# ABHE Commission on Accreditation Manual
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Biblical Higher Education

In the late nineteenth century, a movement began that has had a profound influence on evangelical Protestantism. Its impact has been felt in every part of the world, producing a large percentage of North American evangelical missionaries and serving as a primary educational enterprise for local church development. This religious development was the Bible institute movement, which later evolved into the Bible College movement.

From the humble beginnings of the Missionary Training Institute (Nyack College) in New York City in 1882 to the launching of such schools as Moody Bible Institute in 1886 and Toronto Bible School (Tyndale University College & Seminary) in 1894, the Bible college movement has proliferated throughout North America.

More than 120 years after the first Bible school was started, there are more than 1200 Bible schools and colleges in the United States and Canada. Approximately 200 of these institutions have a relationship with the Association for Biblical Higher Education, either through accreditation or affiliation. Many of these institutions still bear a resemblance to their forbears. For example, the current curriculum of undergraduate institutions accredited by ABHE still includes a core of biblical and theological studies, along with general studies (liberal arts) and professional studies. Course work is supplemented with ministry field education and service learning opportunities through which students apply what they have learned in the classroom. Furthermore, the ethos of these institutions can still be described as academically respectable, evangelical, disciplined, and focused on spiritual and ministry formation.

Most institutions of biblical higher education offer programs in biblical studies, pastoral ministry, Christian education, cross-cultural missions, and music. Many also provide programs in elementary and perhaps secondary education, youth ministries, urban ministries, and business administration. Others offer specialized programs in such areas as deaf ministries, social work, aviation, and other technology-oriented fields. Increasing numbers of biblical higher education institutions offer curricula across a broad spectrum of academic and professional disciplines.

Institutions out of the Bible college tradition continue to earn additional forms of accreditation or (in Canada) provincial university-recognition. Many of the longer-standing institutions now hold membership with the Association for Biblical Higher Education, as well as one of the six U.S. regional accrediting associations. A growing number of these institutions have also established their own seminaries and graduate divisions. Their library holdings have expanded. Their administrators and faculty have earned appropriate graduate degrees, engaged in research and writing, and participate in professional associations in their designated fields. In short, institutions of biblical higher education have achieved widespread and growing credibility and currency within the larger academic community.

One of the most significant developments in the growth of the Bible college movement was the founding of the Accrediting Association of Bible Institutes and Bible Colleges in 1947. The name was shortened in 1957 to the Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges. It was changed in 1973 to the American Association of Bible Colleges before being changed back to the Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges in 1994 to more accurately represent the geographic purview of the Association that included institutions in Canada, the United States and related territories. In 2004, the name was changed to the Association for Biblical Higher Education in order to reflect its expansion of scope with graduate education accreditation and programmatic accreditation and in order to address its expansion of services to include affiliate institutions. Adoption of a new Constitution and Bylaws in 2009 designates the organization’s present name as: The Association for Biblical Higher Education in Canada and the United States.
Recognition

The Association for Biblical Higher Education’s Commission on Accreditation is recognized as a national, faith-based accrediting agency by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), the successor of the Council on Postsecondary Education (COPA), and subsequently the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary accreditation (CORPA). The agency’s official scope of CHEA recognition is as follows: Institutions and programs in the United States, Canada, and related territories that offer certificates, diplomas, associate, baccalaureate or graduate degrees aimed at preparing students for Christian ministries through Biblical, church-vocational and general studies.

ABHE’s Commission on Accreditation is also listed by the United States Department of Education as a recognized national, institutional accrediting agency. The agency’s official scope of USDE recognition (i.e., for the purpose of participation in U.S. Higher Education Act financial aid programs) is as follows: The accreditation and pre-accreditation (“Candidate for Accreditation”) of Bible colleges and institutes in the United States offering undergraduate programs through both campus-based instruction and distance education. USDE recognition extends as well to ABHE’s candidate (pre-accredited) institutions. The Commission’s accredited and pre-accredited member institutions are recognized by the Department of Justice, the Veteran’s Administration, and other relevant federal agencies in the United States.

ABHE is also recognized by the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE), the official theological education partner entity of the World Evangelical Alliance. ICETE is a global community comprising eight continental/regional networks of theological schools.

Incorporated in the State of Illinois as a not-for-profit corporation, the Association is exempt from income tax under the provisions of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.

ABHE is governed by its member institutions through a delegate assembly which elects members of both a Board of Directors and a Commission on Accreditation at an annual business meeting. Accrediting decisions are made by the Commission on Accreditation. The Association’s public accountability is underscored by the requirement that both the Board of Directors and the Commission on Accreditation must include public representatives among its members. The Commission is administered by a full-time Director with the support of additional Association and Commission professional and support staff.

Institutional Accreditation

The ABHE Commission on Accreditation's process of accreditation involves three stages whereby institutions proceed from applicant to candidate and finally to accredited status.

Applicant Status is a pre-membership status granted to those institutions that meet the Commission’s Conditions of Eligibility and that possess such qualities as might provide a basis for achieving candidate status within a maximum of five years. Applicant institutions are required to submit annual reports demonstrating progress toward candidate status. During year four, an institutional self-study report and an institutional planning document are to be submitted to the Commission office prior to an evaluation team visit regarding the institutional readiness for candidate status.
Candidate Status is a pre-accredited status granted to those institutions that show promise of achieving accreditation within a maximum of five years. Candidate institutions are required to submit annual progress reports demonstrating progress toward accreditation. During year three, self-study materials (including a compliance document, assessment plan, and a planning document) are to be submitted to the Commission office prior to an evaluation team visit regarding the institution’s readiness for initial accreditation.

Accredited status is granted to those institutions that substantially meet or exceed the Commission’s Institutional [or programmatic] Standards and give evidence of continual striving toward excellence. During year five, an institutional self-study report and an institutional planning document are to be submitted to the Commission office prior to an evaluation team visit regarding the reaffirmation of the institution’s accredited status. Once reaffirmed, the institution will repeat the reaffirmation process every ten years.

A detailed description of the accreditation process may be found in the policies and procedures section of this Manual.

[Policies to Reference: Colleges where the Primary Institutional Language is other than English]

Programmatic Accreditation

The ABHE Commission on Accreditation provides programmatic accreditation for institutions whose missions include programs outside the scope of biblical higher education. Nonetheless, these institutions offer specific programs that meet the requirements of biblical higher education and lead to credentials in biblical and theological studies as well as specific ministry related careers. Programmatic accreditation indicates that specific program offerings meet the standards of excellence in biblical higher education. A programmatic accreditation review requires that the institution offering the programs meet certain conditions of eligibility. In the United States, these conditions include a requirement that the institution holds institutional accreditation with a recognized accrediting body. In Canada, the institution must present evidence of appropriate governmental approval, prior institutional accreditation with ABHE, or a formal affiliation with a recognized Canadian University. Institutions seeking programmatic accreditation must demonstrate that the programs to be considered are included in the institution’s assessment and planning processes. They must also present documentation that the programs are in compliance with the ABHE programmatic accreditation standards. Programmatic accreditation is granted for a period of ten years. While the Commission monitors the programs offered on an annual basis, programs are subject to the renewal of accreditation on a ten year cycle.

Affiliation with ABHE

Membership status in ABHE is limited to accredited and pre-accredited institutions. Affiliate status is available to credible institutions of biblical higher education seeking to benefit from ready access to ABHE services and networking but presently lacking either readiness or inclination to seek ABHE accreditation. Institutions may be approved by the Board of Directors as ABHE Affiliates upon documentation that they meet the following Criteria/Conditions of Eligibility:

- Agreement with the ABHE Tenets of Faith
- Evidence that the institution is operating legally within the parameters of the particular province/state relative to faith-based post secondary institutions
- Recognition (corporate identity) as a non-profit organization
Presence of a publicly stated/board approved mission statement that has a biblical/ministry formation focus
Commitment to offer education at a post secondary level
Curricular offerings, degrees, and institutional nomenclature consistent with North American higher educational norms
Human, educational, and financial resources commensurate with institutional mission and curricular offerings
Minimum of a two-year history with an identifiable external governing board, administration, faculty, and student body
A letter of reference from an administrator/faculty member of an ABHE member institution or from an ABHE professional staff person affirming the institution’s integrity, credibility, and compatibility with ABHE’s purpose and values

Commitment to accurate disclosure of accredited status, according to the following stipulations:
- an affiliate institution must not portray itself, verbally or in print, as an accredited member of ABHE;
- an affiliate institution must not claim accreditation through an agency lacking recognition by the U.S. Department of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation;
- affiliate institutions must use the following disclosure statement: [Institution Name] is an affiliate institution of the Association for Biblical Higher Education. As such, it participates in and contributes to collegial and professional development activities of the association. Affiliate status does not, however, constitute, imply, or presume ABHE accredited status at present or in the future.
- affiliate institutions must notify the ABHE office promptly regarding any changes in directory information (i.e., website, mailing address, instructional location(s), leadership)
- Submission of annual affiliate dues; institutions whose annual dues are more than 60 days delinquent will be dropped from the affiliate roster.
- Institutions that have been dropped from affiliate status may seek reinstatement after 3 years.
Philosophy of Accreditation

ABHE offers accreditation to institutions that are in accord with the Association’s Tenets of Faith and that have mission statements appropriate to biblical higher education. Accreditation is granted to institutions that satisfactorily demonstrate substantial compliance with the Association’s Conditions of Eligibility and its Standards for Accreditation.

Although accreditation signifies substantial compliance with the Association’s Standards, it is designed to foster ongoing systematic self-study with the goal of continuous institutional improvement. ABHE accredited institutions are expected to affirm, updating as needed, their statements of mission; examine the evidence for the achievement of their respective missions and goals; identify areas of strength, weakness, opportunity, or threat; and develop plans to address issues identified. The ultimate goal of this process is to better equip institutions to prepare students for a life of service to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.


Principle for Accreditation

An institution for Biblical higher education must demonstrate that it is substantially achieving and can be reasonably expected to continue to achieve its mission and the Standards for Accreditation. It must also demonstrate its commitment to ongoing institutional development.

When the standard requires a policy statement, the policy will be 1) expressed in writing, 2) approved by appropriate bodies, 3) distributed to appropriate personnel, and 4) subject to periodic evaluation. Failure to meet these four conditions will constitute partial or non-compliance with the standard.

[Applicable Policies: Statement on Academic Quality]
Comprehensive Integrated Standards for Institutional Accreditation
(Revised April 2013)
Institutional Accreditation
Conditions of Eligibility

The Committee on Applicant and Candidate Status of the Association’s Commission on Accreditation will grant applicant status to those institutions that (1) document compliance with the Association’s Conditions of Eligibility and (2) appear, in the committee’s judgment, to be able to achieve candidate status within a maximum of five years.

To be considered for applicant status by the committee, an institution must provide the Commission with (1) an official statement from its chief executive officer reflecting a decision of its board of control to pursue accreditation, (2) a completed application form providing both essential data and a trend analysis of that data, (3) an official statement from the chief executive officer reflecting a board of control decision to affirm support of the ABHE Tenets of Faith, and (4) a document indicating compliance with the following Conditions of Eligibility.

1. **Authorization.** An institution must have authorization from the appropriate governmental agency (if required) to operate as an educational institution and to grant all degrees, certificates, and diplomas that it awards.

2. **Institutional Mission.** An institution must have a clear statement of mission as well as formally adopted and widely publicized institutional goals that are in accord with the association’s definition of Bible institution education.

3. **Governance.** An institution must have an external governing board of at least five members that has the authority to carry out the mission, goals, and objectives of the institution.

4. **Chief executive officer.** An institution must employ a chief executive officer whose major responsibility is to the institution and who possesses appropriate authority.

5. **Academic Programs.** An institution must offer one or more educational programs that are at least two academic years in length and are consistent with the mission of the institution and appropriate to higher education.

6. **Catalog.** An institution must have available to students and the public a current and accurate catalog setting forth the institution’s governance, mission, institutional goals, specific objectives, programs and courses, resources, admissions and standards, academic offerings, rules and regulations for conduct, degree completion requirements, full-and part-time faculty rosters with faculty degrees, fees and other charges, refund policies, a policy defining satisfactory academic progress, graduation rates, rate of recent graduate employment in program related occupations, and other items related to attending, transferring to, or withdrawing from the institution. Claims regarding educational effectiveness must be supported by appropriate data.

7. **Learning resources.** An institution must have learning resources to support the courses, programs, and degrees offered.

8. **Faculty qualifications.** An institution must have at least one qualified faculty member for each major offered.

9. **Admissions policy.** An institution must have an admissions policy that is compatible with its stated objectives.
10. **Student body.** An institution must have students enrolled in and pursuing its educational programs.

11. **Biblical/theological studies.** An institution must meet, in all its programs, the minimum requirement for biblical/theological studies as specified in the Criteria for Accreditation.

12. **General studies.** An institution must meet, in all its programs, the minimum requirement for general studies as specified in the Criteria for Accreditation.

13. **Christian service program.** An institution must require that students participate in a program of Christian service.

14. **Program completion.** An institution must have graduated at least one class in its principal program by the time of the committee’s decision regarding applicant status.

15. **Institutional stability.** An institution must have a pattern of stability in enrollment, administration, faculty, and finances.

16. **Potential for growth and development.** An institution must possess the capacity for growth and development.

17. **Financial base.** An institution must have a financial base indicating that the institution can achieve its mission and objectives within a balanced budget and at a safe level of debt.

18. **Income allocation.** An institution must devote substantially all of its generated income to the support of its educational purposes and programs.

19. **Annual audit.** An institution must have financial records that receive an annual, opinioned external audit.

20. **Agency disclosure.** An institution must agree to disclose to the association any and all such information as it may require to carry out its evaluation and accreditation functions.

21. **Compliance.** An institution must commit itself to comply with the association’s Criteria for Accreditation, either current or as hereafter modified, during the period of its affiliation.

22. **Public Disclosure.** An institution must attest in writing that it understands and agrees that the association may, at its discretion, make known to any agency or member of the public the nature of any action, positive or negative, regarding the institution’s status with the Association.

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The institution has a clearly written mission appropriate to biblical higher education as well as its own specific educational role. The mission statement serves as the foundation for institutional operations, programs, and activities.

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A clear mission statement, developed and periodically reviewed by broad representation from all sectors of the institution and ratified by the governing board.
2. A mission statement published widely among both internal and external constituencies.
3. A mission statement that guides faculty, staff, administration, and governing boards in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, program development, and educational outcomes.
4. Clearly articulated and publicized institutional goals that directly relate to the mission statement.
5. Clearly articulated and publicized objectives for each educational program that support institutional goals.
Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 2
STUDENT LEARNING, INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS & PLANNING

The institution demonstrates that it is accomplishing and can continue to accomplish its mission, goals and program objectives and improve performance through a regular and comprehensive system of assessment and planning. Central to this plan is the systematic and specific assessment of student learning and development through a strategy that measures the student's knowledge, skills and competencies against institutional and programmatic goals.

2a. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING AND PLANNING

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. The identification of appropriate inter-related student outcomes in the context of institutional goals, program objectives and course objectives.
2. A shared commitment on the part of students, faculty, staff, and administration to achieve these stated outcomes.
3. A written outcomes assessment plan that articulates multiple means to validate expected learning outcomes.
4. Criteria appropriate to the higher education credential to be awarded for evaluating success with respect to student achievement.
5. Validation, as a result of using the outcomes assessment plan, that students are achieving the stated outcomes relative to institutional goals, program objectives and course objectives.
6. A process whereby these outcome measurements lead to the improvement of teaching and learning.
7. The ongoing provision of reliable information to the public regarding student achievement, including graduation and employment rates.

2b. ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND PLANNING

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A written assessment document that describes continuous, structured processes involving the total institution.
2. Meaningful analysis of assessment data and use of results by appropriate constituencies for the purpose of improvement.
3. Substantial evidence issuing from its assessment processes that the institution is effective in fulfilling its mission and achieving its goals and objectives.
4. A planning process that is systematic and ongoing and involves representatives of the various institutional constituencies.
5. A planning process for the improvement of the institution’s goals and services.
6. A plan that reflects the institution’s vision and is based on assessment results and realistic resource projections.
7. A system for monitoring institutional progress in achieving planning goals.
8. The ongoing provision of reliable information to the public regarding its performance.
Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 3
INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

The institution is a model of Christian ethical behavior, both internally and externally. The institution demonstrates integrity in all of its practices and relationships, with strict adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. Institutional publications (including the catalog, see Condition of Eligibility #6), statements and advertising that describe accurately and fairly the institution, its operations, its programs, its transfer credit policies including the criteria for transfer credit award decisions, it’s articulation agreements, and its effectiveness claims.
2. Student, faculty, and staff handbooks that describe and govern various institutional relationships with those constituencies, including appropriate grievance procedures.
3. Policies and practices for the resolution of internal conflicts within the institution’s constituency.
4. An institutional culture that fosters respect for the background and perspectives of the community.
5. Equitable and consistent treatment of constituencies in all areas including student discipline, student evaluation, grievances, faculty promotion, administrative review, compensation, and human resource management.
6. Honest and open communication regarding compliance with agencies such as accrediting, licensing, and governing bodies.
7. Fulfillment of all applicable standards, policies, and requirements of the ABHE Commission on Accreditation.
8. Integrity in all financial matters.

[Policies to Reference: Policy Concerning the Conferring of Honorary Doctoral Degrees; Policy on Ethical Practices; Policy on Falsification of Data; Principles of Good Practice in Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status]
Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 4
AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE

The institution is legally constituted as a nonprofit organization authorized by its state or province to operate as an educational institution and grant all degrees and/or offer credentials. The institution has a governing board with legal and fiduciary responsibility to exercise appropriate oversight over institutional integrity, policies, resource development, and ongoing operations.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. Evidence that the institution is operating legally in its state or province.
2. A constitution and bylaws that clearly and comprehensively provide a basis for institutional administration and governance.
3. A governing board that exercises legal power to establish and review policies of the institution.
4. Board membership that excludes all employees except the chief executive officer.
5. A governing board with elected officers that do not include the chief executive officer.
6. A governing board that assists in generating resources needed to sustain and improve the institution.
7. A conflict of interest policy for board members that addresses issues such as financial interests, contracts, employment, family, or other personal interests in the institution.
8. A governing board appropriate in size to operate efficiently and sufficiently diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender (where theologically appropriate), and professional competencies to represent the constituency.
9. A governing board that is sufficiently autonomous to protect the integrity of the institution.
10. A procedure in place for the assessment of the effectiveness of board members.
11. A process for orienting and developing new board members, and providing updates for current members on issues relative to mission, organization, finances, and programs.
12. A chief executive officer appointed and evaluated by the board, to provide administrative leadership for the institution.
13. Board policies and practices that restrain the board from individual and/or collective involvement in institutional administration.
14. A board rotation system that encourages new members.
Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 5
ADMINISTRATION

The institution has a core of administrators that brings together its various resources and allocates them to accomplish institutional goals by implementing policies and structures in collaboration with appropriate constituencies.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A chief executive officer (whether the president or another), whose primary employment/vocational responsibility is to the institution and who is responsible to the board in leading the institution toward the accomplishment of its mission.
2. A chief executive officer with the combination of academic background and professional training appropriate to the institution’s mission.
3. An organizational structure appropriate to the size and scope of the institution.
4. Administrative leaders with appropriate education, skills, and resources necessary to discharge their duties.
5. Clear documentation in regard to organizational structure, encompassing all units and roles.
6. Complete, accurate, and securely maintained administrative records.
7. A process for review and enhancement of the performance of administrators.
Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 6
INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

The institution has the human, financial, physical, and technological resources needed to achieve its mission and has implemented policies and procedures to manage these resources effectively.

[Policies to Reference: Policy on Institutions Sponsored by Other Organization]

6a. HUMAN RESOURCES

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. An adequate number of qualified institutional personnel to provide basic services to students, faculty, and administration.
2. Written policies and procedures for hiring, promoting, and dismissal of institutional personnel based on principles of fairness and regard for individual rights.
3. Demonstrated commitment to provide adequate resources for employee welfare including professional growth and development.
4. Policies and practices that support employee diversity appropriate to the cultural context.
5. An organizational climate that encourages job satisfaction, collegiality, and respect among personnel.
6. An administrative handbook that describes organizational structures and job responsibilities.

6b. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A consistent record of financial stability as documented by external, opinioned audits available to the public.
2. A budgeting process that serves as an effective instrument of financial control.
3. The cultivation of multiple revenue streams sufficient to enable the realization of institutional goals.
4. Adequate resources to ensure achievement of educational goals.
5. Risk management policies and procedures sufficient to safeguard assets.
6. Appropriate board oversight of financial management to meet public accountability obligations.
7. Sufficient financial reserves to enable an effective response to unforeseen crises.
8. Adequate internal controls to safeguard assets and protect personnel from accusations of wrongdoing.
9. Evidence that institutional planning informs the budgeting process.
6c. PHYSICAL RESOURCES

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. Evidence that identified physical resource needs are addressed in the planning process.
2. Sufficient personnel and procedures in place to provide a well maintained and clean physical plant.
3. Facilities that are operated in compliance with applicable health, safety and disability access codes.
4. Appropriate provisions for the protection of facilities and personnel from threat of harm or loss.
5. Owned or leased facilities that assure continuity of educational offerings.
6. Evidence that facilities, equipment, and supplies are adequate to support the institutional mission and to achieve the educational goals.

6d. TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. Sufficient technology and use of that technology to enhance the institution’s educational and operational effectiveness.
2. Systematic allocation of resources to maintain and expand technology.
3. Ongoing training for technical personnel and users of information systems.
4. Clearly stated policies and procedures regarding technological resources, services, and security.
Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 7
ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

The institution has developed and implemented an enrollment management plan that is consistent with its mission and addresses issues of recruitment, admissions, financial aid and retention.

7a. RECRUITMENT

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. Recruitment strategies that target students whose spiritual commitment, goals and interests are consistent with the institutional mission.
2. Accurate and sufficient recruitment information to enable prospective students to make informed decisions.
3. The allocation of resources and authority to support effective recruitment efforts.
4. Recruitment that reflects ethnic, cultural, and gender patterns and commitments relevant to the institution’s constituency.

[Applicable Policies: Principles of Good Practice in Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status]

7b. ADMISSIONS

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. Admissions requirements and procedures that are clearly communicated to prospective students and applied consistently in the admissions process.
2. Evaluation procedures that reasonably ensure admitted students have attained the requisite educational level and possess the ability to successfully achieve their educational goals.
3. Published policies and procedures related to transfer credit and prior learning, including public disclosure of criteria used to evaluate transfer credit and a list of institutions or programs with which the institution has established articulation agreements.
4. Systematic procedures for identifying students who are not adequately prepared for their desired level of study.

[Policies to Reference: Policy on Transfer and the Award of Academic Credit; Policy on Validating Credits Earned at Unaccredited Institutions]
7c. FINANCIAL AID

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. Accurate financial aid information and counseling in regard to scholarships, grants, loans and refunds.
2. Evidence that financial aid practices meet regulatory requirements.
3. Financial aid decision-making procedures that are timely and equitable.

[Applicable Policies: Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV]

7d. RETENTION

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. Resources and services sufficient to address the needs of at-risk students.
2. The development of services to improve student retention.
3. A functioning assessment process that measures student retention, attrition, and completion rates, and that stimulates improvement.
Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 8
STUDENT SERVICES

The institution provides services that contribute to the holistic development and care of students and that are appropriate to the level of education and delivery system.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A commitment to the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development of students that is consistent with biblical higher education.
2. The organization and delivery of student services that are appropriately aligned with the institution’s mission and culture. Services that meet the needs of students, regardless of location or instructional delivery system.
3. Services that address diverse student needs, abilities, and cultures.
4. Qualified professionals empowered to supervise and provide student services and programs.
5. Leadership development facilitated by curricular and/or co-curricular programs that are integrated with the educational objectives.
6. A regular system of assessing needs, experiences, and levels of student satisfaction in order to improve services.
7. Opportunities for students to provide input in institutional decision-making.
8. Published procedures for and records of addressing student complaints and grievances.
Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 9
FACULTY

The institution maintains a faculty committed to its mission and qualified academically and spiritually to facilitate student learning within their disciplines and to contribute to the development of a biblical worldview. The institution fosters an academic climate that stimulates the exchange of ideas, encourages professional development, and promotes the well-being of faculty.

