

ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
PLANNING AND COORDINATION
ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

CHAPTER 300-2-1
PROGRAM REVIEW

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NOTE: This document shows recommended text for ACHE’s Administrative Procedures §300-2-1-.XX (“Evaluation of Changes to Instructional Role and Academic Units”), which would be a new section. Included are the following related documents:

- OVERVIEW of proposed section
- Clean DRAFT of proposed section, using **red text** to indicate new language and **blue text** to indicate language inserted from related documents. Comments are included to orient the reader. If recommendations are accepted, the new version of the section would read similar to this version.
- Marked-up DRAFT of the proposed section, **red underline text** to indicate new language, **blue text** to indicate language inserted from related documents, and **blue strikethrough text** to show language eliminated. Comments are included to orient the reader.
- EXISTING GUIDELINES FOR INSTRUCTIONAL ROLE, also found at <https://www.ache.edu/wp-content/Instruction/Instr-Role.pdf>
- SACSCOC Policy on “Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level,” also available at <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2020/01/Level-Change-for-Member-Institutions-1.pdf>

OVERVIEW

300-2-1-.XX Changes to Instructional Role and Units of Instruction

Synopsis of Proposed Section: This section would fill a policy need around instructional role change, which is currently only addressed in a guidelines document. This section would also be an appropriate place to address changes to units of instruction (i.e., departments and divisions) within an institution’s existing instructional role. The proposed section would define instructional role and lay out a process for expanding the role to a higher degree level.

Summary of Stakeholder Discussions:

- Several institutions have approached ACHE for guidance on expanding their instructional role, but no official policy exists outside a set of guidelines.
- Stakeholders were largely comfortable codifying existing guidelines, along with some changes to better align with SACSCOC policies.
- Definitions for different instructional role levels should be discussed further with academic leadership and Alabama Council of Graduate Deans.

Link to Open Forum: Administrative Procedures, Part 9 (Posted 12/15/22)
https://www.ache.edu/?page_id=16109

CLEAN DRAFT

300-2-1-.XX 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 Alabama*, 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.

(i) The Commission recognizes the following instructional roles, organized from lowest to highest:

- a. Associate degree granting
- b. Baccalaureate degree granting
- c. Master's degree granting
- d. Education Specialist degree granting
- e. 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

Commented [RM1]: Guidelines for Instructional Role define "instructional role" based on matrix of academic subdivision groupings and award levels. This definition looks to degree levels only, not CIP matrix groupings.

<https://www.ache.edu/wp-content/Instruction/Instr-Role.pdf>

of Business Administration (DBA), and other similar offerings.

f. 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 Alabama* defines an institution's role more narrowly, the institution must secure approval from the Alabama Legislature for the expansion of instructional role.

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

(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:

- (i) Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University (AAMU)
 - (ii) Alabama State University (ASU)
 - (iii) Auburn University (AU)
 - (iv) University of Alabama (UA)
 - (v) University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)
 - (vi) University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH)
 - (vii) University of South Alabama (USA)
- (b) If an institution other than those named herein seeks to expand its instructional role to include research-focused doctorates, the following criteria must be met:
- (i) The institution must demonstrate that it has legislative approval to expand its instructional role.
 - (ii) 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 timeframe.
 - (iii) 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.

Commented [RM2]: This requirement to gain approval for a role change would apply only to research-focused doctorates.

(6) 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:
 - (i) Successful implementation of three academic programs at target degree level
 - (ii) The institution's mission
 - (iii) Institutional readiness (defined as faculty credentials, financial resources, and institutional commitment)
 - (iv) Rationale for the expansion to a higher instructional level
 - (v) Relationship of the requested role expansion to the state's strategic needs
 - (vi) No substantive needless role duplication with other Alabama Public Universities [Also refer to Alabama code 16-5-8(4)(b)]
 - (vii) 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
 - (viii) Priority consideration being accorded to institution(s) with role seniority in that service area [Also refer to Alabama Code 16-5-10]
 - (ix) Accreditation considerations
 - (x) Peer and other feedback

Commented [RM3]: Text that follows is from Guidelines: <https://www.ache.edu/wp-content/Instruction/Instr-Role.pdf>

Commented [RM4]: These sections deal with duplication.

