

ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
PLANNING AND COORDINATION
ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

CHAPTER 300-2-1
PROGRAM REVIEW

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300-2-1-.01 Operating Definitions.

Unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, the definitions recognized by the Commission are as follows throughout these rules:

(1) **25-Mile Rule:** Provision previously included in Rule 300-2-1-.05, specifying that "No off-campus site may be located nearer than 25 miles to a main campus of another institution which offers similar courses without the written consent of that institution." The provision was eliminated in favor of service area as the main

geographical consideration for off-campus sites, and this definition is given for historical purposes only.

(2) Academic Program: See "instructional program."

(3) Academic Program Inventory ("Inventory"): Maintained by the Commission's staff, a comprehensive list of instructional programs currently or previously offered by public postsecondary institutions in Alabama, with a record for each instructional program.

(4) Academic Unit: Within an institution, an organizational structure that includes individuals with faculty appointments or has a reporting relationship to the institution's chief academic officer, usually the Provost. Academic units can be "instructional" or "non-instructional."

(5) Academic Year: Annual period of instruction as defined by an institution of higher education, divided into "terms."

(6) Accreditation: A formal process conducted by a non-governmental, independent accrediting agency recognized by the US Department of Education or by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation to ensure the delivery of sound educational programs. Accreditation may pertain to an entire institution ("institutional accreditation") or to specific academic programs or divisions ("specialized accreditation" or "programmatic accreditation").

(7) ACCS: The Alabama Community College System.

(8) Active Status: In reference to an instructional program, a type of program status indicating that the program may enroll new students.

(9) Administrative Consolidation: A type of institutional change whereby two or more institutions are placed under a single executive head without program interchange. All involved institutions maintain separate functional identities. This does not constitute a multicampus institution, but rather two or more separate institutions operating under a single executive head.

(10) Alteration: A type of program change that modifies an existing instructional program within its previously defined scope. Such changes include modifications to program coursework, modifications to program requirements, including total number of hours, and updates to program titles or CIP codes.

(11) Associate Degree: Designated as IPEDS Level 3, an award granted on completion of an instructional program that requires at least 60 semester hours of undergraduate coursework or the equivalent, with a general education component consisting of at least 15 semester hours or the equivalent.

(12) Baccalaureate Degree: Designated as IPEDS Level 5, an undergraduate award granted on completion of an instructional program that requires at least 120 semester hours of undergraduate coursework or the equivalent, with a general education component consisting of at least 30 semester hours or the equivalent.

(13) Badge: See "mini-certificate."

(14) Branch Campus: A special type of off-campus instructional site that is geographically apart from an institution's main campus, where instruction is delivered, and is independent of the main campus of an institution. An off-campus instructional site is independent of the main campus if it is permanent; offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential; has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

(15) Certificate: A term primarily used in reference to "for-credit non-degree certificates," as defined below. Compare "long certificate (CER)," which the Commission considers a type of "degree."

(16) CIP Code: A six-digit code in the form of xx.xxxx that identifies an instructional program specialty using the taxonomic coding scheme known as Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP), maintained by the US Department of Education. A program's CIP code should accurately reflect the content of instruction and allow for comparison of programs both within and between institutions.

(17) Clock Hour: A period of time consisting of (1) A 50- to 60-minute class, lecture, or recitation in a 60-minute period; (2) A 50- to 60-minute faculty-supervised laboratory, shop training, or internship in a 60-minute period; or (3) Sixty minutes of preparation in a correspondence course.

(18) Combination Degrees: Overlapping courses of study within a single institution that result in awarding more than one degree. Examples include dual majors, accelerated bachelor's-master's programs, and other arrangements that allow for shorter time to completion of multiple awards.

(19) Commission: The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) created by Alabama Code Sections 16-5-1, et. seq.

(20) Competency-Based Education: An educational program wherein student progress toward completion is measured through the attainment of competencies, whether within course-based units or through direct assessment of learning.

(21) Concentration: See "option."

(22) Consortium: A formal federation or association of two or more separate institutions for one or more specific purposes, usually involving a statement of mutual obligations and resource-sharing.

(23) Cooperative Degree Program: A formal arrangement whereby multiple institutions agree to share coursework or other resources to support degree completion for their respective students. In contrast with a joint program, a cooperative degree program results in a single program completion credential from the student's home institution. For program viability purposes, completers will be counted collectively across institutions under most circumstances.

(24) Credit Hour: For purposes of the application of this policy and in accord with federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates one of the following:

(a) Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or

(b) At least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined in item (a) above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

(25) Curriculum: Body of coursework, assessments, or other requirements necessary to complete a program of instruction.

(26) Degree: An academic program leading toward one of the following awards: long certificate (CER), associate degree, baccalaureate degree, master's degree, education specialist (EdS) degree, research doctorate, professional doctorate, or doctorate other.

(27) Degree Level: Also referred to as "degree designation" or "award level," classification of for-credit postsecondary programs of instruction based on duration and depth of study, with graduate programs being at a higher level than undergraduate programs. Within the United States, institutions use IPEDS levels to report awards.

(28) Deleted Status: In reference to a program of instruction, a type of program status indicating that an academic program has been or will soon be terminated. Once a program has been marked as deleted within the Academic Program Inventory, no new students may

be admitted, though current enrollees may be taught out. Programs with deleted status remain in the Academic Program Inventory for archival purposes.

(29) Delivery Modality: See "method of delivery."

(30) Distance Education: A formal educational process using technological delivery in which instruction occurs where students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education, distance learning, and e-learning are recognized by the Commission as being synonymous terms.

(31) Distance Education Program: A for-credit postsecondary program for which all instructional requirements can be completed via distance education modalities. A distance education program may have in-person requirements that are non-instructional (e.g., orientation, practicum).

(32) Doctorate Other: Designated as IPEDS Level 19, a doctor's degree that does not meet the definition of a doctor's degree-research/scholarship or a doctor's degree-professional practice.

(33) Dual Degrees: An arrangement whereby students can earn two separate degrees from two separate institutions with a shorter time to completion than if the degrees were completed separately.

(34) Dual Enrollment: Enrollment of secondary students in postsecondary courses offered through an institution of higher education, for which the student earns college credit and also satisfies high school requirements. Instruction may occur at a dual enrollment site (at the high school), through distance education, or on the college campus or other instructional site.

(35) Dual Enrollment Site: A type of exempt off-campus site located at a high school where one or more postsecondary-level courses are taught exclusively to high school students.

(36) Education Specialist Degree (EdS): Designated as IPEDS Level 8, within the field of Education, a degree that requires completion of an organized instructional program beyond the master's degree but does not meet the requirements of an academic degree at the doctorate level.

(37) Educator Preparation Provider (EPP): An entity authorized by the Alabama State Board of Education to prepare candidates for professional certification as pre-kindergarten through 12th grade (P-12) teachers. An EPP offers one or more "programs leading to professional educator certification," as defined below.

(38) Exemption from Licensure: Pertaining to an institution, a formal process for state authorization conducted by the ACCS Private School Licensure Division to verify that a private

postsecondary institution has met the criteria for exemption from state licensure, resulting in a Certificate of Exemption.

(39) Existing Program of Instruction: An academic degree or certificate program listed in the Academic Program Inventory.

(40) Extension: Pertaining to an instructional program, a type of program change that expands an existing academic offering beyond its previously defined scope. Such changes include the addition of program options within a degree program, as well as the development of for-credit non-degree certificate programs that are related to an existing program or unit of instruction.

(41) Face-to-Face Instruction: Also referred to as "in-person" instruction, a method of delivery where students and instructors are in the same place at the same time.

(42) Faculty: Pursuant to the Commission's responsibilities for instructional program review, "faculty" refers to those individuals engaged by an institution of higher education to serve as instructors of record for its credit-bearing courses. This definition of faculty does not include considerations of academic rank or tenure, which fall under the purview of institutions to determine.

(43) For-Credit Non-Degree Certificate: An academic program that leads to one of the following award designations: mini-certificate, short-term certificate (STC), post-baccalaureate certificate, or post-master's certificate.

(44) Four-Year Institution: See "university."

(45) Graduate-Level Coursework: Coursework designed for instructional programs beyond the bachelor's degree level, including courses that apply toward post-baccalaureate certificates (IPEDS Level 6), master's degrees (IPEDS Level 7), education specialist degrees and post-master's certificates (IPEDS Level 8), and doctoral degrees (IPEDS Levels 17, 18, and 19).

(46) Inactive Status: In reference to an instructional program, a type of program status indicating that an institution intends to reinstate the program to active status within five years. While a program is on inactive status, no students will be admitted, though current enrollees may be taught out.

(47) Institution of Higher Education (IHE): Sometimes referred to as "postsecondary institution," an institution that provides formal programs of instruction with curricula designed primarily for students who have completed the requirements for a high school diploma or its equivalent. This may include academic, occupational, professional, and continuing professional education programs.

(48) Institutional Consolidation: A type of institutional change whereby two or more institutions join to form a distinctly new unit, often with a new name. This results in a single multicampus institution operating under one chief executive officer and under one regional accreditation designation. Often involves program relocation or exchange.

(49) Instructional Program: As defined in Code of Ala., Section 16-5-1, a series of courses at any one location which culminates in a degree, certificate, or other formal recognition of academic credit. This may also be referred to as "program of instruction" or "academic program."

(50) Instructional Role: The degree levels for which an institution is approved to award degrees and does not automatically include approval to offer degrees at a lower degree level.

(51) Instructional Unit: Also referred to as "unit of instruction," an organizational structure within an institution that offers instructional courses or other activities for academic credit and may be considered a "major instructional unit" or a "minor instructional unit."

(52) IPEDS: The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) refers to the postsecondary education data collection program conducted by the US Department of Education. IPEDS is designed to collect standardized data from postsecondary institutions and educational organizations operating within the United States.

(53) Joint Degree Program: An academic degree program whereby students study at two or more institutions and are awarded a single program completion credential bearing the names, seals, and signatures of each of the participating institutions. For program viability purposes, completers are counted collectively.

(54) Long Certificate (CER): Designated as IPEDS Level 2, an award granted on completion of a program consisting of at least 30 but no more than 59 semester hours of undergraduate coursework. Typically, CERs consist of technical coursework and are offered by two-year institutions.

(55) Lower-Division Coursework: Undergraduate coursework designed for introductory- or intermediate-level study in a collegiate discipline, such as general education courses, major prerequisite courses, and program courses at the associate level.

(56) Main Campus: The physical boundaries of the location of an institution's principal administrative offices. In the case of an institution eligible for Title IV funds, the campus designated by the US Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education Identification number (OPEID).

(57) Major Course of Study: Often referred to as "major," that part of a degree program which consists of a specified group of courses in a particular discipline or field. While practices vary among institutions, a baccalaureate program major usually consists of 28 semester hours (42 quarter hours) or more.

(58) Major Instructional Unit: Division, college, or school that comprises several minor units of instruction.

(59) Master's Degree: Designated as IPEDS Level 7, a graduate award granted on completion of an instructional program that requires at least 30 semester hours of post-baccalaureate, graduate-level, or professional coursework.

(60) Merger: A type of institutional change whereby one institution relinquishes its assets and degree-granting authority and is dissolved into another, with the second institution remaining as the sole surviving entity. Such a change may involve the closure of a campus or one institution becoming a branch of the other.

(61) Method of Delivery: Synonymous with "delivery modality," the technology or method used to deliver instruction or assess student progress toward program completion, including face-to-face instruction, distance education, competency-based education, or a combination thereof. In addition, an academic program may be offered in multiple modalities.

(62) Mini-Certificate (MINI): Designated as IPEDS Level 1a, a for-credit certificate program consisting of at least six (6) but less than nine (9) semester credit hours of undergraduate coursework or the equivalent. Credit-bearing badges typically fall into this designation.

(63) Minor Course of Study: Often referred to as "minor," that part of a degree program which consists of a specified group of courses in a particular discipline or field usually constituting a minimum of 18 semester hours (27 quarter hours). The Commission does not require notification for additions of or changes to minor courses of study.

(64) Minor Instructional Unit: A department or other unit offering degree programs, or a cross-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary consortium offering for-credit coursework but no degree programs.

(65) Moved Status: In reference to a program of instruction, a type of program status assigned by Commission staff for archival reasons to keep track of programs that have changed CIP code or IPEDS level. The program at the new code or level retains active status. New students are enrolled in the active program, though existing students may be taught out from the moved program.

