



October 22, 2021

Dr. Christopher Blake  
President  
Middle Georgia State University  
100 University Parkway  
Macon, GA 31206-5145

Dear Dr. Blake:

Thank you for submitting the following substantive change:

Substantive change:

**New Program-Approval**

**Master of Arts (M.A.) Degree Program in Public Relations**

Submission date:

**6/28/2021**

Intended Implementation date:

**1/1/2022**

Case ID:

**SC014997**

SACSCOC requested additional information via email. The institution's response has been added to the record and is reflected in the narrative below.

Middle Georgia State University (MGA) proposes the implementation of the Master of Arts (M.A.) degree program in Public Relations, effective January 1, 2022. Based on the information provided, the program will be ongoing. It will be offered through distance education delivery; the institution has been approved for this delivery method. An initial enrollment of 13 students is anticipated. The target audience will be individuals who have completed undergraduate degrees in media, English, and interdisciplinary studies and currently work in communications and marketing, and those who seek a career change into these fields.

The proposed program appears to be consistent with the institutional mission and goals. The need for the program was based on input from alumni, employers, and community representatives. Letters of support were provided. The legal authority to offer the program was documented through a letter from the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs of the University System of Georgia. The involvement of faculty in planning for and approving the change was documented.



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The curriculum, projected schedule of course offerings, and course descriptions were provided and appear to be appropriate. The programmatic goals and program student learning outcomes were provided; the student learning outcomes will be assessed through a writing assignment, the Digital/Creative Project for PR, and the PR campaign assignment. The admission and graduation requirements for the program were provided and appear to be appropriate. The institution's policies for awarding credit were described. They appear to be appropriate and consistent with common academic practice. Administrative oversight for the program will be provided by the Graduate Program Coordinator and the Chair of the Department of Media, Culture, and the Arts. The program coordinator was identified and appears to have appropriate credentials. The program will be offered in 8-week sessions. The institution described its methods for determining that students achieve levels of knowledge and competencies consistent with students in courses offered through a traditional format.

A faculty roster was provided detailing the credentials of the faculty assigned to teach in the program. The institution was asked to demonstrate the scholarship and research capability of faculty members teaching in the program and, if applicable, document faculty experience in directing student research or creative work; additional information was provided as requested. The faculty members appear to have appropriate credentials to teach the assigned graduate courses. The adequacy of full-time faculty assigned to the program was described and appears to be sufficient. The program's interdisciplinary nature will incorporate the expertise of faculty members from Information Technology and Technical and Professional Writing. Keep in mind that the ultimate determination of faculty qualifications and faculty adequacy is the responsibility of the peer review team who will assess the program as part of the institution's next SACSCOC accreditation review.

The library and learning resources available to support the program were described and appear to be adequate. The discipline-specific learning resources available include databases, peer-reviewed journals, and print and electronic books. Students will access the resources onsite or online using their MGA email addresses and passwords. Faculty and students will be instructed in the use of online and onsite library resources through face-to-face or virtual instruction. Resources to support students in accessing and using learning resources include the Graduate Studies Librarian, the School of Arts & Letters Librarian Liaison, course-embedded library services, video tutorials, and LibGuides.

The support services for students in the program were described and appear to be adequate. These include the Writing Centers, an online graduate student orientation module, the Graduate Studies Librarian, the Graduate Program Coordinator, the Graduate Student Advisory Council, and graduate assistantships. General services include the Academic Resource Centers, Student



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Success Resources, the Center for Career & Leadership Development, technology resources and services, and testing services.

The physical facilities and equipment available to support the program were described and appear to be adequate. Because the program will be offered online, the primary physical resource needed will be office space. Offices are equipped with phones, desktop computers, and access to the Internet and peripheral devices. The institution's learning management system, Brightspace, will be used to deliver the program. The institution does not expect an adverse impact on any existing programs and services due to the implementation of the proposed program.

A four-year budget was provided, and the institution appears to have adequate resources to support the program. Funding will be provided through reallocated funds, tuition, and fees; expenditures include personnel, supplies, expenses, and travel. General institutional funds will cover the projected shortfall in the first year. Based on the information provided, there are no resources going to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services for the program. A contingency plan was provided should the required resources not materialize. The institution affirmed that it is not currently on reimbursement for Title IV funding.

The institutional assessment process was described and appears to be adequate. The process includes aligning program goals and outcomes with the mission of the institution and the school, assessing program goals and student learning outcomes, analyzing assessment results, identifying continuous improvement initiatives, reporting and using results for program improvement, and completing the Comprehensive Program Review as required by the University System of Georgia. The program will be incorporated into the institution-wide review and assessment processes and will use the common template for academic program assessment. An initial plan for assessing the program student learning outcomes was provided that included the assessment methods, data collection points, expected measures of success, and a curriculum map.

**The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the Master of Arts (M.A.) degree program in Public Relations. It was the decision of the Board to approve the program and include it in the scope of the current accreditation.**

Enclosed is an invoice for \$500 to help defray the cost of reviewing the prospectus.

Should you need assistance, please contact Dr. Stephanie L. Kirschmann at 404-679-4501 or via email at [skirschmann@sacscoc.org](mailto:skirschmann@sacscoc.org).



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Please include the Case ID number above in all submissions or correspondence about this substantive change.

*Note:* The SACSCOC substantive change policy was revised in 2020 and updated in March and June 2021. The policy has many new requirements and changes to previous requirements. The *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* and learning resources are available on the substantive change webpage at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Belle S. Wheelan".

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.  
President

BSW/TDB:lp

Enclosure (invoice with liaison's copy only)

cc: Dr. Kevin T. Cantwell, Special Assistant to the President, Middle Georgia State University  
Dr. Stephanie L. Kirschmann, Vice President, SACSCOC