(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:

Commented [RM5]: Input requested on this definition, as well as its subcategories of "unit of instruction" and "non-instructional academic unit" below.

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

Commented [RM6]: Updates existing Definitions established in Section 300-2-1-.01.

- a. Major Instructional Unit: Division, college, or school that comprises several minor units of instruction.
- b. Minor Instructional Unit: Department or other unit offering degree programs, cross-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary consortium offering coursework but no degree programs.

(ii) **Non-Instructional Academic Unit:** An academic unit that does not offer credit-bearing coursework or degree programs, including the following:

- a. **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.
- b. **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.
- c. **Unit of Administration:** An academic unit whose function is primarily administrative in nature, such as the Office of the Provost or Academic Success Center.

Commented [RM7]: Existing Definitions in 300-2-1-.01 define unit of research and unit of public service.

(9) 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 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.

Commented [RM8]: Language inserted from current Extensions/Alterations section (300-2-1-.06).

(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.

Commented [RM9]: Language inserted from current Extensions/Alterations section (300-2-1-.06).

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

Author: Robin McGill

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

History: New Rule: Filed XXX

MARKED-UP DRAFT

300-2-1-.XX 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 Alabama, 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 matrix of academic subdivision groupings (ASG) and degree award levels approved for a university or two year college by the Commission. For the 2015-19 planning period, there will be two instructional role matrix templates, one for universities and one for two year colleges (refer to Appendix A). Each institution's instructional role matrix will be generated by applying the programs in the Commission's academic program inventory to the appropriate instructional role matrix template. Cells in the matrix will either be empty or display an "X". Empty cells are not considered within the institution's current role, and "X" cells indicate that the ASG and degree level are within the institution's role and that at least one program is currently offered.~~

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.

(i) The Commission recognizes the following instructional roles, organized from lowest to highest:

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- a. Associate degree granting
- b. Baccalaureate degree granting
- c. Master's degree granting
- d. Education Specialist degree granting
- e. 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.
- f. 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 approval of a new program proposal that would: a) replace an empty cell on an institution's matrix with an "X," and/or b) add a new CIP code to the instructional role matrix template. Role expansion can occur by expanding to a higher degree level and/or expanding to a new academic subdivision grouping. Parameters for Role Expansion for 2015-19: Through the adoption of general parameters guiding role expansion, the instructional role process allows the Commission to set the parameters for new program development through broad guidelines for a five-year planning period. These parameters will become effective upon approval by the Commission and will continue in effect until the adoption of an instructional role policy for the next planning period. 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 Alabama defines an institution's role more narrowly, the institution must secure approval from the Alabama Legislature for the expansion of instructional role.
- (b) The institution shall attain three successful single discipline program implementations in the higher degree level ~~three (3) different CIP codes (2 digit classification)~~ before it may request an expansion of institutional instructional role to a higher degree level.
- ~~(c) The institution shall not seek a fourth (4th) program discipline implementation before an expansion of institutional instructional role to a higher degree level request has been approved by the Commission.~~

Commented [RM2]: ACHE recommends eliminating this requirement for practice-focused doctorates to increase flexibility.

(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:
 - (i) Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University (AAMU)
 - (ii) Alabama State University (ASU)
 - (iii) Auburn University (AU)
 - (iv) University of Alabama (UA)
 - (v) University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)
 - (vi) University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH)
 - (vii) University of South Alabama (USA)
- (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:
 - (i) The institution must demonstrate that it has legislative approval to expand its instructional role.
 - (ii) The institution shall attain three successful ~~successful~~ must successfully implement research-focused doctoral degree programs ~~single~~

~~discipline program implementations in three (3) different CIP codes (2 digit classification) before it may request an expansion of institutional instructional role to a higher degree level~~ 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 timeframe.