(66) NC-SARA: The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) is a national association of member institutions and states organized to provide a streamlined, reciprocity-based process for participating postsecondary institutions to become authorized to offer interstate distance education in other NC-SARA member states without individually applying to each state for such authorization, subject to certain limitations.

(67) NISP: The Notification of Intent to Submit a Program (NISP) was previously required to be submitted to ACHE prior to review of new program proposal. The NISP was eliminated with revision of Rule 300-2-1-.03, and definition is given for historical purposes only.

(68) Nomenclature: Also referred to as "degree nomenclature" or "award name," a designation for the specific type of award within a given level (e.g., Bachelor of Science, Master of Business Administration, or Doctor of Philosophy). In its official record of an award, an institution will identify the nomenclature followed by the program title using the following format: [Nomenclature] in [Program Title] (e.g., Bachelor of Science in Biology).

(69) Non-Academic Unit: Within an institution, an organizational structure that does not meet the definition of academic unit, including, but not limited to, student services, facilities/operations, financial affairs, information technology, advancement, and auxiliaries. Administrative changes to non-academic units do not have to be reported to the Commission.

(70) Non-Alabama Institution: Also referred to as "non-resident institution," a postsecondary educational institution, public or private, profit or nonprofit, whose main campus or headquarters is located outside the State of Alabama.

(71) Non-Instructional Academic Unit: An academic unit that does not offer credit-bearing coursework or degree programs, including units of research, units of public service, and units of administration.

(72) Off-Campus Course: A course provided to any group of students for academic credit at a particular off-campus site in an organized classroom setting. Courses offered on an individual study basis are excluded.

(73) Off-Campus Instruction: A for-credit course or program taken by a student or students at a location other than a Commission-recognized main or branch campus of the sponsoring institution. The Commission's policy on off-campus instruction applies to traditional instructional settings, i.e., face-to-face classroom instruction that occurs at a location away from the Commission-recognized main or branch campus of the institution. Practicum,

clinical training, or other work-based learning activities are considered non-instructional and are excluded.

(74) Off-Campus Offering: As defined in Code of Ala., Section 16-5-1, any credit course, instructional unit, or instructional program conducted off the main campus of any public postsecondary institution.

(75) Off-Campus Site: The specific location where one or more courses are offered for academic credit geographically distant from the sponsoring institution's main campus. It does not include locations for in-person interactions that are non-instructional (e.g., recruitment offices, research facilities, orientation sites, practicum sites).

(76) Option: An extension of an instructional program offering that is closely related to the existing program and shares a common set of program coursework ("program core") with all other options of the same program. Options may be referred to as "concentrations," "tracks," "specializations," or another institution-specific designation that appears on a student transcript. Options are not represented separately in the Academic Program Inventory, and institutions may not identify them as standalone degree programs.

(77) Physical Presence: Having a geographical site with an address and location within the physical boundaries of the State of Alabama.

(78) Post-Baccalaureate Certificate (Post-Bacc): Designated as IPEDS Level 6, a for-credit program consisting of at least six (6) semester credit hours of graduate-level coursework, or the equivalent. Most graduate certificates fall into the post-baccalaureate classification.

(79) Post-Implementation Period: A seven-year monitoring period following the implementation of a new degree program during which the program must meet conditions set forth at its time of approval.

(80) Post-Master's Certificate (Post-Mast): Designated as IPEDS Level 8, though distinct from the Education Specialist (EdS) degree, a post-master's certificate is a for-credit program consisting of at least six (6) semester credit hours of graduate-level coursework designed specifically for those already holding master's degrees. Post-master's certificates are typically offered in Nursing or other fields where it is common for master's degree holders to seek additional specialized training.

(81) Postsecondary Institution: See "institution of higher education."

(82) Practice-Focused Doctorate: Distinct from "research-focused doctorate," a Commission-specific classification that pertains primarily to instructional role and refers to a doctoral course of study whose primary emphasis is on the application of research. This includes those degrees categorized by IPEDS as Level 18 (Professional Doctorates), as well as the Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), and other similar offerings that may be designated as IPEDS Level 17 or 19.

(83) Private Institution of Higher Education: An institution of higher education which is controlled by an individual or agency other than the state, a subdivision of the state, or the federal government and is usually supported primarily by other than public funds and operated by other than publicly elected or appointed officials.

(84) Private School Licensure: Pertaining to an institution, a formal process for state authorization conducted by the ACCS Private School Licensure Division to certify viability and legal authority to offer postsecondary programs of instruction, resulting in a Private School License.

(85) Professional Doctorate: Designated as IPEDS Level 18, a doctor's degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice. For the purposes of instructional role, all professional doctorates are considered "practice-focused doctorates."

(86) Professional Licensure Program: As defined in federal regulations, an instructional program that is designed to meet educational requirements for a specific professional license or certification that is required for employment in an occupation or is advertised as meeting such requirements.

(87) Program Length: A measure of the amount of time required for a student to progress to program completion, typically represented in semester credit hours.

(88) Program of Instruction: See "instructional program."

(89) Program Status: An indication of whether a program of instruction is actively enrolling new students, including the following status types: active, deleted, inactive, and moved.

(90) Program that Leads to Professional Educator Certification: A type of professional licensure program at the baccalaureate, master's, or education specialist level that receives authorization from the Alabama State Board of Education to lead to professional educator certification and is considered an "approved program," as defined under Alabama Administrative Code §290-3-3-.01.

(91) Program Title: A name given by an institution to describe a program's specific field of study and which is used alongside nomenclature in official records of the award, such as in student transcripts. The program title should accurately reflect the content of instruction and therefore should closely correspond to the standardized CIP Code list.

(92) Program Viability Standard: In keeping with Code of Ala., Section 16-5-8(a)(2), the minimum average annual number of graduates that an approved degree program must produce during its post-implementation period, differentiated by degree level.

(93) Public Institutions of Higher Education: As defined in Code of Ala., Section 16-5-1, those public educational institutions in Alabama which have been authorized by the Legislature or by the Constitution to provide formal education, including vocational, technical, collegiate, professional, or any other form of education above the secondary school level.

(94) Research Doctorate: Designated as IPEDS Level 17, a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement. To promote consistency within IPEDS reporting, the Doctor of Education (EdD) is included in this degree level.

(95) Research-Focused Doctorate: Distinct from "practice-focused doctorate," a Commission-specific classification that pertains primarily to instructional role and refers to a doctoral course of study that incorporates substantial research preparation, including the production of original research. This includes the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and similar degrees, but it does not include all "research doctorates" designated as IPEDS Level 17. Specifically, the Doctor of Education (EdD) is excluded from this classification.

(96) Role Expansion: An institution's ability to develop and implement academic programs at a higher or lower degree level than previously awarded.

(97) SACSCOC: The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the primary accrediting agency for public institutions of higher education in Alabama.

(98) Semester: A type of academic term consisting of approximately 15 weeks of instruction. Typically, two semesters comprise one academic year, though there may be an additional summer session.

(99) Senior Institution: See "university."

(100) Service Area: The geographical area within the State of Alabama where an institution is recognized as a primary provider of for-credit postsecondary instruction and where new off-campus sites are considered exempt from Commission approval.

(101) Short-Term Certificate (STC): Designated as IPEDS Level 1b, a for-credit certificate program consisting of at least nine (9) but no more than twenty-nine (29) semester credit hours of undergraduate coursework, or the equivalent.

(102) SOC Code: A six-digit code in the form of xx-xxxx that identifies an occupational category using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System, maintained by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

(103) Specialization: See "option."

(104) State Authorization: Formal approval to offer postsecondary programs of instruction to Alabama residents.

(105) State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA): An interstate distance education compact coordinated through the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). Institutional membership in SARA establishes recognition of comparable standards in the interstate delivery of postsecondary distance education courses and programs and streamlines authorization to enroll non-Alabama residents.

(106) Strategic Benefit: A higher standard used for review of a new academic program that is outside an institution's instructional role. Strategic benefit entails a significant and meaningful overall benefit for the state of Alabama, with criteria defined in Rule 300-2-1-.03.

(107) System: Two or more separately accredited colleges or universities under the governance of a single board and under the control or supervision of a single head.

(108) Term: Division of an academic year that a student must complete to earn academic credit. Most public institutions in Alabama organize their academic year by semesters, though trimesters, quarters, or other divisions may be used.

(109) Two-Year Institution: An institution of higher education approved to grant associate degrees as its highest award level, including community, technical, and vocational colleges.

(110) Unaccredited Institution: An institution not accredited by an agency recognized by the US Department of Education or Council on Higher Education Accreditation or by an entity determined to be comparable.

(111) Unit: As defined in Code of Ala., Section 16-5-1, a school, college, division, or institute and includes the establishment of any new branch or campus. The term does not include reasonable extension or alterations of existing curricula or programs which have a direct relationship to existing programs previously approved by the Commission. The Commission may, under its rule-making authority, define the character of such reasonable extensions and alterations. Units may be considered "academic" or "non-academic."

(112) Unit of Administration: An academic unit whose function is primarily administrative in nature, such as the Office of the Provost or Academic Success Center.

(113) Unit of Instruction: See "instructional unit," "major instructional unit," and "minor instructional unit."

(114) Unit of Public Service: An academic unit established to make available to the public the various unique resources and capabilities of an institution for the specific purpose of responding to local, regional, or statewide needs or problems.

(115) Unit of Research: An academic unit whose primary purpose is to produce one or more research outcomes, including the creation of new knowledge, the organization of knowledge, and the application of knowledge. These may include such entities as research divisions, bureaus, institutes, centers, and experiment stations.

(116) University: An institution of higher education approved to grant degrees at the baccalaureate level or higher.

(117) Upper-Division Coursework: Also known as "upper-level" coursework, undergraduate coursework designed for more advanced study and is required to complete a baccalaureate program of study.

(118) Work-Based Learning (WBL): Instructional activities that include sustained interactions with industry or community professionals intended to foster in-depth, first-hand engagement with tasks required of a given career field, aligned to curriculum and instruction. Work-based learning includes apprenticeships, internships, practicums, and other activities and may be required or recommended for program completion.

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Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-5-1, et. seq.

History: New Rule: Filed June 12, 1995; effective July 17, 1995. (This rule is based on definitions included in the Alabama Code, Section 16-5-1, and operational definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/24/79, 5/20/88, and 8/19/94; and revised on 3/30/90, 6/21/91, 6/19/92, and 8/19/94.) **Amended:** Filed March 12, 1996; effective April 16, 1996. **Amended:** Filed August 4,

1998; effective September 8, 1998. **Repealed and New Rule:**
Published June 30, 2025; effective August 14, 2025.

**300-2-1-.02 Review Or Exemption From Review Of Proposed
Postsecondary Course Offerings In Alabama By Non-
Alabama Institutions Seeking State Authorization.**

(1) **Purpose and Commission Responsibility.** Per the Code of Ala. 1975, §16-5-10(14), it is the responsibility of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education to establish policies and procedures for the review and approval or disapproval of all proposed postsecondary credit courses or programs of instruction offered in the State of Alabama by non-Alabama institutions of higher education. The Code of Ala. 1975, §16-5-10(10) authorizes the Commission to make rules and regulations for its meetings, procedures, and execution of the powers and duties delegated to it by this article. These institutions must also be licensed to do business or be exempt from licensing in Alabama by the Private School Licensure Division of the Alabama Community College System (ACCS).

(2) **Scope.** This section shall apply only to Non-Resident Institutions seeking to offer postsecondary programs of instruction to Alabama residents. It does not apply to Alabama-based institutions.

(3) **Definitions.** For purposes of this rule, the following definitions apply:

(a) **Accreditation:** A formal process conducted by a non-governmental, independent accrediting agency recognized by the US Department of Education or by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation to ensure the delivery of sound educational programs.

(b) **ACCS-Exempted Institutions:** Those postsecondary institutions that are granted a Certificate of Exemption from Licensure by the ACCS Private School Licensure Division and for which the System has waived formal licensure application and review.

(c) **ACHE-Exempted Institutions:** Non-Resident Institutions that are determined to meet one of the criteria for exemption from Commission review and are named in an official letter of exemption from the Commission.

(d) **Approved Programs:** Programs of study that have been reviewed and found to meet the criteria for approval by the Commission.

(e) Authorization: Formal approval to offer postsecondary programs of instruction to Alabama residents. Authorization is generally secured through one of the following processes:

1. Private School Licensure: A formal process conducted by the ACCS Private School Licensure Division to certify viability and legal authority to offer postsecondary programs of instruction, resulting in a Private School License.

