

**CERTIFICATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE RULES
FILED WITH THE LEGISLATIVE SERVICES AGENCY
OTHNI LATHRAM, DIRECTOR**

(Pursuant to Code of Alabama 1975, §41-22-6, as amended).

I certify that the attached is/are correct copy/copies of rule/s as promulgated and adopted on Friday, June 13, 2025, and filed with the agency secretary on Wednesday, June 18, 2025.

AGENCY NAME: Alabama Commission on Higher Education Planning and Coordination

INTENDED ACTION: Repeal and Replace

RULE NO.: 300-2-1-.01

(If amended rule, give specific paragraph, subparagraphs, etc., being amended)

RULE TITLE: Operating Definitions

ACTION TAKEN: State whether the rule was adopted with or without changes from the proposal due to written or oral comments:

Adopted with changes. ACHE staff has received requests to make the following modifications for inclusion in the final rule:

1. Include a reference to "badges" under "mini-certificate."
2. Modify the definition for "cooperative degree program" to clarify expectations for program viability.
3. Add a definition for "faculty."
4. Replace "senior institution" with "university" as the primary term for referring to institutions whose instructional role includes granting baccalaureate degrees and higher.

In addition, ACHE staff have made several minor modifications to improve consistency, including streamlining references to federal entities.

NOTICE OF INTENDED ACTION PUBLISHED IN VOLUME XLIII, ISSUE NO. 6, AAM,
DATED MONDAY, MARCH 31, 2025.

STATUTORY RULEMAKING AUTHORITY: Code of Ala. 1975, §§16-5-1, et seq.

APA-3

(Date Filed)
(For LRS Use Only)

Robin E. McGill

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Certifying Officer or his or her
Deputy

(NOTE: In accordance with §41-22-6(b), as amended, a proposed rule is required to be certified within 90 days after completion of the notice.)

300-2-1-.01 Operating Definitions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(7) ACCS: The Alabama Community College System.

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

(9) Administrative Consolidation: A type of institutional change whereby two or more institutions are placed under a single executive head without program interchange. All involved institutions maintain separate functional identities. This does

not constitute a multicampus institution, but rather two or more separate institutions operating under a single executive head.

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

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

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

(13) Badge: [See "mini-certificate."](#)

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

~~(14)~~ **(15) Certificate:** A term primarily used in reference to "for-credit non-degree certificates," as defined below. Compare "long certificate (CER)," which the Commission considers a type of "degree."

~~(15)~~ **(16) CIP Code:** A six-digit code in the form of xx.xxxx that identifies an instructional program specialty using the taxonomic coding scheme known as Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP), maintained by the US Department of Education. A program's CIP code should accurately reflect the content of instruction and allow for comparison of programs both within and between institutions.

~~(16)~~ **(17) Clock Hour:** A period of time consisting of (1) A 50- to 60-minute class, lecture, or recitation in a 60-minute period; (2) A 50- to 60-minute faculty-supervised laboratory, shop

training, or internship in a 60-minute period; or (3) Sixty minutes of preparation in a correspondence course.

~~(17)~~ (18) **Combination Degrees:** Overlapping courses of study within a single institution that result in awarding more than one degree. Examples include dual majors, accelerated bachelor's-master's programs, and other arrangements that allow for shorter time to completion of multiple awards.

~~(18)~~ (19) **Commission:** The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) created by Alabama Code Sections 16-5-1, et. seq.

~~(19)~~ (20) **Competency-Based Education:** An educational program wherein student progress toward completion is measured through the attainment of competencies, whether within course-based units or through direct assessment of learning.

~~(20)~~ (21) **Concentration:** See "option."

~~(21)~~ (22) **Consortium:** A formal federation or association of two or more separate institutions for one or more specific purposes, usually involving a statement of mutual obligations and resource-sharing.

~~(22)~~ (23) **Cooperative Degree Program:** A formal arrangement whereby multiple institutions agree to share coursework or other resources to support degree completion for their respective students. In contrast with a joint program, a cooperative degree program results in a single program completion credential from the student's home institution. For program viability purposes, completers maywill be counted collectively across institutions under certainmost circumstances.

~~(23)~~ (24) **Credit Hour:** For purposes of the application of this policy and in accord with federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates one of the following:

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

(b) At least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined in item (a) above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work,

internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

~~(24)~~ (25) **Curriculum:** Body of coursework, assessments, or other requirements necessary to complete a program of instruction.