- (iii) An institution shall not seek a fourth (4th) research-focused doctoral program ~~discipline~~ implementation before an expansion of institutional instructional role ~~to a higher degree level request~~ 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.

- ~~(i) In the ACHE Standard calculation~~ research-focused ~~doctoral institutions receive a higher component cost factor than nondoctoral institutions for some components. For the purposes of the ACHE Standard calculation, any institution as of the date of the passage of this provision, is considered a nondoctoral institution that has a Commission approved doctoral program will be given the appropriate doctoral weights only for the credit hours that result from the implementation of the approved program. These credit hours also shall receive the doctoral library factor in the ACHE Standard calculation.~~

- ~~(ii) That is, under the ACHE Standard calculation an institution will receive weighted program(s) until a doctoral role change is made. The institution will not receive full doctoral~~

Commented [RM3]: This requirement to gain approval for a role change would apply only to research-focused doctorates.

Commented [RM4]: This calculation is used internally only at this point. This text may be reduced or eliminated.

~~weighting until a role change occurs. More specifically, once an institution attains three (3) ACHE approved research-focused doctoral programs in three (3) different CIP categories (2-digit classification) and the role change has been approved by the Commission, it will then be considered a research-focused doctoral institution for the purposes of the ACHE Standard calculation and will receive the same component cost factors as other institutions.~~

~~(b) NOTE: Any similar provisions previously placed on an institution as part of a program approval prior to the revision of this policy are still in effect.~~

(6) **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:
- (i) Successful implementation of three ~~single-discipline programs in three different CIP codes (2-digit classification)~~ academic programs at target degree level
 - (ii) The institution's mission
 - (iii) Institutional readiness (defined as faculty credentials, financial resources, and institutional commitment)
 - (iv) Rationale for the expansion to a higher instructional level
 - (v) Relationship of the requested role expansion to the state's strategic needs
 - (vi) No substantive needless role duplication with other Alabama Public Universities [Also refer to Alabama code 16-5-8(4) (b)]
 - (vii) Justification of having no anticipated/ projected adverse influence on enrollments at public institution(s) already having that role [as determined by the Academic Program Inventory CIP

Commented [RM5]: FROM Guidelines: <https://www.ache.edu/wp-content/Instruction/Instr-Role.pdf>

~~code(s)]~~, particularly those within 50 miles of the proposing institution or within that service area

- (viii) Priority consideration being accorded to institution(s) with role seniority in that service area [Also refer to Alabama Code 16-5-10]
- (ix) Accreditation considerations
- (x) Peer and other feedback

Commented [RM6]: These sections deal with duplication.

(8) Implementation of Use 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 ~~and calls for a strong rationale.~~

(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:

Commented [RM7]: Input requested on this definition, as well as its subcategories of "unit of instruction" and "non-instructional academic unit" below.

(i) **Unit of Instruction:** ~~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.~~

Commented [RM8]: From Existing Definitions established in Section 300-2-1-.01. Clearly outdated.

~~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.~~

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.~~ There are two types:

- a. Major Instructional Unit: Division, college, or school that comprises several minor units of instruction.
 - b. Minor Instructional Unit: Department or other unit offering degree programs, cross-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary consortium offering coursework but no degree programs.
- (ii) Non-Instructional Academic Unit: An academic unit that does not offer credit-bearing coursework or degree programs, including the following:
- a. 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.
 - b. 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).
 - c. Unit of Administration: An academic unit whose function is primarily administrative in nature, such as the Office of the Provost or Academic Success Center.

Commented [RM9]: Existing Definitions in 300-2-1-.01 define unit of research and unit of public service.

(9) 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,

Commented [RM10]: Language inserted from current Extensions/Alterations section (300-2-1-.06).

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.