2. Formal Exemption from Licensure: A formal process conducted by the ACCS Private School Licensure Division to verify that a private postsecondary institution has met the criteria for exemption from licensure, resulting in a Certificate of Exemption.

3. Membership in the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) (applies only to Non-Resident Institutions without a physical presence in Alabama): A streamlined, reciprocity-based process for participating postsecondary institutions to become authorized to offer interstate distance education programs in other NC-SARA member states without individually applying to each state for such authorization, subject to certain limitations. Institutions are approved for NC-SARA membership by their states of domicile, and as a condition of membership, they are required to maintain certain academic and financial standards designed to protect students.

(f) Commission: The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE).

(g) Distance Education Program: A for-credit postsecondary program for which all instructional requirements can be completed via distance education courses. A distance education program may have in-person requirements that are non-instructional (e.g., orientation, practicum).

(h) Main Campus: The physical boundaries of the location of an institution's principal administrative offices. In the case of an institution eligible for Title IV funds, the campus designated by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education identification number (OPEID).

(i) NC-SARA: The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) is a national association of member institutions and states organized to provide a streamlined, reciprocity-based process for participating postsecondary institutions to become authorized to offer interstate distance education in other NC-SARA member states without individually applying to each state for such authorization, subject to certain limitations.

(j) **Non-Alabama Institution:** A postsecondary educational institution, public or private, profit or nonprofit, whose main campus or headquarters is located outside the State of Alabama.

(k) **Non-Resident Institution:** Synonymous term for Non-Alabama Institution.

(l) **Physical Presence:** Having a geographical site with an address and location within the physical boundaries of the State of Alabama.

(m) **Programs of Instruction (Courses):** Any course or sequence of courses for which credit toward any postsecondary degree, certificate, or diploma is to be awarded.

(n) **SARA (State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements):** An interstate distance education compact coordinated through NC-SARA.

(o) **System:** The Alabama Community College System (ACCS).

(p) **Unaccredited Institution:** An institution not accredited by an agency recognized by the US Department of Education or Council on Higher Education Accreditation or by an entity determined to be comparable.

(4) State Authorization for Non-Resident Institutions. The Commission's review or exemption from review of postsecondary programs of instruction offered by Non-Resident Institutions is a component of the state authorization process conducted by the ACCS Private School Licensure Division under the authority granted to it under Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-46-1, et seq.

(a) All Non-Resident Institutions seeking authorization by obtaining a Private School License must complete the Commission's program review or exemption process.

(b) If the ACCS Private School Licensure Division grants a Certification of Exemption to a Non-Resident Institution, the institution does not need to apply to the Commission for program review or formal exemption from review.

(c) Non-Resident Institutions who are NC-SARA members and do not maintain a physical presence in Alabama are not required to obtain a Private School License or Certificate of Exemption and are therefore not required to seek program review or exemption by the Commission.

(5) Requests for Formal Exemption from Program Review.

(a) As a component of its Private School Licensure application, a Non-Resident Institution may request a letter

of exemption from the Commission's program review process, if the institution meets any of the following criteria:

1. It is accredited by a regional, national, or specialized/programmatic accrediting body that is recognized by the US Department of Education or by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Documentation concerning accreditation is required.
2. It offers only non-degree programs or non-credit courses.
3. It was originally incorporated in Alabama and is now owned by an entity headquartered in another state. These institutions must have been in continuous operation in Alabama since their inception, with no more than a one-year interruption of operations due to a change in ownership. Legal documentation of Alabama origin must be submitted to the Commission.

(b) An institution seeking formal exemption from Commission program review must submit an application and proper documentation to the Commission. The Commission will then determine if the institution meets any of the criteria for exemption from review and will inform the Alabama Community College System concerning the disposition of the application.

(c) Formal exemption from program review by the Commission does not exempt Non-Resident Institutions from the ACCS Private School Licensure requirements as established in the Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-46-1, et seq.

(6) Program Review and Approval Required for Non-Exempt Institutions.

(a) Any Non-Resident Institution seeking Private School Licensure that is not exempt from Commission review must undergo a review of its programs of instruction and receive approval from the Executive Director on behalf of the Commission.

(b) As a prerequisite to program approval, an unaccredited Non-Resident Institution seeking a Private School License must undergo an external review of its programs of study by one or more outside consultants chosen by the Commission.

1. The unaccredited institution shall underwrite all costs related to the external review.

2. The program review process for unaccredited institutions shall not exceed six months following receipt of data and information required by the Commission.

(c) The following considerations will be made as to whether programs of instruction can be approved:

1. In general, program proposals must meet academic standards used by the Commission proposals for new off-campus offerings by in-state public institutions and in doing so be in full compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) guidelines or those of other regional, national, or specialized/ programmatic accrediting bodies recognized by the US Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

2. Since the use of state appropriated funding is not involved, the question of unnecessary duplication is not an issue when proposals of non-Alabama institutions are reviewed.

(d) In the absence of unavoidable delays, the Commission will report its approval or disapproval of proposed courses or program(s) of instruction to the System and to the applying institution within sixty (60) working days following receipt of the required data and information forms from the applying institution.

(e) By statute, the Commission is authorized to promulgate a schedule of fees commensurate with the cost of Commission activities related to the programmatic review, not to exceed fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) and may exercise this authority as the Commission determines necessary with six (6) months' advance notice.

(f) The Commission reserves the right to conduct a site visit to the proposed location for an evaluation of a course or program of instruction before or subsequent to concluding its review of a pending application. There is no charge to the institution for mileage or per diem payments to Commission staff for such visits. However, in the event that the Commission appoints other education or external specialists as on-site visit consultants, the institution will pay the consultants a consulting fee determined by the Commission, as well as expenses.

(7) Changes to Approved Program Offerings by Licensed Non-Resident Institutions. If a currently licensed Non-Resident Institution seeks to change its approved program offerings, whether by adding new programs or by relocating or modifying previously approved programs, the Commission will review these changes in a cycle to coincide with the license renewal process established by the ACCS Private School Licensure Division.

(8) Period of Approval or Exemption. In keeping with the review cycle for ACCS Private School Licensure, program approval or

formal exemption from program review is valid for two years, after which the institution may seek renewal.

(9) **Appeals.** Any person or institution aggrieved by the action of the Commission in its administration of this rule may, by written petition filed with the Commission within thirty (30) days after notice of the aggrieving action, request a rehearing by the Commission. The Commission shall schedule the requested rehearing to be held no less than twenty (20) nor more than thirty (30) days after receipt of the petition. The aggrieved party may present written and oral evidence supporting its petition and may be represented by counsel, if desired. The decision of the Commission following the rehearing shall be final.

Author: Robin E. McGill

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-5-1, et seq.

History: Filed December 10, 1985. Rule 300-2-1-.02 was formerly referenced as Chapter 300-2-1; it has been repealed and reinserted as a rule within this chapter. The rule title remains unchanged from its previous chapter title. The contents are also unchanged except for slight format changes and the addition and deletion of certain definitions: Filed April 10, 1989. **Amended:** Filed August 21, 1996; effective September 25, 1996. **Amended:** Filed January 6, 2003; effective February 10, 2003. **Amended:** Filed May 6, 2004; effective June 10, 2004. **Amended:** Filed February 8, 2010; effective March 15, 2010. **Amended:** Filed November 5, 2013; effective December 10, 2013. **Amended:** Filed May 9, 2016; effective June 23, 2016. **Amended:** Filed December 11, 2018; effective January 25, 2019. **Repealed and New Rule:** Published December 29, 2023; effective February 12, 2024.

300-2-1-.03

Evaluation And Review Of New Instructional Program Proposals Of Public Postsecondary Institutions.

(1) **Purpose:** The purpose of reviewing new program proposals of public postsecondary institutions is to insure that such proposals meet the criteria established by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

(2) **Commission Responsibility:** It is the responsibility of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education to establish policies and procedures for reviewing and taking action on all new instructional program proposals for Alabama's public postsecondary institutions.

(3) **Scope and Definitions.** This section shall apply to academic programs leading toward one of the following degree designations as defined within the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS):

(a) Level 2, Long certificate (CER): an award granted on completion of a program consisting of at least 30 but no more

than 59 semester hours of undergraduate coursework. Typically, CERs consist of technical coursework and are offered by community and technical colleges.

(b) Level 3, Associate degree: an award granted on completion of an educational program that requires at least 60 semester hours of undergraduate coursework or the equivalent, with a general education component consisting of at least 15 semester hours or the equivalent.

(c) Level 5, Baccalaureate degree: an undergraduate award granted on completion of an educational program that requires at least 120 semester hours of undergraduate coursework or the equivalent, with a general education component consisting of at least 30 semester hours or the equivalent.

(d) Level 7, Master's degree: a graduate award granted on completion of an educational program that requires at least 30 semester hours of post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional coursework.

(e) Level 8, Education Specialist (EdS): Within the field of education, a degree that requires completion of an organized program beyond the master's degree but does not meet the requirements of an academic degree at the doctorate level.

(f) Level 17, Research Doctorate: A Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement. ACHE includes Doctor of Education (EdD) in this level.

(g) Level 18, Professional Doctorate: A doctor's degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice.

(h) Level 19, Doctorate Other: A doctor's degree that does not meet the definition of a doctor's degree - research/scholarship or a doctor's degree - professional practice.

(4) **Preparation and Submission of Proposals:** Program proposals will be prepared by the institutions in keeping with procedures set forth below and with guidelines published by Commission staff. Program proposals may be submitted electronically to the Commission at any time. Receipt of a proposal for review by the Commission does not imply approval of the program.

(5) **Procedures for the Evaluation and Review of New Two-Year College Programs of Instruction:** In the case of proposals from community, junior, and technical colleges, evaluation and review

of new program proposals will occur in conjunction with the Alabama Community College System (ACCS).

(a) Review of Program Applications: ACCS will conduct a review of the program application. This review will determine whether the program is denied, whether additional information is required, or whether the program is eligible for further consideration. If approved, ACCS will send the program application to the Commission staff for review, which shall include consideration of program design, state and regional needs, and stewardship of resources. Should additional information or program modifications be deemed necessary, ACCS will provide such for consideration.

(b) Completion of Staff Recommendation and Commission Action on the Program: Completion of the Commission staff recommendation and Commission action on the program will occur within ninety days after receipt of the formal request, unless a longer time frame is recommended for the institution to address deficiencies within the proposal. Commission staff recommendations will encompass expected program outcomes that will be monitored over the post-implementation period, as described below in §300-2-1-.04. Commission approval of a program is based upon agreement of ACCS to discontinue the program if the expected outcomes are not reached within the established time frame.

(c) Review of Programs Designed to Meet the Needs of Business and Industry: The purpose of these procedures is to expedite the review of new programs designed to meet the immediate needs of business and industry.

1. For such programs, the proposing college will submit a program application to ACCS, providing evidence of the immediate need of a specific business or industry which can be met only through the development and implementation of the proposed instructional program.

2. Completion of the Commission staff recommendation and Commission action on the program will occur within sixty days after receipt of the program proposal, unless another time frame is agreed upon. Commission staff recommendations will encompass expected program outcomes that will be monitored over the post-implementation period, as described below in §300-2-1-.04. Commission approval of a program is based upon agreement of ACCS to discontinue the program if the expected outcomes are not reached within the established time frame.

(d) Provision for Reconsideration of Programs Disapproved by the Commission: Upon the request of the institution, ACCS may request a second review of the program six months after the program has been disapproved by the Commission on the basis of

substantial additional information bearing on previous concerns and issues.

(6) Procedures for the Evaluation and Review of New Baccalaureate Programs of Instruction: The evaluation and review of new baccalaureate programs shall be conducted with the participation of the University Chief Academic Officers.

(a) **Submission and Peer Review of the Program Proposal:** The program proposal may be submitted electronically to the Commission at any time. In preparation for each Commission meeting, Commission staff will contact the chair of the University Chief Academic Officers to request feedback on baccalaureate proposals from institutional representatives. As appropriate, Commission staff may request responses from the proposing institution to issues raised in the peer review and may recommend changes to improve the program proposals.

(b) **Review of the Program by Commission Staff:** Commission staff will consider the following factors in its review, along with other factors as appropriate:

1. The objectives of the proposed program in relation to student demand and the workforce needs of the state;
2. The fit of the program within the institution's mission and role;
3. Resources required and the capacity of the institution to deliver the program as proposed;
4. Potential for unnecessary duplication of offerings beyond core academic programs; and
5. Opportunities for collaboration with other institutions that offer similar or related programs.