~~(25)~~ (26) **Degree:** An academic program leading toward one of the following awards: long certificate (CER), associate degree, baccalaureate degree, master's degree, education specialist (EdS) degree, research doctorate, professional doctorate, or doctorate other.

~~(26)~~ (27) **Degree Level:** Also referred to as "degree designation" or "award level," classification of for-credit postsecondary programs of instruction based on duration and depth of study, with graduate programs being at a higher level than undergraduate programs. Within the United States, institutions use IPEDS levels to report awards.

~~(27)~~ (28) **Deleted Status:** In reference to a program of instruction, a type of program status indicating that an academic program has been or will soon be terminated. Once a program has been marked as deleted within the Academic Program Inventory, no new students may be admitted, though current enrollees may be taught out. Programs with deleted status remain in the Academic Program Inventory for archival purposes.

~~(28)~~ (29) **Delivery Modality:** See "method of delivery."

~~(29)~~ (30) **Distance Education:** A formal educational process using technological delivery in which instruction occurs where students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education, distance learning, and e-learning are recognized by the Commission as being synonymous terms.

~~(30)~~ (31) **Distance Education Program:** A for-credit postsecondary program for which all instructional requirements can be completed via distance education modalities. A distance education program may have in-person requirements that are non-instructional (e.g., orientation, practicum).

~~(31)~~ (32) **Doctorate Other:** Designated as IPEDS Level 19, a doctor's degree that does not meet the definition of a doctor's degree-research/scholarship or a doctor's degree-professional practice.

~~(32)~~ (33) **Dual Degrees:** An arrangement whereby students can earn two separate degrees from two separate institutions with a

shorter time to completion than if the degrees were completed separately.

~~(33)~~ (34) **Dual Enrollment:** Enrollment of secondary students in postsecondary courses offered through an institution of higher education, for which the student earns college credit and also satisfies high school requirements. Instruction may occur at a dual enrollment site (at the high school), through distance education, or on the college campus or other instructional site.

~~(34)~~ (35) **Dual Enrollment Site:** A type of exempt off-campus site located at a high school where one or more postsecondary-level courses are taught exclusively to high school students.

~~(35)~~ (36) **Education Specialist Degree (EdS):** Designated as IPEDS Level 8, within the field of Education, a degree that requires completion of an organized instructional program beyond the master's degree but does not meet the requirements of an academic degree at the doctorate level.

~~(36)~~ (37) **Educator Preparation Provider (EPP):** An entity authorized by the Alabama State Board of Education to prepare candidates for professional certification as pre-kindergarten through 12th grade (P-12) teachers. An EPP offers one or more "programs leading to professional educator certification," as defined below.

~~(37)~~ (38) **Exemption from Licensure:** Pertaining to an institution, a formal process for state authorization conducted by the ACCS Private School Licensure Division to verify that a private postsecondary institution has met the criteria for exemption from state licensure, resulting in a Certificate of Exemption.

~~(38)~~ (39) **Existing Program of Instruction:** An academic degree or certificate program listed in the Academic Program Inventory.

~~(39)~~ (40) **Extension:** Pertaining to an instructional program, a type of program change that expands an existing academic offering beyond its previously defined scope. Such changes include the addition of program options within a degree program, as well as the development of for-credit non-degree certificate programs that are related to an existing program or unit of instruction.

~~(40)~~ (41) **Face-to-Face Instruction:** Also referred to as "in-person" instruction, ~~occurs~~ a method of delivery where students and instructors are in the same place at the same time.

~~(41)~~ (42) **Faculty:** Pursuant to the Commission's responsibilities for instructional program review, "faculty" refers to those individuals engaged by an institution of higher education to

serve as instructors of record for its credit-bearing courses. This definition of faculty does not include considerations of academic rank or tenure, which fall under the purview of institutions to determine.

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

~~(42)~~ **(44) Four-Year Institution:** See "~~senior institution~~university."

~~(43)~~ **(45) Graduate-Level Coursework:** Coursework designed for instructional programs beyond the bachelor's degree level, including courses that apply toward post-baccalaureate certificates (IPEDS Level 6), master's degrees (IPEDS Level 7), education specialist degrees and post-master's certificates (IPEDS Level 8), and doctoral degrees (IPEDS Levels 17, 18, and 19).