9a. FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS, DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A spiritually mature faculty who engage in modeling and mentoring relationships with students.
2. Faculty members who possess earned degrees from institutions accredited by agencies recognized by either the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or the U. S. Department of Education or by the appropriate provincial government. (Exceptions to faculty credential requirements should be limited and validated by personal vitae.)
3. Undergraduate faculty who have earned a minimum of a master’s degree and teach an area of documented expertise.
4. Graduate faculty who have an earned terminal or appropriate professional doctoral degree and teach in an area of documented expertise.
5.appropriate documentation of its faculty’s academic preparation including official transcripts, official documentation of professional experience, performance and technical competencies, published documents, and other certifications and qualifications.
6. A faculty handbook that delineates appropriate policies and procedures, including published criteria for the recruitment, appointment, teaching load, promotion, grievance processes, and termination of faculty based on principles of fairness and regard for the rights of individuals.
7. Systems for evaluating and improving the pedagogical effectiveness of all faculty.
8. Evidence of faculty contribution to student learning, scholarship, institutional development, ministry, and community service.
9. Adequate support for the professional advancement and development of its faculty including the pursuit of terminal degrees.
10. A published statement of academic freedom and adherence to its principles within the context of the institutional mission.
11. A faculty that is representative of the diversity of the constituency consistent with institutional theological distinctives.
9b. FACULTY DECISION MAKING

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A core faculty of sufficient size and expertise, committed to the fulfillment of the institutional mission, and responsible for the quality of its academic functions.
2. An academic structure organized in departments, divisions, or alternate approaches appropriate to the size and complexity of the institution.
3. A process of faculty appointment that involves related academic and administrative personnel.
4. A clear and publicized statement of faculty-adopted requirements for graduation.
5. A process that involves faculty approval of candidates for graduation.
6. A faculty that is involved in academic-related decision-making processes especially related to admissions criteria, curriculum, student life, and graduation requirements.
Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 10
LIBRARY AND OTHER LEARNING RESOURCES

The institution ensures the availability of learning resources and services of appropriate form, range, depth, and currency to support the curricular offerings and meet student and faculty needs.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A written learning resource purpose statement, consistent with the institutional mission and outcomes.
2. Appropriate written policies and procedures relating to the management of library and other learning resources.
3. Sufficient funding, staff, and practices to procure and maintain needed learning resources and services for all instructional modalities used by the institution.
4. The availability of library services (reference, technical, and circulation) and other means of support to meet research and information needs.
5. Promotion to enhance student and faculty awareness of resources and services available.
6. Participation in library networks and documentation of cooperative arrangements that involve the use of other institutions’ resources.
7. Joint participation of librarians and faculty in curriculum planning, the analysis of resource adequacy, the selection of resource materials, and the development of library policy.
8. Policies, procedures, and facilities that ensure access to and security of learning resources.
9. Effective leadership by a credentialed director who has faculty status and who normally reports to the chief academic officer.
10. Effective collaboration between the librarians and information technology personnel.
11. Evaluation of learning resource utilization by the learning community.
12. Curricular requirements, instruction, and reference services designed to teach information literacy skills to the learning community.
Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 11
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

The institution’s academic programs are appropriate to the achievement of its mission and to the level of educational programs offered, with some programs oriented specifically to full-time vocational ministry but all programs enabling students to achieve a biblical worldview.

11a. CURRICULUM

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. Evidence that academic programs exhibit the content and rigor characteristic of higher education, and a level of analytical research and communication skills needed for life-long learning commensurate with the level of education.
2. A written statement of expected student outcomes for each academic program and a coherent program of study to achieve these objectives.
3. Evidence that the integration of curricular components enable students to achieve a biblical worldview.
4. A curriculum taught with sensitivity to the cultural context in which the students minister.
5. A process of regular review by faculty to ensure that curricular objectives for each academic program are being realized.
6. Evidence that course sequence progresses from foundational to advanced studies appropriate to the degree.
7. A curriculum content and level of education appropriate to the degree and nomenclature being offered.
8. Appropriate distinctions between levels of study within the context of student classifications, faculty qualifications, and learning methodologies.

Relative to this standard, the undergraduate programs of an accredited institution are characterized by . . .

9. A Bible/theology component equivalent to 30 semester hours, 9 of which may be in interdisciplinary Bible related courses for a non-church related baccalaureate, 18 semester hours of Bible/theology for a non-traditional degree completion program and 12 semester hours of Bible/theology for a one- or two-year program.
10. A core of general education studies representative of the breadth of general studies and equivalent to 36 semester hours for a baccalaureate degree or 18 semester hours for an associate degree.
11. A core of professional studies equivalent to a minimum of 18 semester hours (baccalaureate degrees only) and selected to equip students for professional positions.
12. A minimum of 120 semester hours for a baccalaureate degree, and a minimum of 60 semester hours for an associate’s degree.
13. Professional programs requiring significant practicum experiences in the area of specialization.
Relative to this standard, the graduate programs of an accredited institution are characterized by . . .

14. Curricula and resources to support programs that foster progressively more advanced student educational achievement and more effective ministry/leadership than undergraduate education.
15. Curricula providing for the development of research and independent thinking at an advanced level and/or appropriate high level professional practice.
16. Pre-requisite or curricular biblical/theological studies to ensure that students develop and demonstrate significant ability to think biblically in relation to their academic or professional disciplines.
17. Appropriate pre-requisite and/or curricular requirements to ensure that students are capable of pursuing advanced studies in the discipline.
18. A learning environment that cultivates critical thinking, theological reflection, spiritual formation, and effective leadership/ministry practice.
19. Appropriate practicum or internship experiences in the area of specialization for all professional programs.

11b. MINISTRY FORMATION PROGRAM

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution offering undergraduate curricula (and graduate curricula that feature field education) is characterized by . . .

1. A culture and programs that promote development of effective witnesses and servants in the church and the world at large.
2. An educational philosophy in which ministry formation is viewed as an integral part of the student's education.
3. A program of supervision that provides an adequate basis for evaluating and guiding students in the pursuit of their professional goals.
4. A ministry formation program coordinated by a director normally with faculty status and implemented under the supervision of faculty.
5. Evidence that the program is adequately staffed and financially supported.
6. A system of regular program review and assessment of outcomes that results in program improvement.
7. Evidence that academic credit given for ministry, if awarded, is warranted.

11c. ACADEMIC PATTERNS AND PROCEDURES

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. An academic advising system that guides the student from matriculation to selection of a program and graduation from that program.
2. An academic calendar that considers regional higher educational patterns, and meets state, provincial, or federal regulations.
3. The award of academic credit commensurate with normative academic and/or governmental definitions that may be based upon an intended learning outcome.
4. A system of accurate and secure record keeping consistent with state, provincial and/or federal regulations.
5. A system of grading and associated policies and procedures that reflects integrity, ensures fairness and consistency, conforms to higher education norms, and facilitates transportability of students’ academic credits.

11d. ALTERNATIVE ACADEMIC PATTERNS

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution’s academic programs utilizing off-campus locations, distance education, or alternative academic patterns are characterized by . . .

1. Objectives consistent with the institution’s mission.
2. An intention to extend the accessibility of the institution’s learning opportunities.
3. Clearly defined learning outcomes that are designed, approved, administered and evaluated under established institutional procedures.
4. Standards for quality of instruction and academic rigor appropriate to higher education.
5. Accessible and adequate learning resources.
6. Adequate staffing, facilities, and technology to support the programs.
7. Appropriate measures required of students participating in distance and/or correspondence education to ensure that the student receiving credit is in fact the person completing the work.

[Policies to Reference: Alternative Academic Programs and Online Distance Education Best Practices (WCET); Guidelines for Sharing Online Courses]
Programmatic Accreditation Standards
(Revised April 2012)
Programmatic Accreditation
Conditions of Eligibility

1. The programs to be accredited will be in biblical/theological and ministry formation-related areas.

2. The programs to be accredited will demonstrate compliance relative to criteria such as Bible/theology credit hours and student ministry.

3. In the U.S., an institution will be required to have institutional accreditation with a CHEA- and/or USDE-recognized agency in order to apply for programmatic accreditation.

4. In Canada, the institution must present evidence of appropriate governmental approval, prior institutional accreditation with ABHE, or a formal affiliation with a recognized Canadian University. An institution will be required to have institutional accreditation with a CHEA- and/or USDE-recognized agency in order to apply for programmatic accreditation.

5. Institutional Mission. The objectives for programs to be accredited by ABHE are within the scope of the institutional mission or purpose.

6. Catalog. An institution must have available to students and the public a current and accurate catalog setting forth the institution’s governance, mission, institutional goals, specific objectives, programs and courses, resources admissions and standards, academic offerings, rules and regulations for conduct, degree completion requirements, full- and part-time faculty rosters with faculty degrees, fees and other charges, refund policies, a policy defining satisfactory academic progress, graduation rates, rate of recent graduate employment in program-related occupations, and other items related to attending, transferring to, or withdrawing from the institution. Claims regarding education effectiveness must be supported by appropriate data. The type of accreditation held with ABHE, detailing the programs accredited.

7. Learning Resources. Accredited programs must be supported by adequate Learning Resources.

8. Christian Service Program. Students admitted to programs accredited by ABHE are expected to participate in a program of Christian Service.

9. Agency Disclosure. An institution must agree to disclose to the Commission any and all such information as it may require to carry out its evaluation and accreditation functions.

10. Compliance. An institution must commit itself to comply with the Standards for Accreditation of its institutional accrediting associations as well as ABHE, either current or as hereafter modified during the period of its affiliation.

11. Public Disclosure. An institution must attest in writing that it understands and agrees that the Commission may, at its discretion, make known to any agency or member of the public the nature of any action, positive or negative, regarding its program’s status with the Commission.

***
Programmatic Accreditation Standards

Standard 1
OBJECTIVES

The program has specific objectives that reflect the institutional mission and goals and lead to the development of church related ministries.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited program is characterized by . . .

1. Clearly articulated and publicized program specific objectives that serve as the basis for designing each curricular offering.
2. Program objectives that appropriately fit the mission of the institution and the goals of the related academic unit.
Programmatic Accreditation Standards

Standard 2
ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING AND PLANNING

The program demonstrates that it is accomplishing and can continue to accomplish its objectives through a regular and comprehensive system of assessment and planning. Central to this plan is the systematic and specific assessment of student learning and development through a strategy that measures the student’s knowledge, skills and competencies against institutional goals and programmatic objectives.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited program is characterized by . . .

1. The identification of appropriate inter-related student outcomes in the context of institutional goals, program objectives and course objectives.
2. A shared commitment on the part of students, faculty, staff, and administration to achieve these stated outcomes.
3. A written outcomes assessment plan that articulates multiple means to validate expected learning outcomes.
4. Substantial evidence issuing from its assessment processes, that students are achieving the stated outcomes relative to institutional goals, program objectives and course objectives.
5. A process whereby these outcome measurements lead to the improvement of teaching and learning.
6. A planning process for the improvement of the program’s objectives and services.
7. The ongoing provision of reliable information to the public regarding its performance including student achievement, graduation and employment rates.
8. A system for monitoring program progress in achieving its plans.
Programmatic Accreditation Standards

Standard 3
INTEGRITY

The program is a model of Christian ethical behavior, both internally and externally. The program demonstrates integrity in all of its practices and relationships, with strict adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited program is characterized by . . .

1. Institutional publications, statements and advertising that describe accurately and fairly the institution, its operations, its programs, and its effectiveness claims.
2. Fulfillment of all applicable standards and requirements of the ABHE Commission on Accreditation.
3. Integrity in all financial matters.
4. Honest and open communication regarding compliance with agencies such as accrediting, licensing, and governing bodies.
5. Fulfillment of all applicable standards, policies, and requirements of the ABHE Commission on Accreditation.
Programmatic Accreditation Standards

Standard 4
ADMINISTRATION

The program has personnel to bring together its various resources and allocate them to accomplish objectives by implementing policies and structures in collaboration with appropriate constituencies.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS:
Relative to this standard, an accredited program is characterized by . . .

1. An organizational structure and qualified staff that fit the size and scope of the institution.
2. Administrative leaders with appropriate credentials, skills, and resources necessary to discharge their duties and who enjoy a status comparable to that of other sectors within the institution.
3. Clear documentation in regard to organizational structure, encompassing all units and roles.
4. Complete, accurate, and securely maintained administrative records.
5. A process for review and enhancement of the performance of personnel.
Programmatic Accreditation Standards

Standard 5
ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

The program has the human, financial, physical, and technological resources needed to achieve its objectives and has implemented policies and procedures to manage these resources effectively.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS:
Relative to this standard, an accredited program is characterized by . . .

1. An adequate number of qualified program personnel to provide basic services to students, faculty, and administration.
2. An organizational climate that encourages job satisfaction, collegiality, and respect among personnel.
3. Appropriate technology and the use of that technology to enhance the institution’s educational and operational effectiveness.
4. Systematic allocation of resources to maintain and expand technology
5. Adequate financial and physical resources to ensure achievement of educational goals.
6. Ongoing training for technical personnel and users of information systems
7. Evidence that facilities, equipment, and supplies are adequate to support the institutional mission and to achieve the educational goals.
Programmatic Accreditation Standards

Standard 6
ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT AND STUDENT SERVICES

The program utilizes procedures designed to effectively recruit, admit, and retain qualified students. The program also provides services that contribute to the holistic development and care of students and are appropriate to the level of education and delivery system.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited program is characterized by . . .

1. Recruitment strategies that are directed toward students whose spiritual commitment, goals and interests are consistent with program objectives.
2. Accurate and comprehensive recruitment literature that enables prospective students to make informed decisions.
3. Evaluation procedures that reasonably ensure admitted students have attained the requisite educational level and possess the ability to successfully achieve their educational goals.
4. Published policies and procedures related to transfer credit and prior learning, including public disclosure of criteria used to evaluate transfer credit and a list of institutions or programs with which the institution has established articulation agreements.
5. An assessment process that measures student retention, attrition, and completion rates.
6. A commitment to the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development of students that is consistent with biblical higher education.
7. Services that meet the needs of students, regardless of location or instructional delivery system.
8. Leadership development facilitated by curricular and/or co-curricular programs that are integrated with the educational objectives.
9. Opportunities for students to provide input in programmatic decision-making.
10. Published procedures for and records of addressing student complaints and grievances.
Programmatic Accreditation Standards

Standard 7
FACULTY RESOURCES

The program maintains a faculty committed to the institutional mission and program objectives and qualified academically and spiritually to facilitate student learning within their disciplines and to contribute to the development of a biblical worldview. The program fosters an academic climate that stimulates the exchange of ideas, encourages professional development, and promotes the well-being of faculty.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited program is characterized by . . .

1. A spiritually mature faculty who engage in modeling and mentoring relationships with students.
2. A core faculty of sufficient size and expertise, responsible for the fulfillment of the program objectives.
3. Undergraduate faculty who have earned a minimum of a master’s degree and who are teaching in their areas of expertise.
4. Graduate faculty who have earned terminal degrees in their primary teaching fields.
5. Faculty members who possess earned degrees from institutions accredited by agencies recognized by either the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or the U. S. Department of Education or by the appropriate provincial government. (Exceptions to faculty credential requirements should be limited and validated by personal vitae.)
6. A faculty that is appropriately involved in decision-making processes especially related to admissions criteria, curriculum, student life, and graduation requirements.
7. Systems for evaluating the teaching effectiveness of all faculty.
8. Evidence of faculty contribution in the areas of student learning, scholarship, institutional development, ministry, and community service.
9. Adequate support for the professional advancement and development of faculty including the pursuit of advanced studies.
10. Appropriate documentation of its faculty’s academic preparation; including official transcripts, official documentation of professional experience, performance and technical competencies, published documents, and other certifications and qualifications.
11. A published statement of academic freedom and adherence to its principles within the context of the institutional mission.
Programmatic Accreditation Standards

Standard 8
LIBRARY AND OTHER LEARNING RESOURCES

The program ensures the availability of learning resources and services of appropriate form, range, depth, and currency to support the programmatic offerings and meet student needs.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited program is characterized by . . .

1. Faculty involvement with the library staff in the analysis of resource adequacy, the selection of resource materials, and the establishment of library policy.
2. Library staff participation in curricular planning.
3. The availability of reference services and other means of support to help users find needed information.
4. Evaluation of learning resource utilization by the learning community.
5. Sufficient funding, staff and practices to procure and maintain needed library resources and services.
Programmatic Accreditation Standards

Standard 9
ACADEMICS

The program is appropriate to the achievement of the institutional mission and to the level being offered, specifically for service in church-related ministry enabling students to achieve a biblical worldview.

9a. CURRICULUM

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited program is characterized by . . .

1. Evidence that academic programs exhibit the content and rigor characteristic of higher education, and a level of analytical research and communication skills needed for life-long learning commensurate with the level of education.
2. A written statement of expected student outcomes for each academic program and a coherent program of study to achieve these objectives.
3. Evidence that the integration of curricular components enable students to achieve a biblical worldview.
4. A program taught with sensitivity to the cultural context in which the students minister.
5. A process of regular review by faculty to ensure that curricular objectives for each academic program are being realized.
6. Evidence that course sequence progresses from foundational to advanced studies appropriate to the degree.
7. A curriculum content and level of education appropriate to the degree and nomenclature being offered.
8. Appropriate distinctions between levels of study in terms of students, faculty, and learning methods.
9. A system of grading and associated policies and procedures that reflects integrity, ensures fairness and consistency, conforms to higher education norms, and facilitates transportability of students’ academic credits.

Relative to this standard, an accredited undergraduate program is characterized by…

10. A Bible/theology component equivalent to 30 semester hours, 9 of which may be in interdisciplinary Bible related courses, for a non-church related baccalaureate, 18 semester hours of Bible/theology for a non-traditional degree completion program and 12 semester hours of Bible/theology for a one- or two-year program.
11. A core of general education studies representative of the breadth of general studies and equivalent to 36 semester hours for a baccalaureate degree or 18 semester hours for an associate degree.
12. A core of professional studies equivalent to a minimum of 18 semester hours and selected to equip students for professional positions.
13. A minimum of 120 semester hours for a baccalaureate degree, and a minimum of 60 semester hours for an associate’s degree.
14. Professional program requiring significant practicum experiences in the area of specialization.

Relative to this standard, an accredited graduate program is characterized by…

15. Curricula and resources to support programs that foster progressively more advanced student educational achievement and more effective ministry/leadership than undergraduate education.
16. Curricula providing for the development of research and independent thinking at an advanced level and/or appropriate high level professional practices and training experiences.
17. Pre-requisite or curricular biblical/theological studies to ensure that students develop and demonstrate significant ability to think biblically in relation to their academic or professional disciplines.
18. Appropriate pre-requisite and/or curricular requirements to ensure that students are capable of pursuing advanced studies in the discipline.
19. A learning environment that cultivates critical thinking, theological reflection, spiritual formation, and effective leadership/ministry practice.
20. Appropriate practicum or internship experiences in the area of specialization for all professional programs.

9b. MINISTRY FORMATION PROGRAM

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited undergraduate program (and a graduate program that features field education) is characterized by . . .

1. A culture and programs that promote development of effective witnesses and servants in the church and the world at large.
2. An educational philosophy in which ministry formation is viewed as an integral part of the student’s education.
3. A program of supervision that provides an adequate basis for evaluating and guiding students in the pursuit of their professional goals.
4. A system of regular program review and assessment of outcomes that results in program improvement.
5. Evidence that academic credit given for ministry is warranted.

9c. ACADEMIC PATTERNS AND PROCEDURES

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by. . .

1. An academic advising system that guides the student from matriculation to selection of a program and graduation from that program.
2. The award of academic credit commensurate with normative academic and/or governmental definitions that may be based upon an intended learning outcome.
3. A clear and publicized statement of faculty-adopted requirements for graduation.
4. A process that involves faculty approval of candidates for graduation.
5. An academic calendar that considers regional higher educational patterns, and meets state, provincial, or federal regulations.
6. A system of accurate and secure record keeping consistent with state, provincial and/or federal regulations.

9d. ALTERNATIVE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an academic program utilizing off-campus locations, distance education or alternative academic patterns is characterized by . . .

1. Objectives consistent with the institution’s mission.
2. An intention to extend the accessibility of the institution’s learning opportunities.
3. Clearly defined learning outcomes that are designed, approved, administered and evaluated under established institutional procedures.
4. Standards for quality of instruction and academic rigor appropriate to higher education.
5. Accessible and adequate learning resources.
6. Adequate staffing, facilities and technology to support the program.
7. Appropriate measures required of students participating in distance and/or correspondence education to ensure that the student receiving the credit is in fact the person completing the work.

Note: Descriptions of common alternative academic programs (delivery systems, formats, or methods) are found in the self-study manual.

[Policies to Reference: Alternative Academic Programs and Online Distance Education Best Practices (WCET); Guidelines for Sharing Online Courses]

***
Policies

Commission policies provide supplemental guidance regarding implementation of the *Standards*. Institutions are expected to use the Policies to understand how the Commission interprets various segments of the *Standards*. Evaluators may use the Policies as a basis for “Suggestions” to institutions, but normally “Recommendations” by evaluators may only be attached to *Standards*.

The Policies are organized into three sections:

1) *Policies Relating to Commission Standards* (Comprehensive and Programmatic);
2) *Policies Relating to Commission Procedures*, and
3) *Policies Providing General Institutional Guidance*.
Policies Relating to Commission Standards
Policy on Biblical and Theological Studies  
(Applicable to Undergraduate Only)

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 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 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 disciplinary.

**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.

Programs that do not meet these minimal requirements must file a substantive change request with the Commission on Accreditation using the guidelines on the following page to demonstrate a satisfactory alternative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any proposed alternative must include direct study of the Bible.</td>
<td>Does the proposed alternative include direct study of the Bible? If so, how is this quantified?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any proposed alternative must contain courses and/or assignments that require significant Biblical study by students.</td>
<td>Does the proposed alternative require courses or assignments that require significant Biblical study by students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any proposed alternative must provide the student with skills in Biblical interpretation and application.</td>
<td>Does the proposed alternative provide the student with skills in Biblical interpretation and application?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any proposed alternative must include ways for the student to demonstrate skills in Biblical interpretation and application.</td>
<td>How does the student demonstrate mastery in interpreting and applying Scripture in the proposed alternative?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any proposed alternative must fulfill the student learning outcome goals related to Biblical and theological studies.</td>
<td>How does the student satisfy the institution’s stated outcome goals related to its Biblical and theological studies curricular component in the proposed alternative?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any proposed alternative must result in the achievement of equivalent outcomes over time.</td>
<td>Can the institution demonstrate that student achievement of outcomes in the alternative program is equivalent to achievement of outcomes in the regular program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions must be clear about how the proposed alternative compares to their regular program or to a standard 30 credit program.</td>
<td>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?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed alternatives should only be used in special cases.</td>
<td>Approximately what proportion of students at the institution will be taking the proposed alternative program?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Applicable Standards: 11a] [c.f. Policy on Substantive Change]
Procedures for Independent Accreditation Status

Introduction

In order to make education more accessible, ABHE member institutions have increasingly taken steps to establish educational opportunities at a distance from the parent campus. This is accomplished through use of various educational modalities and through the establishment of off campus instructional sites. The ABHE Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns recognizes three types of off campus instructional sites: 1) extension classes; 2) additional location; and 3) branch campuses. The policy defines the latter two in a manner suggesting a level of permanence that enables a student to complete a major portion of an academic program. Indeed, it may be possible for a student to earn a credential at the site.