Author: Robin McGill

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

History: New Rule: Filed XXX

Commented [RM11]: Language inserted from current Extensions/Alterations section (300-2-1-.06).

GUIDELINES FOR INSTRUCTIONAL ROLE FOR 2015-19 – NEW FORM

These Guidelines are in effect from October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2019

Instructional role is defined as the matrix of academic subdivision groupings (ASG) and degree award levels approved for a university or two-year college by the Commission. For the 2015-19 planning period, there will be two instructional role matrix templates, one for universities and one for two-year colleges (refer to Appendix A). Each institution's instructional role matrix will be generated by applying the programs in the Commission's academic program inventory to the appropriate instructional role matrix template. Cells in the matrix will either be empty or display an "X". Empty cells are not considered within the institution's current role, and "X" cells indicate that the ASG and degree level are within the institution's role and that at least one program is currently offered.

Role Expansion: Role expansion is defined as approval of a new program proposal that would: a) replace an empty cell on an institution's matrix with an "X," and/or b) add a new CIP code to the instructional role matrix template. Role expansion can occur by expanding to a higher degree level and/or expanding to a new academic subdivision grouping.

Parameters for Role Expansion for 2015-19: Through the adoption of general parameters guiding role expansion, the instructional role process allows the Commission to set the parameters for new program development through broad guidelines for a five-year planning period. These parameters will become effective upon approval by the Commission and will continue in effect until the adoption of an instructional role policy for the next planning period.

1. There will be no change in the instructional role matrix template for two-year colleges. The instructional role matrix template for . . .

- Community colleges accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools - Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) will include only Certificate (30-60 sh), AA, AS, AAS & AOT awards.
- Technical colleges accredited by the SACS-COC will include only Certificate (30-60 sh), AAS & AOT awards.
- Technical colleges accredited by the Council on Occupational Education (COE) will include only Certificate (30-60 sh), AAT, & AOT awards.

Note: All two-year colleges also offer short certificates that are less than or equal to 30 semester hours. However, those certificates are not reflected on the Commission's instructional role matrix because they are not subject to Commission approval and are not listed in the Commission's inventory.

2. Consideration of Program Proposals above the Instructional Role Level Recognized by the Commission:

- a. Proposals for new academic programs must be in agreement 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. Consideration of Proposed Higher Degree Programs in a Single Discipline:

The Commission will receive, review, and vote on program proposals in a single discipline at a level higher than an institution's Commission-recognized instructional degree level if the following applies:

The proposed program shall contribute **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:

- (1) Alabama’s need for graduates in the field;
- (2) the program’s academic quality and articulation with the institution’s academic mission;
- (3) demonstrating no substantive needless duplication [Alabama code 16-5-8(4)(b)] with other Alabama Public Universities;
- (4) justification of having no anticipated/projected adverse influence on enrollments at public institution(s) already having that program [as determined by the Academic Program Inventory CIP code], particularly those within 50 miles of the proposing institution or within that service area;
- (5) priority consideration being accorded to institution(s) with seniority in that service area [Alabama Code 16-5-10];
- (6) the proposed program must serve and provide documentation of strong, distinct, and well-documented societal, educational, **and** economic need for Alabama.

Additionally, the following factors shall be considered by the Commission:

- (1) the program’s academic quality (e.g., as reflected by recognition from accrediting bodies, learned societies and affiliations for that discipline) and articulation with the institution’s academic mission;
- (2) the proposed program’s documentation that the curriculum is timely, reflects substantive student demand, and will result in strong prospects for graduates’ employment;

(3) formal collaboration with an Alabama unique resource or facility shall be another factor of important consideration;

(4) inter-institution collaboration (or attempted collaboration by the proposing institution);

The process and purview of judging “strategic benefit” and other relevant factors shall be the determination and recommendation of the Instructional Affairs Advisory Committee.

