

RCW 28C.10.050 Minimum standards—Consumer student loan products—Denial of application for licensure—Determination that school or program is at risk of closure or termination. (1) The agency shall adopt by rule minimum standards for entities operating private vocational schools. The minimum standards shall include, but not be limited to, requirements to assess whether a private vocational school is eligible to obtain and maintain a license in this state.

(2) The requirements adopted by the agency shall, at a minimum, require a private vocational school to:

(a) Disclose to the agency information about its ownership and financial position and demonstrate to the agency that the school is financially viable and responsible and that it has sufficient financial resources to fulfill its commitments to students. Financial disclosures provided to the agency shall not be subject to public disclosure under chapter 42.56 RCW;

(b) Follow a uniform statewide cancellation and refund policy as specified by the agency;

(c) Disclose through use of a school catalog, website, brochure, or other written material, necessary information to students so that students may make informed enrollment decisions. The agency shall specify what data and information are required. To the extent that these websites or materials present any data on the completion rates, employment rates, loan or indebtedness metrics, and its graduates' median hourly and annual earnings for any of the private vocational schools or its programs, the posted data must be consistent with the data posted on the agency's career bridge website or the data posted by the United States department of education, if the agency or the department of education has posted such data. Nothing in this subsection requires the agency to make changes to the career bridge website or add new elements or features to the career bridge website;

(d) Use an enrollment contract or agreement that includes: (i) The school's cancellation and refund policy, (ii) a brief statement that the school is licensed under this chapter and that inquiries, concerns, or complaints may be made to the agency, and (iii) other necessary information as determined by the agency;

(e) Describe accurately and completely in writing to students before their enrollment prerequisites and requirements for (i) completing successfully the programs of study in which they are interested and (ii) qualifying for the fields of employment for which their education is designed;

(f) Comply with the requirements of RCW 28C.10.084;

(g) Assess the basic skills and relevant aptitudes of each potential student to determine that a potential student has the basic skills and relevant aptitudes necessary to complete and benefit from the program in which the student plans to enroll, including but not limited to administering a United States department of education-approved English as a second language exam before enrolling students for whom English is a second language unless the students provide proof of graduation from a United States high school or proof of completion of a high school equivalency certificate as provided in RCW 28B.50.536 in English or results of another academic assessment determined appropriate by the agency. Guidelines for such assessments shall be developed by the agency, in consultation with the schools;

(h) Discuss with each potential student the potential student's obligations in signing any enrollment contract and/or incurring any debt for educational purposes. The discussion shall include the

inadvisability of acquiring an excessive educational debt burden that will be difficult to repay given employment opportunities and average starting salaries in the potential student's chosen occupation;

(i) Ensure that any enrollment contract between the private vocational school and its students has an attachment in a format provided by the agency. The attachment shall be signed by both the school and the student. The attachment shall stipulate that the school has complied with (h) of this subsection and that the student understands and accepts his or her responsibilities in signing any enrollment contract or debt application. The attachment shall also stipulate that the enrollment contract shall not be binding for at least five days, excluding Sundays and holidays, following signature of the enrollment contract by both parties;

(j) Comply with the requirements related to qualifications of administrators and instructors; and

(k) Disclose to the agency regarding any pending investigations by an oversight entity, including the nature of that investigation, within thirty days of the school's first knowledge of the investigation. For the purposes of this subsection, "investigation" means any inquiry into possible violations of any applicable laws or accreditation standards. For the purposes of this subsection, "oversight entity" means all of the following:

(i) Any federal or state entity that provides financial aid to students of the institution or approves the school for participation in a financial aid program;

(ii) Any state or federal attorney general's office or department of justice;

(iii) Any regulator that approves the operation of the private vocational school;

(iv) The federal consumer financial protection bureau or the federal securities and exchange commission; and

(v) Any accrediting agency.

(3) A private vocational school that has at least one hundred fifty students or more in the state during any given year, or that has been operating in the state for less than two consecutive years, or that has not had at least one of its programs recognized by the agency as an eligible training provider for at least two consecutive years, may not engage in any practice regarding the sale of, or inducing of students to obtain, specific consumer student loan products to fund education that financially benefits any person or entity that has an ownership interest in the institution, unless the institution can demonstrate to the agency that the student has exhausted all federal aid options and has been denied noninstitutional private commercial loan products. A financial benefit for purposes of this subsection does not include merely having an interest in students with loans enrolling in the institution or assisting students with financial aid matters. For purposes of this subsection, "agent" means any employee, officer, or contractor working on behalf of the institution.

(4) The agency may deny a private vocational school's application for licensure if the school fails to meet the requirements in this section.

(5) The agency may determine that a licensed private vocational school or a particular program of a private vocational school is at risk of closure or termination if:

(a) There is a pattern or history of substantiated student complaints filed with the agency pursuant to RCW 28C.10.120; or

(b) The private vocational school fails to meet minimum licensing requirements and has a pattern or history of failing to meet the minimum requirements.

(6) If the agency determines that a private vocational school or a particular program is at risk of closure or termination, the agency shall require the school to take corrective action. [2018 c 203 s 6; 2014 c 11 s 2; 2013 c 39 s 15; 2007 c 462 s 2; 2005 c 274 s 247; 2001 c 23 s 1; 1990 c 188 s 7; 1987 c 459 s 3; 1986 c 299 s 5.]

Finding—Intent—2018 c 203: See note following RCW 28B.85.095.

Severability—1990 c 188: See note following RCW 28C.10.020.