In the course of time, it is possible that the stature of an additional location or branch campus could grow to the point that the administration of the parent institution or the key stakeholders in the local site would wish to establish the site as a free-standing educational institution and to pursue accreditation as an independent entity. Should such a situation arise, a spirit of Christian unity, professional collegiality, and integrity should guide all stakeholders. Specifically, the Commission expects that the following procedures will be followed:

- Personnel representing the “new” independent entity must provide written documentation demonstrating that the parent institution either endorses the establishment of a free-standing entity or, at a minimum, that its governing board is fully apprised regarding the plans of those who seek to establish the new institution.
- Where the new institution is being formed upon the initiative or blessing of the parent campus, the Commission on Accreditation may recognize the parent institution’s postsecondary courses and degree programs conducted at the site towards satisfaction of the ABHE Conditions of Eligibility. The new institution must document its compliance with the Conditions of Eligibility and otherwise exhibit the characteristics of an independent entity.
- In instances where the new institution is being formed over the objection of the parent campus, the new entity will be required to satisfy ABHE’s eligibility requirements without reference to its history with the parent institution. This requires that the new entity assume responsibility for securing its resources independent of the parent:
  1. Curriculum – it will need to establish its own curriculum or provide evidence that the parent has given it permission to use the curricula historically taught.
  2. Governance – it will need to establish a separate corporate identity, 501(c )(3) status, enabling documents, and board of control. (This principle does not preclude it from establishing a separate identity with another organization (i.e. a sponsoring church).
  3. Faculty – it will need to employ its own faculty. Individuals will of course be free to retain their identity with the parent institution or seek employment with the new entity.
  4. Students – it will need to recruit its own student body. Existing students who were enrolled in the programs of the parent entity at the time of the separation should be encouraged to complete their studies with the parent entity. (They will normally want to do this since it will take time for the new entity to achieve accreditation.)
  5. Learning Resources – it will need to establish its own learning resources and/or enter into a contract with the parent institution regarding the use of its resources.
  6. Campus Facilities – it will need to work out an acceptable arrangement with the parent entity over the use of the campus facilities. The range of potential arrangements will vary widely depending on the legal obligations in place at the time of independence.
- Unless the parent institution is a participant in the development of the instructional site as an independent entity, the new institution will be required to satisfy Condition of Eligibility #14 “Program Completion” without reference to its prior connection with the parent institution.
Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns

The Commission provides for various forms of learning in which education is offered apart from the main campus.

(1) Branch campuses
(2) Additional locations
(3) Extension sites and extension classes
(4) Distance education
(5) Correspondence education

Residential education has been the typical means of instruction due to the added values, and immediate resources of the main campus and the interaction with the institution's local community. Institutions with adequate resources may extend their influence beyond the main campus by using alternative academic patterns to meet the needs of the general public, to deliver instruction to constituencies unable to attend courses on the main campus, to allow students to benefit from educational experiences in the context of life and ministry, and to provide continuing education for program graduates. Alternative academic patterns may be either for credit (supportive of a certificate or degree) or noncredit (popular level). All alternative patterns should be under the direct control of the institution's administration.

Definitions

Branch Campus:
A branch campus is a geographically separate unit with its own core facilities, curricula, faculty, administrative or supervisory personnel, and instructional resources. General oversight is provided by the parent institution. A branch campus (1) is permanent in nature; and (2) offers academic programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized credential.

Additional Location:
Additional locations are locations other than the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.

Extension Site:
Extension sites are locations away from the main campus at which the institution offers less than 50 percent of an educational program.

Distance education. Distance education is defined as education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the other technologies listed.

Correspondence education. Correspondence education is defined as education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. The
interaction between the instructor and student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced. Correspondence education is not distance education. Note: Correspondence education is not within ABHE’s scope of recognition by the U.S. Department of Education.

**General Policies**

1. Alternative academic patterns are an extension of the parent institution and, hence, come under the institutional, or where applicable, programmatic accrediting jurisdiction of the Commission. Institutions wishing to initiate alternative academic patterns should refer to the “Policy on Substantive Change.” Each initiative is considered individually and, once approved, becomes part of the institution’s regular reporting and evaluation cycle. Accordingly, any branch campus or additional location may be visited by an evaluating team or Commission staff representative as part of the institution’s reaffirmation process.

2. Alternative academic patterns must be consistent with the institution’s mission and be limited to those subject areas for which the parent institution has expertise.

3. Alternative academic patterns must be offered in conformity with applicable state or provincial law.

4. Initially, the establishment of an alternative academic pattern will be considered a major substantive change to be processed in accord with the “Policy on Substantive Change.” A comprehensive written proposal addressing the alternative academic pattern’s compliance with the Standards for Accreditation and this “Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns” is required. Specifically, the plan should identify the purpose, objectives, resources, methods of implementation, and means of implementation for each alternative academic pattern adopted (branch campus, additional location, extension class, distance education, or correspondence education). Materials must include a business plan that includes statements of projected cash flow, and of revenues and expenditures. Details regarding the different academic patterns are found at the end of this document.

5. Alternative academic patterns must contribute to the parent institution’s quality and integrity. For-credit courses must be applicable toward one of the institution’s degree programs and must be commensurate in quality with regular on-campus offerings. A course offered via multiple modalities must reflect similar content and student learning outcomes across delivery modes.

6. Alternative academic patterns must not adversely affect the institution’s administrative effectiveness, result in faculty overload, or cause financial stress or instability. Alternative academic patterns must be controlled by the parent institution to ensure sound business practices, adequate financial support, quality instruction, and accurate promotion.

7. The qualifications of alternative academic pattern faculty must be commensurate with those of on-campus faculty.

8. Faculty involved in the development and implementation of offerings using alternative academic patterns must be provided appropriate support and training to ensure their effectiveness.

9. Adequate instructional and technical support, facilities, supplies, library, and other resources that support the classes taken must be provided in alternative academic patterns.
10. After the establishment of an alternative academic pattern, changes that depart significantly from the approved offerings must be processed in accord with the “Policy on Substantive Change.”

11. Alternative academic patterns are an extension of the parent institution and, hence, come under the institutional, or where applicable, programmatic accrediting jurisdiction of the Commission. Institutions wishing to initiate alternative academic patterns should refer to the “Policy on Substantive Change.” Each initiative is considered individually and, once approved, becomes part of the institution’s regular reporting and evaluation cycle. Accordingly, at the time an institution’s or program’s status is reaffirmed, any branch campus or additional location may be visited by an evaluating team representative as part of the institution’s reaffirmation process.

12. Alternative academic patterns must be consistent with the institution’s mission and be limited to those subject areas for which the parent institution has expertise.

13. Alternative academic patterns must be offered in conformity with applicable state or provincial law.

14. Initially, the establishment of an alternative academic pattern will be considered a major substantive change to be processed in accord with the “Policy on Substantive Change.” A comprehensive written proposal addressing the alternative academic pattern’s compliance with the Standards for Accreditation and this “Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns” is required. Specifically, the plan should identify the purpose, objectives, resources, methods of implementation, and means of implementation for each alternative academic pattern adopted (branch campus, additional location, extension class, distance education, or correspondence education). Materials must include a business plan that includes statements of projected cash flow, and of revenues and expenditures. Details regarding the different academic patterns are found at the end of this document.

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18. Faculty involved in the development and implementation of offerings using alternative academic patterns must be provided appropriate support and training to ensure their effectiveness.

19. Adequate instructional and technical support, facilities, supplies, library, and other resources that support the classes taken must be provided in alternative academic patterns.

20. After the establishment of an alternative academic pattern, changes that depart significantly from the approved offerings must be processed in accord with the “Policy on Substantive Change.”
21. Admissions standards must be the same for all students whether they study on campus or in an alternative academic pattern. Safeguards are in place to confirm the identity of enrolled students. The safeguards must ensure that the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives the academic credit. At the time of enrollment, the institution will notify students of any projected additional financial charges associated with the verification of their identity.

22. Alternative academic pattern courses must be systematically evaluated to determine if course objectives are being met and outcomes documented to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program. Records that deal with academic and other matters must be maintained and safeguarded by the parent institution.

23. Adequate student support services, such as admissions, financial aid, academic and personal counseling, registration, and oversight must be provided for all approved alternative academic pattern locations. Processes must be in place to protect the privacy of the student's personal information.

24. Steps are taken to establish long-term relationships with the students at the alternative academic pattern locations so that they become members of the institution’s learning community.

25. Personnel providing services to students employing alternative academic patterns are provided appropriate support and training to ensure their effectiveness in meeting student needs.

26. The use of alternative academic patterns is continued for a period long enough to enable admitted students to complete their credential within a publicized timeframe.

27. Students considering enrollment in programs employing alternative academic patterns are fully informed regarding technologies to be used, program costs, financial aid available, time frames available for program completion, learning resources available, support services available, means available for interaction with faculty and other students, and any other matters which may affect their success in the program.

28. Credentials should be awarded only to alternative academic pattern students who complete a planned program consistent with institutional mission and program objectives.

29. When an institution initially proposes to establish an alternative academic pattern utilizing a branch campus or an additional location, a special visit is required in order to assess the branch or additional location with respect to the Commission’s Comprehensive Integrated Standards and this “Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns.” Representatives of the Commission will visit the location within six months of its establishment. Special attention will be given to the design of curricular offerings, the validity of any credentials awarded, the adequacy of financial support, instructional resources, administrative oversight, and the impact of the added location upon the parent institution.

30. The curricula, instruction, awarding of credit, and conferral of degrees or diplomas must remain under the control of the institution’s faculty and administration.

31. When a degree or diploma is offered through alternative academic patterns, the institution must ensure that the students fulfill Christian service requirements.
32. When alternative academic patterns are offered, the institution or program must provide for the proper evaluation of the student’s progress and for guidance regarding future work.

Special Policies for Branch Campuses

1. The establishment or relocation of a branch campus will be considered a major substantive change to be processed in accord with the Policy on Substantive Change. A change of address for an established branch campus is considered a relocation. A comprehensive written proposal addressing the branch campus’s compliance with the Standards for Accreditation and this Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns is required. Materials must include a business plan that includes statements of projected cash flow, and of revenues and expenditures. This procedure must be followed for each branch campus established, and an evaluation visit by a Commission staff representative must be completed within six months of implementation.

2. A branch campus is responsible for maintaining its own core facilities, curricula, faculty, administrative or supervisory personnel, and instructional resources at a level that demonstrates compliance with the ABHE Standards. Appropriate documents should specify organizational and administrative relationships between the branch campus and the parent institution.

3. Institutions operating a branch campus will be responsible to maintain evidence that the quality of education at the branch campus is maintained through:
   a. Clearly identified academic control;
   b. Regular evaluation of the branch campus;
   c. Adequate qualified faculty, facilities, resources, and academic and student support systems;
   d. Financial stability; and
   e. Long-range planning for expansion.

4. Degrees, certificates, or other credentials that are based chiefly upon credits earned at a branch campus must indicate that they were earned at the branch campus.

5. The discontinuation of a branch campus is a major substantive change to be processed in accord with the Policy on Substantive Change. A teach-out plan must be provided when closing a branch campus.

Special Policies for Additional Locations

1. The establishment or relocation of an additional location will be considered a major substantive change to be processed in accord with the “Policy on Substantive Change.” A change of address for an established additional location is considered a relocation. An institution is required, prior to implementation, to submit for COA approval a comprehensive written proposal addressing the additional location’s compliance with the Standards for Accreditation and this “Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns” and subsequently to host a special evaluation team site visit. Substantive Change request materials must include a business plan that includes statements of projected cash flow, and of revenues and expenditures. This procedure must be followed for at least the first three additional locations established, and an evaluation visit by a Commission staff representative must be completed within six months of implementation.
2. An additional location must be under the administrative and legal control of the parent institution’s president and board. Appropriate documents should specify organizational and administrative relationships between the additional location and the parent institution.

3. Degrees or diplomas that are based chiefly upon credits earned at an additional location must indicate that they were earned at the additional location.

4. The Commission may, under certain conditions, waive an institution’s pre-approval requirements relative to establishing or relocating an additional location where the institution has previously hosted successful site visits to at least three additional locations. In general, such a waiver is granted on the basis of the Commission’s review of evidence that the institution has established a system to assure quality across a distributed enterprise. Specifically, an institution wishing waiver of individual additional location approvals must submit evidence of the following in the substantive change request for each additional location established under a pre-approval waiver:
   a. Clearly identified academic control relative to additional locations;
   b. A system of data collection and regular evaluation to ensure comparability of educational quality at all additional locations;
   c. Written policies, criteria, and monitoring data to ensure adequate qualified faculty, facilities, resources, and academic and student support systems for all additional locations;
   d. Fiscal strength and financial stability as reflected in the institution’s composite Financial Stability Factor score; and
   e. Comprehensive long-range planning for maintenance and expansion of additional locations.

Pre-approval waivers relative to additional locations will be reviewed by the Commission at least every five years. At the time of the five-year review, site visits to a representative sample of not less than 25 percent of additional locations operated under the waiver will be required. Preapproval waiver will be suspended in cases where an institution undergoes a change in ownership resulting in a change in control, unless and until such time as the Commission re-determines that the institution continues to meet the conditions for the pre-approval of additional locations.

5. Pre-approval waivers are not applicable to additional locations under the following circumstances:
   - a new degree program is offered;
   - state/provincial boundaries are crossed;
   - establishment of the additional location requires the development of substantial new faculty and learning resources;
   - the ownership of the institution changes;
   - the institution acquires an institution, program, or location of another institution;
   - the institution adds a permanent location at a site where it is conducting a “teach-out” for students of another institution that ceased operating before all students completed their program of study.

6. Institutions that are not eligible for a pre-approval waiver or do not seek a pre-approval waiver, must host a site visit within six months of establishment of any new additional location.

7. In all cases, institutions operating (an) additional location(s) will be responsible to maintain evidence that they are ensuring the quality of education at their additional location(s) through:
   a. Clearly identified academic control;
b. Regular evaluation of the location;
c. Adequate qualified faculty, facilities, resources, and academic and student support systems;
d. Financial stability; and
e. Long-range planning for expansion.

8. In all cases, ABHE will conduct site visits to a representative sample of at least 25 percent of an institution’s additional locations during an accreditation cycle. At the discretion of the Commission, additional visits may be required to verify compliance with the standards.

Special Policies for Extension Sites

1. The establishment of an extension site will be considered a major substantive change to be processed in accord with the “Policy on Substantive Change.” After the successful establishment of the first extension site, a category "A" (mature) institution can treat subsequent locations as minor substantive changes except where a new degree program is offered, state/provincial boundaries are crossed or the new location requires the development of substantial new faculty and learning resources. In such instances, a new location must be treated as a major change. Visits will be held at the discretion of the Commission.

2. An extension site must be under the administrative and legal control of the parent institution’s president and board. Appropriate documents should specify organizational and administrative relationships between the extension site and the parent institution.

Special Policies for Distance Education

1. The establishment of distance education studies by the institution will require compliance with the “Policy on Substantive Change.”
   a. Institutions must apply for a major substantive change to initiate online instruction.
   b. An institution having approval to use the online instructional modality must apply for a major substantive change when it initiates its first degree program where it becomes possible for a student to complete 50 percent or more of an academic program via online.
   c. An institution accredited for less than ten years or an institution on sanction that proposes to offer degree programs beyond the first degree where 50 percent or more of the program is available online must apply for a major substantive change.
   d. An institution accredited for less than ten years or an institution on sanction that proposes to substantially decrease or discontinue its online offerings must apply for a major substantive change.

   Visits will be held at the discretion of ABHE.

2. Each distance education offering must feature adequate safeguards to protect the integrity of the offering, including ensuring that the person taking the class is the person registered for the class and appropriate proctoring of major examinations. To accomplish this purpose, institutions will utilize the Guidelines for Ensuring Integrity in Correspondence and Distance Education.

3. Institutions will utilize the Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs developed by the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET).
4. Institutions utilizing distance education courses through consortial agreements with other institutions or agencies will utilize the "Guidelines for Sharing Online Courses."

5. When an institution offering distance education experiences headcount enrollment growth of 50 percent or more in a single year, the Commission staff will inform the U.S. Department of Education of the institution’s rapid growth within 30 days of acquiring such data.

**Special Policies for Correspondence Study**

1. The establishment of correspondence studies by the institution will require compliance with the “Policy on Substantive Change.”
   a. Institutions must apply for a major substantive change to initiate correspondence instruction.
   b. An institution having approval to use the correspondence instructional modality must apply for a major substantive change when it initiates its first degree program where it becomes possible for a student to complete 50 percent or more of an academic program via correspondence.
   c. An institution accredited for less than ten years or an institution on sanction that proposes to offer degree programs beyond the first degree where 50 percent or more of the program is available via correspondence must apply for a major substantive change.
   d. An institution accredited for less than ten years or an institution on sanction that proposes to substantially decrease or discontinue its correspondence offerings must apply for a major substantive change.

   Visits will be held at the discretion of ABHE.

2. Each correspondence offering must feature adequate safeguards to protect the integrity of the offering, including ensuring that the person taking the class is the person registered for the class and appropriate proctoring of major examinations. To accomplish this purpose, institutions will utilize the Guidelines for Ensuring Integrity in Correspondence and Distance Education.

3. When an institution offering correspondence studies experiences headcount enrollment growth of 50 percent or more in a single year, the Commission staff will inform the U.S. Department of Education of the institution’s rapid growth within 30 days of acquiring such data.

Revised April 2012, November 2012, February 2013
Alternative Academic Patterns –
Best Practices in Online Distance Education

Source: Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Comprehensive</th>
<th>Programmatic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Institutional Context and Commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electronically offered programs both support and extend the roles of educational institutions. Increasingly they are integral to academic organization, with growing implications for institutional infrastructure.</td>
<td>Standards 1, 3, &amp; 6</td>
<td>Standards 1, 3, &amp; 5</td>
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<td>• In its content, purposes, organization, and enrollment history if applicable, the program is consistent with the institution’s role and mission.</td>
<td>Standard 1: EE# 5; Standard 11d: EE# 1</td>
<td>Standard 1: EE# 1; Standard 9d: EE# 1</td>
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<td>• It is recognized that a healthy institution’s purposes change over time. The institution is aware of accreditation requirements and complies with them. Each accrediting commission has established definitions of what activities constitute a substantive change that will trigger prior review and approval processes. The appropriate accreditation commission should be notified and consulted whether an electronically offered program represents a major change. The offering of distributed programs can affect the institution’s educational goals, intended student population, curriculum, modes or venue of instruction, and can thus have an impact on both the institution and its accreditation status.</td>
<td>Policy on Substantive Change</td>
<td>Policy on Substantive Change</td>
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<td>• The institution’s budgets and policy statements reflect its commitment to the students for whom its electronically offered programs are designed.</td>
<td>Standard 6b: EE # 2 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Standard 5: EE # 5</td>
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<td>• The institution assures adequacy of technical and physical plant facilities including appropriate staffing and technical assistance, to support its electronically offered programs.</td>
<td>Standard 6c: EE # 5; Standard 6d: EE # 1</td>
<td>Standard 5: EE # 5; Standard 5: EE # 3</td>
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<td>• The internal organizational structure which enables the development, coordination, support, and oversight of electronically offered programs will vary from institution to institution. Ordinarily, however, this will include the capability to:</td>
<td>Standard 5: EE # 3, 4, &amp; 5</td>
<td>Standard 4: EE # 2, 3, &amp; 4</td>
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<td>o Facilitate the associated instructional and technical support relationships.</td>
<td>Standard 6c: EE # 1</td>
<td>Standard 5: EE # 4</td>
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<td>Standard 1 (Continued, WCET)</td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Provide (or draw upon) the required information technologies and related support services.</td>
<td>Standard 6d: EE # 1</td>
<td>Standard 5: EE # 3</td>
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<td>Standard 7: EE # 3</td>
<td>Standard 6: EE # 1</td>
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<td>o Develop and implement a marketing plan that takes into account the target student population,</td>
<td>Standard 6d: EE # 3;</td>
<td>Standard 5: EE # 3;</td>
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<td>the technologies available, and the factors required to meet institutional goals.</td>
<td>Standard 8: EE # 2;</td>
<td>Standard 6: EE # 6;</td>
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<td>Standard 9a: EE # 9</td>
<td>Standard 7: EE # 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Provide training and support to participating instructors and students.</td>
<td>Standard 6d: EE # 3;</td>
<td>Standard 5: EE # 3;</td>
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<td>Standard 8: EE # 2; Standard 9a: EE # 9</td>
<td>Standard 6: EE # 6;</td>
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<td>Standard 7: EE # 9</td>
<td>Standard 7: EE # 9</td>
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<td>o Contract for products and outsourced services.</td>
<td>Standard 5: EE # 3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Standard 4: EE # 3 &amp; 4</td>
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<td>o Assess and assign priorities to potential future projects</td>
<td>Standard 2b: EE # 5 &amp; 6</td>
<td>Standard 2: EE # 15</td>
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<td>o Assure that electronically offered programs and courses meet institution-wide standards,</td>
<td>Standards 11d: EE # 4</td>
<td>Standard 9d: EE # 4</td>
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<td>both to provide consistent quality and to provide a coherent framework for students who</td>
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<td>may enroll in both electronically offered and traditional on-campus courses.</td>
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<td>o Maintain appropriate academic oversight.</td>
<td>Standard 11d: EE # 3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Standard 9d: EE # 3 &amp; 4</td>
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<td>o Maintain consistency with the institution’s academic planning and oversight functions,</td>
<td>Standard 2b: EE # 5 &amp; 6; Standard 11d: EE # 1</td>
<td>Standard 2: EE # 5 &amp; 6; Standard 9d: EE # 1</td>
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<td>to assure congruence with the institution’s mission and allocation of required resources.</td>
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<td>o Assure the integrity of student work and faculty instruction.</td>
<td>Standard 11d: EE # 4</td>
<td>Standard 9c: EE # 4</td>
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<td>o In its articulation and transfer policies the institution judges courses and programs on</td>
<td>Standard 7b: EE # 3; Standard 11d: EE # 3</td>
<td>Standard 6: EE # 4; Standard 9c: EE # 3</td>
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<td>their learning outcomes, and the resources brought to bear for their achievement, not on</td>
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<td>modes of delivery.</td>
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<td>o The institution strives to assure a consistent and coherent technical framework for</td>
<td>Standard 6d: EE # 3</td>
<td>Standard 5: EE # 2</td>
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<td>students and faculty. When a change in technologies is necessary, it is introduced in a way</td>
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<td>that minimizes the impact on students and faculty.</td>
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<td>Standard 1 (Continued, WCET)</td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
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<td>• The institution provides students with reasonable technical support for each educational technology hardware, software, and delivery system required in a program.</td>
<td>Standard 6d: EE # 1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Standard 5: EE # 3</td>
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<td>Standard 11d: EE # 6</td>
<td>Standard 9d: EE # 6</td>
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<td>• The selection of technologies is based on appropriateness for the students and the curriculum. It is recognized that availability, cost, and other issues are often involved, but program documentation should be specific consideration of the match between technology and program.</td>
<td>Standard 6d: EE # 1; Standard 11d: EE # 6</td>
<td>Standard 3: EE # 4</td>
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<td>Standard 5: EE # 3; Standard 9d: EE # 6</td>
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<td>• The institution seeks to understand the legal and regulatory requirements of the jurisdictions in which it operates, e.g., requirements for service to those with disabilities, copyright law, state and national requirements for institutions offering educational programs, international restrictions such as export of sensitive information or technologies, etc.</td>
<td>Standard 3: EE # 6; Standard 4: EE # 1</td>
<td>Standard 3: EE # 4</td>
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<td>Standard 9d: EE # 6</td>
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**Standard 2**

**2. Curriculum and Instruction**

Methods change, but standards of quality endure. The important issues are not technical but curriculum-driven and pedagogical. Decisions about such matters are made by qualified professionals and focus on learning outcomes for an increasingly diverse student population.

| • As with all curriculum development and review, the institution assures that each program of study results in collegiate level learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded by the institution, that the electronically offered degree or certificate program is coherent and complete, and that such programs leading to undergraduate degrees include general education requirements. | Standard 11d: EE # 3 & 4; Standard 11a: EE # 1, 7 & 10 | Standard 9a: EE # 1, 4, & 7; Standard 9c: EE # 3 |
|                                                                                           | Standard 9a: EE # 3 & 4            | Standard 7: EE # 3, 4, & 6       |
|                                                                                           | Standard 9b: EE # 6                |                     |
| • Academically qualified persons participate fully in the decisions concerning program curricula and program oversight. It is recognized that traditional faculty roles may be unbundled and/or supplemented as electronically offered programs are developed and presented, but the substance of the program, including its presentation, management, and assessment are the responsibility of people with appropriate academic qualifications. | Standard 9a: EE # 3 & 4            | Standard 7: EE # 3, 4, & 6       |
|                                                                                           | Standard 9b: EE # 6                |                     |
Standard 2 (Continued, WCET)

- In designing an electronically offered degree or certificate program, the institution provides a coherent plan for the student to access all courses necessary to complete the program, or clearly notifies students of requirements not included in the electronic offering. Hybrid programs or courses, mixing electronic and on-campus elements, are designed to assure that all students have access to appropriate services. (See also 2d below, concerning program elements from consortia or contract services.)