(c) **Staff recommendation and Commission Action on the Proposed Program:** Completion of the staff recommendation and action by the Commission will occur within ninety days after receipt of the program proposal, unless a longer time frame is recommended for the institution to address deficiencies within the proposal. The staff recommendation will encompass expected program outcomes that will be monitored over the post-implementation period, as described below in §300-2-1-.04. Commission approval of a program requires agreement by the institution to discontinue the program if expected outcomes are not reached within the established time frame.

(7) Procedures for the Evaluation and Review of New Graduate Programs of Instruction: The evaluation and review of new master's, education specialist, and doctorate programs shall be

conducted with the participation of the Alabama Council of Graduate Deans (ACGD).

(a) Submission and Peer Review of the Program Proposal: The program proposal may be submitted electronically to the Commission at any time. In preparation for each Commission meeting, Commission staff will contact the ACGD chair to request members' feedback on graduate proposals, especially around academic quality of the proposed program, potential student demand for the proposed program, and additional capacity within similar programs offered by the responding institution. ACGD shall establish the format and procedures for peer review. As appropriate, Commission staff may request responses from the proposing institution to issues raised in the peer review and may recommend changes to improve the proposal.

(b) Review of the Program by Commission Staff: A higher level of scrutiny shall be given to graduate program proposals due to increased resources and capacity that such programs require. Commission staff shall consider the following factors in its review, along with other factors as appropriate:

1. The objectives of the proposed program in relation to student demand and the workforce needs of the state;
2. The fit of the program within the institution's mission and role;
3. Resources required and the capacity of the institution to deliver the program as proposed;
4. Potential for unnecessary duplication of offerings;
and
5. Opportunities for collaboration with other institutions that offer similar or related programs.

(c) Staff Recommendation and Commission Action on the Proposed Program: Completion of the staff recommendation and action by the Commission will occur within ninety days after receipt of the program proposal, unless a longer time frame is recommended for the institution to address deficiencies within the proposal. The staff recommendation will encompass expected program outcomes that will be monitored over the post-implementation period, as described below in §300-2-1-.04. Commission approval of a program requires agreement by the institution to discontinue the program if expected outcomes are not reached within the established time frame.

(8) Consideration of Program Proposals above the Instructional Role Level Recognized by the Commission.

(a) Statutory Description: The Commission may review program proposals in a single discipline at a level higher than an institution's Commission-recognized instructional degree level, so long as the proposed program accords with the institution's description in state statute. Proposals for programs that are outside the statutory description of the institution will be considered incomplete and returned to the proposing institution.

(b) Provisions for Proposing a Program above Instructional Role: An institution may seek approval for a new degree program above its recognized instructional role under one of the following provisions:

1. Strategic Benefit: Beyond standard criteria for program review stated above, the proposed program must demonstrate that it contributes a "strategic benefit" to the configuration of current public institution offerings in the State of Alabama. "Strategic benefit" is defined as significant and meaningful overall benefit for the state of Alabama, and includes:

(i) Alabama's need for graduates in the field;

(ii) The program's academic quality and articulation with the institution's academic mission;

(iii) Demonstration that the proposed program will not result in unnecessary duplication of offerings (Code of Ala. 1975 §16-5-8[4][b]) with other Alabama public universities;

(iv) Justification of having no anticipated or projected adverse influence on enrollments at public institution(s) already having that program, particularly those within 50 miles of the proposing institution or within that service area;

(v) Priority consideration being accorded to institution(s) with seniority in that service area (Code of Ala. 1975, §16-5-10);

(vi) Demonstration that the proposed program will serve a strong distinct, and well-documented societal, educational, and economic need for Alabama.

2. Specialized Accreditation Requirement: The Commission will review program proposals in a single discipline at a level higher than an institution's Commission-recognized instructional degree level if an elevation in degree level for an existing program is required by the recognized accrediting agency for that single discipline

program and must be attained to continue the program's accreditation.

(c) **Staff Recommendation:** During the review process, if staff determines that higher degree-level program proposal does not meet one of the provisions above (strategic benefit or specialized accreditation), the staff recommendation will be to "not approve" the proposal.

(d) **Peer Review:** An institution submitting a higher degree-level program in a single discipline will be evaluated and voted upon by the Alabama Council of Graduate Deans or College and University Chief Academic Officers, as appropriate.

(e) **Resubmission of Disapproved Programs:** If a single discipline elevation does not receive an approve vote, the institution may not resubmit that program's revised single discipline proposal until at least one year has elapsed from date of refusal.

(f) **Commission Approval:** Receipt of a higher degree-level proposal for review by the Commission does not imply approval of the program. The proposal will still be subject to the academic program review process, vote by the Commission, and post-implementation procedures and conditions.

(g) **Successive Proposals for Higher Degree-Level Programs:** An institution may be approved for up to three higher degree-level programs before seeking an expansion of instructional role. Successive single discipline program implementation requests shall be evaluated sequentially in that demonstration of prior success is a substantive factor in subsequent review process(es). An institution is not "automatically" granted three single discipline program request opportunities.

(9) **Possible Commission Actions on New Program Proposals:** The Commission may take one of three actions on proposed programs: disapproval, approval, or deferral.

(10) **Program Implementation:** Once program approval is given by the Commission, the institution must implement the program within two years of the proposed implementation date, unless another implementation time frame is granted.

Author: William O. Blow; Robin E. McGill

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-5-1, et seq.

History: Filed December 10, 1985. **Amended:** Filed April 10, 1989; August 18, 1989; December 5, 1990. **Amended:** Filed March 12, 1996; effective April 16, 1996. **Repealed and New Rule:** Filed November 5, 1999; effective December 10, 1999. **Amended:** Published September 29, 2023; effective November 13, 2023.

**300-2-1-.04 Operational Policy On The Approval Of New Programs
Of Instruction And Requirements For Post-
Implementation Monitoring.**

(1) **Purpose.** The purpose of the operational policy on the approval, disapproval, deferral, and withdrawal of new programs of instruction is to ensure that all proposals for new degree programs are subject to a fair and consistent evaluation and determination.

(2) **Commission Responsibility.** It is the responsibility of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education to establish policies and procedures for approving, disapproving, deferring, and withdrawing new programs of instruction. It is also the Commission's responsibility to ensure that approved programs meet standards for viability and quality following implementation.

(3) **Scope.** This section shall apply to proposals for new academic degree programs as specified above in §300-2-1-.03(3).

(4) **Commission Actions on Proposed New programs of Instruction:** The Commission shall take no longer than ten months to review a proposal for a new program of instruction before taking one of the following actions on the proposal:

(a) **Approval:** The approval of a new program of instruction shall require the concurrence of a majority (7) of all the members of the Commission.

(b) **Disapproval:** A program that receives a negative recommendation by a majority vote of Commission members present may be reconsidered after one year at the request of the institution, provided substantive changes indicate the need for reconsideration.

(c) **Deferral:** Should the Commission (by majority vote of members present) defer action on a proposed program, it will specify the future meeting at which the program will be reconsidered, being mindful of the ten-month deadline for program action. If the ten-month limitation has been reached or will be reached before the next scheduled meeting of the Commission, action will not be deferred; however, if the Commission decides that special consideration is warranted, such a program may be disapproved by a majority of members present with the provision that the program can be reconsidered at a specified meeting scheduled prior to the one-year restriction on resubmission of disapproved programs. Deferral is a Commission, not an institutional prerogative.

(5) **Withdrawal of a New Program Proposal.** Should an institution withdraw a proposed program from Commission consideration, it may be resubmitted at any time; however, the time which has expired prior to the withdrawal will not count toward the ten-month deadline on Commission program action. The Commission will have ten months beginning at the time the program is resubmitted to take action on the program.

(6) **Post-implementation Requirements for Approved Programs of Study.** Any new degree program approved by the Commission shall have a seven-year post-implementation monitoring period, during which it must meet conditions set forth at the time of approval as follows:

(a) **Condition on Graduates:** An approved degree program must meet the minimum viability standard for average number of graduates for its degree level, established by Code of Ala. 1975, §16-5-8(a)(2) as follows:

1. Baccalaureate degrees (IPEDS Level 5), associate degrees (IPEDS Level 3), and long certificates (IPEDS Level 2) must produce an average of at least 7.5 graduates per year. In vocational and technical programs, a student who leaves the program for purposes of gainful employment, in the same field of study as the program, having obtained the skills in said program, shall count as a graduate. For two-year technical and vocational college programs, a student who completes 26 semester hours or equivalent programs shall be deemed and counted as a graduate for the purposes of viability standards.

2. Master's degrees (IPEDS Level 7) must produce an average of at least 3.75 graduates per year.

3. Education Specialist (IPEDS Level 8) or terminal sub-doctoral degrees must produce an average of at least 3.0 graduates per year.

4. Doctorate degrees (IPEDS Levels 17, 18, and 19) must produce an average of at least 2.25 graduates per year.

(b) **Condition on New Enrollments:** Approved degree programs must attract a sufficient number of new students each year ("new enrollments") to ensure that the program will continue to meet minimum viability requirements for program graduates. In order to account for attrition or enrollment fluctuations over the post-implementation period, the condition for new enrollments shall be set at 25% higher than the minimum viability standard for graduates as follows:

1. Baccalaureate degrees, associate degrees, and long certificates must enroll an average of at least 9.4 students per year following program implementation.

2. Master's degrees must enroll an average of at least 4.7 students per year following program implementation.

3. Education Specialist or terminal sub-doctoral degrees must enroll an average of at least 3.75 students per year following program implementation.

4. Doctorate degrees (must enroll an average of at least 2.8 students per year following program implementation, though an institution may request that the Commission reduce this number under certain circumstances.

(c) **Condition on Reporting:** Institutions must provide a report evaluating whether the program has met its post-implementation conditions and whether it has fulfilled the objectives stated in the proposal, specifically pertaining to employment outcomes for graduates.

(d) **Additional Conditions:** As appropriate to the specific program of study, the Commission may require additional post-implementation conditions, such as the following:

1. Programs with discipline-specific accreditation may be required to show progress toward specialized accreditation as a post-implementation condition of approval.

2. Programs leading to professional licensure will be required to report steps to be taken to optimize exam pass rates and the licensure pass rate as a post-implementation condition of approval.

3. In the case that the proposed program of study is likely to reduce new enrollments or graduates from an existing program of study, such as when an option within an existing program becomes a standalone program, the Commission may require that the existing program continue to maintain viability in terms of average annual number of graduates.

(7) **Implementation Window.** The window will be 24 months (2 years) from the time of Commission approval to implementation, before Commission approval will expire. An institution may request that a longer implementation window be approved under certain circumstances.

(8) **Post-Implementation Review.** At the end of the seven-year post-implementation period, ACHE staff will review the post-implementation report submitted in fulfillment of the condition on reporting, as noted above, and will notify the Commission as to whether the program has met its post-implementation requirements.

(a) Programs determined to have met all post-implementation conditions will no longer be subject to post-implementation monitoring.

(b) Any program determined not to have met one or more of its post-implementation conditions will be recommended for deletion within the Commission's Academic Program Inventory, unless the Commission approves an amendment to the post-implementation conditions for the program.

Author: William O. Blow; Robin E. McGill

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-5-1, et seq.

History: Filed April 10, 1989. **Amended:** Filed March 12, 1996; effective April 16, 1996. **Amended:** Filed March 13, 2018; effective April 27, 2018. **Amended:** Published September 29, 2023; effective November 13, 2023.

300-2-1-.05 Review of Off-Campus Instruction Offered by Public Postsecondary Institutions and Determination of Service Areas (New Rule).

(1) Purpose: The purpose of reviewing and approving or disapproving off-campus offerings of public postsecondary institutions is to ensure that such offerings meet the criteria and standards established by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education and to ensure that educational needs across the state are being met, while maintaining the integrity of institutional service areas.

(2) Commission Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education to monitor off-campus instructional offerings within the state of Alabama and establish policies and procedures for reviewing new or existing off-campus sites of public postsecondary institutions in Alabama, except for exempt sites delineated by the Commission's statute (see Code of Ala. 1975, §16-5-8[d]).

(3) Scope: This rule shall apply only to off-campus sites located within the state of Alabama. This rule does not apply to off-campus sites that are located out of state, nor does it apply to distance education offerings, non-credit offerings, courses offered on an individual study basis, or non-instructional sites.