~~(44)~~ **(46) Inactive Status:** In reference to an instructional program, a type of program status indicating that an institution intends to reinstate the program to active status within five years. While a program is on inactive status, no students will be admitted, though current enrollees may be taught out.

~~(45)~~ **(47) Institution of Higher Education (IHE):** Sometimes referred to as "postsecondary institution," an institution that provides formal programs of instruction with curricula designed primarily for students who have completed the requirements for a high school diploma or its equivalent. This may include academic, occupational, professional, and continuing professional education programs.

~~(46)~~ **(48) Institutional Consolidation:** A type of institutional change whereby two or more institutions join to form a distinctly new unit, often with a new name. This results in a single multicampus institution operating under one chief executive officer and under one regional accreditation designation. Often involves program relocation or exchange.

~~(47)~~ **(49) Instructional Program:** As defined in Code of Ala., Section 16-5-1, a series of courses at any one location which culminates in a degree, certificate, or other formal recognition of academic credit. This may also be referred to as "program of instruction" or "academic program."

~~(48)~~ **(50) Instructional Role:** The degree levels for which an institution is approved to award degrees and does not

automatically include approval to offer degrees at a lower degree level.

~~(49)~~ (51) **Instructional Unit:** Also referred to as "unit of instruction," an organizational structure within an institution that offers instructional courses or other activities for academic credit and may be considered a "major instructional unit" or a "minor instructional unit."

~~(50)~~ (52) **IPEDS:** The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) ~~is~~ refers to the postsecondary education data collection program ~~for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a division of the Institute of Education Sciences within~~ conducted by the US Department of Education. IPEDS is designed to collect standardized data from postsecondary institutions and educational organizations operating within the United States.

~~(51)~~ (53) **Joint Degree Program:** An academic degree program whereby students study at two or more institutions and are awarded a single program completion credential bearing the names, seals, and signatures of each of the participating institutions. For program viability purposes, completers are counted collectively.

~~(52)~~ (54) **Long Certificate (CER):** Designated as IPEDS Level 2, an award granted on completion of a program consisting of at least 30 but no more than 59 semester hours of undergraduate coursework. Typically, CERs consist of technical coursework and are offered by two-year institutions.

~~(53)~~ (55) **Lower-Division Coursework:** Undergraduate coursework designed for introductory- or intermediate-level study in a collegiate discipline, such as general education courses, major prerequisite courses, and program courses at the associate level.

~~(54)~~ (56) **Main Campus:** The physical boundaries of the location of an institution's principal administrative offices. In the case of an institution eligible for Title IV funds, the campus designated by the US Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education Identification number (OPEID).

~~(55)~~ (57) **Major Course of Study:** Often referred to as "major," that part of a degree program which consists of a specified group of courses in a particular discipline or field. While practices vary among institutions, a baccalaureate program major usually consists of 28 semester hours (42 quarter hours) or more.

~~(56)~~ (58) **Major Instructional Unit:** Division, college, or school that comprises several minor units of instruction.

~~(57)~~ [\(59\)](#) **Master's Degree:** Designated as IPEDS Level 7, a graduate award granted on completion of an instructional program that requires at least 30 semester hours of post-baccalaureate, graduate-level, or professional coursework.

~~(58)~~ [\(60\)](#) **Merger:** A type of institutional change whereby one institution relinquishes its assets and degree-granting authority and is dissolved into another, with the second institution remaining as the sole surviving entity. Such a change may involve the closure of a campus or one institution becoming a branch of the other.

~~(59)~~ [\(61\)](#) **Method of Delivery:** Synonymous with "delivery modality," the technology or method used to deliver instruction or assess student progress toward program completion, including face-to-face instruction, distance education, competency-based education, or a combination thereof. In addition, an academic program may be offered in multiple modalities.

~~(60)~~ [\(62\)](#) **Mini-Certificate (MINI):** Designated as IPEDS Level 1a, a for-credit certificate program consisting of at least six (6) but less than nine (9) semester credit hours of undergraduate coursework or the equivalent. [Credit-bearing badges typically fall into this designation.](#)

~~(61)~~ [\(63\)](#) **Minor Course of Study:** Often referred to as "minor," that part of a degree program which consists of a specified group of courses in a particular discipline or field usually constituting a minimum of 18 semester hours (27 quarter hours). The Commission does not require notification for additions of or changes to minor courses of study.