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<tr>
<th>Comprehensive</th>
<th>Programmatic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 11d: EE # 2 &amp; 5</td>
<td>Standard 9d: EE # 2 &amp; 5</td>
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</table>

- Although important elements of a program may be supplied by consortial partners or outsourced to other organizations, including contractors who may not be accredited, the responsibility for performance remains with the institution awarding the degree or certificate. It is the institution in which the student is enrolled, not its suppliers or partners, that has a contract with the student. Therefore, the criteria for selecting consortial partners and contractors, and the means to monitor and evaluate their work, are important aspects of the program plan. In considering consortial agreements, attention is given to issues such as assuring that enhancing service to students is a primary consideration and that incentives do not compromise the integrity of the institution or of the educational program. Consideration is also given to the effect of administrative arrangements and cost-sharing on an institution’s decision-making regarding curriculum.

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<th>Comprehensive</th>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 11d: EE # 3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Standard 9d: EE # 3 &amp; 4</td>
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</table>

- The importance of appropriate interaction (synchronous or asynchronous) between instructor and students and among students is reflected in the design of the program and its courses, and in the technical facilities and services provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehensive</th>
<th>Programmatic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 11d: EE # 5 &amp; 6</td>
<td>Standard 9d: EE # 5 &amp; 6</td>
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Standard 3

3. Faculty Support

As indicated above, faculty roles are becoming increasingly diverse and reorganized. For example, the same person may not perform both the tasks of course development and direct instruction to students. Regardless of who performs which of these tasks, important issues are involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehensive</th>
<th>Programmatic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Standards 9 &amp; 10</td>
<td>Standard 7</td>
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</table>
### Standard 3 (Continued, WCET)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the development of an electronically offered program, the institution and its participating faculty have considered issues of workload, compensation, ownership of intellectual property resulting from the program, and the implications of program participation for the faculty member’s professional evaluation processes. This mutual understanding is based on policies and agreements adopted by the parties.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 3: EE #6; Standard 6a: EE # 1 &amp; 3; Standard 9a: EE # 7; Standard 9b: EE # 1; Standard 11d: EE #6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 5: EE # 1 &amp; 5; Standard 7: EE # 2 &amp; 7; Standard 9d: EE # 6</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The institution provides an ongoing program of appropriate technical, design, and production support for participating faculty members.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 6d: EE# 1, 2, &amp; 3; Standard 11d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 9c</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The institution provides to those responsible for program development the orientation and training to help them become proficient in the uses of the program’s technologies, including potential changes in course design and management.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 6d: EE# 3; Standard 11d: EE# 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 9d: EE# 6</td>
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</table>

### Standard 4

#### 4. Student Support

Colleges and universities have learned that the twenty-first century student is different, both demographically and geographically, from students of previous generations. These differences affect everything from admissions policy to library services. Reaching these students, and serving them appropriately, are major challenges to today’s institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The institution has a commitment – administrative, financial, and technical – to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable all admitted students to complete a degree or certificate in a publicized timeframe.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy: Alternative Academic Patterns, #14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy: Alternative Academic Patterns, #14</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior to admitting a student to the program, the institution:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 7b: EE# 1, 2, &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 6: EE# 1 &amp; 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ascertains by a review of pertinent records and/or personal review that the student is qualified by prior education or equivalent experience to be admitted to that program, including in the case of international students, English language skills.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 7a: EE# 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 6: EE# 2 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 4 (Continued, WCET)</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Informs the prospective student concerning technical competence required of students in the program</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Informs the prospective student concerning estimated or average program costs (including costs of information access) and associated payment and refund policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Informs the prospective student concerning curriculum design and the time frame in which courses are offered, and assists the student in understanding the nature of the learning objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Informs the prospective student of library and other learning services available to support learning and the skills necessary to access them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Informs the prospective student concerning the full array of other support services available from the institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Informs the prospective student about arrangements for interaction with the faculty and fellow students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Assists the prospective student in understanding independent learning expectations as well as the nature and potential challenges of learning in the program's technology-based environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Informs the prospective student about the estimated time for program completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The institution recognizes that appropriate services must be available for students of electronically offered programs, using the working assumption that these students will not be physically present on campus. With variations for specific situations and programs, these services, which are possibly coordinated, may include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 4 (Continued, WCET)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Accurate and timely information about the institution, its programs, courses, costs, and related policies and requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Pre-registration advising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Application for admission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Placement testing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Enrollment/registration in programs and courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Financial aid, including information about policies and limitations, information about available scholarships, processing of applications, and administration of financial aid and scholarship awards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Academic advising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Timely intervention regarding student progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Tutoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Career counseling and placement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Academic progress information, such as degree completion audits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 4 (Continued, WCET)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Library resources appropriate to the program, including, reference and research assistance; remote access to data bases, online journals and full-text resources; document delivery services; library user and information literacy instruction, reserve materials; and institutional agreements with local libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Training in information literacy including research techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Bookstore services: ordering, secure payment, and prompt delivery of books, course packs, course-related supplies and materials, and institutional memorabilia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Ongoing technical support, preferably offered during evenings and weekends as well as normal institutional working hours.</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Referrals for student learning differences, physical challenges, and personal counseling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Access to grievance procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The institution recognizes that a sense of community is important to the success of many students, and that an ongoing, long-term relationship is beneficial to both student and institution. The design and administration of the program takes this factor into account as appropriate, through such actions as encouraging study groups, providing student directories (with the permission of those listed), including off-campus students in institutional publications and events, including these students in definitions of the academic community through such mechanisms as student government representation, invitations to campus events including graduation ceremonies, and similar strategies of inclusion.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Standard 5

#### 5. Evaluation and Assessment
Both the assessment of student achievement and evaluation of the overall program take on added importance as new techniques evolve. For example, in asynchronous programs the element of seat time is essentially removed from the equation. For these reasons, the institution conducts sustained, evidence-based and participatory inquiry as to whether distance learning programs are achieving objectives. The results of such inquiry are used to guide curriculum design and delivery, pedagogy, and educational processes, and may affect future policy and budgets and perhaps have implications for the institution’s roles and mission.

- As a component of the institution’s overall assessment activities, documented assessment of student achievement is conducted in each course and at the completion of the program, by comparing student performance to the intended learning outcomes. | Standard 2a: EE # 1, 3, & 4 | Standard 2: EE # 1, 3, & 4 |
- When examinations are employed (paper, online, demonstrations of competency, etc.), they take place in circumstances that include firm student identification. The institution otherwise seeks to assure the integrity of student work. | Standard 3 | Standard 3 |
- Documented procedures assure that security of personal information is protected in the conduct of assessments and evaluations and in the dissemination of results. | Standard 3: EE # 2 & 5; Standard 11c: EE # 3 | Standard 3: EE # 1; Standard 9c: EE # 5 |
- Overall program effectiveness is determined by such measures as | Standard 2a: EE # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 | Standard 3: EE # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 |
  - The extent to which student-learning matches intended outcomes, including for degree programs both the goals of general education and the objectives of the major. | Standard 2a: EE # 1 & 3 | Standard 2: EE # 1 & 3 |
  - The extent to which student intent is met. | Standard 2a: EE # 4 | Standard 2: EE # 4 |
  - Student retention rates, including variations over time. | Standard 7d: EE # 2 & 4 | Standard 6: EE # 5 |
  - Student satisfaction, as measured by regular surveys. | Standard 8: EE # 2 & 7 | Standard 6: EE # 6 |
  - Faculty satisfaction, as measured by regular surveys and by formal and informal peer review processes. | Standard 9a: EE # 5 Standard 9b: EE # 6 | Standard 7: EE # 6 & 8 |
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Standard 5 (Continued, WCET)</strong></th>
<th>Comprehensive</th>
<th>Programmatic</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The institution conducts a program of continual self-evaluation directed toward program improvement, targeting more effective uses of technology to improve pedagogy, advances in student achievement of intended outcomes, improved retention rates, effective use of resources, and demonstrated improvements in the institution’s service to its internal and external constituencies. The program and its results are reflected in the institution’s ongoing self-evaluation process and are used to inform the further plans of the institution and those responsible for its academic programs.</td>
<td>Standard 2a: EE # 5; 11d: EE #6</td>
<td>Standard 2: EE# 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Institutional evaluation of electronically offered programs takes place in the context of the regular evaluation of all academic programs.</td>
<td>Standard 2a Standard 2b: EE# 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Standard 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The extent to which access is provided to students not previously served.</td>
<td>Standard 8: EE # 1, 2, 3, 4; Standard 9a: EE # 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Measures of the extent to which library and learning resources are used appropriately by the program’s students.</td>
<td>Standard 10: EE #12</td>
<td>Standard 8: EE # 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Measures of student competence in fundamental skills such as communication, comprehension, and analysis.</td>
<td>Standard 2a: EE # 4</td>
<td>Standard 2: EE # 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Cost effectiveness of the program to its students, as compared to campus-based alternatives.</td>
<td>Standard 11d</td>
<td>Standard 9d</td>
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</table>
Policy on Canadian Institution Degree Programs
(Applicable to Undergraduate Only)

The following facts and observations need to be considered concerning the length of degree programs in ABHE Canadian institutions.

1. There is a lack of uniformity in Canadian higher education regarding the length and content of degree programs.
2. Several Canadian provinces offer a Grade-12 senior matriculation that is regarded as being equivalent to first-year university studies. This equivalency, however, is no longer fully accepted nationally and internationally as it was in the past. “Senior matriculation” programs have undergone change over the years and have become more similar to high school programs being offered in other provinces and in the U.S.A.
3. There is a trend in Canadian universities towards the four-year bachelor’s degree. However, universities in several provinces offer three-year bachelor’s degrees.
4. It is desirable to see greater standardization in the length of degree programs offered in ABHE institutions in Canada, but not at the expense of enforced departure from accepted provincial educational patterns.

Policy

Since higher education is under provincial jurisdiction in Canada and there is no federal standardizing agency, considerable diversity exists regarding the length and content of degree programs. ABHE policy on the length of degree programs in Canadian institutions should both respect this diversity and at the same time encourage movement toward standardization. Therefore,

1. ABHE institutions in Canada are encouraged to move toward offering the standard four-year bachelor’s degree, particularly for vocational programs.
2. As long as provincial universities are offering three-year bachelor’s degrees, ABHE institutions located in these provinces will not be prevented from also offering three-year degree programs. Canadian three-year, pre-seminary baccalaureate programs must require a minimum of 24 semester hours (36 quarter hours) of biblical/theological studies.
3. All ABHE programs must have a sound and acceptable philosophy of general studies and should make sure that adequate general studies course work is offered and taught at the level of higher education so as to fulfill all the objectives of its programs. The length of degree programs must never be used by an ABHE applicant, candidate, or accredited institution as an excuse for inadequate treatment of the general studies component.
4. Tolerance and understanding should be shown by ABHE advisors, evaluators, and Commissioners towards Canadian institutions that are working through this transitional stage, especially when these institutions are working within the assumptions of their provincial authorities with regard to the equivalency of Grade-12 senior matriculation to first-year university. Since ABHE institutions operate in Canada, it is legitimate that they should be allowed to develop according to, and be evaluated by, prevailing standards in Canadian higher education in conjunction with the regular standards of the ABHE that are based upon American norms in higher education.
5. In Canadian higher education, the Bachelor of Theology degree is frequently associated with the British tradition rather than the American. In British and Canadian universities, the B.Th. is a standard undergraduate degree in divinity or theology and requires no more than four years of study beyond high school. Canadian ABHE institutions, therefore, should not be prevented from offering four-year B.Th. programs.

[Applicable Standards: 11a]

Revised October 1983, February 1994
Policy Concerning Adult Degree Completion Programs
(Applicable to Undergraduate Only)

The Commission has witnessed implementation of an increasing number of adult degree completion programs offered by member institutions. The growth of such programs has doubtless been stimulated by the need for lifelong learning opportunities, rapid changes in the work place and ministry vocations, and the need for additional flexibility in degree program opportunities provided by member institutions. While acknowledging the need for appropriate educational and degree programs designed to respond to the needs of adult learners with incomplete or inadequate higher educational credentials, proliferation of such programs raises numerous potential quality assurance concerns.

The Commission’s posture toward educational innovation is well documented in its “Policy on the Spirit of Accreditation.” The Commission does not desire to inhibit institutions endeavoring to address constituent needs for Bible-centered postsecondary education and adult ministry formation for adult learners through non-conventional means. At the same time, the Commission endeavors to assist institutions contemplating and designing such educational programs in the careful consideration of adequate measures for educational quality assurance.

Initial implementation or addition of adult degree completion programs constitutes a major substantive change, as indicated in the Commission’s “Policy on Substantive Change.” Adult degree completion programs must also fully meet all applicable Standards for Accreditation. In addition to general guidelines prescribed for submission of substantive change proposals, substantive change proposals for adult degree completion programs must respond (including submission of appropriate documentation) to each of the following specific requirements:

1. The educational objectives, content, and methodologies of the degree completion program must be consonant with the institution’s mission statement and educational goals.

2. Spiritual and academic admissions requirements must be consistent with the institutional mission and with admission policies and practices for resident degree programs; deviations (in policy or practice) from resident program admission standards must have approval of the faculty, administration, and governing board, and rationale for such deviation must be documented.

3. The degree completion program must maintain standards commensurate with the academic rigor, policies, and procedures (i.e., in such matters as academic probation and dismissal, course waivers and substitutions, grading) employed for the institution’s traditional programs.

4. The institution must designate means and procedures by which it will assess the extent to which stated learning and developmental outcomes for the degree completion courses and programs are comparable to those in the institution’s parallel traditional courses and programs.

5. The institution must follow practices consistent with its traditional resident programs for the screening, employment, orientation, training, and evaluation as appropriate for full- and part- time faculty members. Substantive change proposals for degree completion programs should include faculty rosters documenting academic and experiential credentials and teaching assignments for faculty employed to teach in the program.

6. Where extensive reliance upon part-time faculty to teach adult degree completion program courses is contemplated either temporarily or long term, the program must describe means by which it will assess student
satisfaction with faculty accessibility and adequacy of faculty/student interaction.

7. In cases where resident faculty are relied upon to teach courses in the degree completion program, whether the institution considers such courses part of standard teaching assignments or voluntary overload for additional pay, such assignments must be included in institutional reports of faculty work load.

8. The institution must develop a plan to provide special training in andragogical principles to all instructors within the program.

9. The institution must provide evidence that appropriate support services are accessible to the degree completion student.

10. The institution must provide evidence that appropriate learning resources are accessible to the degree completion student, that courses require appropriate use of learning resources, and that students actually use appropriate learning resources in completing course requirements.

11. Students in the degree completion program need to meet the minimum number of Bible credits (Standard 11a., undergraduate programs) set forth by ABHE standards.

12. The program must delineate ways in which adult degree completion students will fulfill Christian service requirements.

13. The amount of classroom contact in the degree completion program should equal approximately 50% or more of a traditional program. Adult education factors and rationale upon which the degree completion program’s accelerated calendar and curricular scheme are based should be clearly understood and enunciated (e.g., adult students, cohort system, collaborative learning, consolidated block of class time, consolidated block of homework time, one course taken at a time, etc.) in all published materials relating to the program.

14. The program must specify the total number of credit hours (ordinarily no more than 50%) which may be earned through degree completion program course work.

15. The institution must specify the total number of credit hours (ordinarily no more than 30%), which may be earned through non-classroom contact means (e.g., online, correspondence courses, credit-by-examination, credit for prior learning, etc.).

16. Whenever appropriate, awarding of credit for prior learning (CPL) [credit for demonstrated competence (CDC)] shall follow the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) standards or be based upon recommendations of the College Credit Recommendation Service (formerly American Council on Education/Program on Non-collegiate Sponsored Instruction, ACE/PONSI).* No more than 30 semester hours of credit for prior learning shall be awarded toward a degree.

17. If an institution approves certain workshops, seminars, or programs for a standard CPL award, the rationale in each case (based upon such factors as objectives, contact hours, instructor qualifications, student requirements, quality of materials, assessment of learning, etc.) for such standard awards shall be documented in a policy and procedure manual.
18. A variety of periodic and systematic outcomes assessment procedures should be established to assess the quality and integrity of the degree completion program and its comparability to the institution’s traditional degree programs.

19. Where off-campus locations are involved, the institution must demonstrate appropriate special arrangements provided for student access to faculty members, student services (e.g., academic advising, guidance and counseling, academic services, financial aid), and learning resources (c.f., ABHE “Policy on Alternative Academic Programs”).

20. When possible, institutions initiating adult degree completion programs will receive a special evaluation visit within the first six months of operation. In cases where reaffirmation visits will take place within one year, such visits may be waived, but an additional member of the reaffirmation committee will be assigned to review the degree completion program(s).

21. The institution must demonstrate that its pricing policies are both ethically and financially appropriate to the costs incurred and the services rendered.

[Applicable Standards: 11a]

*under the auspices of the State University of New York.

Adopted February 1998
Policy on General Studies
(Applicable to Undergraduate Only)

The general studies core is the breadth component of an undergraduate degree program. Majors and professional studies are the depth components.

General Studies in Biblical Higher Education

General studies encompass several subject areas, convey an advanced body of knowledge, and provide for the development of a high level of analytical and communicative skills that are expected of program graduates. General studies focus upon key concepts and philosophical issues in the various disciplines. Presuppositions and worldviews are examined in light of biblical principles. The integrating of biblical and general studies forms the basis for the development of a biblical world view and provides a frame of reference for engaging those to whom graduates are called to minister.

Hence, it is essential to biblical higher education that an institution engage highly qualified general studies faculty with expertise in both their chosen academic fields and biblical studies; otherwise, the desired integration is less likely to take place. Institutions that have yet to assemble a qualified general studies faculty remain responsible for assisting students in integrating biblical and general studies and forming a biblical world view. As a temporary measure, integrative seminars, analytical papers, and/or weekly consultation with a faculty member would help to facilitate the integration process for those students who must take general studies course work off-campus while enrolled at the institution. An interdisciplinary course designed to examine key concepts, presuppositions, philosophical bases, and worldviews should be required of all transfer students who have taken 25 percent or more of their general studies course work in a secular program.

Course Work Qualifying as General Studies

Standard 11a. states:

A core of general education studies representative of the breadth of general studies and equivalent to 36 semester hours for a baccalaureate degree or 18 semester hours for an associate degree.

For general studies to indeed serve as the breadth component of a degree program, it is essential that the course work be general in nature and that the common core include a distribution requirement ensuring that students take courses from a number of disciplines, such as communications (composition and speech), fine arts (art and/or music), foreign language, history (including world history), literature, mathematics, natural sciences (life and/or physical), philosophy, physical education, and social sciences. Hence, the general studies core must not be centered around only a few subject areas. An exemplary program will have a broadly distributed core, yet require that students extend two general studies disciplines to the second level, i.e., each built upon a prerequisite, and one to a third, i.e., built upon two prerequisites.

It is essential that general studies course work flow from the disciplinary categories listed in the criteria, e.g., biology, chemistry, and physics as natural sciences. Hence, courses that are professional in nature, e.g., business, education, do not qualify as general studies. Also, courses that qualify as biblical and theological studies, although having general education value in other contexts, do not qualify as general studies within the context of biblical higher education.
Ordinarily, only one general studies discipline will be extended to the third level. Under no circumstances will a fourth-level course be accepted in the general studies component. Such a course is too specialized to be classified as "general" and should rather be incorporated into a major or minor.

[Applicable Standards: 11a]

Adopted October 1983; Revised October 1990; February 2004
Policy on International Education Programs

Educational institutions in the U.S. and Canada are establishing branch campuses abroad and moving whole degree programs overseas. Therefore, guidelines are needed to ensure quality of programs wherever they are offered. The following principles should assist institutions in planning international ventures and evaluating teams in assessing those programs.

These principles are derived from a longer list endorsed by the Executive Directors of the regional institutional accrediting bodies of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation on February 14, 1990, and neither supplant the ABHE Standards for Accreditation nor replace the processes for approving programmatic change.

The Principles

1. The international program is rooted in the institution’s stated mission and purposes.

2. The institution cooperates with the appropriate educational community leadership in the host country.

3. The international program has received all appropriate internal programmatic approvals, including that of the governing board, and all appropriate external approvals where required, including government bodies and accrediting associations. The program is controlled by the institution and its board.

4. The institution documents the accepted legal basis for its operations in the host country.

5. The program specifies the educational needs to be met by the international program.

6. The content of the program is subject to review by the program’s faculty and is taught by faculty with appropriate academic preparation and language proficiencies.

7. While the program, where appropriate, is adapted to the culture of the host country, the standard of student achievement in the international program is equivalent to the standard of student achievement on the institution’s campus.

8. The institution currently uses and assures the continuing use of adequate physical facilities for its international education program, including classrooms, offices, and libraries, and provides access to computer facilities where appropriate.

9. The institution has demonstrated its financial capacity to underwrite the international program without diminishing its financial support of the home campus. Financing of the international program is incorporated into the regular budgeting and auditing process.

10. International students admitted abroad meet admissions requirements similar to those used for international students admitted to the home campus, including appropriate language proficiencies.

11. The institution exercises control over recruitment and admission of students in the international program and all such students are recognized as students of the program.
12. All academic credits earned in the international program are applicable to comparative degree programs at the program.

13. The institution maintains official records of academic credit earned in its international program and the official transcript of record follows the institution’s practices.

14. The institution assures that its international program provides a supportive environment for student development consistent with the culture and mores of the international setting, and students in the international program are fully informed as to services that will or will not be provided.

15. The institution’s primary catalog describes its international program.

16. In instances where contractual relationships are established, the official contract is available in all languages of the contracting parties.

17. Procedures for program termination are available to provide appropriate protection for enrolled students.

[Applicable Standards: 11a]

Adopted February 1998
Policy on Two-Year Programs
(Applicable to Undergraduate Only)

Within higher education, there exists a variety of patterns relative to two-year programs. Some are freestanding, but others are found within four-year institutions and are distinguished as separate curricular programs awarding a terminal two-year degree. Others are offered within four-year curricular programs where the two-year degree is granted to those who complete the first two years of the four-year curriculum.

Generally, the purposes of two-year programs are to provide the benefits of a biblical higher education to those students (1) who do not elect to complete a four-year degree, (2) who are planning to transfer to a secular institution or university, or (3) who are preparing for occupations that do not require a four-year degree.

So that the benefits of a biblical higher education can best be provided to these students in the limited amount of time available, the following guidelines are established for terminal and transfer programs:

1. The minimum of 12 semester hours (18 quarter hours) of biblical/theological studies must concentrate upon an examination of those biblical principles that are essential for the development of a biblical world view.

2. The minimum of 18 semester hours (27 quarter hours) of general studies must concentrate upon an examination of the presuppositions underlying the various disciplines in light of biblical principles.

3. Students must be afforded the opportunity to actively participate in meeting the needs of people through the program of Christian service program.

4. Students must be challenged to develop a personal philosophy of ministry that emphasizes the application of biblical principles to both the unchanging need of man and the changing issues and needs of modern society.

5. Students must be afforded the opportunity to formulate a biblical world view based upon their biblical and general studies and their involvement in ministry.

6. Students must be challenged to embody the characteristics and spirit of Jesus Christ.

[Applicable standards: 11a]

Adopted October 1979; revised October 1987 and 1990
Policy on Transfer and the Award of Academic Credit

[The following statement was developed by a joint committee of representatives from the American Association on Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, the American Council on Education/Commission of Educational Credit, and the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (predecessor to the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation). The statement was endorsed by the three associations in 1978 and reaffirmed in 1990.]

