

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT[281]

Adopted and Filed

Rulemaking related to community colleges

The State Board of Education hereby amends Chapter 21, “Community Colleges,” Iowa Administrative Code.

Legal Authority for Rulemaking

This rulemaking is adopted under the authority provided in Iowa Code section 260C.48.

State or Federal Law Implemented

This rulemaking implements, in whole or in part, 2025 Iowa Acts, House File 295.

Purpose and Summary

This rulemaking implements 2025 Iowa Acts, House File 295, which eliminated the requirement that community colleges be accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and broadened the accreditation requirement to “any federally recognized accreditor of postsecondary educational institutions selected” by the State Board.

Public Comment and Changes to Rulemaking

Notice of Intended Action for this rulemaking was published in the Iowa Administrative Bulletin on December 10, 2025, as **ARC 9805C**. A public hearing was held on the following date(s):

- December 30, 2025

No one attended the public hearing. No public comments were received. One change from the Notice has been made to replace a reference to legislation with a reference to the codified statute.

Adoption of Rulemaking

This rulemaking was adopted by the State Board on January 15, 2026.

Fiscal Impact

This rulemaking has no fiscal impact to the State of Iowa.

Jobs Impact

After analysis and review of this rulemaking, no impact on jobs has been found.

Waivers

Any person who believes that the application of the discretionary provisions of this rulemaking would result in hardship or injustice to that person may petition the State Board for a waiver of the discretionary provisions, if any, pursuant to 281—Chapter 4.

Review by Administrative Rules Review Committee

The Administrative Rules Review Committee, a bipartisan legislative committee which oversees rulemaking by executive branch agencies, may, on its own motion or on written request by any individual or group, review this rulemaking at its [regular monthly meeting](#) or at a special meeting. The Committee’s meetings are open to the public, and interested persons may be heard as provided in Iowa Code section 17A.8(6).

Effective Date

This rulemaking will become effective on March 11, 2026.

The following rulemaking action is adopted:

ITEM 1. Adopt the following **new** definition of “Federally recognized accreditor of postsecondary educational institutions” in rule **281—21.1(260C)**:

“Federally recognized accreditor of postsecondary educational institutions” or “federally recognized accreditor” means an accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education to perform accreditation functions and selected by the state board of education to perform such functions in Iowa. The state board may select more than one federally recognized accreditor. Iowa Code sections 260C.47 and 260C.48 require that the state accreditation process be integrated with the processes established by a federally recognized accreditor.

ITEM 2. Rescind the definition of “Higher Learning Commission” in rule **281—21.1(260C)**.

ITEM 3. Rescind rule 281—21.61(260C) and adopt the following **new** rule in lieu thereof:

281—21.61(260C) Accreditation components and criteria—federally recognized accreditor. To be accredited by the state board of education and maintain accreditation status, a community college must meet the accreditation criteria of a federally recognized accreditor of postsecondary institutions and additional state standards. Documents and materials provided in accordance with the accreditation requirements of the federally recognized accreditor will also be provided to the department for the state accreditation process pursuant to Iowa Code section 260C.47(1), unnumbered paragraph 1.

[Filed 1/15/26, effective 3/11/26]

[Published 2/4/26]

EDITOR’S NOTE: For replacement pages for IAC, see IAC Supplement 2/4/26.