

Call for Comments – August 2016

PROPOSED CHANGES

Key: ~~Delete~~, Add

Policy on Biblical and Theological Studies

(Applicable to Undergraduate Only)

Biblical and theological study is at the heart of the educational experience in an ABHE accredited institution, and ABHE's common commitment is to extensive and serious study of the Word of God as fundamental to a meaningful biblical higher education credential. An understanding of the Word of God and its application in living context is essential to a biblical higher education, regardless of the professional discipline for which a student prepares. While significant content in biblical/theological studies is unequivocal, the method of engagement, delivery, and evaluation of that content are subject to the unique contexts of individual institutions and programs, and ABHE intentionally seeks to maintain flexibility in how the Bible/theology core is fulfilled.

Institutions are at liberty to engage biblical/theological study through (1) discrete courses in Bible or theology, (2) interdisciplinary courses including Bible/theology content, (3) competency-based outcomes demonstrating biblical/theological knowledge, or (4) other means of demonstrating a substantial acquisition of Bible/theology knowledge at the level required for the designated credential as specified in Standard 11a. Note that Standard 11a specifies *minimum* expectations for all programs; specific programs and institutional outcomes may necessitate additional engagement in biblical-theological study.

Institutions that elect to fulfill some or all of the Bible/theology requirement through means other than courses clearly identified by course description and content as biblical or theological must demonstrate that the requirements have been fulfilled through equivalent coursework and/or learning experiences. It is the responsibility of the institution to document equivalence to the satisfaction of the Commission on Accreditation.

Definitions:

Biblical Studies Course

A biblical studies course is one that incorporates major engagement with the biblical text. For such a course, the syllabus will clearly indicate that the major thrust of the course is direct study of the Bible. The Bible will be identified as the main text; reading assignments will be heavily and primarily focused on the Bible; assigned papers will require significant biblical study, interpretation, and/or application; tests will be designed primarily to determine a student's facility for interpreting and applying biblical principles; and the final grade awarded will reflect the degree to which a student demonstrates mastery in interpreting and applying Scripture. Hence,

course work such as archaeology, ethics, geography, and hermeneutics would be classified as Bible only if it satisfies the above requirements.

Theological Studies Course

The syllabus for such a course will clearly indicate that the major thrust of the course is theological. Course work may include theological studies emanating from an historical, systematic, or biblical perspective. Hence, courses such as ethics, contemporary theology, denominational theology, pastoral theology, and philosophy would be classified as theological. Courses that summarize Christian doctrine with a view to relating it convincingly to the present, or historical theology, i.e., an examination of the historical development of various doctrines, would also be classified as theological.

Interdisciplinary Bible-Related Course

An interdisciplinary Bible-related course applies the Bible's teaching to various practical areas of study. The syllabus for a given course will clearly indicate that the course content is built on related biblical and theological truth which is then applied to the subject matter, skill, principles, or practice of a professional discipline. Hence, courses such as Business Principles and Practices, Ethics, Teaching Bible, Educational Philosophy, Communications Theory, The Bible as Literature, Principles of Leadership, Human Resource Management, and Economic Theory may be counted as Interdisciplinary Bible-related courses if a major focus of the course is clearly the integration of the Bible with the discipline.

Requirements

~~**For one- and two-year traditional programs:** Twelve semester credit hours (18 quarter hours) of biblical/theological studies courses are required.~~

~~**For three-year Canadian pre-seminary baccalaureate degree programs:** Twenty-four semester credit hours (36 quarter hours) of biblical/theological studies are required.~~

~~**For four- or five-year traditional baccalaureate programs:** Thirty semester credit hours (45 quarter hours) of biblical/theological studies are required.~~

~~**For programs leading to church vocational ministries:** Thirty semester credit hours (45 quarter hours) of biblical/theological studies are required.~~

~~**For non-church related vocational programs:** Thirty semester credit hours (45 quarter hours) of biblical/theological studies are required, but nine of these may be interdisciplinary Bible-related courses.~~

~~For nontraditional degree completion programs culminating in a baccalaureate degree that lead to a church vocational ministry: Thirty semester credit hours (45 quarter hours) of biblical/theological studies are required.~~

~~For nontraditional degree completion programs culminating in a baccalaureate degree that lead to non-career specific majors: Eighteen semester credit hours (27 quarter hours) of biblical/theological studies are required.~~

Alternative Bible-Theology Requirement

Completion of 50% or more of the Bible-theology requirement through means other than Biblical Studies courses and/or Theological Studies courses as defined above constitutes an alternative Bible-theology requirement. ~~Programs that do not meet these minimal requirements~~ Institutions must file a substantive change request with the Commission on Accreditation ~~using the guidelines on the following page to demonstrate a satisfactory alternative~~ and secure Commission on Accreditation approval before implementing an alternative Bible-theology requirement. The institution will address the following questions in its substantive change proposal to the Commission on Accreditation:

Policy	Question
Any proposed alternative must include direct study of the Bible.	Does the proposed alternative include direct study of the Bible? If so, how is this quantified?
Any proposed alternative must contain courses and/or assignments that require significant biblical study by students.	Does the proposed alternative require courses or assignments that require significant biblical study by students?
Any proposed alternative must provide the student with skills in biblical interpretation and application.	Does the proposed alternative provide the student with skills in Biblical interpretation and application?
Any proposed alternative must include ways for the student to demonstrate skills in Biblical interpretation and application.	How does the student demonstrate mastery in interpreting and applying Scripture in the proposed alternative?
Any proposed alternative must fulfill the student learning outcome goals related to Biblical and theological studies.	How does the student satisfy the institution's stated outcome goals related to its Biblical and theological studies curricular component in the proposed alternative?
Any proposed alternative must result in the achievement of equivalent outcomes over time.	Can the institution demonstrate that student achievement of outcomes in the alternative program is equivalent to achievement of outcomes in the regular program?
Institutions must be clear about how the proposed alternative compares to their regular program or to a standard 30-credit program.	How do the course requirements in the proposed alternative compare to the course requirements in the regular program or to the 30-semester credit ABHE standard?

Policy	Question
Proposed alternatives should only be used in special cases.	Approximately what proportion of students at the institution will be taking the proposed alternative program?

Does the proposed alternative include direct study of the Bible? If so, how is this quantified or demonstrated to be substantial engagement in biblical study equivalent to the credit hours specified?

Does the proposed alternative provide the student with skills in biblical interpretation and application?

How does the student demonstrate mastery in interpreting and applying Scripture in the proposed alternative?

How will the institution verify that student achievement of stated outcomes in biblical and theological studies is achieved?

How do the credit hours or credit hour equivalents in Bible-theology in the proposed alternative compare to the credit hour requirements in Standard 11a?

[Applicable Standards: 11a] [Applicable Policy: Policy on Substantive Change]

Adopted October 1990; Revised February 1994, 2004, 2009, **PROPOSED August 2016**