This statement is directed to institutions of postsecondary education and others concerned with the transfer of academic credit among institutions and award of academic credit for extra-institutional learning. Basic to this statement is the principle that each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices with regard to the transfer and award of credit. Institutions are encouraged to review their policies and practices periodically to assure that they accomplish the program’s objectives and that they function in a manner that is fair and equitable to students. Any statements, this one or others referred to, should be used as guides, not as substitutes, for institutional policies and practices.

Transfer of credit is a concept that now involves transfer between dissimilar institutions and programs and curricula and recognition of extra-institutional learning, as well as transfer between institutions and curricula of similar characteristics. As their personal circumstances and educational objectives change, students seek to have their learning, wherever and however attained, recognized by institutions where they enroll for further study. It is important for reasons of social equity and educational effectiveness, as well as the wise use of resources, for all institutions to develop reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for acceptance of transfer credit. Such policies and procedures should provide maximum consideration for the individual student who has changed institutions, programs, or objectives. It is the receiving institution’s responsibility to provide reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for determining a student’s knowledge in required subject areas. All institutions have a responsibility to furnish transcripts and other documents necessary for a receiving institution to judge the quality and the quantity of the work. Institutions also have a responsibility to advise the student that the work reflected on the transcript may or may not be accepted by a receiving institution.

Interinstitutional or Programmatic Transfer of Credit

Transfer of credit from one program to another involves at least the following three considerations:

1. The educational quality of the program from which the student transfers;

2. The comparability of the nature, content, and level of credit earned to that offered by the receiving program; and

3. The appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned to the programs offered by the receiving program in light of the student’s educational goals.

Accredited institutions or programs. Accreditation speaks primarily to the first of these considerations, serving as the basic indicator that an institution or program meets certain minimum standards. Users of accreditation are urged to give careful attention to the accreditation conferred by accrediting bodies recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). CHEA is developing a formal process of recognition that will require any
accrediting body so recognized to meet the same standards. Pending implementation of the CHEA recognition process, CHEA has carried forward the recognition granted agencies by its predecessor organization, CORPA (Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation). CORPA recognized a number of accrediting bodies including:

1. Regional accrediting commissions (which historically accredited the more traditional institutions and universities but which now accredit proprietary, vocational-technical, and single-purpose institutions as well);

2. National accrediting bodies that accredit various kinds of specialized institutions or programs; and

3. Certain professional organizations that accredit freestanding professional schools in addition to programs within multipurpose institutions. (The American Council on Education annually publishes a list of recognized accrediting bodies as well as a directory of institutions or programs accredited by these organizations.)

Although accrediting agencies vary in the ways they are organized and in their statements of scope and mission, all accrediting bodies that hold CHEA recognition function to assure that the institutions or programs they accredit have met generally accepted minimum standards for accreditation.

Comparability and applicability. Comparability of the nature, content, and level of transfer credit and the appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned to programs offered by the receiving institution are as important in the evaluation process as the accreditation status of the institution at which the transfer credit was awarded. Since accreditation does not address these questions, this information must be obtained from catalogs and other materials and from direct contact between knowledgeable and experienced faculty and staff at both the receiving and sending institutions. When such considerations as comparability and appropriateness of credit are satisfied, however, the receiving institutions should have reasonable confidence that students from accredited institutions or programs are qualified to undertake the receiving institution’s educational program.

Accreditation affords reason for confidence in an institution’s or a program’s purposes, in the appropriateness of its resources and plans for carrying out these purposes, and in its effectiveness in accomplishing its goals insofar as these things can be judged. Accreditation speaks to the probability, but does not guarantee, that students have met acceptable standards of educational accomplishment.

Admissions and degree purposes. At some institutions there may be differences between the acceptance of credit for admission purposes and the applicability of credit for degree purposes. A receiving institution may accept previous work, place credit value on it, and enter it on the transcript. However, that previous work, because of its nature and not its inherent quality, may be determined to have no applicability to a specific degree to be pursued by the student.

Institutions and programs have a responsibility to make this distinction, and its implications, clear to students before they decide to enroll. This should be a matter of full disclosure, with the best interests of the student in mind. Institutions and programs also should make every reasonable effort to reduce the gap between credits accepted and credits applied toward an educational credential.

Unaccredited institutions. Institutions of postsecondary education that are not accredited by CHEA-recognized accrediting bodies may lack that status for reasons unrelated to questions of quality. Such institutions, however,
cannot provide a reliable, third-party assurance that they meet or exceed minimum standards. That being the case, students transferring from such institutions may encounter special problems in gaining acceptance and transferring credits to accredited institutions. Institutions admitting students from unaccredited institutions should take special steps to validate credits previously earned.

Foreign institutions. In most cases, foreign institutions are chartered and authorized to grant degrees by their national governments, usually through a Ministry of Education or similar appropriate ministerial body. No other nation has a system comparable with voluntary accreditation as it exists in the United States. At an operational level, AACRAO’s Office of International Education Services can assist institutions by providing general or specific guidelines on admission and placement of foreign students, or by providing evaluations of foreign educational credentials.

Validation of Extra-institutional and Experiential Learning for Purposes of Transfer and Award of Credit

Transfer of credit policies should encompass educational accomplishment attained in extra-institutional settings as well as at accredited postsecondary institutions. In deciding on the award of credit for extra-institutional learning, institutions will find the services of the American Council on Education’s Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials helpful. One of the center’s functions is to operate and foster programs to determine credit equivalencies for various modes of extra-institutional learning. The center maintains evaluation programs for formally structured courses offered by the military, and civilian non-collegiate sponsors, such as businesses, corporations, government agencies, and labor unions. Evaluation services are also available for examination programs, for occupations with validated job proficiency evaluation systems, and for correspondence courses offered by schools accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council. The results are published in a guide series. Another resource is the General Education Development (GED) Testing Program, which provides a means for assessing high school equivalency. For learning that has not been validated through the ACE formal credit recommendation process or through credit-by-examination programs, institutions are urged to explore the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) procedures and processes. Pertinent CAEL publications designed for this purpose are available from CAEL National Headquarters, 55 E. Monroe, #1930, Chicago, IL 60603; 312/499-2600; www.cael.org.

Uses of This Statement

Institutions or programs are encouraged to use this statement as a basis for discussions in developing or reviewing institutional policies with regard to the transfer and award of credit. If the statement reflects an institution’s policies, that institution may wish to use these guidelines to inform faculty, staff, and students.

In September of 2001, this statement was again ratified by the three national associations most concerned with practices in the area of transfer and award of credit—the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, the American Council on Education, and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

[Applicable Standards: 7]

Endorsed by ABHE Board October 1983
Policy on Validating Credits Earned at Unaccredited Institutions

In dealing with transfer-of-credit issues, ABHE institutions are referred to the Transfer and Award of Academic Credit statement approved by CHEA, ACE, and AACRAO. This statement provides that “Institutions admitting students from unaccredited institutions should take special steps to validate credits previously earned.”

Proper validation will demonstrate that course work taken in the sending institution is comparable to course work offered by the accredited receiving institution. It may be accomplished by some combination of the following means:

1. Demonstration of achievement by means of comprehensive examinations.
2. Review of syllabi, faculty credentials, grading standards, and other relevant learning resources at the sending institution.
3. Analysis of historic experience regarding the success of transfers from the sending institution.
4. Successful completion of a prescribed amount of study at the receiving institution.

Institutions shall retain documentation in the student’s permanent file outlining the process used to validate credits accepted from unaccredited sending institutions. This documentation shall serve as the basis for self study of institutional practices relative to validation of transfer credits from unaccredited institutions.

[Applicable Standards: 7]

Adopted October 1983
Principles of Good Practice in Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status

All accredited postsecondary institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, must exhibit integrity and responsibility in advertising, student recruitment, and representation of accredited status. Responsible self-regulation requires rigorous attention to principles of good practice.

General

1. Educational programs and services offered should be the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature, and recruitment activities.

2. All statements and representations should be clear, factually accurate, and current. Supporting information should be kept on file and readily available for review.

3. Catalogs and other official publications should be readily available and accurately depict the following:
   a. programmatic purposes and objectives;
   b. Entrance requirements and procedures;
   c. Basic information on programs and courses;
   d. Degree and program completion requirements, including length of time required to obtain a degree or certificate of completion;
   e. Faculty (full-time and part-time listed separately) with degrees held and the institutions conferring these degrees;
   f. institutional facilities that are readily available for educational use;
   g. Rules and regulations for conduct;
   h. Tuition, fees, and other program costs;
   i. Opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and
   j. Policies and procedures for refunding fees to students who withdraw from the institution.

4. In institution catalogs and/or official publications describing career opportunities, clear and accurate information should be provided on the following:
   a. National and/or state legal requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered, and
   b. Any unique requirements for career paths or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described.
   c. Address and telephone number of the accrediting body.

Student Recruitment

1. Student recruitment should be conducted by well-qualified admissions officers and trained volunteers whose credentials, purposes, and position or affiliation with the institution or program are clearly specified.
2. Independent contractors or agents used by the institution for recruiting purposes shall be governed by the same principles as institutional admissions officers and volunteers.

3. The following practices in student recruitment are to be scrupulously avoided:
   a. Assuring future employment, unless employment opportunities have been made and can be verified,
   b. Misrepresenting job placement and employment opportunities for graduates,
   c. Misrepresenting program costs,
   d. Misrepresenting abilities required to complete an intended program,
   e. Offering to agencies or individual persons money or inducements other than educational services in exchange for student enrollment. (Except for awards of privately endowed restricted funds, grants or scholarships are to be offered only on the basis of specific Standards related to merit or financial need.)

Representation of Accredited Status

1. The term “accreditation” is to be used only when accredited status is conferred by an accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and/or the U.S. Secretary of Education.

2. No statement should be made about possible future accreditation status or qualification not yet conferred by the accrediting body. Statements like the following are not permissible: “(Name of institution or program) has applied for candidate status with the Commission on Accreditation of the Association for Biblical Higher Education” or “The program is being evaluated by the Commission on Accreditation of the Association for Biblical Higher Education, and it is anticipated that accreditation will be granted in the near future.”

3. Any reference to state or provincial approval should be limited to a brief statement concerning the actual charter, incorporation, license, or registration that has been given by the state or province.

4. The phrase “fully accredited” should be avoided because partial accreditation is not possible.

5. When accredited status is affirmed in institutional catalogs and other official publications, it should be stated accurately and fully in a comprehensive statement, including the following:
   a. Identifying the accrediting body by name,
   b. Indicating the scope of accreditation as: (1) institutional or programmatic (regional or national), for example: The Yukon Bible College is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the Association for Biblical Higher Education, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (and/or the U.S. Department of Education); (2) programmatic (regional or national), for example: The Department of Music at Yukon Bible College is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music, a specialized accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (and/or the U.S. Department of Education). Programs for the preparation of elementary, secondary, and special education teachers at the bachelor’s and master’s level, for the preparation of guidance counselors at the master’s and specialist degree level, and for school superintendents at the specialist and doctoral degree level are accredited by the National
Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, a specialized accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (and/or the U.S. Department of Education).

c. Indicating the address and telephone number of the accrediting body.

6. The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented.

a. The accreditation granted by an institutional accrediting body has reference to the quality of the institution as a whole. Since institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program in the institution, statements like “this program is accredited” or “this degree is accredited” are incorrect and misleading.

b. “Freestanding” institutions offering programs in a single field, e.g., a school of art, engineering, theology, granted accreditation by a regional or national institutional accrediting body alone, should clearly state that this accreditation does not imply specialized accreditation of the programs offered.

Member agencies of CHEA should assume responsibility for informing the CHEA office of improper or misleading advertising or unethical practices that come to their attention, so that CHEA may inform the appropriate accrediting association or associations.

[Applicable Standards: 3 & 7a]

Approved by COPA Board April 1983; endorsed by ABHE Board October 1983; Revised February 1997
Statement on Academic Quality
As Related to Institutional Mission

ABHE accredited institutions will have up-to-date, clearly articulated statements of mission, goals, and program specific objectives that are appropriate to higher education and designed to equip students for a life of service to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Institutions will maintain ongoing processes designed to assess the results of their educational activities within the context of their respective mission and to determine any gaps between their intentions and results. Where gaps are identified, institutions will have planning processes in place to take action steps to address any issues discovered. Institutions will have teaching faculty of sufficient size and expertise to fulfill their mission. Faculty members will have degrees, appropriate for the assigned level of instruction, from institutions accredited by agencies recognized by USDE and/or CHEA or approved by the applicable provincial government. Faculty will be intricately involved in the design and implementation of curricular programs that exhibit the content and rigor characteristic of higher education. Students will achieve the analytical research and communication skills needed for life-long learning commensurate with the level of education offered. Written student learning outcomes will be identified for each academic program, along with related performance expectations. A coherent program of study will be implemented to achieve these objectives. Learning resources and services of appropriate form, range, depth, and currency will be available to support curricular offerings and meet student needs. Services that contribute to the holistic development and care of qualified students and that are appropriate to the level of education and delivery system will be available. Assessment efforts will validate that students are achieving the anticipated learning outcomes relative to institutional mission, institutional goals, and program specific objectives.

[Applicable Standards: Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, &11]

February 2007
Policies Relating to ABHE Procedures
Procedures for Institutional Accreditation

1. Applicant Status

A. Attaining Applicant Status

An institution desiring applicant status with the Commission on Accreditation should contact the Commission office to schedule a one-day consultation visit by a member of the Commission’s professional staff to the institution’s campus. The consultation visit must be completed during the 24 months prior to the institution submitting an application. The purpose of the visit is to assist the institution in understanding the process and timetable for accreditation, and to provide the Commission with a preliminary assessment of the institution’s achievement of the Conditions of Eligibility.

The institution should submit one electronic copy (pdf) of the following documents to coa@abhe.org by December 1 for consideration by the Commission at the upcoming February Commission meeting. Applications are considered on an annual basis.

1. A completed ABHE application form,

2. An official letter from the chief executive officer stating the board of control's desire for the institution to pursue accreditation with the Commission,

3. An official statement from the chief executive officer reflecting a board of control decision to affirm support of the ABHE Tenets of Faith, and

4. A document demonstrating compliance with the Conditions of Eligibility according to the sample available from the Commission office.

The Commission’s Committee on Applicant and Candidate Status will review these materials and determine whether to grant or deny applicant status or defer action. The committee’s decision is based upon whether it believes the institution has demonstrated compliance with the Conditions of Eligibility and appears to be able to achieve candidate status within a maximum of five years.

An institution denied applicant status must wait one year before reapplying. An institution may voluntarily withdraw its request for applicant status, without prejudice, at any time prior to the decision of the Committee on Applicant and Candidate Status.

B. Maintaining Applicant Status

An applicant institution must demonstrate progress in moving toward candidate status. An annual consultation visit by a member of the Commission’s professional staff is required in any year in which the institution does not host a visiting team. A two-day visit is required during the first year in applicant status and a one-day visit is required in subsequent years. The consultant will analyze the institution with respect to the Standards for Accreditation and assist the institution in organizing for self-study and institutional planning. The Commission’s Committee on Applicant and Candidate Status will annually review the institution’s progress report, the staff consultant’s report, the institution’s financial audit report for the
recently completed fiscal year, and its completed annual report form. The committee will make a recommendation to the Commission, which is responsible for making a determination whether sufficient progress is being made to warrant the continuation of applicant status. Continued applicant status is contingent upon submission to the Commission of all required reports and timely payment of annual Association and Commission dues and applicable fees. In extenuating circumstances, a grace period of up to six months may be requested. Institutional representatives are expected to participate annually in the Commission’s self-study seminar.

C. Statement on Applicant Status

Applicant institutions are to accurately reflect the nature of “applicant status” in their catalogs and other advertising. The following statement must be used to define applicant status: “(Institution name) holds applicant status with the Commission on Accreditation of the Association for Biblical Higher Education, 5850 T.G. Lee Blvd., Ste. 130, Orlando, FL 32822; 407.207.0808. Applicant status is a pre-membership status granted to those institutions that meet the ABHE Conditions of Eligibility and that possess such qualities as may provide a basis for achieving candidate status within five years.”

2. Candidate Status

A. Attaining Candidate Status

The institution will conduct an institutional self-study with respect to its own mission and objectives and with respect to the Standards for Accreditation. A final report, in the form of a compliance document, of the institution’s self-study (normally not exceeding 100 pages), together with an institutional assessment plan and planning document, is to be received in the Commission office no later than November 1 prior to an evaluation team visit scheduled for the spring or fall of the institution’s fourth year of applicant status.

An evaluation team will verify claims made in the institution’s self-study materials, formulate recommendations relative to the institution’s achievement of the Standards for Accreditation, assess whether the institution has in place a mechanism for ongoing development, and prepare a recommendation for the Commission on Accreditation regarding the institution’s readiness for advancement to candidate status.

Institution representatives will be given an opportunity to appear before the Commission on Accreditation as it considers the evaluation team report and the institution's response to the team report and determines whether to grant or deny candidate status or defer action. The Commission’s decision is based upon whether the institution appears able to achieve accredited status within a maximum of five years.

An institution denied candidate status must wait one year before making reapplication. If desired, it may appeal the decision in accord with the “Policy and Procedures for Reviews and Appeals.” An institution may voluntarily withdraw its request for candidate status, without prejudice, at any time prior to the decision of the Commission on Accreditation.

B. Maintaining Candidate Status

A candidate institution must demonstrate progress in moving toward accredited status. An annual consultation visit by a member of the Commission’s professional staff is required in any year in which the
institution does not host a visiting team. A two-day visit is required during the first year in applicant status and a one-day visit is required in subsequent years. The consultant will analyze the institution with respect to the Standards for Accreditation and assist the institution in organizing for self-study and institutional planning. The Commission’s Committee on Applicant and Candidate Status will annually review the institution’s progress report, the staff consultant’s report, the institution’s financial audit report for the recently completed fiscal year, and its completed annual report form. The committee will make a recommendation to the Commission, which is responsible for making a determination whether sufficient progress is being made as would warrant the continuation of candidate status. Continued candidacy is contingent upon submission to the Commission of all required reports and timely payment of annual Association and Commission dues and applicable fees. In extenuating circumstances, a grace period of up to six months may be requested. Institutional representatives are expected to participate annually in the Commission’s self-study seminar.

C. Statement on Candidate Status

Candidate institutions are to accurately reflect the nature of “candidate status” in their catalogs and other advertising. The following statement must be used to define candidate status: “(Institution name) holds candidate status with the Commission on Accreditation of the Association for Biblical Higher Education, 5850 T.G. Lee Blvd., Ste. 130, Orlando, FL 32822, 407.207.0808. Candidate status is a pre-accreditation status granted to those institutions that meet the ABHE Conditions of Eligibility and that possess such qualities as may provide a basis for achieving accreditation status within five years.”

3. Accredited Status

A. Attaining Accredited Status

A candidate institution will conduct an institutional self-study with respect to its own mission and objectives and with respect to the Standards for Accreditation. A final report, in the form of a compliance document, of the institution’s self-study (normally not exceeding 100 pages), together with an institutional assessment plan and planning document, is to be received in the Commission office no later than November 1 prior to an evaluation team visit scheduled for the spring or fall of the institution’s fourth year of candidate status.

An evaluation team will verify claims made in the institution’s self-study materials, formulate recommendations relative to the institution’s achievement of the Standards for Accreditation, assess whether the institution has in place a mechanism for ongoing development, and prepare a recommendation for the Commission on Accreditation regarding the institution’s readiness for advancement to accredited status.

Institution representatives will be given an opportunity to appear before the Commission on Accreditation as it considers the evaluation team report and the institution’s response to the team report and determine whether to grant or deny initial accreditation or defer action. The Commission’s decision is based upon the Principle for Accreditation, i.e., that an institution is substantially achieving and can be reasonably expected to continue to achieve its own mission and objectives and the Standards for Accreditation, and that it is committed to ongoing institutional development.

An institution denied accredited status must wait one year before reapplying at the level of its choice. If
desired, it may appeal the decision in accord with the “Policy and Procedures for Reviews and Appeals.” An institution may voluntarily withdraw its request for accredited status, without prejudice, at any time prior to the decision of the Commission on Accreditation.

B. Maintaining Accredited Status

Continued accreditation is contingent upon submission to the Commission of all required reports and timely payment of annual Association and Commission dues and applicable fees. In extenuating circumstances, a grace period of up to six months may be requested. In the third year of accreditation, a supplementary evaluation visit will be conducted by a representative of the Commission in order to verify the progress reported by the institution.

C. Reaffirming Accredited Status

An accredited institution will conduct an institutional self-study with respect to its own mission and objectives and with respect to the Standards for Accreditation. A final report, in the form of a compliance document, of the institution’s self-study (normally not exceeding 100 pages), together with an institutional assessment plan and planning document, is to be received in the Commission office not less than eight weeks prior to an evaluation team visit that will be scheduled for the spring of the institution’s fifth year of accredited status.

An evaluation team will verify claims made in the institution’s self-study materials, formulate recommendations relative to the institution’s achievement of the Standards for Accreditation, assess whether the institution has in place a mechanism for ongoing development, and prepare a recommendation for the Commission on Accreditation regarding the reaffirmation of the institution’s accredited status.

The Commission on Accreditation will consider the evaluation team report and the institution’s response to the team report and determines whether to reaffirm the institution’s accredited status. The Commission’s decision is based upon the Principle for Accreditation, i.e., that an institution is substantially achieving and can be reasonably expected to continue to achieve its own mission and objectives and the Standards for Accreditation, and that it is committed to ongoing institutional development.

An institution denied reaffirmation of accredited status may, if desired, appeal the decision in accord with the “Policy and Procedures for Reviews and Appeals.”

Once reaffirmed, the institution will repeat the reaffirmation process every ten years. Institutions offering sub-baccalaureate vocational education may be required to host an unannounced visit at least once during each interval between reaffirmation visits. The purpose of the visit will be to ensure that the institution has the personnel, facilities, and resources it has claimed to have and that it continues to comply with the Standards for Accreditation. These visits are conducted without the benefit of self-study materials. The Commission on Accreditation will consider reports of unannounced visits at its regular meetings. Upon considering such reports, it will have the same range of decision-making options as are available for regular reaffirmation visits.

Five-year and ten-year reaffirmation visits will be conducted in the spring. In extenuating circumstances, an institution may petition the Commission for a fall reaffirmation visit.
D. Statement on Accredited Status

Accredited institutions are to accurately reflect the nature of accredited status in their catalogs and other advertising.

For use when graduate education has been accredited — ______________________ College/University is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the Association for Biblical Higher education to grant certificates and degrees at the Associate, Baccalaureate, Master’s, and Doctoral degrees.

For use when undergraduate education only has been accredited — ______________________ College/University is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the Association for Biblical Higher Education to grant certificates and degrees at the Associate and Baccalaureate levels.

E. Title IV Noncompliance

As a consequence of the 1992 Higher Education Amendments, the U.S. Department of Education is more closely monitoring institutional compliance with Title IV (Federal Student Financial Assistance) requirements. Upon discovery that an institution is no longer in compliance with the Title IV requirements, ABHE will conduct a special assessment to assure that the institution remains in substantial compliance with the Commission’s Standards.

F. Statement of Accredited Status (Programmatic Accreditation)

The following statement must be used in the public documents of institutions who hold Programmatic Accreditation with the ABHE:

The Commission on Accreditation of the Association for Biblical Higher Education (5850 T.G. Lee Blvd., Ste. 130, Orlando, FL 32822, Telephone: 407-207-0808) accredits the following programs: [list the specific programs that are accredited].

Procedures for Programmatic Accreditation

Institutions with Prior ABHE Institutional Accreditation

1. The institutional CEO should submit a letter of request to the COA expressing the desire to pursue programmatic accreditation status.

2. The institution provides evidence that it meets the Conditions of Eligibility for programmatic accreditation. The evidence provided will be reviewed by the Commission’s Committee on Applicant and Candidate Status. The Committee will determine whether the Conditions have been sufficiently satisfied to authorize the preparation of self-study materials in view of a subsequent evaluative visit.

