

APA-1

TRANSMITTAL SHEET FOR NOTICE OF INTENDED ACTION

Control: 300
Department or Agency: Alabama Commission on Higher Education Planning and Coordination
Rule No.: 300-2-1-.01
Rule Title: Definitions Recognized By The Commission
Intended Action: Repeal and Replace

Would the absence of the proposed rule significantly harm or endanger the public health, welfare, or safety? No

Is there a reasonable relationship between the state's police power and the protection of the public health, safety, or welfare? Yes

Is there another, less restrictive method of regulation available that could adequately protect the public? No

Does the proposed rule have the effect of directly or indirectly increasing the costs of any goods or services involved? No

To what degree?: N/A

Is the increase in cost more harmful to the public than the harm that might result from the absence of the proposed rule? NA

Are all facets of the rule-making process designed solely for the purpose of, and so they have, as their primary effect, the protection of the public? Yes

Does the proposed action relate to or affect in any manner any litigation which the agency is a party to concerning the subject matter of the proposed rule? No

Does the proposed rule have an economic impact? No

If the proposed rule has an economic impact, the proposed rule is required to be accompanied by a fiscal note prepared in accordance with subsection (f) of Section 41-22-23, Code of Alabama 1975.

Certification of Authorized Official

I certify that the attached proposed rule has been proposed in full compliance with the requirements of Chapter 22, Title 41, Code of Alabama 1975, and that it conforms to all applicable filing requirements of the Administrative Procedure Division of the Legislative Services Agency.

Signature of certifying officer

Robin E. McGill
Robin McGill

Date

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

REC'D & FILED

MAR 19, 2025

LEGISLATIVE SVC AGENCY

**ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
PLANNING AND COORDINATION**

NOTICE OF INTENDED ACTION

AGENCY NAME: Alabama Commission on Higher Education

RULE NO. & TITLE: 300-2-1-.01 Definitions Recognized By The
Commission

INTENDED ACTION: Repeal and Replace

SUBSTANCE OF PROPOSED ACTION:

The proposed new rule is intended to address the following issues with existing rule §300-2-1-.01:

1. Obsolete terminology should be removed.
2. Outdated definitions should be updated to align with federal reporting requirements, accreditation policies, recent updates to the Commission's Administrative Procedures, and Commission practice.
3. New definitions should be added to reflect the full scope of the Commission's responsibilities regarding academic program review.
4. The definitions should be reorganized into alphabetical order for ease of use.

TIME, PLACE AND MANNER OF PRESENTING VIEWS:

Interested persons may present views on the proposed new rule by contacting Dr. Robin McGill, Deputy Director for Academic Affairs, Alabama Commission on Higher Education, PO Box 302000, Montgomery, AL 36130-2000 (robin.mcgill@ache.edu, 334-242-2104) between 8:30am and 5:00pm CT each business day up to and including May 16, 2025. A final version of the proposed new rule, with any amendments, will be voted on by the Commission at its meeting on June 13, 2025 at 10am.

FINAL DATE FOR COMMENT AND COMPLETION OF NOTICE:

Friday, May 16, 2025

CONTACT PERSON AT AGENCY:

Dr. Robin McGill, Deputy Director
for Academic Affairs, Alabama
Commission on Higher Education, PO
Box 302000, Montgomery, AL
36130-2000 (robin.mcgill@ache.edu,
334-242-2104)

Robin E. McGill

Robin McGill

(Signature of officer authorized
to promulgate and adopt
rules or his or her deputy)

~~300-2-1-.01 Definitions Recognized By The Commission.~~

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

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

~~(b) Unit of Instruction: An organizational structure which offers instructional courses or other activities for academic credit. This definition pertains to institutions, branches, and campuses as well as colleges, schools, divisions, departments, institutes, and centers within institutions which offer courses or other activities for academic credit.~~

~~1. Existing Unit of Instruction: A unit of instruction in place prior to August 19, 1994. Official documentation must be available to support the existence of a unit of instruction.~~

~~2. Proposed New Unit of Instruction: A unit of instruction not in place prior to August 19, 1994. Several new units which offer academic credit are subject to Commission approval, including a new institution (including one formed by consolidation), branch, campus, school, college, division, or institute.~~

~~(c) 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. Might include such entities as research divisions, bureaus, institutes, centers, and experiment stations.~~

~~(d) 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. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 5/20/88 and 8/19/94; and revisions adopted by the Commission on 6/21/91 and 8/19/94; Code of Ala. 1975, Chapter 5, Paragraphs 16-5-1; 16-5-8).~~

