



REACH Act Guidelines

September 2021

South Carolina Act 26 of 2021, hereinafter the “REACH Act” requires undergraduate students to complete a three-credit course that requires, at a minimum, the reading of the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Emancipation Proclamation, five Federalist Papers, and one document foundational to the African American Struggle; hereinafter collectively known as the “Founding Documents.”

The General Assembly charged the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) with ensuring institutional compliance with these procedures. Below are guidelines institutions may follow regarding compliance.

What Are the REACH Act Required Readings?

At a minimum, a course must include reading the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Emancipation Proclamation, five Federalist Papers, and one document foundational to the African American Struggle **in their entirety**.

Does a Course Need to Include these Subjects in Discussion or Modules or Test Students on their Comprehension?

No. The REACH Act only requires students to read the listed material in their entirety.

May an Institution Certify Multiple Courses that Split the Founding Documents as Required Readings?

No. A course must include all Founding Documents within its required reading material.

May an Institution Offer an Online Seminar or Course fewer-than Three Credits that Satisfies the Reading Requirements?

No. The Founding Documents must be included within a minimum three-credit course.

Does the Course Need to be in American History or American Government?

No. While these subjects may naturally fit in an American history or American government course, any three-credit course that requires reading in the entirety the Founding Documents is sufficient.

To Which Freshman Class Does this Apply?

Section 2.B. of the Act applies to “the first incoming undergraduate freshman class entering a public institution of higher learning after the effective date of the act.”

The CHE interprets this provision to apply to the incoming undergraduate freshman class of Academic Year 2021-22.

Who Are Included in the “First Incoming Undergraduate Freshman Class?”

The CHE interprets that the REACH Act applies to degree-seeking students entering with freshman status who have never enrolled in a postsecondary institution prior to the Fall 2021 term. Students who have earned dual enrollment credits are not considered to have been enrolled previously in a postsecondary institution.

Examples

- **Student A** enrolls at a public South Carolina institute of higher learning (IHL) in Fall 2021, with freshman status, having previously completed fewer than 30 credit hours at another postsecondary institution after obtaining a high school diploma or passing the GED. REACH Act provisions **DO NOT** apply.
- **Student B** graduated from high school following the 2020-21 academic year having earned more than 30 credit hours in AP and IB coursework. Student B enrolls in a public South Carolina IHL in Fall 2021 with sophomore status. REACH Act provisions **DO NOT** apply.
- **Student C** graduated from high school following the 2019-20 academic year and took a gap year. While in high school, Student C enrolled in dual credit courses offered by the local technical college. Student C enrolls in a public South Carolina IHL in Fall 2021 as an incoming freshman, transferring 15 credit hours. REACH Act provisions **DO** apply.

What Students are Exempt from REACH Act Foundational Document Reading Requirements?

Students who have successfully taken and received a passing grade in an AP, IB, or dual-credit course American Government or History in high school are exempt from the requirements.

Do Students Need to Take and Pass the AP or IB Examination in American Government or History to Be Exempt from the REACH Act?

No. Students need only have taken and passed the course.

What is Expected of the Board of Trustees?

Section B requires that the Board of Trustees ensure that their institution(s) incorporate, or they are working to incorporate, REACH Act requirements into undergraduate degree requirements of all degree programs that does not add to the total number of credit hours of any degree or conflict with the school accreditation process. Boards of Trustees must confirm this in writing to the CHE.

Does the REACH Act Apply to Associate Degrees?

Section 2.A. includes two-year institutions in its definition of “a public institution of higher learning.” While a two-year institution may graduate a student with an associate degree without having complied with the REACH Act provisions, the CHE believes that two-year institutions should include the reading of the Founding Documents in courses that are transferrable to four-year institutions.

*According to the South Carolina Technical College System, beginning in Fall 2021, History 201 American History: Discovery to 1877 and Political Science 201 American Government include reading the Founding Documents in their entirety.

Does the REACH Act Apply to Incoming Out-of-State Transfer Students or Transfer Students from a Non-Public Institution?

If a student is an incoming freshman beginning in Fall 2021 (see the definition above) then the REACH Act requirements apply.

What Must Institutions Provide to the Commission on Higher Education to Prove Compliance?

By October 1, 2021, institutions must provide a letter signed by either the provost, president, or chancellor certifying that undergraduate degree requirements beginning with the entering freshman class of academic year 2021-22 include reading the entirety of the Founding Documents AND that the institution has or is in the process of establishing procedures to ensure it will not award a baccalaureate degree to students who were entering freshmen in academic year 2021-22 unless exempted.

Attached to the first certifying letter, institutions should include a list of compliant courses along with syllabi from those courses.

In addition, each institution should attach a letter signed by the chair of its board of trustees affirming that the board of trustees has ensured, or is in the process of ensuring, provisions of the REACH Act have been incorporated into all current undergraduate degree requirements in a manner that does not add to the total number of credit hours for any degree and does not conflict with any school accreditation process. If an institution is unable to provide the letter signed by the board of trustees' chairperson by October 1, the institution should include a statement as to when it will submit such a letter.

How will CHE Determine Compliance?

CHE Staff will review every provided syllabus to ensure the course requires students read in the entirety at minimum: The U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, five (5) Federalist Papers, the Emancipation Proclamation, and one document foundational to the African American struggle.

Will there Be Ongoing Compliance Review?

After the initial compliance review, institutions must provide letters from their provost, president, or chancellor and chair of the board of trustees for new or modified program proposals coming before the Commission on Higher Education for approval that the proposed program(s) are in compliance with the REACH Act.

Each fall, the CHE will collect syllabi from courses purporting to comply with the REACH Act for the current fall term and the proceeding spring and summer terms.