(4) Definitions: For purposes of this rule, the following definitions apply:

(a) Off-Campus Site: The specific location where one or more courses are offered for academic credit geographically distant from the sponsoring institution's main campus. It does not include locations for in-person interactions that are non-instructional (e.g., outreach and recruitment offices,

research facilities, orientation sites, practicum sites). An off-campus site will be designated as exempt or non-exempt:

1. Exempt Sites: The following off-campus sites are exempt from Commission approval and require prior notification only, provided that institutions intend to offer only off-campus courses that do not constitute an off-campus program. Exemptions may be granted in statute or by Commission decision:

a. Off-Campus Sites Exempted by Statute

i. Sites at which the Fall 1978 registrations exceeded 500 class enrollments (exempted by statute, see Code of Ala. 1975, §16-5-8[d]).

ii. University sites which were operated prior to 1960 (exempted by statute, see Code of Ala. 1975, §16-5-8[d]).

iii. Sites located on military reservations (exempted by statute, see Code of Ala. 1975, §16-5-8[g]).

iv. Business and industry sites where only their employees are enrolled in the off-campus courses (exempted by statute, see Code of Ala. 1975, §16-5-8[d]).

b. Off-Campus Sites Exempted by Commission Decision

i. Off-campus prison sites where courses are taught exclusively for inmates and prison employees (exempted by Commission decision prior to August 18, 2000).

ii. High school sites where courses are taught exclusively to high school students enrolled in early admission, accelerated, or dual enrollment/dual credit programs (exempted by Commission decision on August 18, 2000).

iii. Two-year college sites located within their respective service areas (exempted by Commission decision on August 18, 2000).

iv. University sites located within their respective service areas (exempted by Commission decision on August 18, 2000).

2. Non-Exempt Sites: Any off-campus site that does not fit within one of the exemptions enumerated above shall

be considered non-exempt and will require Commission approval before instruction can be offered at the site.

(b) Branch Campus: A special type of off-campus instructional site that is geographically apart from an institution's main campus, where instruction is delivered, and that is independent of the main campus of an institution. An off-campus instructional site is independent of the main campus if it is permanent; offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential; has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and has its own budgetary and hiring authority. See also §300-2-1-08 ("Operational Policy on the Designation of Branch Campus Sites").

(c) Off-Campus Instruction: A for-credit course or program taken by a student or students at a location other than a Commission-recognized main or branch campus of the sponsoring institution. The Commission's policy on off-campus instruction applies to traditional instructional settings, i.e., face-to-face classroom instruction that occurs at a location away from the Commission-recognized main or branch campus of the institution. Practicum, clinical training, internships, or other work-based learning activities are considered non-instructional and are excluded from this rule.

(d) Off-Campus Course: A course provided to any group of students for academic credit at a particular off-campus site in an organized classroom setting.

(e) Off-Campus Program: A program of instruction for which 50% or more of the instruction is delivered at an off-campus site.

(f) Service Area: The geographical area within the state of Alabama where an institution is recognized as a primary provider of for-credit postsecondary instruction.

(g) Graduate-Level Coursework: Coursework designed for programs of study beyond the bachelor's degree level, including courses that apply toward post-baccalaureate certificates (IPEDS Level 6), master's degrees (IPEDS Level 7), education specialist degrees and post-master's certificates (IPEDS Level 8), and doctoral degrees (IPEDS Levels 17, 18, and 19).

(h) Lower-Division Coursework: Undergraduate coursework designed for introductory- or intermediate-level study in a collegiate discipline, such as general education courses, major prerequisite courses, and program courses at the associate level.

(i) Upper-Division Coursework: Also known as "upper-level" coursework or "major" coursework, undergraduate coursework

designed for more advanced study and is required to complete a baccalaureate program of study.

(5) Establishment of a New Off-Campus Site Exempted by Statute:

(a) Prior Notification Required: An institution seeking to offer instruction at an off-campus site that fits one of the statutory exemptions enumerated above under §(4)(a)1 a is exempted from Commission approval, but the institution must notify the Commission prior to delivering instruction at the proposed site. Notification should include courses and programs that the institution intends to offer at the site.

(b) Written Consent not Required: Written consent from other two-year or four-year institutions in the target service area is not required when the new site fits one of the statutory exemptions.

(6) Establishment of a New Off-Campus Site within an Institution's Own Service Area:

(a) Prior Notification Required: An institution seeking to offer instruction at an off-campus site within its recognized service area is exempted from Commission approval in most cases, but the institution must notify the Commission prior to delivering instruction at the proposed site.

(b) Documentation Required for New Off-Campus Site: Institutions must submit the following documentation to the Commission as part of their notification for a new off-campus site:

1. Off-Campus Course List: A list of courses from which each term's schedule will be developed will be submitted with each new site notification. If the list includes upper-division or graduate-level courses, the institution shall include information about how the courses will be applied to specific academic program requirements.

2. Off-Campus Program List, if applicable: A list of programs for which 50% or more of the program coursework will be delivered at the off-campus site. Institutions planning to offer one or more off-campus programs will be required to seek Commission approval for the site, unless the site is exempted by statute.

3. Summary of Funding of Off-Campus Instruction: Off-campus instruction should be self-supporting, i.e., costs should be covered by tuition, fees, and extramural support. If an institution plans to reallocate its own funds to support instruction at an off-campus site (such as for new equipment or lease of the facility), budget projections must accompany the site notification.

(c) **Coordination of Instructional Offerings:** The Commission recognizes that institutions often share service areas, and the following guidelines are intended to support coordination of instructional offerings:

1. All universities which are located in the same county or which share service areas may offer courses within the shared area, but they should work together and in conjunction with the Commission to avoid the unnecessary duplication of course offerings.

2. Since there are instances in which two-year colleges and universities are located within overlapping areas, care must be taken to avoid the unnecessary duplication of lower-division courses. For this reason, a university shall not offer lower-division courses in the home county of a two-year institution main campus which offers similar courses without the written consent of the two-year institution, while a two-year institution shall not offer courses in the home county of a university main campus which offers similar courses without the written consent of the university. This stipulation does not apply to situations in which a university and a two-year college are located in the same county. In these situations, each institution may offer courses within the shared area, but they should work together to avoid the unnecessary duplication of course offering.

(7) Establishment of a New Exempt Off-Campus Site outside an Institution's Service Area:

(a) **Prior Notification Required:** An institution seeking to offer instruction at an exempt off-campus site located outside its recognized service area is exempted from Commission approval in most cases, but the institution must notify the Commission prior to delivering instruction at the proposed site.

(b) **Documentation Required:** Institutions must submit the following documentation to the Commission as part of their notification for a new exempt off-campus site located outside their recognized service area:

1. **Off-Campus Course List:** A list of courses from which each term's schedule will be developed will be submitted with each new site notification. If the list includes upper-division or graduate-level courses, the institution shall include information about how the courses will be applied to specific academic program requirements.

2. **Off-Campus Program List, if applicable:** A list of programs for which 50% or more of the program coursework will be delivered at the off-campus site. Institutions

planning to offer one or more off-campus programs will be required to seek Commission approval for the site, unless the site is exempted by statute.

3. Summary of Funding of Off-Campus Instruction: Off-campus instruction should be self-supporting, i.e., costs should be covered by tuition, fees, and extramural support. If an institution plans to reallocate its own funds to support instruction at an off-campus site (such as for new equipment or lease of the facility), budget projections must accompany the site notification.

4. Written Consent: Since it is desirable in most instances to have the closest qualified institution respond to off-campus credit course needs, the Commission requires that institutions seeking to offer instruction at a new site outside their recognized service area obtain written consent from institutions whose service area includes the proposed site, except when the institutions within the service area do not offer similar courses to proposed off-campus instruction.

(8) Establishment of a New Non-Exempt Off-Campus Site:

(a) Commission Approval Required: An institution seeking to offer instruction at a non-exempt off-campus site must receive Commission approval prior to delivering instruction at the proposed site, regardless of whether off-campus programs will be offered.

(b) Documentation Required: Institutions must submit the following documentation to the Commission as part of their proposal for a new non-exempt off-campus site:

1. Off-Campus Course List: A list of courses from which each term's schedule will be developed will be submitted with each new site notification. If the list includes upper-division or graduate-level courses, the institution shall include information about how the courses will be applied to specific academic program requirements.

2. Off-Campus Program List, if applicable: A list of programs for which 50% or more of the program coursework will be delivered at the off-campus site.

3. Summary of Funding of Off-Campus Instruction: Off-campus instruction should be self-supporting, i.e., costs should be covered by tuition, fees, and extramural support. If an institution plans to reallocate its own funds to support instruction at an off-campus site (such as for new equipment or lease of the facility), budget projections must accompany the site proposal.

4. **Written Consent:** Since it is desirable in most instances to have the closest qualified institution respond to off-campus credit course needs, the Commission requires that institutions seeking to offer instruction at a non-exempt site obtain written consent from institutions whose service area includes the proposed site.

(9) Compliance with Accreditation Requirements: All off-campus instructional sites, exempt and non-exempt, must be in full compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) guidelines and policies pertaining to substantive change, along with curriculum, faculty, administration, equipment, learning resources, and student services. Council on Occupational Education (COE) guidelines will apply to institutions accredited by that agency.

(10) Annual Follow-up Report Requirement: Institutions must submit an annual follow-up report for each off-campus site, regardless of its exemption status. The Alabama Community College System (ACCS) may submit a comprehensive follow-up report for the entire system.

(11) Discontinuation of an Off-Campus Site: The Commission must be notified if a site is discontinued so that annual reports will not be expected.

(12) Modification of an Off-Campus Site: Modifications to existing off-campus sites may be considered substantive-requiring approval, substantive-requiring notification, or non-substantive.

(a) **Substantive, requiring approval:** Commission approval is required before an institution can add a new off-campus program at an existing off-campus site, unless the site is exempted by statute.

(b) **Substantive, requiring notification:** An institution must notify the Commission prior to implementing any of the following changes to an existing off-campus site:

1. Modification of the site's course list to include additional upper-division or graduate-level coursework.
2. Discontinuation of an off-campus program.
3. Change of address.
4. For sites exempted by statute only, addition of a new off-campus program.

(c) **Non-substantive:** An institution may make the following changes to an off-campus site without prior notification to the Commission. Such changes must be noted on the institution's annual follow-up report for the site:

1. Addition of lower-division courses to the site's course list.
2. Deletion of courses from the site's course list.

(13) Compliance Monitoring Authority: The Commission retains the authority to monitor compliance with the guidelines. If infractions are found, they will be referred to the appropriate governing board for corrective action.

(14) Determination of Service Areas:

(a) Under its authority to authorize and regulate off-campus offerings, the Commission shall determine service areas for public institutions within the state. All geographic areas of the state must be served by at least one senior institution and one two-year institution.

(b) Commission approval is required to modify the geographical boundaries of an institution's service area. The Commission will use all of the following criteria to evaluate and approve or disapprove requests for modification of institutional service area:

1. Appropriateness for the institution's mission, including support of the institution's governing board;
2. Institutional readiness (defined as institutional commitment, resources, and facilities to support the target service area);
3. Rationale for the change in service area, specifically to include advancement of state and/or regional strategic interests;
4. No adverse impact on access to public postsecondary education for any geographical area of the state;
5. Written consent of public institution(s) operating within the target service area;
6. Demonstrated support of community and industry stakeholders within the target service area; and
7. Accreditation considerations, as appropriate.

Author: Robin E. McGill

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-5-1, et seq.

History: New Rule. Filed on 7/11/95 to replace a repealed rule, "Review of Off-Campus Offerings of Postsecondary Institutions," which had the same rule number. Effective: August 31, 1995. This rule is based on policy adopted by the Commission on 6/22/79 and revised on 6/19/92 and 2/11/94. Extensive addition and revision adopted by the Commission on 6/30/95 necessitated the repeal of

the former rule and the adoption of the current rule. **Amended:** Filed June 4, 1997; effective July 9, 1997. **Amended:** Filed April 6, 1998; effective May 11, 1998. **Repealed and New Rule:** Filed December 5, 2000; effective January 9, 2001. **Amended:** Filed May 7, 2007; effective June 11, 2007. **Repealed and New Rule:** Published December 31, 2024; effective February 14, 2025.

300-2-1-.06 **Reasonable Extensions and Alterations of Existing Programs of Instruction.**

(1) **Purpose.** The purpose of reviewing extensions and alterations to existing programs of instruction is to ensure that public postsecondary institutions can make reasonable changes to their program offerings without creating new programs of instruction.