~~(e) Higher Education/Postsecondary Education Institutions: Institutions which provide formal programs of instruction with curricula designed primarily for students who have completed the requirements for a high school diploma or its equivalent. This includes academic, occupational, professional, and continuing professional education programs. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(f) Public Institutions of Higher Education: 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 (Code of Ala. 1975, 16-5-1). These institutions are controlled and operated by publicly elected or appointed officials and derive their primary support from public funds. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(g) Private Institutions 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. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~1. Private Nonprofit Institution: A private institution in which the individual(s) or agency of control receives no compensation other than wages, rent, or other expenses for the assumption of risk. These include both independent not-for-profit institutions and those affiliated with a religious organization. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~2. Private For-Profit (Profit-Making) Institution: A private institution in which the individual(s) or agency of control receives compensation other than wages, rent, or other expenses for the assumption of risk. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(h) College or University 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 executive head. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(i) Multicampus Institution: A single institution which operates on two or more administratively equal campuses. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(j) University: An institution of higher education usually composed of several schools and colleges. The institution normally confers undergraduate degrees, primarily the baccalaureate. It also may confer graduate degrees, such as masters, doctorates, and specialist in education, as well as one or more first professional degrees in fields such as law and medicine. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(k) Upper Division College or University: An institution of higher education which does not enroll freshmen or sophomores and offers courses and programs only at the junior, senior, and possibly graduate level. The institution normally confers the baccalaureate degree and, in some~~

~~instances, graduate degrees. Students matriculated in formal programs of study transfer the lower division (freshman-sophomore) component from other institutions. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(l) Community College: A lower division institution which offers university parallel transfer programs which culminate in the award of Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degrees as well as "career" or "applied" programs to prepare students for occupational, technical, or paraprofessional employment. The applied programs, varying in length, culminate in certificates, diplomas, or Associate in Applied Science degrees. Considerable emphasis is placed on developmental/ remedial studies and continuing education. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(m) Junior College: A lower division institution similar in role and mission to the Community College. The main distinction is in the scope of the curriculum, i.e. the junior college is generally less comprehensive than the community college in its "applied" programs and is primarily a transfer institution designed to offer the first two years of a baccalaureate degree. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(n) Technical College: A lower division institution which offers occupational programs in trade and industrial, technical and applied science fields. These programs culminate in certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees. Technical Colleges accredited by the Commission on Occupational Education Institutions (COEI) may grant the Associate in Applied Technology degree (AAT), while those accredited by the Commission on Colleges (COC) may grant the Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree. The technical college may not offer the transfer AA and AS degrees. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission 8/19/94.)~~

~~(o) Branch: A degree-granting division of an institution located in a geographical setting separate from the sponsoring institution's main campus or central administration and authorized for a stated purpose in relation to the sponsoring institution and the area served. The branch offers all requirements for completing degree programs in two or more fields of study as classified by the CIP taxonomy at the six-digit level. A branch provides the necessary administrative services, student services, financial resources, library, and physical facilities to provide adequate support for degree programs offered. (Definition was adopted by the Commission on 8/24/79; revision adopted 8/19/94.)~~

~~(p) Campus: The grounds and buildings of an institution of higher education. (From Operation Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~1. Main Campus: The physical boundaries of the campus where the institution's principal administrative offices are located. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~2. Branch Campus: The physical boundaries of the location of an institution branch. (From Operational Definitions adopts by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(q) Off-campus Site: The specific location where one or more courses are offered for academic credit away from the sponsoring institution's main campus. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(r) Off-campus Facility: The actual physical plant in which instruction is conducted at an off-campus site. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(s) College: An instructional unit within a university which usually includes several academic divisions and/or departments and is usually administered by a dean. Often, though not always, a college is a more prominent or inclusive unit than a school. As used here, the term "college" does not pertain to separate institutions known as colleges, such as junior college, community college, technical college, or Athens State College. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(t) School: An instructional unit within an institution of higher education which usually encompasses a professional discipline such as medicine, engineering, education, etc. and which often includes several academic divisions and/or departments. A school is usually under the administration of a dean or director. Often, though not always, a school is less inclusive than a college. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(u) Division: An instructional unit which usually includes two or more academic departments representing allied fields of study. (For example, a Division of Natural Sciences might include departments of biology, chemistry, physics and geology). Usually, but not always, a division is a more prominent entity than a department. (Some institutions identify the department as the more inclusive unit. In such cases, the department might include several divisions.) (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(v) Department: An instructional unit encompassing a discrete branch of study; usually located within a division and/or a school or college. The department is usually a less~~