Notwithstanding “strategic benefit” and related factors directly above, The Commission will review program proposals in a single discipline at a level higher than an institution's Commission-recognized instructional degree level if accreditation criteria applies:

Accreditation - 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. The institution must provide conclusive and unambiguous documentation from the agency accrediting the program. In this instance the proposal will be presented as a decision item.

- c. **During the review process if staff determines that a higher degree program(s) single discipline program proposal does not meet the criteria above (strategic benefit or accreditation), the staff recommendation will be to “not approve” the proposal.**

In this instance, procedurally the proposal including staff recommendation, shall be brought forth for full Commission review, consideration, and vote to accept or reject the staff's recommendation.

- d. If a single discipline elevation proposal 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.

ACHE Bylaws Article 5 state:

“The positive recommendation of a new instructional program, new unit of instruction, research, or public service, or a new public institution of higher education (as provided in Code of Alabama, 16-5-4(b)) shall require the concurrence of a majority (7) of all the members of the Commission.

A new instructional program, new unit of instruction, research, or public service, or a new public institution of higher education that receives a negative recommendation by a majority vote of Commission members present may be reconsidered after one year provided that in the judgment of the Commission substantive changes indicate the need for reconsideration.

A new instructional program, new unit of instruction, research, or public service, or a new public institution of higher education that receives a favorable vote of a majority of the members

present, but which falls short of receiving a favorable vote by a majority of the members of the Commission, may be reconsidered at the next regularly scheduled meeting.”

- e. Receipt of a proposal for review by the Commission does not imply approval of the program. The proposal still will be subject to the regular academic program review process, vote by the Commission, and post-implementation procedures and conditions.
- f. The Commission, at its discretion, may include additional post-implementation conditions to those typically required.
- g. An institution submitting a higher degree level program(s) in a single discipline will be evaluated and voted on by the Alabama Graduate School Deans or Chief Academic Officers.
- h. **Unless specifically required in writing by the accrediting body addressed to ACHE or by state statute:**

(1) the institution shall attain three successful single discipline program implementations in three (3) different CIP codes (2-digit classification) before it may request an expansion of institutional instructional role to a higher degree level; and

(2) the institution shall not seek a fourth (4th) discipline implementation before an expansion of institutional instructional role to a higher degree level request has been approved by the Commission.

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 timeframe.

Successive single discipline program implementation requests are 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.

- Institutions recognized by the Commission with a doctoral role are:
Alabama A&M University, Alabama State University, Auburn University, The University of Alabama, University of Alabama at Birmingham, University of Alabama in Huntsville, University of South Alabama.

- i. In the ACHE Standard calculation doctoral institutions receive a higher component cost factor than nondoctoral institutions for some components.

For the purposes of the ACHE Standard calculation, any institution as of the date of the passage of this provision, is considered a nondoctoral institution that has a Commission approved doctoral program will be given the appropriate doctoral weights only for the credit hours that result from the implementation of the approved program. These credit hours also shall receive the doctoral library factor in the ACHE Standard calculation.

That is, under the ACHE Standard calculation an institution will receive **weighted program(s)** until a doctoral role change is made. The institution will not receive full doctoral weighting until a role change occurs.

More specifically, once an institution attains three (3) ACHE approved Doctoral programs in three (3) different CIP categories (2-digit classification) **and** the role change has been approved by the Commission, it will then be considered a Doctoral institution for the purposes of the ACHE Standard calculation and will receive the same component cost factors as other institutions.

NOTE: Any similar provisions previously placed on an institution as part of a program approval prior to the revision of this policy are still in effect.

3. Consideration of Requests for the Expansion of Institutional Instructional Role to a Higher Degree Level:

- a. To be considered for any expansion of instructional role to a higher level, the request must be aligned with applicable State statute recognizing it.
- 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 single discipline proposals shall precede a role expansion request;

(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;

(6) relationship of the requested role expansion to the state's strategic needs,

educational goals, and priorities;

(7) no substantive needless role duplication with other Alabama Public Universities; [Also refer to Alabama code 16-5-8(4)(b)]

(8) justification of having no anticipated/projected adverse influence on enrollments at public institution(s) already having that role [as determined by the Academic Program Inventory CIP code(s)], particularly those within 50 miles of the proposing institution or within that service area;

(9) priority consideration being accorded to institution(s) with role seniority in that service area [Also refer to Alabama Code 16-5-10];

(10) accreditation considerations;

(11) peer and other feedback.

