RCW 28B.85.040 Completion of program of study prerequisite to degree—Application of chapter. (1) An institution or person shall not advertise, offer, sell, or award a degree or any other type of educational credential unless the student has enrolled in and successfully completed a prescribed program of study, as outlined in the institution's publications. This prohibition shall not apply to honorary credentials clearly designated as such on the front side of the diploma or certificate and awarded by institutions offering other educational credentials in compliance with state law.

(2) No exemption or waiver granted under this chapter is permanent. The council shall periodically review exempted degree-granting institutions and degree-granting institutions granted a waiver, and continue exemptions or waivers only if an institution meets the statutory or council requirements for exemption or waiver in effect on the date of the review.

(3) Except as provided in subsection (1) of this section, this chapter shall not apply to:

(a) Any public college, university, community college, technical college, or institute operating as part of the public higher educational system of this state;

(b) Institutions that have been accredited by an accrediting association recognized by the council for the purposes of this chapter: PROVIDED, That those institutions meet minimum exemption standards adopted by the council; and PROVIDED FURTHER, That an institution, branch, extension, or facility operating within the state of Washington which is affiliated with a nonprofit institution operating in another state:

(i) Has continuously offered degree programs in the state for 10 years or more;

(ii) Has been continuously authorized to offer degree programs in its home state for 20 years or more;

(iii) Has been continuously accredited as a degree-granting institution for 10 years or more by an accrediting association recognized by the council and maintains such accreditation status;

(iv) Maintains eligibility to participate in Title IV financial aid programs;

(v) Is recognized for its extensive academic research and innovation, doctoral programs, and advanced facilities and resources; and

(vi) Maintains ongoing compliance with the requirements for authorization specified in this chapter. If an institution fails to maintain compliance with such requirements, the council may:

(A) Deny an application for exemption; or

(B) Suspend or withdraw an existing exemption;

(c) Institutions of a religious character, but only as to those education programs devoted exclusively to religious or theological objectives if the programs are represented in an accurate manner in institutional catalogs and other official publications;

(d) Honorary credentials clearly designated as such on the front side of the diploma or certificate awarded by institutions offering other educational credentials in compliance with state law; or

(e) Institutions not otherwise exempt which offer only workshops or seminars and institutions offering only credit-bearing workshops or seminars lasting no longer than three calendar days. [2025 c 157 s 2; 2012 c 229 s 545; 2006 c 234 s 4; 2004 c 96 s 2; 1996 c 97 s 1; 1994 c 38 s 2; 1986 c 136 s 4.]

Effective date—2012 c 229 ss 101, 117, 401, 402, 501 through 594, 601 through 609, 701 through 708, 801 through 821, 902, and 904: See note following RCW 28B.77.005.