

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Accountability in Higher Education: Promoting Excellence in Texas Public Universities through Institutional Groupings, Peers, and Benchmarks

BACKGROUND

Texas' Closing the Gaps plan calls for each public higher education institution to engage in an ongoing pursuit of excellence. A strategy for carrying out that goal relies on the selection of institutional peers and benchmarks of performance against which progress can be measured. Because comparisons between institutions are inevitable, institutions have been grouped according to general academic mission and certain key academic indicators such as size and number of graduate programs, research expenditures, and other factors. The groupings are intended to be neither permanent nor prescriptive. Rather, they are to be considered permeable, subject to revision as institutions evolve. The current peer groups for universities include:

- Research
- Emerging Research
- Doctoral
- Comprehensive
- Master's

OVERVIEW

Making accountability more transparent and promoting excellence in Texas universities through institutional groupings, peers, and benchmarks requires:

- Establishing groupings of institutions of similar types and missions
- Determining for each group appropriate measures that reflect institutional performance
- Determining benchmarks against which to measure success
- Assessing progress annually and taking steps to improve performance

University Peer Group Criteria for FY 2014 – FY 2020

In addition to regular review of peer group assignments, review of the criteria for determining placement into Accountability Peer Groups is also important. Criteria for assigning universities to Accountability Peer Groups were first developed in 2004 when the Accountability System was implemented. Those criteria remained unchanged until July 2013 when the Coordinating Board officially adopted revised criteria for universities.

The revision process began in March 2013 when University Peer Group members, at their regularly scheduled spring meeting, developed a list of proposed criteria changes based on group consensus. The Commissioner of Higher Education incorporated the peer groups' suggested changes into his recommendations to the Board. The Board-adopted criteria are

listed in this document by institution type. For comparison purposes, a chart on page 6 highlights key differences between the original criteria and the updated criteria.

The approved criteria allow an institution to be grandfathered into its existing peer group, if the institution chooses, while the current criteria are in effect. The Board requested a full review of the criteria in five years. The Coordinating Board also requested that institutional status based on the revised criteria be reported to the Board on a yearly basis beginning July 2014.

Institutions eligible to change peer groups will be given the option of reassignment at that time.

RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

Research universities provide a broad range of undergraduate, graduate and professional programs, place a greater emphasis on research than universities in other groups, and serve their regions, the state, and beyond. Excellent undergraduate education is a central function, but a significantly higher proportion of these institutions' students are enrolled in graduate and professional programs than is the case in Master's, Comprehensive, Doctoral, or Emerging Research universities.

Research universities are expected to:

- Offer a comprehensive range of excellent undergraduate and graduate programs
- Award 200 or more PhD degrees annually, based on a rolling average of two consecutive years of degree production
- Generate at least \$150 million annually in restricted research expenditures, adjusted for inflation, based on a rolling two-year average (a baseline of \$150 million will be adjusted for inflation each subsequent September starting in 2013 using the CPI-U index). As of September 1, 2020, the adjusted threshold was \$193,420,227.

Texas universities that are presently in this category are:

Institution	Fiscal Year	PhD Award Count	Annual Restricted Research Expenditures (current \$)
Texas A&M University (w/ System & Agencies)	2020	743	\$573,657,497
	2019	721	\$421,380,690
	2018	694	\$404,515,032
The University of Texas at Austin	2020	752	\$515,771,491
	2019	784	\$425,672,469
	2018	799	\$421,772,328

EMERGING RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

Emerging Research universities are educational, scientific, engineering, business and cultural resource centers committed to the three-fold mission of teaching, research and service. As universities with extensive educational programs, academic efforts are directed to applied and basic research in selected fields, teaching and scholarship, and creative activities. The universities encourage faculty members to be active researchers/creators in their respective disciplines and to involve both undergraduate and graduate students in research and creative pursuits.

Emerging Research universities are expected to:

- Offer a comprehensive range of excellent undergraduate and graduate programs
- Award at least 30 PhD degrees annually, based on a rolling average of two consecutive years of degree production
- Generate at least 20% of the research universities' criteria for restricted research expenditures (20% of \$150 million, adjusted for inflation), as determined by a rolling two-year average. As of September 1, 2020, the adjusted threshold was \$38,684,045.