~~inclusive unit than a division, although this is not always the case. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(w) Center: A place, area, or concentration of resources marked significantly by an indicated activity, pursuit or interest. A center may involve instruction, research or service or some combination of the three. It may or may not offer courses or other activities for academic credit. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(x) Institute: An association of persons or organizations that collectively constitute a technical or professional authority in a field of work, study, research, or service. An institute may or may not offer courses or other activities for academic credit. Sometimes the term is used interchangeably with a center or an entire special purpose institution. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(y) Bureau: A specialized administrative unit of an institution that usually serves as a clearing house or intermediary for exchanging information, making contacts or coordinating related activities. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(z) Program of Instruction: An organized set of courses and related activities for which, upon satisfactory completion, some degree, diploma, or certificate is awarded. This does not include areas of specialization or concentration within a program. If an institution wishes to give such options discrete program identify, they must first be reviewed and approved by the Commission. Options within programs will not be separately identified in the Commission's Academic Program Inventory, and the institution may not identify such options as degree programs in its catalog or other publications.~~

~~1. Existing Program of Instructions: A program which is currently identified in the Commission's Academic Program Inventory.~~

~~2. New Program of Instruction: A program which has not been approved by the Commission and added to its Academic Program Inventory. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 5/20/88 and 8/19/94; and revisions adopted by the Commission on 6/21/91; Code of Ala. 1975, Chapter 5, Paragraphs 16-5-1; 16-5-8).~~

~~(aa) Cooperative Program of Instruction: A program which is under the sponsorship of a single institution (identified as the primary institution) but which contains elements of resource sharing agreed upon by one or more other institutions (the secondary institution(s)). The~~

~~administrative control of such a program and commitment for maintaining the resources necessary to support it are the responsibility of the primary institution. The degree is granted under the seal of the primary institution and the program will be identified in the Commission's Academic Program Inventory for that institution only. The program is so structured that should the elements contributed by the secondary institution(s) be discontinued, the basic strength of the program will not be damaged seriously and the institution administering the program will be able to continue to do so with few or no additional resources. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 5/20/88 and revised on 6/21/91 and 8/19/94.)~~

~~(bb) Joint Program: A program which is mutually sponsored by two or more institutions leading to a single degree which is conferred by both or all participating institutions. A joint degree program is unique and distinguishable from any program offered independently at any one of the institutions. A joint degree program exhibits the following specific characteristics:~~

- ~~1. The program is planned, implemented, and monitored by a joint committee comprised of representatives from all participating institutions and is managed by an academic administrator or by co-academic administrators jointly appointed by and responsible to both or all participating institutions.~~
- ~~2. The program has a common faculty who hold joint appointments at all participating institutions.~~
- ~~3. The program has common entrance requirements, curriculum, and degree requirements agreed upon by all participating institutions.~~
- ~~4. For joint graduate programs, common qualifying examinations should be given and jointly graded by the participating institutions.~~
- ~~5. The program is based on carefully prescribed and explicitly stated procedures for sharing resources at participating institutions.~~
- ~~6. The program leads to a single degree granted under the seals of all participating institutions. If a joint program is to be offered by two or more institutions which are within the same system but are under a single executive head, explicit procedures must be developed and stated that will assure equal administrative oversight of the program.~~
- ~~7. The joint program is so designed that its viability is dependent upon the shared resources of the participating institutions. In the event one or more of the participating institutions cannot meet its commitments and responsibilities, the program would be~~

~~terminated. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 5/20/88 and revised on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(cc) Shared Program: A program of instruction that is mutually sponsored by two or more institutions and leads to a single degree or other award of completion which is jointly conferred by all participating institutions. A shared program is very similar to a joint program. However, the withdrawal of one of more participating institutions from a shared program does not automatically preclude the continuation of the program by the remaining participants or the reversion to independent program status by institutions which offered independent programs prior to entering the shared program agreement. The purpose of a shared program is to allow institutions to pool their resources in order to offer a collaborative program of greater depth, breadth, academic quality, productivity, and economy than would generally be possible through independent single programs. It is also expected that shared programs will help reduce program duplication. Guidelines for shared programs are listed below.~~

