

## CHAPTER 410

### FALSE ACADEMIC DEGREES OR CERTIFICATES

#### §10801. Definitions

As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings. [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

**1. Accreditation.** "Accreditation" means a formal status granted by an accrediting agency to an institution meeting or exceeding the educational quality criteria as stated in the accrediting agency's publication in order to assess and enhance the educational quality of an institution, ensure consistency in institutional operations, promote institutional improvement and provide for public accountability. [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

**2. Accreditation mill.** "Accreditation mill" means an entity that is created to give the appearance that certain substandard schools or institutions of higher education are legitimately accredited organizations, that is not recognized by any authorized state, professional or national agency and that has few, if any, standards for quality. [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

**3. Diploma mill.** "Diploma mill" means an institution of higher education operating without accreditation or supervision of a state or a nationally recognized professional agency and granting diplomas that are either fraudulent or, because of lack of proper standards, worthless. [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

**4. Degree mill.** "Degree mill" means a school or institution of higher education without accreditation that meets any one of the following conditions:

A. Issues degrees without requiring any student academic work; [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

B. Issues degrees based solely on the student's life experience or portfolio without requiring any college-level work submitted to and evaluated by faculty with appropriate academic degrees from standard accredited institutions; or [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

C. Issues degrees basing more than 50% of required credits on the student's life experience. [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]  
[PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

**5. Duly authorized institution of higher learning.** "Duly authorized institution of higher learning" means an institution that:

A. Has accreditation recognized by the United States Secretary of Education or has the foreign equivalent of such accreditation; [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

B. Has an authorization to operate under the laws of this State; or [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

C. Does not operate in this State and is:

(1) Licensed by the appropriate agency of another state; and

(2) An active applicant for accreditation by an accrediting body recognized by the United States Secretary of Education. [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

[PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

**6. False academic degree.** "False academic degree" means a document such as a degree or certification of completion of a degree, course work or academic credit, including a transcript, that provides evidence or demonstrates completion of a course of instruction or course work that results in

the issuance of an associate or more advanced degree by an institution that is not a duly authorized institution of higher learning.

[PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

**7. Substandard school or institution of higher education.** "Substandard school or institution of higher education" means an entity without accreditation that offers credentials purported to be degrees without requiring the type and level of academic work typically needed to earn a degree and that:

A. Issues degrees without requiring any substantial student academic work; [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

B. Issues degrees based solely on the student's life experience or portfolio without requiring any college-level work submitted to and evaluated by faculty with appropriate academic degrees from accredited institutions; [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

C. Issues degrees without requiring that at least 80% of the student work for which credit is given be college-level work appropriate for the degree; [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

D. Issues degrees using more than 20% of required credits based on the student's life experience; [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

E. Issues degrees using more than 20% of credits transferred from an unaccredited school or institution of higher education; or [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

F. Issues degrees without at least 80% of student work for credit being evaluated by faculty with accredited degrees or issues degrees based on a nationally recognized college-level examination such as College Level Examination Program, Advanced Placement or New York Regents. [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

[PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).

#### **§10802. Unlawful to issue, manufacture, or use false academic degrees; penalty**

**1. False academic degree.** A person may not issue or manufacture a false academic degree. A person who violates this subsection commits a Class C crime.

[PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

**2. Use of false academic degree.** A person may not use a false academic degree:

A. To obtain employment; [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

B. To obtain a promotion or higher compensation in employment; [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

C. To obtain admission to an institution of higher learning; or [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

D. In connection with any business, trade, profession or occupation. [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

A person who violates this subsection commits a Class D crime.

[PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).

#### **§10803. Unlawful to use degree or certificate when course work not completed; penalty**

**1. Unlawful use of degree.** A person may not knowingly use a degree, certificate, diploma, transcript or other document purporting to indicate that the person has completed an organized program

of study or completed courses when the person has not completed the organized program of study or the courses as indicated on the degree, certificate, diploma, transcript or document:

- A. To obtain employment; [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]
- B. To obtain a promotion or higher compensation in employment; [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]
- C. To obtain admission to an institution of higher learning; or [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]
- D. In connection with any business, trade, profession or occupation. [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

[PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

**2. Penalty.** A person who violates this section commits a Class D crime.

[PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).

#### §10804. Consumer protection

The department shall provide, via publicly accessible sites on the Internet, information to protect students, businesses and others from persons, institutions or entities that issue, manufacture or use false academic degrees. This information must include the names of known state, national and international diploma mills, degree mills, accreditation mills and substandard schools or institutions of higher education. [PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2005, c. 429, §1 (NEW).

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