

Alabama Commission on Higher Education

**GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING PROGRAMS FOR INCLUSION
IN THE ACADEMIC COMMON MARKET FOR ALABAMA RESIDENTS**

The Academic Common Market (ACM) is a consortium of 16 Southern states that belong to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). Through this program, students wishing to pursue study in uncommon programs not available within their home states may be able to attend out-of-state graduate programs at in-state tuition rates. Selected baccalaureate programs also are available to residents of 13 of these states.

The following states are partners in the ACM consortium and abide by the policies of the SREB: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida (graduate programs only), Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina (graduate programs with restrictions) Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas (graduate programs only), Virginia, and West Virginia.

The list of programs included in the Academic Common Market that is accessed by each state is revised periodically to reflect the changing needs and offerings of participating states.

Policy: The State of Alabama will access programs through the ACM for its residents only if three conditions are met:

1. The program does not duplicate a program offered by an Alabama institution.
2. The program is offered to the ACM by the other state.
3. The resident is unconditionally admitted to the university and the program.

How Programs Are Selected for Inclusion in the ACM for Alabama Residents:

Each public university in Alabama has appointed an ACM coordinator who works with the Commission to make program selections for the State. Each fall, the coordinators review the list of programs available to the ACM and select those programs that are uncommon to the State to be available to Alabama residents for the next year. The list of available programs changes each year depending on the willingness of other states to make programs available, and the development of new programs in Alabama institutions that duplicate those programs offered to the ACM. Access to programs is based on a decision that similar programs (curriculum configurations, not necessarily degree titles) are not available in Alabama and meet the following criteria:

1. The program must be designed to culminate in the conferral of a baccalaureate, master's or doctoral degree, and the institution must be able to classify the participant as degree seeking. Degrees or awards at the less-than-associate, associate, and first professional level, and post-baccalaureate and post-master's awards and certificates, are not eligible for the Common Market.

2. Correspondence and other degree programs operating out-of-state (relative to the teaching institution) are not eligible for the Common Market.
3. Under the premise that such study may be arranged in the home state, independent combinations of available degree programs such as biology and music should not be considered, nor should double major or major/minor combinations that are independently set by students. If both major programs of study qualify for inclusion in the ACM, then the state and institution may allow the student to enroll in both programs. Coordinated degree programs, such as joint MBA/MPH programs, should have a defined, published structure.
4. Degree program titles do not necessarily define program content. As a guideline, at least one-half of the courses in the major should consist of courses not available in similar programs in the home state.
5. Concentrations, options, tracks, or specialization within more general (and otherwise ineligible) degree programs must be extraordinary, specific, and structured to merit eligibility for the Academic Common Market. They must materially change the nature of the degree such that it is markedly different from degree programs that exist in the state.
6. Curricular differences will always exist between two programs of study at different institutions. State coordinators are responsible for determining whether to seek access to out-of-state programs, based on the extent of the differences in curriculum.

Several factors are explicitly excluded from consideration in determining the eligibility of programs for the Academic Common Market. These include:

1. Specific programmatic accreditation or state licensure requirements.
2. The difficulty of access to in-state programs.
3. The unavailability of a similar in-state degree program with unique student services.
4. Student amenities or other non-academic features.
5. The geographic location of programs within the State of Alabama.

To Participate in the ACM:

1. If an Alabama resident requests ACM access to one of the 200 programs currently listed in the ACM Inventory for Alabama residents, the Commission staff will send the Alabama resident an application that requires proof of:
 - a. Alabama residency
 - b. Unconditional admittance to the university and the approved program.

2. If an Alabama resident requests ACM access to a program not listed in the ACM Inventory for Alabama residents, the Commission staff will send the Alabama resident an application that requires proof of:
 - a. Alabama residency.
 - b. Unconditional admittance to the university and the approved program.
 - c. Program non-duplication (Proof must be consistent with ACM guidelines).

If the State Coordinator determines that the program is available to the ACM and should be made available to Alabama residents, he will send a request to SREB and the university to add the program to the ACM. Once the access is available, the State Coordinator will send a certification letter to the Alabama resident and his/her university's ACM Coordinator, provided the Alabama resident has fulfilled all ACM/ACHE requirements.

Appeals Process:

Should the State Coordinator deny access to the program based on the assessment of the information provided by the student and the guidelines for the ACM, the student may appeal the decision to the Executive Director of the Commission. The appeal must be submitted no later than 15 days after the State coordinator's decision has been made.

To make such an appeal, the Alabama resident must have on a file the following:

- a. An ACM application.
- b. Proof of Alabama residency.
- c. Proof of unconditional admittance to the university and the approved program.
- d. An official program guide that includes the courses and descriptions in the program that the student desires to access through the ACM.

The decision of the Executive Director will be final.

The following guidelines relate to students enrolling in programs under the Academic Common Market agreement:

- The student must first be accepted for admission to the desired degree program by following the normal admission procedure for the institution.
- The student must be accepted as a degree-seeking student in the specified major with a regular admission status.
- Students with a probationary, provisional, or non-degree-seeking status at the institution are ineligible for Common Market participation.
- Institutions that do not classify undergraduate students as degree-seeking in a major until a fixed point in their studies (e.g. sophomore or junior year) may elect to accept Common Market students as first-year students or only at the point official acceptance into a major occurs. This decision is at the discretion

of the institution and may vary among different disciplines. In addition, institutions may determine additional student eligibility standards such as full-time status.