

Alabama Commission on Higher Education

Non-Resident Institutions (NRI)

PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW

Procedures

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Application Forms

1 May 2026

previous editions are obsolete

Alabama Commission on Higher Education

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* This document applies only to Non-Resident Institutions (NRI). It does not apply to Alabama *resident* institutions.

Section I. Procedures

Non-Resident Institution (NRI) Authorization Process:

Non-Alabama postsecondary institutions with main campus or headquarters located outside the state of Alabama are referred to here as “Non-Resident Institutions” (NRI). The authorization process described in this document applies only to NRI, not to Alabama *resident* institutions.

Obtaining state authorization for Non-Resident Institutions to offer postsecondary programs in Alabama requires licensure or exemption from licensure by the Private School Licensing Division in the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) [Ala. Code §16-46-1 et seq. (1975)]. Licensure is a formal process conducted by the ACCS Private School Licensing Division to certify viability and legal authority to offer postsecondary programs of instruction, resulting in a Private School License. Exemption from licensure is a formal process conducted by the ACCS Private School Licensing Division to verify that a private postsecondary institution has met the criteria for exemption from licensure, resulting in a Certificate of Exemption (see “ACCS Licensure Exemption” under “Exemptions” below).

The licensure process includes programmatic review by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) for either programmatic approval or exemption from programmatic review under certain criteria explained below in “ACHE Programmatic Review Exemption.”

ACCS and ACHE are separate state agencies with separate procedures and applications for each agency.

ACCS Licensure: The Private School Licensing Division of the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) issues Private School Licenses to proprietary postsecondary schools interested in offering courses of instruction, whether on a resident campus or through distance learning, within the State of Alabama, based on the Guidelines for Private School License requirements. For ACCS licensure requirements, see [Private School Licensure - Alabama Community College System](#).

ACHE Programmatic Review: All Non-Resident Institutions seeking ACCS authorization by obtaining a Private School License must complete the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) program review or exemption process. ACHE programmatic review requires submitting an application either for programmatic review or for exemption from programmatic review (see p. 5 for links to application forms):

- “Application for Programmatic Review” is a form for institutions that do not qualify for exemption from full programmatic review.

- “Application for Exemption from Programmatic Review” is a form for institutions that meet criteria for exemption from programmatic review (see “Exemptions” below).

Exemptions:

ACCS Licensure Exemption: The Alabama Private School License law provides licensure exemptions for selected institutions. For information on ACCS licensure exemption, see [Exemptions - Alabama Community College System](#) or contact ACCS at the address below.

ACHE Programmatic Review Exemption: Institutions that ACCS exempts from licensure (see “Licensure Exemption” below) and institutions that participate in NC-SARA without a physical presence in Alabama are exempt from ACHE review and are not required to apply for ACHE programmatic review or exemption from review.

The following institutions are also exempt from ACHE review but must submit an “Application for Exemption from Programmatic Review” to document the exemption:

- Institutions that are physically located within the United States of America (USA) or its territories and are accredited by a United States accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education or Council on Higher Education Accreditation and not exempt from ACCS licensure and not NC-SARA participants.
- Institutions that originated in Alabama and are now owned by an institution or corporation headquartered in another state.
- Institutions that do not offer postsecondary credits or degree programs to Alabama students.

All other Non-Resident Institutions applying for licensure and seeking to enroll Alabama students must submit an “Application for Programmatic Review” to ACHE.

Fees:

Licensure Fees: For ACCS licensure fees see [Alabama-Private-School-Licensure-Fee-Schedule-October-1-2024.pdf](#).

ACHE Programmatic Review or Exemption from ACHE Review: No fee payable to ACHE.

Non-USA Institutions: No fee payable to ACHE for institutions located outside the United States of America (USA) that are accredited by an agency recognized or approved by the United States Department of Education. However, non-USA institutions must complete

and submit to ACHE an “Application for Programmatic Review.” Non-USA institutions that are not accredited by an agency recognized or approved by the United States Department of Education must follow the process for unaccredited institutions.

Unaccredited Institutions: As required by Alabama Code 300-20-1.02(6), an unaccredited institution seeking ACCS licensure must undergo an external review of its programs of study by one or more outside consultants chosen by ACHE. The unaccredited institution must underwrite all costs related to the external review other than ACHE staff administrative expenses. For information on the process and expenses for the review, contact the Non-Resident Institution Office at the address below.

Contacts:

ACCS licensure information and process:

Private School Licensing Division
Alabama Community College System
P. O. Box 302130
Montgomery, AL 36130-2130
<https://www.accs.edu/about-accs/private-school-licensure/>

ACHE Non-Resident Institution information and application for programmatic review or exemption from review:

Office of Non-Resident Institutions
Alabama Commission on Higher Education
P. O. Box 302000
Montgomery, AL 36130-2000
Telephone: 334.242.2235
Email: nri@ache.edu
[State Authorization Program Review Procedures, Application and Regulations - Alabama Commission on Higher Education](#)

Section II. Regulations

The procedures for non-resident institutions (NRI), including the authority for the programmatic review process for out-of-state institutions wishing to operate in Alabama, are governed by the Administrative Code for the Alabama Commission on Higher Education in *Rule 300-2-1-.02 - Review Or Exemption From Review Of Proposed Postsecondary Course Offerings In Alabama By Non-Alabama Institutions Seeking State Authorization*.

This rule includes the following ACHE NRI regulations:

- Purpose and Commission responsibility
- Scope of responsibility
- Definitions of key terms
- State Authorization for Non-Resident Institutions
- Requests for Formal Exemption from Program Review
- Program Review and Approval Required for Non-Exempt Institutions
- Requests for Formal Exemption from Program Review
- Changes to Approved Program Offerings by Licensed Non-Resident Institutions
- Period of Approval or Exemption
- Appeals process

The rule revised and replaced the former Rule 300-2-1-.02 and became effective on February 12, 2024. The current Rule 300-2-1-.02 is available in a direct link at [Alabama Administrative Code](#).

Section III. ACHE Application Forms

Online Links

Application for Programmatic Review:

[Prog Review Application.pdf](#)

Application for Exemption from Programmatic Review:

[Prog Review Exemptions.pdf](#)