(2) **Commission Responsibility.** The Commission is responsible for reviewing changes to programs of instruction for academic credit at the state's public postsecondary institutions in order to determine whether a proposed change can be considered a reasonable extension or alteration of an existing program of instruction or whether it constitutes a new program of instruction. In addition, the Commission's responsibilities for data collection and research necessitate that it maintains an accurate and comprehensive record of for-credit program offerings in its Academic Program Inventory.

(3) **Scope.** This rule shall apply to all programs of instruction offered for academic credit by public colleges and universities in Alabama. It does not apply to non-credit programs or other offerings that do not culminate in a postsecondary award.

(4) **Definitions.** The following definitions shall apply:

(a) Academic Program Inventory ("Inventory"): List maintained by the Commission's staff of programs of instruction offered by public postsecondary institutions in Alabama, with a record for each degree and certificate program.

(b) Alteration: A type of program change that modifies an existing academic offering within its previously defined scope. Such changes include modifications to program coursework, modifications to program requirements, including total number of hours, and updates to program titles or CIP codes.

(c) Credit Hour: A unit of measure representing the equivalent of an hour (50 minutes) of instruction per week over the entire term. It is applied toward the total number of credit hours needed for completing the requirements of a degree, diploma, certificate, or other recognized postsecondary credential. Alabama's public postsecondary institutions

typically use the semester credit hour, rather than quarter credit hour or other equivalent unit.

(d) CIP Code: A six-digit code in the form of xx.xxxx that identifies an instructional program specialty using the taxonomic coding scheme known as Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP), maintained by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) within the US Department of Education. A program's CIP code should accurately reflect the content of instruction and allow for comparison of programs both within and between institutions.

(e) Curriculum: Body of coursework, assessments, or other requirements necessary to complete a program of instruction.

(f) Existing Program: An academic degree or certificate program listed in the Academic Program Inventory.

(g) Extension: A type of program change that expands an existing academic offering beyond its previously defined scope. Such changes include the addition of program options within a degree program, as well as the development of for-credit, non-degree certificate programs that are related to an existing program or unit of instruction.

(h) IPEDS: The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System is the postsecondary education data collection program for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a division of the Institute of Education Sciences within the US Department of Education. IPEDS is designed to collect standardized data from postsecondary institutions and educational organizations operating within the United States.

(i) Method of Delivery: Synonymous with "delivery modality," refers to the means of delivering instruction within an academic program or assessing student progress toward program completion. There are three distinct types, though a single program may employ a combination thereof:

1. Competency-Based Education: An educational program wherein student progress toward completion is measured through the attainment of competencies, whether within course-based units or through direct assessment of learning.

2. Distance Education: A formal educational process using technological delivery in which instruction occurs where students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education, distance learning, and e-learning are recognized by the Commission as being synonymous terms.

3. Face-to-Face Instruction: Also referred to as "in-person" instruction, occurs where students and instructors are in the same place at the same time.

(j) Nomenclature: Also referred to as "degree nomenclature" or "award name," a designation for the specific type of award within a given level (e.g., Bachelor of Science, Master of Business Administration, or Doctor of Philosophy). In its official record of an award, an institution will identify the nomenclature followed by the program title using the following format: [Nomenclature] in [Program Title] (e.g., Bachelor of Science in Biology).

(k) Option: An extension of an offering that is closely related to the existing program and shares a common set of program coursework ("program core") with all other options of the same program. Options can be referred to as concentrations, tracks, or specializations.

(l) Program Length: A measure of the amount of time required for a student to progress to program completion, typically represented in semester credit hours.

(m) Program of Instruction: A postsecondary course of study offered for academic credit that leads to one of the following types of postsecondary awards:

1. Degree: An academic program approved by the Commission under the rules set forth in §300-2-1-.03.

2. For-Credit Non-Degree Certificate: An academic program that leads to one of the following award designations as defined within the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS Level):

(i) Level 1a, Mini-Certificate (MINI): A for-credit certificate program consisting of at least six (6) but less than nine (9) semester credit hours of undergraduate coursework or the equivalent.

(ii) Level 1b, Short-Term Certificate (STC): A for-credit certificate program consisting of at least nine (9) but no more than twenty-nine (29) semester credit hours of undergraduate coursework, or the equivalent.

(iii) Level 6, Post-Baccalaureate Certificate: A for-credit program consisting of at least six (6) semester credit hours of graduate coursework, or the equivalent. Most graduate certificates fall into the post-baccalaureate classification.

(iv) Level 8, Post-Master's Certificate: Apart from the Education Specialist degree defined above, a post-master's certificate is a for-credit program consisting of at least six (6) semester credit hours of graduate coursework designed specifically for those already holding master's degrees. Post-master's certificates are typically offered in nursing or other fields where it is common for master's degree holders to seek additional specialized training.

(n) Program Status: An indication of whether a program of instruction is actively enrolling new students. Each program will have one of the following status types:

1. Active: Active status indicates that the program may enroll new students.

2. Deleted: Deleted status indicates that the institution intends to terminate the program. Once a program has been marked as deleted within the Academic Program Inventory, no new students may be admitted, though current enrollees may be taught out. Note that programs with deleted status remain in the Academic Program Inventory for archival purposes.

3. Inactive: Inactive status indicates that the institution intends to reinstate the program to active status within five years. While a program is on inactive status, no students will be admitted, though current enrollees may be taught out.

4. Moved: Moved status is assigned by ACHE staff for archival reasons to keep track of programs that have changed CIP code or IPEDS level. The program at the new code or level retains active status. New students are enrolled in the active program, though existing students may be taught out from the moved program.

(o) Program Title: A name given by an institution to describe a program's specific field of study and which is used alongside nomenclature in official records of the award, such as in student transcripts. The program title should accurately reflect the content of instruction and therefore should closely correspond to the standardized name within the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code list.

(p) Programs that Lead to Professional Educator Certification: Academic degree programs at the baccalaureate, master's, or education specialist level, that receive authorization from the Alabama State Board of Education and are considered "Approved Programs," as defined under Alabama Administrative Code §290-3-3-.01.

(q) "Reasonable": A reasonable extension or alteration of an existing program of instruction is a modification which does not change the essential character, integrity, or objectives of the program.

(5) Reasonable Extensions and Alterations of Existing Degree Programs. Reasonable extensions and alterations of existing degree programs may be considered substantive-requiring approval, substantive-requiring notification, or non-substantive. It is recommended that institutions consult ACHE staff prior to submitting documentation if there is a question regarding whether the proposed extension or alteration requires Commission approval or notification.

(a) **Substantive Changes to Degrees Requiring Approval:** Certain extensions or alterations must be approved by the Commission prior to implementation because the change to the Academic Program Inventory is similar in scope to the approval of new programs of instruction, described above at §300-2-1-.03. Unlike new programs of instruction, however, these substantive modifications will not require post-implementation monitoring:

1. **Consolidating Programs:** Merging two or more degree programs into one consolidated program will result in the deletion of the existing program(s) within the Academic Program Inventory and may result in a new entry in the Inventory to better reflect the content of the consolidated program. For a substantive modification to be considered, the following conditions must be met:

(i) The proposed modification does not require any additional resources to implement.

(ii) The existing program(s) and the consolidated program must have at least 50% of their courses in common.

(iii) If the consolidated program is configured to have options corresponding to the previous degree programs, the options must share a common set of program courses in keeping with the option requirements listed in this rule below under 5(b)(1).

2. **Separating a Program:** Splitting an existing program into two distinct degree programs will result in one or more new entries in the Academic Program Inventory, which is typically done by proposing a new academic degree program in keeping with §300-2-1-.03 above. For a substantive modification to be considered instead of a new program proposal, both of the following conditions must be met:

(i) The proposed modification does not require any additional resources to implement.

(ii) Each of the existing options or tracks to be separated can show that over the most recent four years it would exceed the minimum program viability standard for graduates as defined above in §300-2-1-.04.

3. Curricular Changes over 50%: Modifications to existing programs that will affect more than 50% of the curriculum may be considered for approval by the Commission only if the program exceeds its minimum viability standard for graduates as defined above in §300-2-1-.04. If less than one-third of the curriculum of the proposed extension/alteration is in common with the curriculum of the existing program(s), the change automatically will be considered a new program. Institutions are responsible for determining the percentage change and submitting documentation comparing the proposed modified curriculum to the existing curriculum.

4. Certain Changes to Program Length: Commission approval is required when the total credit hours (or equivalent progress measure) increase or decrease by 25% or more, resulting in significant change in students' time to degree.

5. Certain Modifications to Doctoral Programs: Changes in award nomenclature or IPEDS level for doctoral programs will require Commission approval, particularly for programs seeking recognition as "research-focused doctorates," such as the Doctor of Philosophy.

6. Development of Joint Degree Programs: A joint degree program, whereby students study at two or more institutions and are awarded a single program completion credential bearing the names, seals and signatures of each of the participating institutions, is considered unique and distinguishable from any program offered independently at any one of the contributing institutions. Institutions should consult with ACHE staff to determine whether the proposed joint degree program should be treated as a new program or as a substantive modification requiring approval.

7. Change of Program Status from Deleted to Active: An institution may re-activate a previously deleted program with Commission approval under the following circumstances:

(i) The request to re-activate the program occurs within five years of deletion.

(ii) No additional resources are required to re-activate the program.

(iii) The program can meet the viability standard for its degree level.

(b) Substantive Changes to Degrees Requiring Notification: Before any of the following changes may be implemented, they must be presented to the Commission as information items. If supporting documentation verifies that any conditions and requirements are met, the changes will be recognized by the Commission by information item. The Commission staff may request additional information if necessary:

1. Addition of Options: Each new option must be reviewed by the Commission prior to implementation. An institution may request to add an option or options to an existing degree program under the following circumstances:

(i) The option must be in a field closely related to the existing program.

(ii) Generally, the option comprises less than half of the total credits required for the existing program.

(iii) Generally, the resulting program has a common set of coursework ("program core") that constitutes at least 50% of the required program credit hours, aside from any general education coursework that may be in common. Exceptions may be considered if the institution can present a convincing rationale that the 50% shared coursework requirement should be reduced.

2. Updates to Academic Program Inventory: An institution may request the following changes to how an existing degree program is listed in the Academic Program Inventory:

(i) Changes in award nomenclature at the same IPEDS level for existing programs listed in the Commission's Academic Program Inventory, provided that no changes in program requirements, content, or objectives are made, except for doctoral awards as noted above. Prior to implementation, the institution must present an information item which provides sufficient evidence that the proposed nomenclature is more appropriate than the current designation.

(ii) Changes to program titles or CIP codes, provided that no changes are made in program requirements, content, or objectives, and provided that the new

title or CIP code replaces an earlier designation. Program title changes or CIP code changes should only be made when the proposed title or code more adequately reflects the nature and content of the program. The burden of demonstrating this is upon the institution.

(iii) Changes in program status, including placing programs on inactive or deleted status. Only viable programs, as determined by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, may be placed on inactive status. A program placed on inactive status may be reinstated to active status within five years after the status change, after which time it will be marked as deleted within the Academic Program Inventory.

3. Changes to Curriculum between 25% and 49%: Modifications to existing programs that will affect between 25% and 49% of the curriculum, except for changes to program length noted above, may be implemented after notification to the Commission at a regular meeting. Institutions are responsible for determining the percentage change and submitting documentation showing the percentage of the program to be modified.

4. Certain Changes to Method of Delivery: Changes to delivery modality that affect 100% of the program's curriculum, especially in relation to adding a fully distance education program, as described below in rule §300-2-1-.10.

5. Addition of Long Certificate to Existing Associate Pathway: An institution may add a long certificate (IPEDS Level 2) with prior notification (rather than program approval) in the following circumstances:

(i) The institution offers an associate degree at the same CIP Code, where all of the coursework for the long certificate also meets requirements for the associate degree.

(ii) No new resources are required to implement the long certificate.

(c) Non-Substantive Changes to Degrees: The following degree program changes are considered non-substantive, and institutions do not need to notify the Commission or ACHE Staff prior to implementation. It is the responsibility of the institution to determine whether they must register the change with their accreditor or other entity.

1. Changes to Curriculum under 25%: Modifications to existing programs that will affect less than 25% of the

curriculum, including changes to program length, may be implemented without notifying the Commission. Institutions are responsible for determining the percentage of the program's curriculum to be modified.

2. Changes to Existing Options: Once an option has been reviewed by the Commission and added to an existing degree, changes to the option's title or curriculum do not need to be reviewed by the Commission, with the following exceptions:

(i) If an institution seeks to change an option in such a manner that affects more than 25% of the program's curriculum, the change will be considered substantive—requiring notification.

