# ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

# PLANNING AND COORDINATION

# ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

**CHAPTER 300-2-1**

**PROGRAM REVIEW**

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| NOTE: Proposed changes are visible in this document using the “track changes” function of MS Word. The current version of the Administrative Code is available at <http://www.alabamaadministrativecode.state.al.us/docs/hged/300-2-1.pdf> | | |

# 300-2-1-.03 Evaluation and Review of New Instructional Program Proposals of Public Postsecondary Institutions.

* 1. **Purpose:** The purpose of reviewing new program proposals of public postsecondary institutions is to ensure that such proposals meet the criteria established by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.
  2. **Commission Responsibility:** It is the responsibility of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education to establish policies and procedures for reviewing and taking action on all new instructional program proposals for Alabama's public postsecondary institutions.
  3. **Scope and Definitions:** This section shall apply to academic programs leading toward one of the following degree designations as defined within the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS):

(a) Level 2, Long certificate (CER): an award granted on completion of a program consisting of at least 30 but no more than 59 semester hours of undergraduate coursework. Typically, CERs consist of technical coursework and are offered by community and technical colleges.

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

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

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

(e) Level 8, Education Specialist (EdS)

(f) Level 17, Research Doctorate

(g) Level 18, Professional Doctorate

(h) Level 19, Doctorate Other

* 1. **Preparation and Submission of Proposals:** Program proposals will be prepared by the institutions in keeping with procedures set forth below and with guidelines published by Commission staff.Program proposals may be submitted electronically to the Commission at any time. Receipt of a proposal for review by the Commission does not imply approval of the program.
  2. **Procedures for the Evaluation and Review of New Two-Year College Programs of Instruction:** In the case of proposals from community, junior, and technical colleges, evaluation and review of new program proposals will occur in conjunction with the Alabama Community College System (ACCS).
     1. Review of Program Applications: ACCS will conduct a review of the program application. This review will determine whether the program is denied, whether additional information is required, or whether the program is eligible for further consideration. If approved, ACCS will send the program application to the Commission staff for review, which shall include consideration of program design, state and regional needs, and stewardship of resources. Should additional information or program modifications be deemed necessary, ACCS will provide such for consideration.
     2. Completion of Staff Recommendation and Commission Action on the Program: Completion of the Commission staff recommendation and Commission action on the program will occur within ninety days after receipt of the formal request. Commission staff recommendations will encompass expected program outcomes which will be assessed in subsequent program review.
     3. Review of Programs Designed to Meet the Needs of Business and Industry: The purpose of these procedures is to expedite the review of new programs designed to meet the immediate needs of business and industry.

1. For such programs, the proposing college will submit a program application to ACCS, providing evidence of the immediate need of a specific business or industry which can be met only through the development and implementation of the proposed instructional program. Completion of the Commission staff recommendation and Commission action on the program will occur within sixty days after receipt of the formal request. Commission staff recommendations will encompass expected program outcomes which will be assessed in subsequent program review.
   * 1. Provision for Reconsideration of Programs Disapproved by the Commission: Upon the request of the institution, ACCS may request a second review of the program six months after the program has been disapproved by the Commission on the basis of substantial additional information bearing on previous concerns and issues.
   1. **Procedures for the Evaluation and Review of New Baccalaureate Programs of Instruction:** The evaluation and review of new baccalaureate programs shall be conducted with the participation of the University Chief Academic Officers.
      1. Submission and Peer Review of the Program Proposal: The program proposal may be submitted electronically to the Commission at any time. In preparation for each Commission meeting, Commission staff will contact the chair of the university chief academic officers to request feedback on baccalaureate proposals from institutional representatives. . As appropriate, Commission staff may request responses from the proposing institution to issues raised in the peer review and may recommend changes to improve the proposal.
      2. Review of the Program by Commission Staff: Commission staff will consider the following factors in its review, along with other factors as appropriate:
         1. The objectives of the proposed program in relation to student demand and the needs of the state;
         2. The centrality of the program to the institution’s mission and role;
         3. Resources required and the capacity of the institution to deliver the program as proposed;
         4. Potential program duplication and opportunities for collaboration with other institutions.
      3. Staff Recommendation and Commission Action on the Proposed Program: Completion of the staff recommendation and action by the Commission will occur within ninety days after receipt of the program submission. The staff recommendation will encompass expected program outcomes which will be assessed in subsequent program review. Commission approval of a program requires agreement by the institution to discontinue the program if expected outcomes are not reached within the established time frame.
   2. **Procedures for the Evaluation and Review of New Graduate Programs of Instruction:** The evaluation and review of new master’s, education specialist, and doctorate programs shall be conducted with the participation of the Alabama Council of Graduate Deans (ACGD).
      1. Submission and Peer Review of the Program Proposal: The program proposal may be submitted electronically to the Commission at any time. In preparation for each Commission meeting, Commission staff will contact the ACGD chair to request feedback on graduate proposals from institutional representatives. ACGD shall establish the format and procedures for peer review. As appropriate, Commission staff may request responses from the proposing institution to issues raised in the peer review and may recommend changes to improve the proposal.
      2. Review of the Program by Commission Staff: Commission staff will consider the following factors in its review, along with other factors as appropriate:
         1. The objectives of the proposed program in relation to student demand and the needs of the state;
         2. The centrality of the program to the institution’s mission and role;
         3. Resources required and the capacity of the institution to deliver the program as proposed;
         4. Potential program duplication and opportunities for collaboration with other institutions.
      3. Staff Recommendation and Commission Action on the Proposed Program: Completion of the staff recommendation and action by the Commission will occur within ninety days after receipt of the program submission. The staff recommendation will encompass expected program outcomes which will be assessed in subsequent program review. Commission approval of a program requires agreement by the institution to discontinue the program if expected outcomes are not reached within the established time frame.
      4. **Consideration of Program Proposals above the Instructional Role Level Recognized by the Commission**:
         1. The Commission may review program proposals in a single discipline at a level higher than an institution’s Commission-recognized instructional degree level, so long as the proposed program is 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.
         2. An institution may seek approval for a proposal above its recognized instructional role under one of the following provisions:
2. Strategic Benefit: Beyond regular criteria for program review stated above, the proposed program must demonstrate that it contributes a “strategic benefit” to the configuration of current public institution offerings in the State of Alabama. “Strategic benefit” is defined as significant and meaningful overall benefit for the state of Alabama, and includes:

(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.

1. Specialized accreditation requirement: The Commission will review program proposals in a single discipline at a level higher than an institution's Commission-recognized instructional degree level if an elevation in degree level for an existing program is required by the recognized accrediting agency for that single discipline program and must be attained to continue the program's accreditation.
   * + 1. During the review process if staff determines that a higher degree program proposal does not meet one of the criteria above (strategic benefit or accreditation), the staff recommendation will be to “not approve” the proposal.
       2. 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.

5. Receipt of a higher degree-level 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.

6. 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.

1. An institution may be approved for up to three higher degree-level programs before seeking an expansion of instructional role. Successive single discipline program implementation requests shall be evaluated sequentially in that demonstration of prior success is a substantive factor in subsequent review process(es). An institution is not “automatically” granted three single discipline program request opportunities.
   1. **Possible Commission Actions on New Program Proposals:** The Commission may take one of three actions on proposed programs: disapproval, approval, or deferral.
   2. **Program Implementation:** Once program approval is given by the Commission, the institution must implement the program within two years of the proposed implementation date, unless another implementation time frame is granted.

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