~~(62)~~ [\(64\)](#) **Minor Instructional Unit:** A department or other unit offering degree programs, or a cross-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary consortium offering for-credit coursework but no degree programs.

~~(63)~~ [\(65\)](#) **Moved Status:** In reference to a program of instruction, a type of program status assigned by Commission staff for archival reasons to keep track of programs that have changed CIP code or IPEDS level. The program at the new code or level retains active status. New students are enrolled in the active program, though existing students may be taught out from the moved program.

~~(64)~~ [\(66\)](#) **NC-SARA:** The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) is a national association of member institutions and states organized to provide a streamlined, reciprocity-based process for participating postsecondary institutions to become authorized to offer

interstate distance education in other NC-SARA member states without individually applying to each state for such authorization, subject to certain limitations.

~~(65)~~ (67) **NISP:** The Notification of Intent to Submit a Program (NISP) was previously required to be submitted to ACHE prior to review of new program proposal. The NISP was eliminated with revision of Rule 300-2-1-.03, and definition is given for historical purposes only.

~~(66)~~ (68) **Nomenclature:** Also referred to as "degree nomenclature" or "award name," a designation for the specific type of award within a given level (e.g., Bachelor of Science, Master of Business Administration, or Doctor of Philosophy). In its official record of an award, an institution will identify the nomenclature followed by the program title using the following format: [Nomenclature] in [Program Title] (e.g., Bachelor of Science in Biology).

~~(67)~~ (69) **Non-Academic Unit:** Within an institution, an organizational structure that does not meet the definition of academic unit, including, but not limited to, student services, facilities/operations, financial affairs, information technology, advancement, and auxiliaries. Administrative changes to non-academic units do not have to be reported to the Commission.

~~(68)~~ (70) **Non-Alabama Institution:** Also referred to as "non-resident institution," a postsecondary educational institution, public or private, profit or nonprofit, whose main campus or headquarters is located outside the State of Alabama.

~~(69)~~ (71) **Non-Instructional Academic Unit:** An academic unit that does not offer credit-bearing coursework or degree programs, including units of research, units of public service, and units of administration.

~~(70)~~ (72) **Off-Campus Course:** A course provided to any group of students for academic credit at a particular off-campus site in an organized classroom setting. Courses offered on an individual study basis are excluded.

~~(71)~~ (73) **Off-Campus Instruction:** A for-credit course or program taken by a student or students at a location other than a Commission-recognized main or branch campus of the sponsoring institution. The Commission's policy on off-campus instruction applies to traditional instructional settings, i.e., face-to-face classroom instruction that occurs at a location away from the Commission-recognized main or branch campus of the institution. Practicum, clinical training, or other work-based learning activities are considered non-instructional and are excluded.

~~(72)~~ (74) **Off-Campus Offering:** As defined in Code of Ala., Section 16-5-1, any credit course, instructional unit, or instructional program conducted off the main campus of any public postsecondary institution.

~~(73)~~ (75) **Off-Campus Site:** The specific location where one or more courses are offered for academic credit geographically distant from the sponsoring institution's main campus. It does not include locations for in-person interactions that are non-instructional (e.g., recruitment offices, research facilities, orientation sites, practicum sites).

~~(74)~~ (76) **Option:** An extension of an instructional program offering that is closely related to the existing program and shares a common set of program coursework ("program core") with all other options of the same program. Options may be referred to as "concentrations," "tracks," "specializations," or another institution-specific designation that appears on a student transcript. Options are not represented separately in the Academic Program Inventory, and institutions may not identify them as standalone degree programs.

~~(75)~~ (77) **Physical Presence:** Having a geographical site with an address and location within the physical boundaries of the State of Alabama.

~~(76)~~ (78) **Post-Baccalaureate Certificate (Post-Bacc):** Designated as IPEDS Level 6, a for-credit program consisting of at least six (6) semester credit hours of graduate-level coursework, or the equivalent. Most graduate certificates fall into the post-baccalaureate classification.

~~(77)~~ (79) **Post-Implementation Period:** A seven-year monitoring period following the implementation of a new degree program during which the program must meet conditions set forth at its time of approval.