(ii) If an institution seeks to change the CIP code of an option apart from the existing degree program, the change will be considered substantive—requiring approval as noted above under "separating a program."

3. Most Changes to Method of Delivery: Changes to delivery modality that affect less than 100% of the program's curriculum are considered non-substantive. These include changes to the delivery modality of individual courses or groups of courses (e.g., options).

4. Addition or Modification of Combination Degrees: When a single institution creates an overlapping course of study that results in awarding more than one degree, it is considered non-substantive so long as the programs to be combined are already listed in the Academic Program Inventory. Examples include dual majors, accelerated bachelor's-master's programs, and other arrangements that allow for shorter time to completion of multiple awards.

5. Addition or Modification of Dual Degrees: Adding or modifying dual degree programs sponsored by two different institutions leading to the award of two separate degrees is considered non-substantive so long as the constituent degree programs are listed in the Academic Program Inventory.

6. Addition or Modification of Academic Minors: Minor courses of study are not considered standalone awards and as such are not listed in the Academic Program Inventory. Institutions do not need to notify the Commission when developing or updating requirements for academic minors.

(d) Changes to Degree Programs that Lead to Professional Educator Certification: Institutions seeking to modify a degree program leading to professional educator certification should consult with appropriate staff at the Alabama State

Department of Education (ALSDE). Depending on the nature of the program change and ALSDE guidance, institutions may request that the Commission waive requirements for prior approval or notification.

(6) Reasonable Extensions and Alterations of For-Credit Non-Degree Certificates. For-credit non-degree programs fall under the Commission's responsibility to consider reasonable extensions and alterations of existing programs of study, since it is assumed that institutions will develop and deliver new for-credit non-degree programs using existing personnel, equipment, facilities, and other resources. Changes to for-credit non-degree certificates may be considered substantive—requiring notification or non-substantive:

(a) Substantive Changes to For-Credit Non-Degree Certificates Requiring Notification: Before any of the following changes may be implemented, they must be presented to the Commission as information items. If supporting documentation verifies that any conditions and requirements are met, the changes will be recognized by the Commission by information item. The Commission staff may request additional information if necessary:

1. Addition of New For-Credit Non-Degree Certificates: Review of new for-credit non-degree program offerings is necessary to ensure that the Commission maintains an accurate and comprehensive list of program offerings in its Academic Program Inventory. Institutions may advertise new non-degree programs once notification is received by ACHE staff, but institutions should not begin delivering the new non-degree programs until after formal notification has been made to the Commission.

2. Changes in CIP Codes: CIP code changes should be made when the proposed code more accurately reflects the nature and content of the program. Notification is required to ensure that the Academic Program Inventory remains up-to-date.

3. Change in IPEDS Level: If a change is made to the curriculum of a for-credit non-degree certificate such that the institution seeks to reclassify it to a higher or lower IPEDS level (from Level 1a to Level 1b, for instance), documentation must be provided to support the request.

4. Changes in Program Status: Placing certificate programs on inactive or deleted status requires prior notification to ensure that the Academic Program Inventory remains up-to-date.

5. Certain Changes to Method of Delivery: Changes to delivery modality that affect 100% of the program's curriculum, especially in relation to adding a fully distance education program, as described below in rule §300-2-1-.10.

(b) Non-Substantive Changes to For-Credit Non-Degree Certificates: The following changes to for-credit non-degree certificates are considered non-substantive, and institutions do not need to notify the Commission or ACHE staff prior to implementation. It is the responsibility of the institution to determine whether they must register the change with any other entity.

1. Changes to Courses and Requirements: Updates to individual courses or other requirements for certificate completion do not need to be reported to the Commission, provided that the content and objectives remain consistent with the existing program.

2. Changes to Certificate Title: Updates to the title of the certificate are considered non-substantive, provided that the new title accurately describes the content of the program.

3. Most Changes to Method of Delivery: Changes to delivery modality that affect less than 100% of the certificate's curriculum are considered non-substantive. These include changes to the delivery modality of individual courses or groups of courses.

Author: Robin McGill

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-5-1, et seq., specifically §§16-5-7 and 16-5-8.

History: Filed April 10, 1989. **Amended:** Filed July 27, 1990; September 4, 1991; August 4, 1992. **Amended:** Filed March 12, 1996; effective April 16, 1996. **Amended:** Filed August 4, 1997; effective September 8, 1997. **Amended:** Filed December 12, 2017; effective January 26, 2018. **Repealed and New Rule:** Published March 29, 2024; effective May 13, 2024.

300-2-1-.07

Operational Policy On Inactive Status And Reinstatement Of Programs.

(1) The purpose of the operational policy on inactive status and reinstatement of inactive programs is to insure there is a consistent policy for placing programs on inactive status, for reinstating programs to active status, and for maintaining an accurate academic program inventory.

(2) It is the responsibility of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education to establish policies and procedures for placing

programs on inactive status and for the reinstatement of such programs.

(3) Until June 6, 1997, an institution could place a program on inactive status at any time. Such action was reported to the Commission by information item and was noted in the Commission's Academic Program Inventory. New students were not admitted to a program which was on inactive status. After June 6, 1997, the Commission will place programs on inactive status only if they are viable programs as determined by the Commission through the program viability process.

(4) The institution may reinstate a program within five years after the program has been placed on inactive status without submitting a program proposal for approval. However, the institution will inform the Commission of program reinstatement by information item. The information item should provide evidence of adequate resources and student demand to reactivate the program.

(5) If a program has not been reinstated within five years after being placed on inactive status, it will be removed from the Academic Program Inventory.

(6) If an institution wishes to offer a program which has been deleted from the Academic Program Inventory, it will be required to submit a new program proposal for Commission review and action.

Author: William O. Blow

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-5-1, et seq.

History: Filed April 10, 1989. **New Rule:** Filed March 12, 1996; effective April 16, 1996. **Amended:** Filed August 4, 1997; effective September 8, 1997.

300-2-1-.08

Operational Policy On The Designation Of Branch Campus Sites.

(1) **Exceptional Nature of Branch Campus Designation:** Establishing a branch campus includes a long-term commitment which should not be entered into lightly. Given the large number of institutions and campuses already offering a variety of educational services in Alabama, branch approval should only be given in rare instances of exceptional need and institutional and community commitment. This need and commitment must be clear and apparent and there should be no doubt that an exceptional case has been made.

(2) **Location:** All of the following criteria must be met regarding the proposed branch campus.

(a) The location of a branch campus must be in compliance with the "25 mile rule" as outlined in the Commission's Guidelines for Off-Campus Instruction.

(b) The institution must have been operating successfully at the proposed branch site for a period of at least five consecutive years.

(c) Branch campus approvals are facility specific. Any relocation, regardless of the distance, must first be approved by the Commission. Additionally, expansion of facilities after initial approval must be approved by the Commission.

(3) Need: The institution must demonstrate that branch status will enable it to satisfy clearly documented needs which cannot otherwise be met.

(4) Administration: The following criteria relate to the administration of the proposed branch campus.

a. The branch must be responsible to appropriate administrative officers on the main campus. It will not have a separate set of administrators, such as deans or department heads.

b. The institution must employ a full-time director for the branch who will report directly to the appropriate administrator on the main campus.

c. The branch proposal must outline the organizational structure and describe the nature of the relationship of the administrative staff of the branch to the administration on the main campus.

(5) Student Support: The institution must provide adequate student support services at the branch including on-site registration, tuition and fee payment, textbook purchasing, academic advising, and student counseling. The proposal must provide a detailed description of how these services will be provided. The institution must also explain how branch campus students will have access to main campus events.

(6) Curriculum: The following criteria regarding curriculum must be followed.

(a) All off-campus programs to be offered at branch campuses must first be included in the Commission's Academic Program Inventory for the proposing institution. Any program offered exclusively at a branch is still considered a program of the sponsoring institution. Separate program inventories are not maintained for branch campuses.

(b) The institution must meet all criteria for off-campus programs as outlined in the Commission's off-campus Guidelines, and a standard Off-Campus Proposal Form must be submitted for each program.

(c) Expansion of the curriculum at the branch after initial approval must first be approved by the Commission.

(7) Enrollment and Student Characteristics: The following requirements relate to enrollment and student characteristics.

(a) Documentation must be presented that reveals that the prevailing student characteristics at the proposed branch prevents or seriously hampers their attendance at the main campus. Reasonable access to quality educational offerings, not mere convenience, should be the goal. The proposal must include data on student age, sex, marital status, employment status, full-time/part-time status, and student source (county/city of residence).

(b) The institution must demonstrate that enrollments at the site for which branch status is sought have been stable, or preferably increasing, over the past five years.

(c) Enrollment projections must be high enough to maintain the critical mass of students necessary for a vigorous academic atmosphere and to operate on a cost effective basis.

(8) Faculty and Staff: The institution must meet all faculty criteria as outlined in the Commission's Guidelines for Off-Campus Instruction. Since at least two full academic programs will be offered, a minimum of 50% of the faculty at the branch must be employed as full-time faculty by the sponsoring institution.

(9) Facilities and Equipment: The following requirements related to facilities and equipment must be met.

(a) Facilities must meet all criteria as outlined in the Commission's Off-Campus Guidelines. A branch campus involves at least two full academic programs and a long-term commitment by the institution. Facilities must be adequate in every respect.

(b) The proposal must include a detailed description of the facilities, including floor plans.

(c) The proposal must include an inventory of instructional equipment available at the site. The equipment must be adequate to support the academic program.

(9) Library Resources: The proposal must include a detailed description of the library resources and services available at the site. Library resources and services will be expected to be significantly superior to those available at most off-campus sites and must support the degree programs at the same level as that available on the main campus.

(10) Budget: The institution must provide projected budgets for the first three years of operation of the proposed branch. The costs of operating the branch must be covered by tuition, fees, and other non-appropriated funds.

(11) Community Support: The proposal must include tangible evidence of significant community support for the branch, including both private and public sector support.

(12) Accreditation: The institution must provide documentation that all requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools have been met for the establishment of a branch campus.

Author: William O. Blow

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-5-1, et seq.

History: New Rule: Filed August 5, 1996; effective September 9, 1996. **Amended:** Filed June 4, 1997; effective July 9, 1997.

300-2-1-.09

Guidelines For The Review And Approval Of The Consolidation Or Merger Of Two-Year Postsecondary Institutions.

(1) The purpose of the guidelines for the review and approval of the consolidation or merger of two-year postsecondary institutions is to insure that such actions are educationally and economically beneficial to the state.

(2) It is the responsibility of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education to establish policies and procedures for the review and approval of the consolidation or merger of two-year postsecondary institutions. In establishing these policies, the Commission has acted in agreement with an Alabama State Board of Education resolution, which was passed by the Board on January 25, 1996. (The State Board resolution is filed as an attachment to this rule.)

(3) For the purposes of this rule, the following definitions apply:

(a) Administrative Consolidation: Two or more institutions are placed under a single executive head without program interchange. All involved institutions maintain separate functional identities. This does not constitute a multicampus institution, but rather two or more separate institutions operating under a single executive head. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94).

(b) Institutional Consolidation: Two or more institutions join to form a distinctly new unit, often with a new name. This results in a single multicampus institution operating under one chief executive officer and under one regional accreditation designation. Often involves program relocation

or exchange. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)

(c) Merger: One institution relinquishes its assets and degree-granting authority and is dissolved into another with the second institution remaining as the sole surviving entity. Might involve the closure of a campus or one institution becoming a branch of the other. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)

(4) The following sequential procedures will be used for the review of proposed consolidations or mergers of two-year postsecondary institutions:

(a) The Statement of Intent Phase:

1. The Chancellor of the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education (ADPE) presents a Statement of Intent to Consolidate or Merge two or more institutions to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) for review, comment, and approval.
2. The Chancellor of ADPE presents the Statement of Intent to Consolidate or Merge to the Alabama State Board of Education for approval.
3. Institutional notification of pending change to the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

(b) Administrative Consolidation Phase:

1. The Chancellor of ADPE presents a formal request to the Commission on Higher Education for its approval of the administrative consolidation of the institutions.
2. The Chancellor of ADPE presents a resolution to the Alabama State Board of Education for approval of the administrative consolidation of the institutions.

(c) Institutional (Programmatic) Consolidation or Merger Phase:

1. Preparation and submission of Prospectus for Substantive Change to the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).
2. Visit by SACS Substantive Change Committee.
3. Approval of change by SACS.

4. Submission of Proposal for Institutional (Programmatic) Consolidation or Merger to ACHE for review and approval.

5. Final approval of the consolidation or merger by the Alabama State Board of Education.

(5) The following specific requirements must be addressed in merger or consolidation proposals.