- c. **During the review process if staff determines that a request for the expansion of institutional instructional role to a higher degree level does not meet the criteria above, the staff recommendation will be to “not approve” the request.**

In this instance, procedurally the higher level role expansion request including staff recommendation, shall be brought forth for full Commission review, consideration, and vote to accept or reject the staff’s recommendation.

- d. Use of Collaborative Programs: 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 and calls for a strong rationale.

Appendix A
 Instructional Role Matrix Template
 Universities
 2015-19

| LINE | ACADEMIC SUBDIVISION GROUPINGS | | | | |
|------|---|-------|------|--------|-----|
| | | ASSOC | BACC | M/ EdS | DOC |
| 1 | Agriculture & Renewable Natural Resources (CIP 01, 03) | | | | |
| 2 | Architecture & Environmental Design (CIP 04) | | | | |
| 3 | Business (CIP 52) | | | | |
| 4 | Communications & Related Technologies (CIP 09, 10) | | | | |
| 5 | Education (CIP 13) | | | | |
| 6 | Engineering (CIP 14) | | | | |
| 7 | Engineering Technology (CIP 15) | | | | |
| 8 | Family and Consumer Sciences (CIP 19) | | | | |
| 9 | Humanities (CIP 05, 16, 23, 38) | | | | |
| 10 | Law (CIP 22) | | | | |
| 11 | Library Science (CIP 25) | | | | |
| 12 | Parks, Recreation, Leisure & Fitness Studies (CIP 31, 36) | | | | |
| 13 | Protective Services & Public Affairs (CIP 43, 44, 51.1503) | | | | |
| 14 | Biological & Biomedical Sciences (CIP 26) | | | | |
| 15 | Physical Science/Mathematics & Statistics (CIP 27, 40, 41) | | | | |
| 16 | Computer & Information Science (CIP 11) | | | | |
| 17 | Social & Behavioral Science & History (CIP 42, 45, 54) | | | | |
| 18 | Visual & Performing Arts (CIP 50) | | | | |
| 19 | Health Related Professions (CIP 51.02, 51.06-51.10, 51.1501, 51.1502, 51.1599, 51.3804, 51.3902, 51.18, 51.23, 51.26) | | | | |
| 20 | Basic Clinical Health Sciences (CIP 26, 51.14) | | | | |
| 21 | Dentistry (CIP 51.04, 51.05) | | | | |
| 22 | Medicine (CIP 51.12) | | | | |

| LINE | ACADEMIC SUBDIVISION GROUPINGS | ASSOC | BACC | M/ EdS | DOC |
|------|---|-------|------|--------|-----|
| 23 | Nursing (CIP 51.3801-51.3803, 51.3805-51.3822, 51.3899) | | | | |
| 24 | Optometry (CIP 51.17) | | | | |
| 25 | Pharmacy (CIP 51.20) | | | | |
| 26 | Public Health (CIP 51.22) | | | | |
| 27 | Veterinary Medicine (CIP 51.24, 51.25) | | | | |
| 28 | Health Sciences, Other (CIP 51.11, 51.27, 51.99) | | | | |
| 29 | Trade & Industrial (CIP 21, 46, 47, 48, 49) | | | | |
| 30 | Liberal Arts/Interdisciplinary Studies (CIP 24, 30) | | | | |