~~(78)~~ (80) **Post-Master's Certificate (Post-Mast):** Designated as IPEDS Level 8, though distinct from the Education Specialist (EdS) degree, a post-master's certificate is a for-credit program consisting of at least six (6) semester credit hours of graduate-level coursework designed specifically for those already holding master's degrees. Post-master's certificates are typically offered in Nursing or other fields where it is common for master's degree holders to seek additional specialized training.

~~(79)~~ (81) **Postsecondary Institution:** See "institution of higher education."

~~(80)~~ (82) **Practice-Focused Doctorate:** Distinct from "research-focused doctorate," a Commission-specific classification that pertains primarily to instructional role and refers to a doctoral course of study whose primary emphasis is on the application of research. This includes those degrees categorized by IPEDS as Level 18 (Professional Doctorates), as well as the Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), and other similar offerings that may be designated as IPEDS Level 17 or 19.

~~(81)~~ (83) **Private Institution of Higher Education:** An institution of higher education which is controlled by an individual or agency other than the state, a subdivision of the state, or the federal government and is usually supported primarily by other than public funds and operated by other than publicly elected or appointed officials.

~~(82)~~ (84) **Private School Licensure:** Pertaining to an institution, a formal process for state authorization conducted by the ACCS Private School Licensure Division to certify viability and legal authority to offer postsecondary programs of instruction, resulting in a Private School License.

~~(83)~~ (85) **Professional Doctorate:** Designated as IPEDS Level 18, a doctor's degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice. For the purposes of instructional role, all professional doctorates are considered "practice-focused doctorates."

~~(84)~~ (86) **Professional Licensure Program:** As defined in federal regulations, an instructional program that is designed to meet educational requirements for a specific professional license or certification that is required for employment in an occupation or is advertised as meeting such requirements.

~~(85)~~ (87) **Program Length:** A measure of the amount of time required for a student to progress to program completion, typically represented in semester credit hours.

~~(86)~~ (88) **Program of Instruction:** See "instructional program."

~~(87)~~ (89) **Program Status:** An indication of whether a program of instruction is actively enrolling new students, including the following status types: active, deleted, inactive, and moved.

~~(88)~~ (90) **Program that Leads to Professional Educator Certification:** A type of professional licensure program at the baccalaureate, master's, or education specialist level that receives authorization from the Alabama State Board of Education

to lead to professional educator certification and is considered an "approved program," as defined under Alabama Administrative Code §290-3-3-.01.

~~(89)~~ (91) **Program Title:** A name given by an institution to describe a program's specific field of study and which is used alongside nomenclature in official records of the award, such as in student transcripts. The program title should accurately reflect the content of instruction and therefore should closely correspond to the standardized CIP Code list.

~~(90)~~ (92) **Program Viability Standard:** In keeping with Code of Ala., Section 16-5-8(a)(2), the minimum average annual number of graduates that an approved degree program must produce during its post-implementation period, differentiated by degree level.

~~(91)~~ (93) **Public Institutions of Higher Education:** As defined in Code of Ala., Section 16-5-1, those public educational institutions in Alabama which have been authorized by the Legislature or by the Constitution to provide formal education, including vocational, technical, collegiate, professional, or any other form of education above the secondary school level.

~~(92)~~ (94) **Research Doctorate:** Designated as IPEDS Level 17, a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement. To promote consistency within IPEDS reporting, the Doctor of Education (EdD) is included in this degree level.

~~(93)~~ (95) **Research-Focused Doctorate:** Distinct from "practice-focused doctorate," a Commission-specific classification that pertains primarily to instructional role and refers to a doctoral course of study that incorporates substantial research preparation, including the production of original research. This includes the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and similar degrees, but it does not include all "research doctorates" designated as IPEDS Level 17. Specifically, the Doctor of Education (EdD) is excluded from this classification.

~~(94)~~ (96) **Role Expansion:** An institution's ability to develop and implement academic programs at a higher or lower degree level than previously awarded.

~~(95)~~ (97) **SACSCOC:** The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the primary accrediting agency for public institutions of higher education in Alabama.

~~(96)~~ (98) **Semester:** A type of academic term consisting of approximately 15 weeks of instruction. Typically, two semesters comprise one academic year, though there may be an additional summer session.