(a) Proposed program exchanges, duplications, or relocations among the merged or consolidated institutions must be clearly identified in the proposals.

(b) Additional programs, i.e. programs not existing on one or more of the campuses at the time of the merger or consolidation, must undergo the regular Commission review and approval process.

(c) Documentation of specific educational benefits to be derived from the merger or consolidation must be presented with the Statement of Intent to Consolidate or Merge.

(d) The merger or consolidation must be cost beneficial. Specifically, evidence must be presented that a reduction of administrative and other costs will result from the merger or consolidation. Both immediate and long-range savings must be presented.

(6) Only those mergers or consolidations that are educationally and economically beneficial shall be approved.

Author: William O. Blow

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-5-1, et seq.

History: New Rule: Filed April 6, 1998; effective May 11, 1998.

Ed. Note: Previous chapter 300-2-1 entitled "Review and Approval of Proposed Postsecondary Course Offerings in Alabama by Non-Alabama Institutions" consisting of Rules 300-2-1-.01 "Goal," 300-2-1-.02 "Organization," 300-2-1-.03 "Definition of Terms," 300-2-1-.04 "Procedure for Applying for Approval," 300-2-1-.05 "Procedure for Exempt Institutions," 300-2-1-.06 "General Standards for Approval," 300-2-1-.07 "Criteria for Approval of Courses," 300-2-1-.08 "Site Visits and Special Consultants," 300-2-1-.09 "Time Schedule for Commission Response," 300-2-1-.10 "Application Fees," and 300-2-1-.11 "Appeal" filed December 10, 1985. Chapter Repealed and new chapter adopted in lieu thereof. Rule 300-2-1-.09, Definitions Recognized by the Commission was moved to Rule 300-2-1-.01. Rule 300-2-1-.06, Operational Policy on the Approval, Disapproval, Deferral, and Withdrawal of New Programs of Instruction was moved to Rule 300-2-1-.04. Rule 300-2-1-.01, Definitions Relating to Program Review was moved to Rule 300-2-1-.06. Rule 300-2-1-.07, was repealed and replaced with Rule 300-2-1-.08, Operational Policy on Inactive Status and

Reinstatement of Programs. These changes took place in the certification dated March 12, 1996; effective April 16, 1996.

300-2-1-.10 Distance Education.

(1) **Purpose.** This section is intended to ensure consistency around implementation of distance education programs.

(2) **Commission Responsibility.** Programs of instruction offered by Alabama public institutions, including distance education offerings, are subject to Commission approval per the Code of Ala. 1975, Section 16-5-8.

(3) **Scope.** This policy applies to programs of instruction offered by public colleges and universities headquartered in Alabama. It does not apply to programs of instruction offered by private institutions or by institutions with no physical presence in Alabama.

(4) **Definitions.** The following definitions pertain to this rule:

(a) **Delivery Modality:** Technology or method used to deliver instruction or assess student progress toward program completion, such as in-person/face-to-face instruction, distance education, competency-based education, or a combination thereof. In addition, an academic program may be offered in multiple modalities.

(b) **Distance Education:** A formal educational process using technological delivery in which instruction occurs where students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education, distance learning, and e-learning are recognized by the Commission as being synonymous terms.

(c) **Distance Education Program:** An academic program for which required instructional activities can be completed entirely through distance education modalities. A distance education program may have in-person requirements that are non-instructional (e.g., orientation, practicum).

(d) **State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA):** An interstate distance education compact coordinated through the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). Institutional membership in SARA establishes recognition of comparable standards in the interstate delivery of postsecondary distance education courses and programs and streamlines authorization to enroll non-Alabama residents.

(5) **Tuition for Distance Education Programs.** Institutions are to set tuition for distance education offerings, ensuring that they meet statutory requirements under Code of Ala. 1975, §16-64-1 et seq.

(6) **Expectations for Compliance.**

(a) Institutions providing distance education courses or programs are expected to be in full compliance with the standards and/or requirements of any appropriate governing, authorization, or accreditation authorities.

(b) Academic degree programs offered through distance education by Alabama public institutions must have been approved by the Commission on Higher Education and must be listed in the Commission's Academic Program Inventory with no restriction to a military base.

(7) **Configuration of Programs for Distance Education.**

(a) Programs of instruction listed in the Commission's Academic Program Inventory do not require additional Commission approval to be configured and offered as distance education programs. However, institutions preparing to offer existing programs as distance education offerings must report this intent to the Commission prior to implementation.

(b) Institutions intending to deliver a new program of instruction as a distance education program are to note this on the program proposal so that no further notification is needed prior to implementation.

(c) The Commission on Higher Education does not require prior notification of distance education in the following cases:

1. Configuration of individual courses for distance education.

2. Programs of instruction where less than 100% of the coursework is delivered through distance education modalities.

Author: Leonard Lock; Robin McGill

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-5-1 et seq.

History: **New Rule:** Filed December 11, 2018; effective January 25, 2019 **Amended:** Published December 29, 2023; effective February 12, 2024.

300-2-1-.11 Evaluation Of Changes To Instructional Role And Academic Units.

(1) **Purpose.** The purpose of evaluating changes to instructional role and academic units is to ensure that institutions expand their academic offerings in line with their institutional missions and maintain academic rigor without generating unnecessary duplication of offerings.

(2) **Commission Responsibility.** The Commission is responsible for evaluating requests from public institutions regarding changes in their classification or role and scope, including expansion of instructional offerings to higher or lower degree levels. In cases where the expansion of offerings would exceed the role recognized for the institution in the Code of Ala. 1975, approval must be sought from the Legislature prior to Commission review.

(3) **Scope.** The following policy applies to all public postsecondary institutions.

(4) **Definitions related to Instructional Role.**

(a) **Instructional Role:** Instructional role is defined as the degree levels for which an institution is approved to award degrees and does not automatically include approval to offer degrees at a lower degree level. The Commission recognizes the following instructional roles, organized from lowest to highest:

1. Associate degree granting
2. Baccalaureate degree granting
3. Master's degree granting
4. Education Specialist degree granting
5. Practice-focused doctorate degree granting, where "practice-focused doctorate" is defined as a doctoral course of study whose primary emphasis is on the application of research. This includes those degrees categorized by IPEDS as Level 18 (Professional Doctorates), as well as the Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), and other similar offerings.
6. Research-focused doctorate degree granting, where "research-focused doctorate" is defined as a doctoral course of study that incorporates substantial research preparation, including the production of original

research. This includes the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and similar degrees.

(b) **Role Expansion:** Role expansion is defined as the ability to develop and implement academic programs at a higher or lower degree level than previously awarded. Once a role expansion is approved, the institution may bring forward new program proposals at the expanded level without needing to demonstrate strategic benefit for each, as described in §300-2-1-.03.

(5) Eligibility for Expansion to a Higher Degree Level up to Practice-Focused Doctorate Granting.

(a) To be considered for any expansion of instructional role to a higher level, the request must be aligned with applicable state statute recognizing the institution. If the Code of Ala. 1975 defines an institution's role more narrowly, the institution must secure approval from the Legislature for the expansion of instructional role.

(b) The institution shall attain three successful single discipline program implementations at the higher degree level before it may request an expansion of institutional instructional role to a higher degree level.

(6) Instructional Role to Include Research-Focused Doctorates.

(a) The following institutions are recognized by the Commission as having an instructional role that includes research-focused doctoral degrees:

1. Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University
2. Alabama State University
3. Auburn University
4. University of Alabama
5. University of Alabama at Birmingham
6. University of Alabama in Huntsville
7. University of South Alabama

(b) If an institution other than those named above seeks to expand its instructional role to include research-focused doctorates, the following criteria must be met:

1. The institution must demonstrate that it has legislative approval to expand its instructional role.

2. The institution must successfully implement three research-focused doctoral degree programs before it may request an expansion of institutional instructional role to include research-focused doctorates. Successful implementation is defined as two years of acceptable post-implementation information including enrollment data, assessment results of the program learning objectives, as well as survey results of faculty and student feedback regarding each program's efficacy, and documentation of ongoing steps that have been implemented to facilitate graduates' employment. The Commission realizes that some data measures may have limited availability or determination within a two-year time frame.

3. An institution shall not seek a fourth (4th) research-focused doctoral program implementation before an expansion of institutional instructional role has been approved by the Commission.

(c) Institutions approved to grant research-focused doctorates will receive differential consideration in the development of the Commission's consolidated budget recommendation.

(7) Evaluation of Instructional Role Expansion.

(a) To be considered for any expansion of instructional role to a higher level, the request must be aligned with applicable state statute recognizing the institution.

(b) The Commission will use all of the following criteria to evaluate and approve or disapprove requests for expansion of institutional role to a higher instructional level:

1. Successful implementation of three academic programs at the target degree level
2. The institution's mission
3. Institutional readiness (defined as faculty credentials, financial resources, and institutional commitment)
4. Rationale for the expansion to a higher instructional level
5. Relationship of the requested role expansion to the state's strategic needs
6. No substantive needless role duplication with other Alabama Public Universities (also refer to Code of Ala. 1975, §16-5-8[b])

7. Justification of having no anticipated/projected adverse influence on enrollments at public institution(s) already having that role, particularly those within 50 miles of the proposing institution or within that service area

8. Priority consideration being accorded to institution(s) with role seniority in that service area (also refer to Code of Ala. 1975, §16-5-10)

9. Accreditation considerations

10. Peer and other feedback

(8) Implementation of Collaborative Programs at a Higher Degree Level. The Commission strongly encourages collaborative programs between/among Alabama public institutions where feasible and when in the best strategic interests of the State. To foster collaboration and cooperation to meet significant identified needs, the Commission may approve institutions without an independent doctoral or master's role to participate in joint, shared, and cooperative doctoral or master's programs if the partner institution meets all requirements and has the commitment at that higher level. Participation in such joint and shared programs will not give such institutions an independent doctoral or master's role.

(9) Definitions Related to Academic Units.

(a) Academic Unit: Organizational structure that includes individuals with faculty appointments or has a reporting relationship to the institution's chief academic officer, usually the Provost. Academic units can be instructional or non-instructional:

1. Unit of Instruction: An organizational structure which offers instructional courses or other activities for academic credit. There are two types:

(i) Major Instructional Unit: Division, college, or school that comprises several minor units of instruction.

(ii) Minor Instructional Unit: Department or other unit offering degree programs, cross-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary consortium offering coursework but no degree programs.

2. Non-Instructional Academic Unit: An academic unit that does not offer credit-bearing coursework or degree programs, including the following:

(i) Unit of Research: An organizational structure for those activities intended to produce one or more research outcomes, including the creation of new knowledge, the organization of knowledge, and the application of knowledge. These may include such entities as research divisions, bureaus, institutes, centers, and experiment stations.

(ii) Unit of Public Service: An organizational structure established to make available to the public the various unique resources and capabilities of an institution for the specific purpose of responding to local, regional, or statewide needs or problems.

(iii) Unit of Administration: An academic unit whose function is primarily administrative in nature, such as the Office of the Provost or Academic Success Center.

(b) Non-Academic Unit: An organizational structure that does not meet the definition of academic unit, including, but not limited to, student services, facilities/operations, financial affairs, information technology, advancement, and auxiliaries. Administrative changes to non-academic units do not have to be reported to the Commission.

(10) Changes to Academic Units.

(a) Changes to Major Units of Instruction: If the administrative change creates a more prominent unit of instruction, such as a division or school, Commission approval as a new unit is may be required. Specifically, changes to major instructional units that entail additional expenditures will need Commission approval prior to implementation. ACHE staff will determine whether the proposed change needs approval.

(b) Changes to Minor Units of Instruction: Administrative changes at the department level, such as establishing a new department, combining two or more departments into a single department, or dividing a department into two or more departments, will require prior notification only, unless the change will entail additional expenditures.

(c) Changes to Non-Instructional Academic Units: Addition, elimination, or modification of non-instructional academic units will require prior notification only.

(d) Relationship to Instructional Role: Changes to academic units must be consistent with an institution's instructional role as recognized by the Commission.

Author: Robin McGill

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §16-5-8, §16-5-10.

History: **New Rule:** Published September 29, 2023; effective November 13, 2023.

300-2-1-A Attachments (Repealed 2/14/2025).

(Repealed)

Author: William O. Blow

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-5-1, et seq.

History: New Rule: Filed April 6, 1998; effective May 11, 1998.

Repealed: Published December 31, 2024; effective February 14, 2025.