- ~~1. An institution may participate in a shared program only at a degree level currently recognized within its Commission approved Instructional Role Matrix.~~
- ~~2. At least one of the participating institutions must have an independent program in the same area and at the same level in operation at the time the shared program is proposed.~~
- ~~3. No institution may offer a separate independent program in the same area and at the same level while participating in a shared program.~~
- ~~4. Should one or more participating institutions withdraw from the shared program, it may be continued if at least two institutions remain. This would constitute an alteration of an existing program and would require Commission approval as such.~~
- ~~5. Should the shared program be discontinued, participating institutions which previously had independent programs may revert back to independent program status subject to program alteration approval by the Commission.~~
- ~~6. The shared program is treated as a single program for viability purposes.~~
- ~~7. Proposals for shared programs must include documentation that necessary approval has been received from all relevant accrediting agencies. Similar documentation must be presented if the program is altered in any way or when an institution wishes to revert to independent program status.~~

~~8. The program is planned, implemented, and monitored by a joint committee comprised of representatives from all participating institutions and is managed by an academic administrator or by co-academic administrators jointly appointed by and responsible to all participating institutions.~~

~~9. The program has a common faculty who hold joint appointments at all participating institutions.~~

~~10. The program has common entrance requirements, curriculum, and degree requirements agreed upon by all participating institutions.~~

~~11. For shared graduate programs, common qualifying examinations should be given and jointly graded by the participating institutions.~~

~~12. The program is based on carefully prescribed and explicitly stated procedures for sharing resources at participating institutions.~~

~~13. The program leads to a single degree granted under the seals of all participating institutions. If a shared program is to be offered by two or more institutions which are within the same system but are under a single executive head, explicit procedures must be developed and stated that will assure equal administrative oversight of the program. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on April 24, 1998.)~~

~~(dd) Reasonable Extension or Alteration of a Unit or Program of Instruction: Modification of an existing unit or program of instruction which does not change its essential character, integrity, or objectives. Such modifications do not create new units or programs of instruction. Program changes may include reasonable extensions such as the addition of a new area of specialization (concentration, option, emphasis, focus, track), or reasonable alterations such as a change in degree nomenclature at the same degree level (except doctoral), or a change in program title or CIP code, provided these modifications are within the Commission guidelines. Provisions for reasonable extensions or alterations of units or programs of instruction do not relate to the addition of off-campus sites or adding any new unit or program. (From Operation Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94. See 300-2-1-.01(d)1 for the Commission's requirements.)~~

~~(ee) 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. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(ff) 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). (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94).~~

~~(gg) Specialization, Concentration, Option, Focus, Track, Emphasis: Synonymous terms that represent a specified group of courses within a program of instruction. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(hh) Degree: An award conferred by a college, university or other higher/postsecondary education institution as official recognition for the successful completion of a prescribed program of studies. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~1. Associate's Degree: An undergraduate award granted on completion of an educational program that is lower than the baccalaureate and that requires at least two but less than four academic years of full-time equivalent college work. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~2. Bachelor's Degree: An undergraduate award that normally requires the completion of at least four but not more than five academic years of full-time equivalent college work. Also includes accelerated bachelor's degrees which are completed in three calendar years. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~3. Master's Degree: A graduate level award that requires the completion of a program of study at least the full-time equivalent of one but usually not more than two academic years of work beyond the bachelor's degree. In professional fields, it is sometimes an advanced professional degree earned after the first professional degree. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~4. Educational Specialist's Degree (Ed.S): A graduate level award that requires completion of an organized program of study consisting of the full-time equivalent of one academic year of work beyond the master's degree, but does not meet the requirements of academic degrees at the doctoral level. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~5. First Professional Degree: An award that requires completion of a program that meets all the following criteria: completion of the academic requirements to begin practice in the profession; at least two years of college work prior to entering the program; and a total of at least six academic years of college work to~~