~~(97)~~ (99) **Senior Institution:** ~~Often used synonymously with~~ See "university." ~~or "four-year institution," an institution of higher education approved to grant degrees at the baccalaureate level or higher.~~

~~(98)~~ (100) **Service Area:** The geographical area within the State of Alabama where an institution is recognized as a primary provider of for-credit postsecondary instruction and where new off-campus sites are considered exempt from Commission approval.

~~(99)~~ (101) **Short-Term Certificate (STC):** Designated as IPEDS Level 1b, a for-credit certificate program consisting of at least nine (9) but no more than twenty-nine (29) semester credit hours of undergraduate coursework, or the equivalent.

~~(100)~~ (102) **SOC Code:** A six-digit code in the form of xx-xxxx that identifies an occupational category using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System, maintained by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

~~(101)~~ (103) **Specialization:** See "option."

~~(102)~~ (104) **State Authorization:** Formal approval to offer postsecondary programs of instruction to Alabama residents.

~~(103)~~ (105) **State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA):** An interstate distance education compact coordinated through the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). Institutional membership in SARA establishes recognition of comparable standards in the interstate delivery of postsecondary distance education courses and programs and streamlines authorization to enroll non-Alabama residents.

~~(104)~~ (106) **Strategic Benefit:** A higher standard used for review of a new academic program that is outside an institution's instructional role. Strategic benefit entails a significant and meaningful overall benefit for the state of Alabama, with criteria defined in Rule 300-2-1-.03.

~~(105)~~ (107) **System:** Two or more separately accredited colleges or universities under the governance of a single board and under the control or supervision of a single head.

~~(106)~~ (108) **Term:** Division of an academic year that a student must complete to earn academic credit. Most public institutions in

Alabama organize their academic year by semesters, though trimesters, quarters, or other divisions may be used.

~~(107)~~ (109) **Two-Year Institution:** An institution of higher education approved to grant associate degrees as its highest award level, including community, technical, and vocational colleges.

~~(108)~~ (110) **Unaccredited Institution:** An institution not accredited by an agency recognized by the US Department of Education or Council on Higher Education Accreditation or by an entity determined to be comparable.

~~(109)~~ (111) **Unit:** As defined in Code of Ala., Section 16-5-1, a school, college, division, or institute and includes the establishment of any new branch or campus. The term does not include reasonable extension or alterations of existing curricula or programs which have a direct relationship to existing programs previously approved by the Commission. The Commission may, under its rule-making authority, define the character of such reasonable extensions and alterations. Units may be considered "academic" or "non-academic."

~~(110)~~ (112) **Unit of Administration:** An academic unit whose function is primarily administrative in nature, such as the Office of the Provost or Academic Success Center.

~~(111)~~ (113) **Unit of Instruction:** See "instructional unit," "major instructional unit," and "minor instructional unit."

~~(112)~~ (114) **Unit of Public Service:** An academic unit established to make available to the public the various unique resources and capabilities of an institution for the specific purpose of responding to local, regional, or statewide needs or problems.

~~(113)~~ (115) **Unit of Research:** An academic unit whose primary purpose is to produce one or more research outcomes, including the creation of new knowledge, the organization of knowledge, and the application of knowledge. These may include such entities as research divisions, bureaus, institutes, centers, and experiment stations.

~~(114)~~ (116) **University:** An institution of higher education approved to grant degrees at the baccalaureate level or higher.

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

~~(115)~~ (118) **Work-Based Learning (WBL)**: Instructional activities that include sustained interactions with industry or community professionals intended to foster in-depth, first-hand engagement with tasks required of a given career field, aligned to curriculum and instruction. Work-based learning includes apprenticeships, internships, practicums, and other activities and may be required or recommended for program completion.

Author: Robin E. McGill

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

History: New Rule: Filed June 12, 1995; effective July 17, 1995. (This rule is based on definitions included in the Alabama Code, Section 16-5-1, and operational definitions adopted by the Commission on 8/24/79, 5/20/88, and 8/19/94; and revised on 3/30/90, 6/21/91, 6/19/92, and 8/19/94.) **Amended:** Filed March 12, 1996; effective April 16, 1996. **Amended:** Filed August 4, 1998; effective September 8, 1998. **Repealed and New Rule:** Published ~~_____~~ June 30, 2025; effective ~~_____~~ August 14, 2025.