2015-2019

| LINE | ACADEMIC SUBDIVISION GROUPINGS | DEGREE LEVEL | | | | | |
|------|---|--------------|----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | CERT | AA | AS | AAS | AAT | AOT |
| 1 | Agriculture (CIP 01, 03) | | | | | | |
| 2 | Business (CIP 52) | | | | | | |
| 3 | College-Parallel Transfer Programs (CIP 01-31, 38-45, 48, 50, 52) | | | | | | |
| 4 | Communications (CIP 09, 10) | | | | | | |
| 5 | Computer and Information Science (CIP 11) | | | | | | |
| 6 | Personal & Culinary Services (CIP 12) | | | | | | |
| 7 | Engineering Technologies (CIP 15) | | | | | | |
| 8 | Health Related Professions (CIP 51 except 51.3801 & 51.3901) | | | | | | |
| 9 | Family and Consumer Sciences (CIP 19) | | | | | | |
| 10 | Legal Assisting (CIP 22.0302) | | | | | | |
| 11 | Library Assisting (CIP 25.0301) | | | | | | |
| 12 | Nursing (CIP 51.3801 & 51.3901) | | | | | | |
| 13 | Parks & Recreation (CIP 31) | | | | | | |
| 14 | Protective Services & Public Affairs (CIP 43, 44) | | | | | | |
| 15 | Science Technologies (CIP 41) | | | | | | |
| 16 | Social Science & History (CIP 45, 54) | | | | | | |
| 17 | Trade & Industrial (CIP 46, 47, 48, 49) | | | | | | |
| 18 | Visual & Performing Arts (CIP 50) | | | | | | |
| 19 | Military & Occupational Technologies (CIP 29, 30) | | | | | | |



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SEEKING ACCREDITATION AT A HIGHER OR LOWER DEGREE LEVEL POLICY

SACSCOC member institutions must seek approval to offer educational programs at a higher or lower degree level than their current level of approval. In most instances, such applications will be reviewed by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees at either its June or December meeting. Institutions may not offer coursework at a higher level prior to approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. All programs included in the institution's application must meet the relevant standards and be approved by the Board for the institution to be accredited at the new level.

The institution will be designated as a member at the new level upon the Board's approval. Institutions should also ensure that their official statement of accreditation by SACSCOC reflects the newly-approved level. Institutions must implement the new program(s) within two years of the Board's awarding of membership at the new level, and the institution must formally inform the SACSCOC President of the date of implementation. The institution should also inform its assigned SACSCOC Vice President. If the institution does not implement the new program(s) – including embedded Associates or Specialists degree – within the two year period, the institution must inform the SACSCOC President. In this case the SACSCOC Board will take action to rescind the institution's membership at the new level or extend the institution's time for implementation.

As part of the approval process, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees will authorize a Substantive Change Committee to conduct a visit no more than six months following the initiation of the new program(s). This Committee is charged with determining the institution's ongoing compliance with selected standards following the implementation of coursework at the new degree level. Institutions may not initiate additional educational programs at the new level until after that Committee's report has been reviewed by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

In accord with the SACSCOC's [*Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*](#), all applications for accreditation at a higher or lower level – including those exceptions noted below – for institutions currently on sanction (Warning or Probation) or subject to Substantive Change Restriction will be reviewed by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees at either its June or December meeting.

Exceptions

Embedded Associate degree(s). Baccalaureate-granting institutions may choose to combine lower-division coursework ***already being offered*** into an Associate degree. Such cases would not constitute a significant departure in terms of curriculum, faculty, or other resources, since the institution is already offering the

courses comprising the new degree. Review of membership at Level I in these cases would normally be conducted by SACSCOC staff and submitted to the Executive Council of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for approval. Subsequent review by a Substantive Change Committee would not normally be authorized following staff review and Executive Council approval.

Baccalaureate-granting institutions seeking approval to offer an Associate degree comprised of coursework that is significantly different from their current lower-division coursework would be required to submit an Application for Level Change that is reviewed by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees at its June or December meeting. The Board's approval of such a program and award of membership at Level I would not normally include the authorization of a Substantive Change Committee.