~~complete the degree program, including prior required college work plus the length of the professional program itself. Among the degrees included are the following: Dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.), Law (J.D.), Medicine (M.D.), Optometry (O.D.) and Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.). (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~6. Doctoral Degree: An earned graduate level academic award carrying the title of doctor, such as the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), Doctor of Science (Sc.D.) and Doctor of Public Health (D.P.H.). Does not include first professional degrees such as M.D., D.M.D., or J.D. or "honorary" degrees such as the LL.D., D.H.L., D.D., or Litt.D. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(ii) Diploma: A formal award certifying the successful completion of a prescribed postsecondary education program. In Alabama, the diploma, which ranges from 48 to 90 quarter hours, is only awarded by the community and technical colleges. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(jj) Certificate: A formal award certifying the satisfactory completion of a prescribed program of study. The certificate is less than a degree, and its curriculum in many instances is related to the student's employment or professional advancement. In the two-year college system of Alabama, a Certificate requires a minimum of 15 quarter hours and a maximum of 90 quarter hours. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(kk) Credit: Recognition of attendance and performance in an instructional activity (course or program) that can be applied by a recipient toward the requirements for a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(ll) Credit Hour: A unit of measure representing the time and activity required for one hour of credit. Usually, this involves the equivalent of 50 minutes of instruction each week for a semester, trimester, or quarter. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(mm) Contact Hour: A unit of measure that represents a minimum of 50 minutes of scheduled instruction given to students. Also referred to as clock hour. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(nn) Academic Year: The period of an institution's regular session, generally extending from September to June, usually divided as semesters, trimesters, quarters or the 4-1-4 plan. These designations are sometimes referred to as~~

~~"terms." (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~1. Quarter: The quarter calendar consists of three quarters of about 10-12 weeks each. There may be an additional summer quarter. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~2. Semester: The semester calendar consists of two semesters of about 16-18 weeks each. There may be an additional summer session. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~3. Trimester: The trimester calendar is composed of three terms of about 15 weeks each. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~4. 4-1-4 Plan: The 4-1-4 calendar is composed of four courses taken for four months, one course taken for one month, and four courses taken for four months. There may be an additional summer session. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(oo) Faculty: Persons whose specific assignments customarily are made for the purpose of conducting instruction, research, or public service as a principal activity (or activities), and who hold academic rank titles of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, lecturer, or the equivalent of any of these academic ranks. If their principal activity is instructional, faculty may include deans, directors, or the equivalent, as well as associate or assistant deans and departmental or division heads. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~1. Full-time Faculty: Faculty employed full-time by a single institution (as defined by the institution). (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~2. Part-time Faculty: Faculty employed less than full-time (as defined by the institution). (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~3. Adjunct Faculty: A faculty position where one has an occasional or temporary affiliation with an institution in performing a duty or service in an auxiliary capacity (as defined by the institution). (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(pp) 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.)~~

~~(qq) 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.)~~

~~(rr) 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.)~~

~~(ss) 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. (From Operational Definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/19/94.)~~

~~(tt) Alphabetical index of definitions recognized by the Commission with reference to location in Chapter 300-2-1. Academic Year, 300-2-1-.01(nn)
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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) 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.

(14) 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."

(15) 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.

(16) 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.

(17) 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.

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

(19) 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.

(20) Concentration: See "option."

(21) 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.

(22) 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 may be counted collectively across institutions under certain circumstances.

(23) 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.

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

(25) 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.

(26) 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.

(27) 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.

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

(29) 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.

(30) 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).

(31) 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.

(32) 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.

(33) 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.

(34) 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.

(35) 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.

(36) 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.

(37) 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.

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

(39) 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.

(40) 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.

(41) 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.

(42) Four-Year Institution: See "senior institution."

(43) 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).

(44) 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.

(45) 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.

(46) 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.

(47) 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."

(48) 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.

(49) 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."

(50) IPEDS: The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 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.

(51) 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.

(52) 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.

(53) 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.

(54) 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).

(55) 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.

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

(57) 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.

(58) 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.

(59) 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.

(60) 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.

(61) 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.

(62) 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.

(63) 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.

(64) 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.

(65) 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.

(66) 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).

(67) 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.

(68) 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.

(69) 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.

(70) 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.

(71) 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.

(72) 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.

(73) 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).

(74) 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.

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

(76) 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.

(77) 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.

(78) 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.

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

(80) 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.

(81) 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.

(82) 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.

(83) 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."

(84) 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.

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

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

(87) 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.

(88) 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.

(89) 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.

(90) 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.

(91) 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.

(92) 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.

(93) 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.

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

(95) **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.

(96) **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.

(97) **Senior Institution:** Often used synonymously with "university" or "four-year institution," an institution of higher education approved to grant degrees at the baccalaureate level or higher.

(98) **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.

(99) **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.

(100) **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.

(101) **Specialization:** See "option."

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

(103) **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.

(104) **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.

(105) **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.

(106) **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.

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

(108) 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.

(109) 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."

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

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

(112) 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.

(113) 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.

(114) 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.

(115) 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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