3. The institution should develop self-study materials in the form of a compliance document that, for the programs to be reviewed, demonstrates each program’s compliance with ABHE’s programmatic standards. The compliance document is due eight weeks prior to the date agreed upon for a team visit.

4. The institution should ensure that its assessment plan and planning documents are up-to-date and that they include consideration of the programs to be considered.

5. The institution will submit to the ABHE office staff three potential dates for the proposed team visit.

6. Upon identifying a team chair, the Commission staff will confirm the actual date of the visit.

7. In addition to a chair, the Commission staff will select other team member(s) the number to be determined in cooperation with the institution upon the basis of the range of programs to be reviewed. At least one team member will be a practitioner related to the fields of study covered by the programs to be examined, but who does not have a formal position with any ABHE institution.

8. A member of the ABHE Commission staff will be designated to accompany the team for the purpose of providing specific training for the practitioner(s) on the team relative to the ABHE programmatic standards. The staff member will also provide coaching services to the practitioner(s) during the course of the team visit.

9. Normally a team visit will last no less than one and one-half days, but the actual schedule will be determined by the team chair in cooperation with the institution and the Commission staff.

10. Within two weeks of the visit, the team chair will distribute a report of the team’s findings to the ABHE Commission staff.

11. Upon receipt of the team report, the Commission staff will review the report for completeness and forward it onto the institution whose programs have been reviewed. The institution will be asked to respond to the report, indicating any errors of fact, disagreements with the findings, and/or responses to the team’s findings. The request for a response will include the deadline by which the response must be received.

12. Upon completion of its response, the institution will forward it to the Commission staff for distribution to the Commission at large.

13. The Commission staff will supply the Commission with the institution’s self-study materials, the report of the team, and the institution’s response to the team report.

14. Representatives of the institution will be asked to meet with the Commission to respond to questions at the time the program(s) are considered for initial programmatic accreditation.
15. Based upon the results of the hearing, the Commission will make a decision to grant, defer, or deny programmatic accreditation.

16. Institutions having programs that are accredited by ABHE will provide an annual report to the Commission on Accreditation each year following guidelines supplied by the Commission.

17. Normally, the Commission will review the accreditation of the covered program(s) each ten years for reaffirmation of accreditation. However, the Commission reserves the right to review a program at any time based upon information coming to its attention.

**Procedures for Institutions with no Recent or Prior ABHE History**

1. The institution must develop and submit a petition to the ABHE Commission on Accreditation’s Committee on Progress Reports and Substantive Change demonstrating satisfaction of the Conditions of Eligibility for programmatic accreditation. The document must clearly identify all of the programs being submitted for consideration.

2. The Committee on Progress Reports and Substantive Change will review the institution’s submission and make a judgment regarding the petition’s satisfaction of the Conditions. Upon determining satisfactory compliance with the Conditions, the Committee will instruct the ABHE Commission staff to communicate its decision to the institution.

3. The ABHE staff will provide the institution instructions for the preparation of the self-study materials for the accreditation of the program(s) being considered for accreditation.

4. Steps 2 through 17 from above are followed.

Adopted February 2010; Revised November 2011
Institutions Where the Primary Instructional Language Is Other Than English

Policy

Institutions where the primary instructional language and the primary institutional document language is not English need to understand that communication with the Commission and the Association will be in English. This includes oral and written communication and institutional documents related to the accreditation process.

What the Commission might expect from Applicant, Candidate, and Member Institutions

1. Materials submitted to the ABHE Office and Commission on Accreditation must be in English. If a document is translated into English, the original document should also accompany the translation.

2. Accreditation-related presentations made to the Commission will be in English.

3. English speakers need to be available to translate for team members during a team visit.

What Applicant, Candidate, and Member Institutions might expect from the Commission

1. The Commission will make every effort to place at least one team member on the visiting team that speaks the primary instructional language of the institution.

2. The Commission will make every effort to help the institution network with educational professionals who speak the primary instructional language of the institution.

Adopted May 2007
Policy on the Assignment of Primary and Secondary Readers

Cases to be considered by the Commission on Accreditation as a whole will be assigned to both a primary and a secondary reader. This procedure enables a division of labor and assures objectivity. It also provides for thoroughness, the opportunity for a second opinion, and a backup, given the unforeseen absence of the primary reader.

To assure objectivity, enhance fairness, and avoid a conflict of interest, primary and secondary readers will not be assigned to a particular institution if they share the same denominational affiliation or the same geographic base for constituency, or if they have previously served on the institution’s faculty or staff, on an evaluation team that visited the institution, as a consultant for the institution, or as a primary reader for the institution. Only one reader will be assigned to committee deliberations.

Commission members will excuse themselves from the committee or Commission meeting when their participation presents a conflict of interest.

Revised October 1990 and 1992
Policy on Commission Records Management

The Commission on Accreditation shall maintain complete and accurate records of:

1. Its last full accreditation or pre-accreditation review of each institution or program including on-site evaluation team reports, the institution’s or program’s responses to on-site reports, periodic review reports, any reports of special reviews conducted by the Commission between regular reviews, and the institution’s or program’s most recent self-study materials.

2. All decisions made throughout an institution’s or program’s affiliation with the Commission regarding the accreditation and pre-accreditation of any institution or program and substantive changes, including all correspondence that is significantly related to those decisions.

In maintaining records, the Commission shall take reasonable and prudent measures to establish both the security and confidentiality of records in a manner consistent with good practice, its own policies, and applicable law. Confidential records will be released only to persons with a need to know as stipulated by the ABHE “Statement on Confidentiality.” Access to records is controlled by the Commission staff.

Security of electronic records shall be maintained according to best practices (e.g., password-protected access, backup solutions, encryption for data transfer, virus protection) to avoid loss or compromise.

Historic paper records shall be stored in a locked facility. These records shall be converted to electronic format as rapidly as possible in a manner consistent with good resource stewardship.

Adopted November 2011
Policy on Budget Development

Introduction

Under federal law, the ABHE Commission on Accreditation must be separate and independent of any related, associated, or affiliated trade association or membership organization. As a means for ensuring appropriate separation and independence, the Commission must develop and determine its own budget, with no review or consultation with any other entity or organization. To further ensure appropriate separation and independence, the Commission must pay fair market value for its proportionate share of any personnel, services, equipment or facilities jointly used by the Commission and the ABHE membership association.

To a certain extent, Commission decisions drive its budget. The numbers of institutions accepted into applicant status have a budgetary impact by determining the numbers of institutions pursuing the accreditation process. These decisions impact the demand for consultative visits held each year. They also impact the numbers of institutions to be assessed. The Commission also determines the acceptance or rejection of institutions into candidacy or accredited status, and the award of team visits for those institutions seeking initial accreditation. These decisions also impact the budget. (The visits scheduled for reaffirmation of accreditation are determined automatically by Commission procedures.) Despite the budgetary impact of these decisions, the Commission will base its decisions on educational quality considerations, not the budgetary implications of positive or negative decisions. The Commission has the right to autonomously set fees for the various activities related to the accreditation process. It also has the right to establish an assessment fee for each student enrolled in a member institution. Through these mechanisms, the Commission will ensure that its budgetary needs are met.

Procedure

1. The ABHE Director, Commission on Accreditation serves as the professional staff member who provides direct support to the Commission on Accreditation. The Director, Commission on Accreditation will, working in conjunction with the Commission officers, make projections regarding the following:

   a. The number of team visits to be held during the budget cycle
   b. The number of consultation visits to be held during the budget cycle
   c. The numbers of institutions that will submit requests for applicant status
   d. The numbers of institutions that will be granted applicant status
   e. The enrollments among institutions related to the accreditation process

2. The ABHE Director, Commission on Accreditation will also, in collaboration with Commission officers, make projections regarding the Commission’s expenses with special attention to the direct costs of the Commission’s activities and an appropriate share of the costs, based on market values, for personnel, services, equipment and facilities of assets used jointly by both the Commission and the larger membership association.

3. On the basis of these considerations, under the supervision of the Commission officers, the Director, Commission on Accreditation will prepare a preliminary budget. This budget will be submitted to the officers of the Commission for review.
4. After reviewing the preliminary budget, the officers will make any recommendations for refinements they deem necessary.

5. The officers will also review the fee schedules for the various accreditation services, as well as the assessment to be levied for each full-time equivalent student enrolled. They will recommend such adjustments as necessary to ensure that the Commission can operate on a sound basis financially.

6. The Director, Commission on Accreditation will prepare appropriate documents to reflect the work completed throughout steps one through five and circulate them to the entire Commission at least one month prior to its February meeting, soliciting feedback from the Commission on the proposals.

7. The Director, Commission on Accreditation will compile any feedback received from Commissioners and distribute it among the Commission officers to obtain their recommendations regarding adjustments that may be necessary to either the fee structure or the preliminary budget.

8. Once adjustments have been incorporated, a refined draft of the budget will be submitted to the Commission for consideration at its regular meeting. Action taken on the budget will include approval of all fees related to enrollments and the accrediting process.

9. Should it become necessary to make mid-year adjustments in the budget, the Director, Commission on Accreditation will work with the Commission Officers to prepare proposals that will be circulated to the entire Commission for adoption.

10. In setting fees, the Commission will exercise care to minimize increases and to ensure that there is a reasonable relationship between the value of the services offered and the charges assessed.

Adopted November 2006
Policy on Changes to the Commission’s
Policies, Procedures, & Standards

The Commission on Accreditation is the accreditation authority within the Association, and is recognized as such by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the U.S. Department of Education. Hence, it is the Commission, through its Committee on Criteria, that is responsible for assuring that the Conditions of Eligibility, Principle for Accreditation, and Standards for Accreditation, together with all accreditation policies and procedures, are kept current.

Procedure for making additions, deletions, or modifications to the Commission’s accreditation policies, procedures, and Standards

1. **Initiation.** Recommendations for addition, deletion, or modification to the Commission’s accreditation policies, procedures, or Standards may originate from any source. Individuals or institutions should direct their recommendations to the Director, Commission on Accreditation who will place them on the agenda of the Committee on Criteria.

2. **Consideration by the Committee on Criteria.** Recommendations will be studied by the Committee on Criteria. If the committee agrees with the worthiness of a recommendation, it will express the proposal in language that is consistent in style and format with existing accreditation policies, procedures, and Standards, and recommend it to the Commission on Accreditation for their approval.

3. **Consideration by the Commission on Accreditation.** Recommendations from the Committee on Criteria will be considered by the Commission on Accreditation. If the Commission agrees with the worthiness of a recommendation, it will recommend it to the ABHE membership. If the Commission disagrees with the worthiness of a recommendation, it will either reject it or return it to the Committee on Criteria for further work.

4. **Circulation and publication.** Recommendations released by the Commission will be circulated by electronic means or mail to the Association’s constituency. Recommendations related to Standards will also be circulated to member institutions, states, provinces, other recognized accrediting bodies, and the public. Constituents are requested to share the recommendations with their faculty, students, and supporters, who are, in turn, invited to forward comments to the Director, Commission on Accreditation. Recommendations relating to accreditation Standards will, in addition, be published on the Association’s website. Readers are invited to forward comments to the Director, Commission on Accreditation. The Director, Commission on Accreditation will forward all comments to the Committee on Criteria of the Commission on Accreditation for its consideration.

5. **Adoption.** Standards recommendations that have gained final approval from the Commission are placed before the membership for a vote. This may be done electronically with a minimum window of ten (10) business days to receive votes or at the Association’s annual meeting, or at a special meeting, for adoption. Standards recommendations may be adopted by majority vote, referred back to the Committee on Criteria, or rejected. Policy and procedural recommendations adopted by the Commission do not require further approval by the membership.
6. **Exception.** The Committee on Criteria, with the assistance of the Commission staff, has major responsibility for monitoring changes in the regulations and initiating action to maintain Commission compliance with these changes. Based upon input from the Committee on Criteria, the Commission shall have authority to make changes needed to policies and procedures to maintain compliance with federal regulations on an “act and inform” basis. For such changes, the Commission will not need to follow the normal procedures described above. The membership, however, having been informed of such changes, may petition the Commission for an alternate means of complying with the regulations by submitting a petition to the Director, Commission on Accreditation. The Director, in turn, will submit the petition to the Committee on Criteria for processing as described by this paragraph.

7. **Implementation.** Newly adopted procedures become effective immediately upon approval. Institutions or programs have one year to comply with newly adopted policies. Unless otherwise specified by the Commission on Accreditation, institutions or programs have two years to comply with newly adopted Standards.

Adopted October 1987; Revised October 1990, November 2007, April 2012, November 2012
Policy on Complaints Against the Commission

Complaints from member institutions or programs and their students, faculty, or employees regarding ABHE Standards, policies, or procedures shall be submitted in writing to the Commission (COA) office for consideration by the Director, Commission on Accreditation. The nature of these complaints, disposition, and method of handling shall be included in the Director, Commission on Accreditation's report to the Commission in accordance with the complaint review procedures. All complaints will be reported in the minutes of the next meeting of the appropriate committee of the Commission.

Complaint Review Procedures

When a complaint is received by the Director, Commission on Accreditation, the following actions will be taken:

1. Within 45 working days, the complainant is advised of this “Policy on Complaints Against the Commission” and is asked to provide a clear, concise statement relating to the complaint and any documentation deemed necessary to support the case.

2. Within 45 working days of receipt of the statement, the Director, Commission on Accreditation will review the complaint and supportive documentation to determine if the allegations are deemed to seriously affect the purposes or objectives of the Commission. (Allegations are deemed to seriously affect the purposes or objectives of the Commission when they relate to the process of accreditation and/or call into question the integrity of the Commission.) A complete record of complaints filed with the Director, Commission on Accreditation will be kept in the Commission’s executive office.

3. If the complaint is not deemed to seriously affect the purposes or objectives of the Commission, the Director, Commission on Accreditation will respond indicating his judgment regarding the complaint’s lack of merit. If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision, an appeal may be filed in accordance with the complaint appeals procedures outlined below.

4. When it has been deemed that the complaint endangers the purposes or objectives of the Commission, the Director, Commission on Accreditation will, within 45 working days, present the complaint to the appropriate Commission committee for its consideration. Each member of the Commission committee will receive a copy of the complaint and the accompanying documentation. Upon receipt of documentation, the members of the committee will, within 45 working days, advise the Director, Commission on Accreditation of a possible resolution of the complaint. Upon receipt of the proposed resolution, the Director, Commission on Accreditation will, within 45 days, inform the complainant of the suggested resolution.

5. If the resolution suggested by the Commission committee is not acceptable to the complainant, the complainant may, within 45 working days, appeal the decision in accordance with the following complaint appeals procedures.

Complaint Appeals Procedure

Appeals of decisions shall be filed with the ABHE COA committee chair, who is responsible for processing them. There are two levels of appeal.
**First level of appeal (COA committee).** At the first level, the appeal is filed with the ABHE Commission committee. When the committee receives an appeal for the review of a complaint, it will act within 45 working days as follows:

1. It will consider the allegations of the complainant,
2. It will review the process completed by the Director, Commission on Accreditation,
3. It will study the evidence submitted in writing by the complainant in support of his allegations, and
4. It will provide a hearing for the complainant, if so requested.

If the appeal for the review of the complaint includes a request for a hearing, the committee will advise the complainant of the date, time, and place for the hearing at least thirty (30) days prior to the hearing. The course of the hearing shall be controlled by the chairman of the committee. The chairman may limit the testimony of witnesses. Unless otherwise ordered by the committee, the hearing shall last no longer than one day.

**Second level of appeal (Commission).** If a complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the Commission committee, further appeal can be made to the ABHE Commission as a whole. Appeals at this level shall be filed with the ABHE Commission chair for processing.

When the Commission receives an appeal for the review of a complaint, it will act within 45 working days as follows:

1. It will consider the allegations of the complainant,
2. It will review the process completed by the Director, Commission on Accreditation and the Commission committee,
3. It will study the evidence submitted in writing by the complainant in support of his allegations, and
4. It will provide a hearing for the complainant, if so requested.

If the appeal for the review of the complaint includes a request for a hearing, the Commission will advise the complainant of the date, time, and place for the hearing at least thirty (30) days prior to the hearing. The course of the hearing shall be controlled by the chairman of the Commission. The chairman may limit the testimony of witnesses. Unless otherwise ordered by the Commission, the hearing shall last no longer than one day. The decision of the Commission is final.

**Costs**

When hearings are requested, all costs relating to the hearings are borne by the complainant. At the first level of appeal, the complainant shall post a $2,000 bond with the Commission prior to the scheduling of the hearing. At the second level of appeal, a $5,000 bond shall be posted.

Should the Commission be found at fault in the decision on a complaint, it will be required to bear the expenses of convening the hearing body.

Adopted October 1982; Revised October 1987, 1997; November 2007
Policy on Complaints Against an Institution or Accredited Program

Complaints from individuals, institutions or programs, or agencies regarding an institution’s or program’s significant noncompliance with ABHE Standards, policies, or procedures shall be submitted in writing to the Director, Commission on Accreditation at 5850 T.G. Lee Blvd., Suite 130, Orlando, FL 32822. The complaints will be handled by the Director, Commission on Accreditation in accordance with the “Policy on Complaints Against an Institution or Accredited Program.” The nature of these complaints, method of handling, and disposition shall be included in the Director, Commission on Accreditation’s report to the Commission on Accreditation.

Occasionally, the Commission on Accreditation or its staff receives anonymous complaints regarding an institution that holds standing with the Commission. While anonymous complaints are reported to the appropriate subcommittee of the Commission, in the absence of a pattern of such complaints, no action is taken unless directed by the committee.

The Director, Commission on Accreditation shall consider complaints from named individuals, institutions, or agencies regarding an institution's or program's noncompliance with ABHE Standards, policies, or procedures only when such allegations are substantiated with proper documentation and when such allegations are deemed to endanger the purposes and objectives of the member institution or program. (Allegations are deemed to seriously affect the purposes or objectives of an institution or program when they relate to the educational quality of its offerings or its probity in dealing with the public.) The Commission may make inquiry concerning such individual complaints to ascertain whether such a potentially adverse condition exists.

Since this complaint procedure is intended only to relate to substantial non-compliance with the ABHE standards, policies, or procedures, it is not to involve ABHE in disputes between individuals and member institutions, or to place ABHE in the position of reviewing individual cases of admission, grades, granting or transferability of credits, application of academic policies, fees or other financial matters, disciplinary matters or contractual rights and obligations. ABHE also will not serve as a grievance panel when the outcome of institutional grievance or appeal processes is unsatisfactory to the complainant unless it is clear that the unsatisfactory result violates ABHE Standards, policies or procedures.

Step One

When a complaint is received by the Director, Commission on Accreditation, the following actions will be taken within 45 working days:

1. The individual filing the complaint (the complainant) is advised of this “Policy on Complaints Against an Institution or Accredited Program” and is asked to provide a concise, clear statement relating to the complaint, including a summary of any institutional/programmatic complaint process attempted, and also provide any documentation deemed necessary to support the complaint.

2. Upon receipt of a written statement, the Director, Commission on Accreditation shall review, within 45 working days, the complaint and supportive documentation to determine if sufficient documentation is provided. He shall also investigate if the complainant has followed any institutional appeals procedures regarding the complaint. If not, the complainant may be required to follow such procedures before any
further action is taken by the Commission.

3. When the complaint has been sufficiently documented, the Director, Commission on Accreditation will, within 45 working days, notify the chief executive officer of the institution against which the complaint and supporting documentation has been directed. The chief executive officer will receive a copy of the complaint and will be requested to reply in writing within thirty (30) days of the date of notification.

4. Upon receipt of the response from the chief executive officer of the institution, the Director, Commission on Accreditation will compare the two presentations regarding the complaint (one from the complainant and one from the institution). When appropriate, the Director, Commission on Accreditation will, within 45 working days, advise the complainant and the institution as to possible resolution of the complaint.

In the event that the resolution suggested by the Director, Commission on Accreditation is not acceptable to one or both parties, the complaint will, within 45 working days, be referred to the appropriate Commission committee, if requested by the dissatisfied party. In such cases, both the complainant and the institution are notified of the referral.

Step Two

In the case of a referral to the Commission committee, the following procedure is utilized for the resolution of the complaint.

1. The Commission committee will review the documentation presented by both parties. Any supplemental information will be included in this review. The recommended resolution of the Director, Commission on Accreditation and subsequent response of the complainant and the institution will also be part of the review material.

2. The Commission committee will initially attempt to resolve the complaint without the necessity of a hearing. At its next regular meeting, the Commission committee will make a determination as to its recommended resolution. Each party will have thirty (30) days to respond to the recommended resolution. If the institution has agreed to certain action as a result of the recommended resolution, these actions will be made known to the Commission committee upon the finalization of those actions.

If the proposed resolution recommended by the Commission committee is unsatisfactory to one or both parties, the dissatisfied party(ies) may request a hearing for the purpose of resolving the complaint. Upon receipt of such a request, the Director, Commission on Accreditation will begin efforts to organize a panel for the purpose of hearing the complaint.

Step Three

The panel will be normally be comprised of five persons, three of whom will be appointed by the Director, Commission on Accreditation. The Director will choose three persons from among current or former Commissioners and/or senior team evaluators. He will select one of the three to be the chair of the hearing panel. Both the institution and the complainants will be offered an opportunity to nominate one panelist each to represent their respective interests. In order to be confirmed, the nominated panelists must agree to sign the confidentiality agreement attached to this policy.
The panel will conduct a special meeting for the purpose of resolving the complaint. The panel chair will conduct the meeting and will have the power to limit the testimony of any witnesses. Each party to the complaint may be represented at the hearing by whomsoever it chooses. The party requesting the hearing will bear the entire cost of the hearing.

1. Upon the conclusion of a hearing between the complainant and the institution, the hearing panel may choose to:

(a) recommend a final disposition to both parties; or

(b) recommend an institutional visit to review the allegations of the complainant. The visit will be conducted by a team of three evaluators from member institutions/programs. The Director, Commission on Accreditation will provide the names of these evaluators from a pool of persons experienced in making institutional visits. The institution has the right to reject any member of the proposed panel of evaluators.

The procedure of this evaluation team will be to review the process for the complaint prior to the review. The team will make an institutional visit to determine the nature of the complaint, the facts surrounding the complaint, and make inquiry of individuals, records, and evidence that may exist at the institution concerning the complaint.

The team may also make inquiry of the complainant regarding the facts, nature, and records related to the complaint. The evaluation team will advise the hearing panel of its findings. The hearing panel will take final action upon receipt of the recommendations of the team.

The hearing panel may require an institution or an individual party to take corrective steps, and it may include publication of findings concerning an institution, the program, or individual party. The hearing panel will establish the deadline for corrective action. In these cases, the institution will submit a report to the hearing panel concerning its actions. The panel will review this report and take whatever action that it deems necessary at that time.

Failure to follow the recommendations of the hearing panel will cause that institution or program to be reviewed by the Commission on Accreditation regarding the institution or program’s accredited status.

Upon completion of all phases of the complaint review process, the hearing panel action will be considered final for both parties.

Costs

When special hearings are requested or an institutional or programmatic review is recommended, all related costs are to be borne by the complainant. Complainants shall be required to post a $5,000 bond with the Commission pending a decision regarding the complaint. Should an institution or program be found at fault in a complaint, it will be required to reimburse the complainant for all expenses in the processing of the complaint. When the fault cannot be clearly determined, the costs will be assessed at the discretion of the hearing panel.

ABHE Policy on Complaints Against an Institution Or Accredited Program

Confidentiality Agreement

Introduction

The ABHE Policy for dealing with complaints against institutions or programs that hold status with the Commission on Accreditation provides three steps for dealing with such issues. The third step provides for a hearing by a five member panel. Each party to the complaint has the prerogative of nominating one member of the hearing panel. For service on the panel, the nominated individual must agree to abide by the confidentiality agreement described below. Failure to enter into the confidentiality agreement will result in a declaration that the nominated individual is ineligible for service on the panel and result in the loss of the nominating party's ability to recommend a person for panel service. Should this occur, the ABHE Director, Commission on Accreditation will appoint a panelist to fill the vacancy created. Should it be found that a panelist who has entered into this agreement has violated this confidentiality policy, the violator will be subject to legal action.

