# 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-.04 Operational Policy on the Approval, Disapproval, Deferral, and Withdrawal of New Programs of Instruction

1. **Purpose:** The purpose of the operational policy on the approval, disapproval, deferral, and withdrawal of new programs of instruction is to ensure that all proposals for new degree programs are subject to a fair and consistent evaluation and determination.
2. **Commission Responsibility:** It is the responsibility of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education to establish policies and procedures for approving, disapproving, deferring, and withdrawing new programs of instruction. It is also the Commission’s responsibility to ensure that approved programs meet standards for viability and quality following implementation.
3. **Scope:** This section shall apply to proposals for new academic degree programs as specified above in 300-2-1-.03 (3).
4. **Commission Actions on Proposed New Programs of Instruction**: The Commission shall take no longer than ten months to review proposals for new programs of instruction before taking one of the following actions on the proposal:
   1. Approval: The approval of a new program of instruction shall require the concurrence of a majority (7) of all the members of the Commission.
   2. Disapproval: A program that receives a negative recommendation by a majority vote of Commission members present may be reconsidered after one year at the request of the institution, provided substantive changes indicate the need for reconsideration.
   3. Deferral:Should the Commission (by majority vote of members present) defer action on a proposed program, it will specify the future meeting at which the program will be reconsidered, being mindful of the ten-month deadline for program action. If the ten-month limitation has been reached or will be reached before the next scheduled meeting of the Commission, action will not be deferred; however, if the Commission decides that special consideration is warranted, such a program may be disapproved by a majority of members present with the provision that the program can be reconsidered at a specified meeting scheduled prior to the one-year restriction on resubmission of disapproved programs. Deferral is a Commission, not an institutional prerogative.
5. **Withdrawal of a New Program Proposal:** Should an institution withdraw a proposed program from Commission consideration, it may be resubmitted at any time; however, the time which has expired prior to the withdrawal will not count toward the ten-month deadline on Commission program action. The Commission will have ten months beginning at the time the program is resubmitted to take action on the program.
6. **Post-Implementation Requirements for Approved Programs of Study:** Any new degree program approved by the Commission shall have a seven-year post-implementation monitoring period, during which it must meet the conditions set forth at the time of approval, as follows:
   1. Condition on Graduates: Approved programs of study must meet minimum viability standards for average number of graduates for its degree level, established by the Legislature as follows:
7. Baccalaureate degrees, associate degrees, and degree certificates must produce an average of at least 7.5 graduates per year. In vocational and technical programs, a student who leaves the program for purposes of gainful employment, in the same field of study as the program, having obtained the skills in said program, shall count as a graduate. For two-year technical and vocational college programs, a student who completes 40 quarter hours or equivalent programs shall be deemed and counted as a graduate for purposes of viability standards.
8. Master’s degrees must produce an average of at least 3.75 graduates per year.
9. Education Specialist or other terminal post-master’s degrees must produce an average of at least 3.0 graduates per year.
10. Doctorate degrees must produce an average of at least 2.25 graduates per year.
    1. Condition on New Enrollments: Approved programs of study must attract a sufficient number of new students each year (“new enrollments”) to ensure that the program will continue to meet minimum viability requirements for program graduates. In order to account for attrition or enrollment fluctuations over the post-implementation period, the condition for new enrollments shall be set at 25% higher than the minimum viability standard for graduates as follows:
11. Baccalaureate degrees, associate degrees, and degree certificates must enroll an average of of at least 9.4 students per year following program implementation.
12. Master’s degrees must show average new enrollments of at least 4.7 students per year following program implementation.
13. Education Specialist degrees must show average new enrollments of at least 3.75 students per year following program implementation.
14. Doctorate degrees should show average new enrollments of 2.8 students per year following program implementation, though this number may be reduced if an institution provides an adequate rationale.
    1. Condition onReporting: Institutions must provide a report evaluating whether the program has met its post-implementation conditions and whether it has fulfilled the objectives stated in the proposal, specifically pertaining to employment outcomes for graduates.
    2. Additional Conditions: As appropriate to the specific program of study, the Commission may require additional post-implementation conditions, such as the following:
15. Programs with program-specific accreditation will be required to report steps to be taken to obtain accreditation in the proposal/application, and the accreditation status as a post-implementation condition of approval.
16. Programs which require licensure will be required to report steps to be taken to optimize exam pass rates in the proposal/application, and the licensure pass rate as a post-implementation condition of approval.
17. In the case that a new program of study is likely to divert students away from an existing program of study, such as when an option within an existing program is approved as a standalone program, the Commission may require that the existing program continue to maintain viability in terms of average annual number of graduates.
18. **Implementation Window**: The window will be 30 months (2.5 years) from the time of Commission approval to implementation, before Commission approval will expire. The Commission may approve a longer implementation window depending on specific implementation circumstances.
19. **Post-Implementation Review:** At the end of the seven-year post-implementation period, ACHE staff will review the post-implementation report submitted in fulfillment of the condition on reporting, as noted above, and will notify the Commission as whether the program that has met its post-implementation requirements.
    1. Programs that have met all post-implementation conditions will no longer be subject to post-implementation monitoring.
    2. Programs that did not meet one or more post-implementation conditions will be recommended for deletion from the Commission’s Academic Program Inventory, unless the Commission approves an amendment to the post-implementation conditions for the program.

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