Embedded Specialist degree(s)¹. Although rare, some institutions already approved for a Doctorate of Education (EdD) might not have sought approval to offer the Specialist in Education (EdS) degree at the time the EdD was approved. Such institutions may subsequently choose to combine graduate-level coursework already being offered as part of the EdD into a coherent Specialist degree. Review of membership at Level IV in these cases would normally be conducted by SACSCOC staff and submitted to the Executive Council of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for approval. Subsequent review by a Substantive Change Committee would not normally be authorized.

NOTE: Staff review and Executive Council consideration is the normal pathway for a prospectus seeking approval of an “embedded” Associate or Specialist degree program. Institutional information revealed in the prospectus may, however, result in a decision to refer the prospectus to one of the Standing Committees on Compliance and Reports for its review and a final recommendation to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees (See [Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#) [Review Procedures | Staff Options]). In addition, in accordance with SACSCOC's policy on [Unsolicited Information](#), evidence of significant non-compliance with one of the Core Requirements or Standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* will be considered for appropriate action irrespective of the decision to approve or deny the institution's application for accreditation at a higher or lower level.

PROCEDURES

Closing and Teaching Out All Coursework at an Approved Level. When an institution decides to discontinue its educational program(s) and coursework at an approved level, the institution must send official notification to SACSCOC. The process of closing such programs may involve a teach-out, and the member institution must comply with all of the applicable requirements of SACSCOC's [Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#). As part of the process of reviewing the notification and any other documentation, SACSCOC will remove the institution's approval to offer coursework at the applicable degree level. The member institution should also ensure that its published statement(s) regarding its SACSCOC accreditation accurately reflect that change.

Should an institution decide to reinstate such a previously discontinued program within three (3) years of the date the teach-out was approved by SACSCOC, the institution may do so by submitting official notification to SACSCOC. The reinstated program(s) must be substantially the same as those previously discontinued. Any program(s) that constitute a significant departure would require the institution to submit

¹ This exception **only** applies to a Specialist's degree that is embedded in an existing doctoral-level curriculum. Institutions wishing to initiate a Specialist's degree that represents a significant departure from existing programs must seek approval through the normal application process. A Substantive Change Committee would normally be authorized following approval of the degree to review the institution's ongoing compliance with selected standards.

a new level change application. Any decision to reinstate prior programs or begin new ones at the previously-approved degree level after the three (3) year window has expired would also require the institution to submit a new level change application for review.

Degree Level Designations. SACSCOC uses the following roman numerals to designate institutional degree levels:

- Level I.....Associate’s degree
- Level II.....Baccalaureate degree
- Level IIIMaster’s degree
- Level IVSpecialist’s degree
- Level VThree or fewer doctoral degrees
- Level VI.....Four or more doctoral degrees

SACSCOC commonly categorizes member institutions by the designation corresponding to the institution’s highest degree level course offerings. The highest degree level offered by the institution does not automatically include authorization of the institution to offer coursework or program at all lower levels; i.e., the institution’s highest degree level is not inclusive of authority to offer courses or programs at all lower degree levels. For example, a Level V institution is not automatically authorized to offer undergraduate coursework or programs; a Level II institution is not automatically authorized to offer the associate degree. Authorization to offer coursework or programs at a given level is explicitly approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. An institution unsure of its coursework or program level authorizations should consult the SACSCOC website or email its SACSCOC staff representative; this information is publicly disclosed for all institutions on the SACSCOC website.

Moving from Level V to Level VI. The distinction between membership at Level V and membership at Level VI is determined by the number of doctoral programs being offered by an institution. Level V institutions offer three or fewer doctorates. Level VI institutions offer four or more doctorates. Membership at Level VI is awarded automatically following the approval of the institution’s fourth doctoral program. Institutions submitting a prospectus for their fourth doctoral program should clearly indicate on the Substantive Change Cover Sheet that approval of the program would result in their being designated as a member at Level VI.

Document History

*Approved: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, December 2019
Edited: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, June 2021; December 2021*