Matters that are confidential

ABHE has a general statement regarding confidentiality. The materials described by this policy are to be treated as confidential. These materials include: self-study materials, evaluation documents, progress reports, institutional financial documents, minutes relating to Commission decisions relating to the Institution, and action letters communicating Commission decisions regarding the institution. Additionally, correspondence, testimony, and related materials developed in efforts to implement each step of this complaint policy shall be regarded as confidential. Such materials will be released only on a “need to know” basis, but the institution shall have the right to make public its own documents. It can also permit panelists to exercise the prerogative of making documents under its control public. The complainants will also have similar powers to those reserved for institutions to control access to materials related to their complaint.

Agreement Confirmed

As a panelist serving on a hearing panel related to the ABHE complaint process, I agree to abide by the terms of this agreement.

Name ______________________________________  Date ______________________________
Policy on Compliance with
U.S. Department of Education Regulations

It is the policy of ABHE to comply with the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) regulations. Most compliance matters are imbedded within the Commission's regular policies, procedures, and Standards. The following compliance issues are either not covered by other policies and procedures or require the combination of several documents to demonstrate compliance and are therefore comparatively obscure. These are summarized below to facilitate a clear understanding by participants in the Commission's accrediting process. The Commission will:

1. File an annual report with the U.S. Secretary of Education hereafter referred to as Secretary.
2. Forward its current Directory to the Secretary each year.
3. Supply the Secretary with information regarding its member institutions or programs' compliance with Title IV responsibilities. In this connection, it will notify the Secretary any time it believes that a member institution or program is failing to meet its Title IV responsibilities or is engaged in fraud and abuse related to these responsibilities.
4. Advise the Secretary of any changes in its own policies, procedures, or Standards that might alter the scope of its recognition or affect its compliance with USDE regulations.
5. Ensure that, in any instance where it becomes necessary to make an emergency substitution of a public member on a decision-making body, the replacement will fully satisfy Commission requirements for service as a public member, and will be capable of completing such service without creating a conflict of interest.
6. Ensure that agency representatives, including consultants, board members, Commission members, and administrative staff, shall avoid conflicts of interest in fact or appearance by refraining from participating in any decisions affecting the accredited or pre-accredited status of an institution or program where they have had a previous affiliation or served as a consultant.
7. Ensure that institutions or programs failing to meet ABHE standards are required to bring themselves into compliance within required time frames. If programs are less than one year in length, compliance must be achieved within twelve months. Programs of at least one-year’s duration, but less than two years may be permitted eighteen months to achieve compliance. Programs of two-year’s duration or more may be granted two years to achieve compliance. The Commission may extend the time available for the achievement of compliance for one additional year beyond the two years of probation for good cause in the case of extraordinary circumstances. Failure of an institution or program to achieve compliance with the standards within the time period specified will result in an adverse action on the part of the ABHE Commission on Accreditation. In this context, an adverse action is defined to mean denial, withdrawal, suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation or pre-accreditation. “Good cause” factors that may justify an extension of time include a change in leadership, the prospect of a significant positive change in financial position (due to realized or anticipated contributions, the sale of assets, the forgiveness of indebtedness or another positive financial development), the prospect or acquisition of a resource(s) that will enable compliance with the standard(s) that led to the sanction, and/or the presentation of compelling evidence that a change in circumstances that will produce compliance is imminent.
An institution may be granted no more than three years to achieve compliance (2 years for probation, 1 year of extension for good cause in the case of extraordinary circumstances). Extraordinary circumstances shall mean that two-thirds of the commission has determined the institution is more likely than not to achieve full compliance within one year. Not more than five percent of accredited/preaccredited institutions may be on an extension for good cause at the same time. An institution on probation for two years or show cause cannot be returned to warning.

8. Upon receipt of USDE information that raises questions about an institution or program’s compliance with its responsibilities under the Title IV program, initiate a written inquiry, within 30 days of notification, seeking responses to the questions. Institutions will be given 30 days to respond. Failure to provide a satisfactory or timely response will result in action to launch a review of the institution or program’s continued compliance with Commission accreditation Standards.

9. Monitor institutions and programs throughout their accreditation period to ensure that educational quality is maintained. Enrollment growth will be among the factors monitored. ABHE defines significant enrollment growth as an increase in the headcount enrollment of 50 percent or more within one institutional fiscal year. Institutions that experience significant enrollment growth will be required to submit to the Commission’s Committee on Progress Reports and Substantive Change (PRSC) a report detailing the growth of each program offered by the institution, accompanied by an explanation for the growth of any program that has experienced 50 percent or more growth in headcount enrollment within one year, and an assessment of educational quality and compliance with ABHE standards for programs that have experienced significant growth. The PRSC Committee will review the report and advise the Commission of its findings. The Commission will take appropriate action, which may include follow-up reports, a special evaluation team visit (focus visit), or sanction. The public is notified of focus visits and sanctions via the Commission website. Upon receipt of substantial, credible evidence from a reliable source of systemic problems that calls into question the ability of the Institution or program to continue to meet ABHE standards, ABHE will take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that an accredited institution documents acceptable levels of educational quality. Failure of an institution to maintain quality will result in adverse Commission action.

10. Require a teach-out plan: (1) ABHE will require an institution it accredits or pre-accredits to submit a teach-out plan to the Commission on Accreditation for approval upon the occurrence of any of the following events:

   (i) The USDE Secretary notifies the Commission that the Secretary has initiated an emergency action against an institution, in accordance with section 487(c)(1)(G) of the HEA, or an action to limit, suspend, or terminate an institution participating in any title IV, HEA program, in accordance with section 487(c)(1)(F) of the HEA, and that a teach-out plan is required.

   (ii) The Commission itself acts to withdraw, terminate, or suspend the accreditation or pre-accreditation of the institution.

   (iii) The institution notifies the Commission that it intends to cease operations entirely or close a location that provides one hundred percent of at least one program.

   (iv) A State licensing or authorizing agency notifies the Commission that an institution’s license or legal authorization to provide an educational program has been or will be revoked.
(2) The Commission must evaluate the teach-out plan to ensure it provides for the equitable treatment of students under its own criteria, specifies additional charges, if any, and provides for notification to the students of any additional charges.

(3) If the Commission approves a teach-out plan that includes a program that is accredited by another recognized accrediting agency, it must notify that accrediting agency of its approval.

(4) The Commission may require an institution it accredits or pre-acredits to enter into a teach-out agreement as part of its teach-out plan.

(5) The Commission must require an institution it accredits or pre-accredits that enters into a teach-out agreement, either on its own or at the request of the Commission, with another institution to submit that teach-out agreement to the Commission for approval. The Commission may approve the teach-out agreement only if the agreement is between institutions that are accredited or pre-accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency, is consistent with applicable standards and regulations, and provides for the equitable treatment of students by ensuring that--

(i) The teach-out institution has the necessary experience, resources, and support services to--

(A) Provide an educational program that is of acceptable quality and reasonably similar in content, structure, and scheduling to that provided by the institution that is ceasing operations either entirely or at one of its locations; and

(B) Remain stable, carry out its mission, and meet all obligations to existing students.

(ii) The teach-out institution demonstrates that it can provide students access to the program and services without requiring them to move or travel substantial distances and that it will provide students with information about additional charges, if any.

11. If through the annual report, special progress reports, substantive change requests, staff visit reports, or special evaluation visit reports, the Commission finds evidence of systematic noncompliance with ABHE policies or significant noncompliance regarding one or more programs at the institution, the Commission will take appropriate action against the institution and promptly notify the Secretary of Education of the determination of systematic or significant noncompliance.

Policy on Composition of Evaluation Teams

There are two types of evaluation teams—regular and special. Regular evaluation teams visit an institution when it is being reviewed for candidate status, accredited status, or reaffirmation of accreditation. Special evaluation teams may be called upon to visit an institution for other reasons, (e.g., branch campus, merger impact, substantive change, stability concerns).

Composition of an Evaluation Team

The selection of evaluation team members is to be based upon their competence as documented by their credentials, experience and expertise in a particular area, the recommendation of a respected reference, and their performance on previous evaluation teams (if they have served on a team earlier). There should be no conflict of interest between the evaluator and the institution to be visited, e.g., same denominational affiliation, same geographic base for constituency, previous affiliation with the institution, or previous service to the institution as an evaluator or consultant. Any situation that could compromise an evaluator’s capacity to serve impartially shall be regarded as a conflict of interest. The team should contain only one person from a given institution and no more than two people from the same denomination. Evaluation teams will include representation from appropriately qualified administrators and appropriately qualified academicians. Persons currently serving on the Commission on Accreditation or the ABHE staff shall not be eligible for service as a member of an evaluation team.

A regular evaluation team is normally composed of five members, although larger or smaller teams may be assigned. The composition of the team will vary, depending upon the level of education offered, the nature of the accreditation sought (i.e. programmatic or institutional), and the status sought (i.e., candidate status, initial accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation).

ABHE does not participate in joint or coordinated accreditation visits with other accrediting bodies. Concurrent visits are possible, and common documentation may be submitted to both accrediting teams where appropriate; however, the ABHE evaluation team will function as an independent review entity reflecting the same composition and responsibilities of an ABHE evaluation team not engaged in a concurrent visit.

Teams for programmatic accreditation visits will normally have two or three members who meet the qualifications listed above. One of the evaluators must be a practitioner in the field of the education being evaluated. Another must be an educator from an ABHE accredited institution. Team members will be selected with sensitivity to the nature of the programs being evaluated (Refer to Policy on Procedures for Programmatic Visits).

Special evaluation teams (focus visits) typically contain two or three evaluators who meet the qualifications listed above. The composition of the team will depend upon the type of visit and the issues at hand.

When developing the evaluator pool and constructing evaluation teams, the Director, Commission on Accreditation should be sensitive to the need for obtaining representation from diverse perspectives.

Selection of the Team Chair

The team chair will be free from potential conflict of interest and have had at least three successful experiences as a team member (as evaluated by the relevant chair) or have served as a team chair previously. Normally, the chair
should be a senior administrator of an accredited member institution and have completed the training unit for team chairs.

**Institution’s Right to Review**

The institution to be evaluated has the right to review the names of proposed team members and to request the replacement of any proposed member that it feels would have a bias or conflict of interest in evaluating the institution.

**Representative from the State/Province**

A representative from the respective state or province higher education Commission will normally be invited to serve as an observer of the team visit.

**Canadian Institutions**

Insofar as possible, Canadian institutions should be evaluated by Canadian evaluators.

**Evaluation Team Expenses**

Within the context of constructing a quality evaluation team, the Commission will make every effort to minimize evaluation team travel expenses.

Procedures for Programmatic Visits

Institutions with Prior ABHE Institutional Accreditation

1. The institutional CEO should submit a letter of request to the COA expressing the desire to pursue programmatic accreditation status.

2. The institution should develop self-study materials in the form of a compliance document that, for the programs to be reviewed, demonstrates each program’s compliance with ABHE’s programmatic standards. The compliance document is due eight weeks prior to the date agreed upon for a team visit.

3. The institution should ensure that its assessment plan and planning documents are up-to-date and that they include consideration of the programs to be considered.

4. The institution will submit to the ABHE office staff three potential dates for the proposed team visit.

5. Upon identifying a team chair, the Commission staff will confirm the actual date of the visit.

6. In addition to a chair, the Commission staff will select other team member(s) the number to be determined in cooperation with the institution upon the basis of the range of programs to be reviewed. At least one team member will be a practitioner related to the fields of study covered by the programs to be examined, but who does not have a formal position with any ABHE institution.

7. A member of the ABHE Commission staff will be designated to accompany the team for the purpose of providing specific training for the practitioner(s) on the team relative to the ABHE programmatic standards. The staff member will also provide coaching services to the practitioner(s) during the course of the team visit.

8. Normally a team visit will last no less than one and one-half days, but the actual schedule will be determined by the team chair in cooperation with the institution and the Commission staff.

9. Within two weeks of the visit, the team chair will distribute a report of the team’s findings to the ABHE Commission staff.

10. Upon receipt of the team report, the Commission staff will review the report for completeness and forward it onto the institution whose programs have been reviewed. The institution will be asked to respond to the report, indicating any errors of fact, disagreements with the findings, and/or responses to the team’s findings. The request for a response will include the deadline by which the response must be received.

11. Upon completion of its response, the institution will forward it to the Commission staff for distribution to the Commission at large.

12. The Commission staff will supply the Commission with the institution’s self-study materials, the report of the team, and the institution’s response to the team report.

13. Representatives of the institution will be asked to meet with the Commission to respond to questions at the time the program(s) are considered for initial programmatic accreditation.

14. Institutions having programs that are accredited by ABHE will provide an annual report to the Commission on Accreditation each year following guidelines supplied by the Commission.

15. Normally, the Commission will reaffirm the accreditation of the covered program(s) each ten years. However, the Commission reserves the right to review a program at any time based upon information coming to its attention.
Procedures for Institutions with no Recent or Prior ABHE History

1. The institution must develop and submit a petition to the ABHE Commission on Accreditation’s Committee on Progress Reports and Substantive Change demonstrating satisfaction of the Conditions of Eligibility for programmatic accreditation. The document must clearly identify all of the programs being submitted for consideration.

2. The Committee on Progress Reports and Substantive Change will review the institution’s submission and make a judgment regarding the petition’s satisfaction of the Conditions. Upon determining satisfactory compliance with the Conditions, the Committee will instruct the ABHE Commission staff to communicate its decision to the institution.

3. The ABHE staff will provide the institution instructions for the preparation of the self-study materials for the accreditation of the program(s) being considered for accreditation.

4. Steps 2 through 15 from above are followed.

Adopted February 2010.
Policy on Falsification of Data

As indicated by ABHE Standard #3 and several policies, ABHE institutions have an obligation to provide accurate information regarding their accredited status, their curricular offerings and supporting resources, and their own performance. The Commission has several means of monitoring institutions to ensure the accuracy of a member or affiliated institution’s public information. Should the Commission determine that an institution’s public information is inaccurate, it will take aggressive steps with the institution to correct the misinformation. Should the Commission determine that the misinformation is the result of a deliberate attempt to mislead the public or the Commission itself, the Commission will place the offending institution under an order to show cause why its status with the Commission should be continued.

Any allegation that a member institution or program has deliberately falsified data submitted to the Commission or any of its representatives is to be submitted in writing to the Director, Commission on Accreditation according to the guidelines of the “Policy on Complaints Against an Institution or Accredited Program.” The procedure for processing the allegation is to follow that outlined by the policy on complaints. If the allegation that the member institution or program has deliberately falsified data is confirmed, the institution or program may be placed on warning (monitoring status) or sanctions ranging from probation up to “show cause” why its status should be continued, and the institution will be assessed the full cost of the investigation.

Should the Commission discover that an institution having no relationship to the Commission is erroneously claiming status with the Commission, it will take aggressive action to correct the misleading claims. The Director, Commission on Accreditation will take appropriate measures to effect a correction, including, if necessary, legal action.

Policy on Institutional Compliance With Title IV

According to federal regulation 602.16(a)(1)(x), accrediting agencies “must have standards that effectively address the record of compliance with the institution’s program responsibilities under Title IV of the 1998 Higher Education amendments. The review is to be based on the most recent data provided by the Secretary regarding default rates in the student loan programs, the results of financial or compliance audits, program reviews, and any other information provided. The ABHE Commission on Accreditation provides the following guidelines and remedial measures for member institutions:

1. Upon learning of a deficiency in compliance, the Commission staff will contact the institution and ask the institution for a response outlining the procedures it is taking to address the problem.

2. Based on the response, the Commission on Accreditation may ask the institution for a progress report within one year, dealing with the problem. Should progress be insufficient, the Commission will send a site visitor to evaluate the institution or program’s efforts to achieve compliance and to make a report on his conclusions to the Commission at its next regular meeting.

3. Should the Commission conclude on the basis of the site visitor’s report that the institution’s or program’s efforts are inadequate, a special team will be sent to the institution to evaluate the institution’s or program’s ongoing compliance with ABHE Standards and to counsel the institution regarding the steps which must be taken toward Title IV compliance.

In addition to the ABHE initiative above, institutions will provide evaluation teams the most recent default rates (and any default reduction plans approved by the Department of Education) and all other documents concerning the institution’s program or responsibilities under Title IV of the act, including any findings of financial audits and program reviews.

Institutions receiving Title IV funds will prepare for evaluating teams copies of documents relevant to Title IV compliance. Teams will study the materials to determine whether the institution’s status with the Department of Education in any way affects its status with ABHE. Should a team discover that an institution or program has failed to meet its Title IV responsibilities or is engaged in fraud or abuse, ABHE has responsibility to provide this information to the Department of Education. Notification to the Secretary of Education includes, but is not limited to, an institution’s systematic noncompliance with the Commission’s definition of credit hour standards.

Adopted February 1998; Revised February 2000, April 2012
ABHE Policy and Procedures for Reviews and Appeals

In the interest of providing appropriate and fair procedures for the review or appeal of decisions to deny or terminate an accreditation status, the Commission on Accreditation establishes the following policies and procedures.

Introduction

An institution/program shall possess the right to request a review or to appeal the decisions of the Commission on Accreditation and receive an impartial response in a timely fashion. Normally this process begins with a request for an ABHE Commission review of a decision. Alternatively, an institution or program may petition directly to an appeal board. In either case, documentation must meet the requirements of this policy including filing deadlines. Pending the outcome of all reviews and appeals, the institution shall continue in the accreditation status enjoyed prior to the appeal action.

Actions That May be Reviewed or Appealed

1. Denial or termination of candidate status,
2. Placement on probation,
3. Issuance of an order to show cause why status should be continued, or
4. Denial or termination of accredited status.

Grounds

A request for review or appeal of a Commission on Accreditation decision must be based upon at least one of the following grounds:

That the action of the Commission is believed to be

1. Based upon a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the documentation submitted or testimony presented.
2. A failure of the Commission to follow its own policies and procedures,
3. A flawed or inconsistent interpretation or application of ABHE Standards or policy,
4. Influenced by (a) person(s) with a significant conflict of interest not known prior to the Commission action,
5. No longer warranted because new financial Information is available that may influence the decision.

With the exception of finances (see ground #5), an institution may not base requests for reviews or appeals on developments that occur following the meeting of the Commission in which adverse action is taken. In certain cases, the Commission's decision may have been based solely upon the failure of an institution or program to meet a standard or criterion pertaining to finances. In such instances, before a final adverse action is taken, an institution will be permitted an opportunity to provide the Commission current financial information where the previously unavailable financial information may have had a material bearing on the institution's capacity to comply with the financial standard or criterion. An institution may not, however, file a separate appeal on the grounds that the Commission failed to give adequate weight to the newly introduced financial information.
**Commission Review: Finances**

The institution requesting a review will include a non-refundable $250.00 filing fee. The institution will pay the following fees plus any additional expenses incurred by the process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Non-refundable Fee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filing fee</td>
<td>$250.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review requiring a face-to-face hearing</td>
<td>$1,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review requiring a focused team visit</td>
<td>$2,250.00</td>
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</table>

Note: The fees are cumulative. If a hearing is required, the total is $1,750: the $250 filing fee plus the $1,500 hearing fee. If the Commission requires a focused team visit as part of resolving the request, the total will be $4,000: the $1,750 plus the $2,250 for the focused team visit. The institution will pay the travel and hosting costs for a face-to-face hearing and/or a visiting team in addition to the fees above.

**Commission Review: Procedures**

1. A written request for a review of an action taken by the Commission on Accreditation must be made by the institution’s chief executive officer or board chair and be postmarked or filed electronically within thirty (30) days of the date of the official letter conveying the Commission’s action. The written request must include (1) a request for reconsideration of the action with an indication as to whether the institution desires a review or a full hearing, (2) the grounds upon which the request is being made, (3) documentation to support the review, and (4) the filing fee.

2. The Director, Commission on Accreditation will confirm receipt of the request and inform the Commission on Accreditation of the request, typically within ten business days (not to exceed 30 business days) of the receipt of the written request.

3. Commission Review. To review its decision, a quorum (half or more) of the Commission on Accreditation members is required. The Commission on Accreditation will meet within thirty (30) days (or as quickly thereafter that a quorum can be established) of having received notice from the Director, Commission on Accreditation. This meeting will normally be via telecommunications, unless the institution requests a personal hearing. The Commission will consider the grounds for review and the documentation in support of the institution’s request. It will then take one of the following actions:
   a. Uphold the original decision,
   b. Request a focused team visit and consider the resultant team report no later than its next regularly scheduled meeting, or
   c. Make a new decision based upon the evidence submitted.

   In the case of a hearing, the institution may be advised and represented by whomsoever it may choose. Normally, the Commission’s chair will preside and may limit the testimony of witnesses. Unless otherwise ordered by the Commission, a hearing will last not more than one day.

4. The Commission will provide written notification to the institution of its decision, including the rationale for the decision, within thirty (30) days of the review meeting.
5. If the institution is not satisfied with the decision of the Commission review, it has the option to file a request for an Appeal Board to evaluate the decision.

**Appeals: Finances**

The institution requesting an appeal will include a non-refundable $250.00 filing fee. The institution will pay the following fees plus any additional expenses incurred by the process.

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The fees are cumulative. If a hearing is required, the total is $1,750: the $250 filing fee plus the $1,500 hearing fee. If the appeal board requires a focused team visit as part of resolving the request, the total will be $4,000: the $1,750 plus the $2,250 for the focused team visit. The institution will pay the travel and hosting costs for a face-to-face hearing and/or a visiting team in addition to the fees above.

**Appeals: Procedures**

1. If an institution elects to appeal the Commission’s original and/or review decision, a written request for reconsideration of the decision must be made by the institution’s chief executive officer or board chair and be postmarked within thirty (30) days of the date of the official letter conveying the Commission’s action or the subsequent notification of the Commission's decision following a review.

2. The Director, Commission on Accreditation in cooperation with the Commission chair will select an appeal board of 7 persons to consider the appeal. (See “Appeal Board” below concerning the pool of potential members of this board.)

3. The appeal board will meet within thirty (30) days of having received its charge from the Director, Commission on Accreditation. This meeting will normally be via telecommunications, unless the institution requests a face-to-face hearing. The Director, Commission on Accreditation will open the meeting by leading the appeal board to select a chair to lead the review. After selecting the appeal board chair, the Director, Commission on Accreditation, will serve a non-voting, advisory role.

4. The appealing institution has the right to appear before the appeal board to present its case. Its appearance can be via telecommunications or, in the case of a face-to-face meeting, in person. The institution has the right to be represented by whomsoever it wishes, including legal counsel.

5. The board will consider the grounds for the appeal, the documentation in support of the institution’s allegations, the procedures followed by the Commission on Accreditation, the team report(s), the consultant reports, and/or the action of the Commission. In its consideration of this information, the Director, Commission on Accreditation, will direct the appeal board not to consider any institutional efforts to comply with Standards that were subsequent to the Commission’s original action. The appeal board shall have the authority necessary to amend, reverse, or remand the Commission’s adverse decision with respect to an institution or program. Upon the completion of its deliberations, it shall take one of the following actions:
a. Uphold the Commission’s decision,
b. Direct that a focused visit be granted and a report be submitted for consideration by the appeal board, or
c. Make a new decision, citing one or more of the five grounds for appeal noted above, based upon the evidence submitted.

6. In the case of a hearing, the appeal board will inform all parties concerned of the time, date, and place of the meeting at least thirty (30) days in advance. This communication will be in writing to the institution’s president and board chair through the Director, Commission on Accreditation. The institution may be advised and represented by whomever it may choose. The chair, elected when the appeal board first convenes, will preside and may limit the testimony of witnesses. Unless otherwise ordered by the appeal board, a hearing will last no more than one day.

7. The appeal board, through the Director, Commission on Accreditation, will notify the institution of its decision, including the rationale for the decision, in writing within thirty (30) days of the special meeting. A report will be provided to the Commission chair and will detail the final judgment and the rationale for the decision. The decision of the appeal board will be final. All final decisions will be disseminated as required by the ABHE “Policy Regarding Communication of Accreditation Decisions.”