Texas universities that are presently in this category are:

Institution	Fiscal Year	PhD Award Count	Annual Restricted Research Expenditures (current \$)
Texas State University	2020	54	\$30,913,314
	2019	66	\$34,914,947
	2018	40	\$35,593,930
Texas Tech University	2020	347	\$56,116,447
	2019	302	\$59,275,406
	2018	302	\$57,600,944
The University of Texas at Arlington	2020	228	\$52,086,621
	2019	203	\$46,008,457
	2018	201	\$45,381,710
The University of Texas at Dallas	2020	245	\$68,413,866
	2019	216	\$64,142,138
	2018	243	\$53,822,907
The University of Texas at El Paso	2020	121	\$49,420,984
	2019	73	\$51,439,709
	2018	79	\$50,568,017

The University of Texas at San Antonio	2020	153	\$56,726,857
	2019	116	\$44,128,961
	2018	138	\$36,820,014
University of Houston	2020	303	\$91,551,332
	2019	303	\$91,334,021
	2018	323	\$85,796,355
University of North Texas	2020	244	\$16,346,249
	2019	236	\$18,182,377
	2018	209	\$17,683,569

DOCTORAL UNIVERSITIES

Doctoral universities are educational and cultural resource institutions committed to the threefold mission of teaching, research and service. With extensive educational programs, academic efforts are directed to both applied and basic research in selected fields, teaching and scholarship, and creative activities. The universities encourage faculty members to be active researchers in their respective disciplines and to involve both undergraduate and graduate students in research and creative pursuits.

Doctoral universities offer a wide range of excellent baccalaureate and master's programs and are committed to graduate education through the doctorate in targeted areas of excellence and/or regional need.

Doctoral Institutions are expected to reach **three of the following four criteria** to be included in this group:

- Award at least 10 PhD degrees annually
- Offer at least 5 doctoral-research/scholarship programs
- Enroll at least 150 doctoral-research/scholarship students
- Generate at least \$2 million annually in restricted research expenditures

Texas universities that are presently in this category are:

Institution	FY 2020 PhD Award Count	FY 2020 Doctoral Research Scholarship Programs	Fall 2020 Doctoral- Research Scholarship Students	FY 2020 Restricted Research Expenditures (current \$)
Sam Houston State University	24	9	350	\$4,546,841
Texas A&M University Commerce	17	6	494	\$1,511,205

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi	17	8	263	\$17,615,912
Texas A&M University Kingsville	18	5	179	\$15,128,090
Texas Southern University	15	7	159	\$3,808,055
Texas Woman's University	104	20	797	\$3,062,906
The University of Texas–Rio Grande Valley	13	8	372	\$8,617,328

COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITIES

Comprehensive universities offer a wide range of excellent baccalaureate programs and are committed to graduate education through the master's degree. Comprehensive universities may also offer doctoral education in targeted program areas to address particular regional needs and/or in disciplines in which the university is nationally recognized for excellence; in most cases, this is in one or two program areas, but may be as many as five.

Comprehensive universities are expected to:

- Provide access to a broad range of excellent baccalaureate and master's programs
- Possibly provide doctoral-research/scholarship-level education in targeted area(s) of excellence and/or regional need
- Provide excellent preparation not only for the workforce, but prepare students for professional schools and graduate education
- Focus on serving the student population within the region

Texas universities that are presently in this category are:

- Lamar University
- Prairie View A&M University
- Stephen F. Austin State University
- Tarleton State University
- Texas A&M International University
- West Texas A&M University

MASTER'S UNIVERSITIES

Access to exemplary undergraduate institutions is critical to students and communities across Texas. Currently, almost 80 percent of public university students are at the undergraduate level. Master's institutions offer a wide range of baccalaureate programs and are committed to graduate education through the master's degree. Excellent undergraduate education is the primary mission of these universities, which generally offer smaller classes than would be expected in other universities.

Master's universities are expected to:

- Concentrate on providing excellent broad-based undergraduate education
- Establish seamless transfer and facilitate success for Associate of Arts and Associate of Science graduates
- Offer smaller undergraduate class sizes
- Provide excellent developmental education and retention programs
- Provide access to critical and other excellent master's programs
- Provide excellent preparation not only for the workforce, but for professional schools and graduate education
- Have a critical role in the preparation of certified teachers
- Provide specialized programs recognized for their excellence Texas universities that are presently in this category are:
 - Angelo State University
 - Midwestern State University
 - Sul Ross State University
 - Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College
 - Texas A&M University-Central Texas
 - Texas A&M University at Galveston
 - Texas A&M University-San Antonio
 - Texas A&M University-Texarkana
 - The University of Texas at Brownsville
 - The University of Texas at Tyler
 - The University of Texas of the Permian Basin
 - University of Houston-Clear Lake
 - University of Houston-Downtown
 - University of Houston-Victoria
 - University of North Texas at Dallas