Appeal Board

This special board will consist of six persons selected from a pool of qualified personnel from accredited institutions or former Commissioners who are not current members of either the Association’s Board of Directors or the Commission on Accreditation and who were not members of the evaluation team that visited the institution in question. The appeal board will include representation from qualified administrators and qualified academicians. In addition to the personnel from accredited institutions, a seventh, public member will be included on the panel who clearly meets the requirements of ABHE’s Policy on Public Representation. To establish a board of appeal with sufficient expertise to address the issues being appealed while, at the same time, avoiding conflicts of interest, a pool of 20 to 30 potential panelists will be maintained. The Director, Commission on Accreditation, in cooperation with the Commission Chair, will nominate a potential pool of members for appointment by the Commission on Accreditation. The Commission will review the membership of the pool on an annual basis: adding, deleting, or reappointing members as it sees fit to maintain the level of competence desired.

The qualifications of an appeal board member will include 1) prior experience as a Commissioner, 2) extensive service as a team evaluator, and/or 3) completion of [or having completed] a specific program of training regarding ABHE standards, policies, and procedures. Administrative representatives must be currently or recently engaged in a significant manner in program or institutional administration at the postsecondary level; academic representatives must be currently or recently engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary teaching and/or research (including learning resource and research support, and/or curriculum development). The public representative must not be affiliated with an ABHE institution as specified in the Policy on Public Representatives. Members of the ABHE staff shall not be eligible for service on an appeal panel. ABHE will provide regular training regarding its standards, policies, and procedures through written materials, workshops, seminars, and online educational opportunities.
Conflicts of Interest

A pool of potential board of appeals members has been determined to ensure the availability of panel members who are free of conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest are described in the ABHE Policy Relating to Conflict of Interest. Persons serving on the appeal board for a given case will be required to sign the Appeal Panel Member Conflict of Interest Form that will be provided by the ABHE staff at the time of their appointment to consider the appeal of a specific institution or program. In the unlikely event that it is impossible to develop a panel free of bias within the established pool, the Director, Commission on Accreditation shall work with the Commission officers to identify additional suitable panelist(s) for the situation under appeal.

Policy on Public Notification of Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

The ABHE Commission on Accreditation accepts written comments from third parties about institutions or programs being evaluated for accreditation or candidacy. The Commission publishes annually, through appropriate vehicles, the names of institutions or programs scheduled for evaluations. The Commission, further, requires that institutions to be evaluated include on their website public notice that they are to be reviewed for the purpose of determining their status with the Commission. The public notice should invite written comments to be submitted to the Commission office at 5850 T.G. Lee Blvd., Suite 130, Orlando, FL 32822. The public should also be notified that there will be opportunity to meet with representatives of the ABHE evaluation team during the actual review of the institution.

Public Statement
To be posted on the institution’s website when hosting an evaluation team relative to its status with the Commission

(Institutional name, state) will be hosting a comprehensive accreditation visit by a team of evaluators from the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) (dates) to determine its compliance with the standards for accreditation. During the visit, representatives of the ABHE team will entertain comments from the public. Any members of the public interested in making a presentation regarding the College to the team should contact the College at the following telephone number (phone number) or email address (email address) to determine a meeting time. Persons wishing to submit third party comments related to the institution may send them to Director, Commission on Accreditation, 5850 T.G. Lee Blvd., Suite #130, Orlando, FL, 32822. Persons interested in reviewing the standards for accreditation will find them on the ABHE website at www.abhe.org. They appear under “about accreditation.” The institution is subject to the “Comprehensive Integrated Standards for Institutional Accreditation.”

Adopted February 1997, Revised November 2011, April 2012
Policy Regarding the Commission Nominating Committee

In order to assure proper balance and representative membership on the Commission on Accreditation, the following procedures should be used by the nominating committee.

Procedures

1. **Nominating committee.** The nominating committee shall be composed of the officers of the Commission (i.e. chair, vice chair, and secretary). The nominating committee shall develop a list of eligible candidates to be nominated for future vacancies on the Commission on Accreditation using the following the guidelines.

2. **Elected offices.** Eligible candidates to be nominated for election to the Commission on Accreditation are administrators and faculty members of accredited member institutions or programs. Administrative representatives must be currently or recently engaged in a significant manner in program or institutional administration at the postsecondary level; academic representatives must be currently or recently engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary teaching and/or research (including learning resource and research support, and/or curriculum development). The nominating committee shall survey the ABHE staff and chief executive officers of member schools for candidates to fill future vacancies.

3. In selecting nominees to present before the Association delegate assembly for a vote, the nominating committee shall consider the following:

   a. The composition of ABHE Commission on Accreditation:

      (1) Denominational balance and representation,
      (2) Geographical balance and representation,
      (3) Representation of institutions or programs based on size, level of education offered, and type of accreditation held,
      (4) Representation from Canadian institutions or programs,
      (5) Representation of women and minorities, and
      (6) Representation of both administrators and academicians.

   b. The credentials of candidates:

      (1) Documentation of competence in terms of education and expertise.
      (2) Past service and activity in association affairs (e.g., Commission service, annual meeting participation, evaluation team participation, consultative activity, contribution to ABHE publications),
      (3) Years of service in ABHE accredited member institutions or programs, and
      (4) Contribution to institutions or programs of biblical higher education.

Adopted February 2010; Revised April 2012
Policy on Public Representatives

One of ABHE’s major purposes is to assure the general public that its institutions and programs are educationally effective. To realize this purpose, ABHE seeks to be sensitive to the public needs for having representation from the public at the meetings of an accrediting agency’s decision makers. Accordingly, ABHE seeks to have “public representatives” on both the Board of Directors and the Commission on Accreditation.

Relationship to Decision-making Body

The public representatives are related to the ABHE decision-making bodies as follows:

1. They are appointed to their office by the relevant decision-making body upon the recommendation of the professional staff.

2. They are appointed to their office for one four-year term. They can succeed themselves for only where they have completed a minor portion of an unexpired term. In no case can they serve for more than six consecutive years.

3. They can terminate their office by written resignation to the board.

4. Their appointment can be terminated by the unanimous vote of the respective executive committee (i.e., ABHE Board of Directors or Commission on Accreditation).

5. They shall serve on the decision-making bodies as voting members.

6. They shall have the right to enter comments into the official minutes of the decision-making body.

Qualifications

Public representatives shall have the following qualifications:

1. They shall not be related to an ABHE affiliate, applicant, candidate, or accredited institution or program by employment or board membership, nor to the primary professions typically served by ABHE institutions or programs.

2. They shall not serve as a consultant to an ABHE affiliate, applicant, candidate, or accredited institution or program.

3. They shall not be a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with ABHE.

4. They shall not be a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in paragraphs one through three above.

5. They shall be sympathetic to biblical higher education and its philosophy of education.
6. They shall be individuals who are known for their integrity, common sense, and professional accomplishments.

7. They shall be individuals who have an awareness of needs and interests of the general public as related to higher education.

**Public representatives shall have the following duties:**

1. They shall acquaint themselves with the purposes of biblical higher education.

2. They shall acquaint themselves with ABHE Standards for Accreditation.

3. They shall acquaint themselves with ABHE procedures for accreditation.

4. They shall familiarize themselves with materials made available to them prior to a meeting of the decision-making body to which they are appointed.

5. They shall attend a major portion of all meetings of the decision-making body.

6. They shall seek to ensure that the decision-making body follows established ABHE policies and procedures.

7. They shall alert the decision-making body to issues they perceive to be pertinent to the public interests and that relate to the issue requiring a decision.

8. They shall honor ABHE’s policies concerning the confidentiality of materials. Within these constraints, they shall have the privilege of reporting to the public such items and through such media as they deem desirable.

*Adopted October 1982; Revised February 2007, April 2012*
Policy Regarding Communication of Accreditation Decisions

In keeping with its responsibility as a recognized accrediting body, the Commission on Accreditation of the ABHE seeks to provide timely information to appropriate agencies and the public regarding its final accrediting decisions. Accordingly, it has established the following procedures:

1. **Notification by ABHE to interested parties.** Within 30 days of a final action to (1) grant, or reaffirm, an institution’s or program’s accreditation or candidacy, (2) place an institution or program on probation, or (3) issue a show-cause order to an institution or program, or (4) implement an adverse decision (denial, withdrawal or suspension of membership status), the ABHE Commission will provide written notification of its decision to the institution, the United States Department of Education, the state or provincial office concerned with postsecondary education, any recognized accrediting agency with which the institution has pre-accreditation or accreditation status, and the public. Notice to the public shall be via the association website. Notification of probation, a “show cause” order, or an adverse decision shall be made to the United States Department of Education, the state or provincial office concerned with postsecondary education, and any recognized accrediting agency with which the institution has pre-accreditation or accreditation status at the same time as it is made to the Institution. Public notification of a negative action will be made within 24 hours of the notice to the institution or program via the association’s website. Within 60 days of the decision to take negative action, the Commission shall make available to all of the parties identified above a summary of the reasons for the decision and any official comments that the affected institution or program may wish to make regarding the decision. If the institution or program does not choose to make comments, the Commission must provide evidence that it provided the institution or program an opportunity to offer official comments.

2. **Responsibility to report rationale for negative decisions.** Within 60 days after a final decision, the ABHE Commission will make available to (1) the U.S. Department of Education, (2) the appropriate state postsecondary education office or provincial office, and, upon request, (3) any appropriate accrediting bodies, and (4) the public, a brief statement of the rationale for any adverse decision made regarding an institution or program and any comments that the institution may make in response to the decision. If no comments are offered, ABHE will provide evidence that the institution was provided opportunity to make comments.

3. **Responsibility to report actions of related agencies.** Institutions or programs seeking or holding candidate or accredited status with the ABHE Commission are to advise the Commission within 30 days of receipt of notice of any final action taken by another recognized accrediting body or governmental agency to deny, suspend, or revoke any pre-accreditation or accreditation status. Notification shall include a copy of the rationale given to the institution by the other agency for its decision. Failure to notify the Commission within 30 days of the final action by the other body shall require issuance of a show-cause order as to why status with ABHE should be continued.

Should an institution or program holding ABHE accreditation or pre-accreditation status receive a negative action on the part of another recognized accrediting body with which it has had standing, the ABHE Commission will, within 30 days of receipt of notification by the other agency or the institution, initiate a review of the institution’s or program’s pre-accreditation or accreditation status to determine if it continues to comply satisfactorily with the Commission’s accreditation Standards. The Commission will not reaffirm the accreditation or pre-accreditation status of an institution or program during the period that it is the subject of an interim action by another recognized institutional or programmatic accrediting body or state agency that could lead to loss of its status with the agency or loss of its state authorization to provide postsecondary education. The Commission will also not grant initial
accreditation or pre-accreditation status to an institution or program during the period that it is the subject of an interim action by another recognized institutional or programmatic accrediting body or state agency that could lead to loss of its accreditation status with the other agency or loss of its state authorization to provide postsecondary education. Grounds for withholding initial or reaffirmation of accreditation or pre-accreditation status include the following:

a. A pending or final action brought by a State agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the State;

b. A decision by a recognized agency to deny accreditation or pre-accreditation;

c. A pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation or pre-accreditation; or

d. Probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized agency.

Should the ABHE Commission, upon completion of interim action by another agency or state, make a decision different from that of the other body, it will, within 30 days of its action, provide the USDE Secretary and other affected bodies a rationale for its decision, to include an explanation why the issue(s) that caused adverse action by the other accreditor was not sufficiently compelling to prevent the Commission from coming to a different decision.

Following each regular meeting, the ABHE Commission on Accreditation provides written information regarding its final decisions relating to an institution’s or program’s accreditation/pre-accreditation status to the U.S. Department of Education, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, all recognized institutional accrediting bodies, and all states or provinces. It is sometimes the case that the Commission will make a final decision regarding an institution or program outside of its regular meeting cycle. In such cases, the Commission routinely provides written information regarding its final decision to the U.S. Department of Education, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, any other recognized accrediting body(ies), and the state(s) or province(s) related to the institution or program. The Commission will share information regarding its decisions related to an institution’s or program’s accreditation or pre-accreditation status, whether positive or adverse, with other recognized accrediting bodies and state/provincial approval agencies upon request.

## Policy on Reinstatement

(Institutional Accreditation Only)

ABHE procedures require that withdrawal (voluntary or involuntary) from applicant, candidate, or accredited status, or denial of candidate status or initial accreditation, result in the severance of an institution’s formal relationship to the ABHE Commission for a period of one year. The one-year period begins after all appeals, if pursued, have been exhausted. After the one-year period, an institution may reapply for status with the Commission by the following means:

A. One year after applicant status was terminated

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Request for</th>
<th>The institution must</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reinstatement of applicant status</td>
<td>Submit a progress report and an official letter of request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New evaluation team visit for candidate status</td>
<td>Submit new self-study materials</td>
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B. One year after candidate or accredited status was terminated

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<tr>
<th>Request for</th>
<th>The institution must</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reinstatement of applicant status</td>
<td>Submit a progress report and an official letter of request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinstatement of candidate status</td>
<td>Submit a progress report and an official letter of request; appear before the Commission on Accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New evaluation team visit for accredited status</td>
<td>Submit new self-study materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinstatement of accredited status</td>
<td>Submit compliance document, planning document, and assessment plan, documenting compliance with all ABHE Standards; host an evaluation team visit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. One year after having voluntarily withdrawn from accredited status

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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Submit compliance document, planning document, and assessment plan, documenting compliance with all ABHE Standards; host an evaluation team visit</td>
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Revised October 1988, April 2012
Policy Relating to Conflicts of Interest

Introduction

Integrity is the foundation upon which any effective accreditation process must depend. It is therefore essential that any individual who participates in the accreditation process be free of conflicts of interest (or even the appearance of a conflict of interest) where circumstances or relationships might call into question a person’s capacity to make impartial judgments regarding an institution’s or program’s compliance with accreditation requirements. The ABHE Commission on Accreditation follows multiple practices to ensure that its processes will be free of conflicts of interest. Although the Commission has attempted to identify and articulate the types of conflicts that may most commonly arise in its accreditation process, the Commission must also depend upon the participants in the process to police themselves and call attention to potential conflicts of interest, should any questionable matters arise.

Obvious Conflicts of Interest

The Commission recognizes the following considerations as conflicts:

- Same denominational/fellowship affiliation
- Same geographical base of constituency
- Previous employment as faculty or staff within past ten years
- Previous service as a board member within the past ten years
- Previous service as a consultant or team member within past five years
- Previous service as a reader (primary or secondary) for a meeting of the full Commission within a three year period
- Acceptance of substantive gifts or honoraria for self or spouse apart from scheduled fees during the accreditation process, including any appeals processes
- Previous attendance at or graduation from an institution being considered
- Submission of an application for employment to an institution within the past five years
- Any situation that could affect an individual’s ability to be impartial

Although it is nearly impossible to develop a comprehensive list, the test of a conflict is whether it could compromise an individual’s capacity to make an impartial decision.

Persons Subject to the Conflict of Interest Policy

The Commission recognizes that that following types of persons serving ABHE’s processes may encounter conflicts of interest:

- ABHE Commission members, especially those assigned as readers
- ABHE Team members
- ABHE Board members
- ABHE staff members
- ABHE assigned consultants
- ABHE appeals panel members
- Persons having an interest in any litigation that may involve the Commission, the Association, or an institution involved in ABHE’s accreditation process

Although the Commission staff will do its best to make team and reader assignments that are free of conflicts of interest, Commission members shall sign a form affirming that they are unaware of any conflicts that will affect their ability to make an impartial decision regarding the status of the institutions they are assigned to review. Commissioners will further agree to recuse themselves from consideration of any institution where they are aware of a potential conflict of interest. Recusal means that the Commissioner will declare a recusal before discussion begins, leave the table, and avoid participating in any discussion related to the institution or the decision that the
Commission makes relative to the institution under consideration. Persons assigned to ABHE accreditation teams shall sign a form certifying that they are free of conflicts of interest with respect to the institution they are to evaluate. Concurrently, institutions will be permitted to object to potential evaluators who they believe may have a conflict of interest. Appeal panel members shall sign a form confirming that they are unaware of any conflicts of interest that may affect their ability to make an impartial decision. Should the Commission chair determine that a conflict of interest has occurred that has not been recognized, the chair will assume responsibility to take whatever action is necessary to mitigate the effects of the conflict. In the case of an egregious action by a Commissioner that creates a conflict of interest, the Commission Officers shall have authority to terminate a Commissioner’s status as a member of the Commission.

Adopted April 2012
Policy on Review of Standards

Introduction

For many years now, the USDE Standards for recognizing accrediting bodies has required agencies to maintain a systematic program of review of their accrediting standards. The purpose of this review has been to ensure that standards are valid and reliable indicators of educational quality and relevant to the needs of students. Regulations written for the implementation of the 1998 Higher Education Amendments eliminated the use of the terms “validity” and “reliability” as found in previous versions of the regulations because of the technical meanings of these terms in the field of statistics. Nevertheless, accrediting agencies are expected to maintain an ongoing or cyclical review of their standards. In light of this expectation the ABHE Commission on Accreditation shall:

1. Maintain a process that will result in a review of at least one major standard per year during its regular meeting. Consideration of standards will be rotated so that over a five-year period all standards will be reviewed.

2. Maintain forms and procedures that will encourage team evaluators to comment on existing standards regarding any difficulties experienced in applying them in the field. Team members will be instructed to rate standards regarding both their importance and their clarity. They will be encouraged to offer revisions to existing standards, suggest new standards, or recommend deletion of existing standards based upon their experience in the field. The Commission on Accreditation (Committee on Criteria) will review all comments and recommendations from team members at its annual meeting.

3. At ten-year intervals, it shall be ABHE’s goal to initiate a comprehensive review of standards. It is anticipated that, at the conclusion of such a review, the standards may be completely recast to ensure that they reflect quality educational expectations according to current practices in the fields of instruction offered by accredited institutions or programs.

4. Upon receipt of evidence that a standard no longer assures the quality of education in a manner that meets the needs of students, ABHE will, within 12 months, initiate action to change the standard. The procedure will be consistent with the Commission’s “Policy on Changes to the Commission’s Policies, Procedures, and Standards.”

5. When proposing a revision to standards, an effort will be made to afford all relevant constituencies (e.g., member institutions, states, provinces, other recognized accrediting bodies, and the public) a meaningful opportunity to provide input into the review and revision process. One of the important constituencies that shall have opportunity for input into the revision process will be the students of accredited member institutions or programs. They will be especially encouraged to comment on the relevance of a proposed standard to their specific needs.

6. It shall be the goal of the Commission to maintain standards that are of sufficient clarity to ensure similar decisions where similar conditions exist. In other words, the standards should enable the Commission to be consistent in its decision-making processes.

Adopted February 2000
Policy on Spirit of Accreditation

Because one of the principal values of accreditation is the stimulus and growth that institutions or programs experience in the accreditation process, the spirit of accreditation should be one of constructive evaluation and helpfulness. Accordingly, evaluators are not to be looked upon as inspectors checking on conformity to arbitrary standards.

Accreditation of an institution or program is based upon the Principle of Accreditation. Hence, strict conformity in every detail is not required. Excellence in major areas may well compensate for minor deficiencies. Then, too, the final test of an institution’s or program’s strength is whether it is achieving its objectives in preparing students for effective Christian living and service.

In cases where the Standards do not seem fully applicable by reason of cultural or ethnic distinctives, the ABHE Commission on Accreditation practices flexibility in the application of Standards, giving more emphasis to positive educational outcomes.

The validity and reliability of the Standards are under constant examination. Their major purpose is to stimulate self-evaluation. The Standards are structured to focus upon desirable qualities rather than minimal quantitative requirements. They include all significant phases of institutional and programmatic and educational excellence.

It is not the desire of the Commission to insist on stultifying uniformity through the application of these Standards. Rather, it encourages individuality within the framework of biblical higher education. When evaluating an institution or program, the Commission looks for creativity, educational vision, and sound planning.

It is the purpose of the Commission to administer these Standards with utmost impartiality and objectivity.

Adopted October 1990
### Policy on Substantive Change

A substantive change significantly alters an institution’s mission, scope, control, or geographical location for instruction. Matters relating to substantive change for accredited institutions will be handled by the Commission on Accreditation’s Committee on Progress Reports and Substantive Change and for candidate institutions by the Committee on Applicant and Candidate Status.

#### Nature of Substantive Change

Proposed substantive changes relating to mission, scope, control, and geographical location will be classified as either major or minor in nature according to the following guidelines. Category A represents institutions that have been accredited by the ABHE Commission on Accreditation for at least ten years and are in good standing with the Commission (i.e., not presently under warning or probation, or in receipt of a show-cause order and that have a proven record of effective education). Category B represents institutions not qualifying for Category A. A major substantive change requires that the institution submit a Substantive Change Proposal according to the format specified, pay the substantive change fee, and receive Commission on Accreditation approval for the change prior to implementation of the change. A minor substantive change requires that the institution notify the Director of the Commission on Accreditation in writing and include a description of the change.

1. **Change in Mission**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Departure from the Association's educational philosophy</td>
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<td>major</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Adding degree programs or educational units which do not conform to institution parameters as defined in the Standards for Accreditation</td>
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2. **Change in Scope**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Initiation of program(s) at a different degree level (e.g., associate to baccalaureate, baccalaureate to master’s, master’s to doctorate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Major expansion at current degree level (i.e., significant departure from previously authorized programs regardless of modality)</td>
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<td>c. Introduction of an alternative Bible/Theology Studies requirement</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Reinstatement of a lapsed program</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Discontinuation of all graduate level offerings or all undergraduate level offerings (requires submission of a teach-out plan for affected students)</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Initiation of a contractual, consortial, or cooperative agreement with another institution (contracts with unaccredited entities may not exceed 25% of an academic program)</td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Initiation of a contractual agreement with an institution or organization not certified for Title IV participation for more than 25% of an academic program regardless of modality</td>
<td>major</td>
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<tr>
<td>h. Initiation of an adult degree completion program</td>
<td>major</td>
<td>major</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. Discontinuation of an adult degree completion program</td>
<td>minor</td>
<td>major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Change in academic calendar or credit values</td>
<td>minor</td>
<td>major</td>
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k. Change from clock hours to credit hours or a substantial increase in the number of clock hours or credit hours required for completion of a program
l. Acquisition of another institution, or program or location of another institution
m. Addition of a permanent location at which the institution is conducting a teach-out

[c.f. Policy on Adult Degree Completion Programs]
[c.f. Policy on Biblical and Theological Studies]

3. Change in Control

a. Relationship with denomination
b. Merger with another institution
c. Abnormal board, administrative, or faculty turnover
d. Change in legal status or ownership (requires a site visit within 6 months of change)

4. Change in Geographical Location

a. Relocation of main campus (requires a site visit within 6 months of implementation)
b. Initiation of extension classes in new location
c. Discontinuation of extension classes in a given location
d. Initiation or relocation of an additional location (requires a site visit within 6 months of implementation)
e. Discontinuation of an additional location
f. Addition of a branch campus
g. Discontinuation of a branch campus

[c.f. Policy on Alternative Academic Programs]

5. Change in Modality

a. Initial offering of courses using a new modality
b. Initial offering of the first degree program(s) where 50 percent or more of the program is available via a new modality
c. Offering degree programs beyond the first degree where 50 percent or more of the program is available via a new modality
d. A substantial decrease or discontinuation of offerings via an approved modality
Clarification, Definition of Terms, Provisions

1. **More advanced level.** Candidate or accredited status is granted to institutions on the assumption of a specific level of curricular program offerings. Thus, for example, if at the time an institution gains candidate or accredited status it offers only a two year diploma, it must receive prior substantive change approval to offer an associate or baccalaureate degree, since these represent a change in the higher educational level that was authorized at the time of initial accreditation or candidacy.

2. **Major expansion at current degree level.** If an institution introduces curricular programs which differ substantially from curricular programs offered at the time of initial candidacy, initial accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation, such programs constitute a substantive change. For example, at the time a institution receives its initial accreditation, it offers five baccalaureate degree majors related to church ministry. If it subsequently proposes to introduce a baccalaureate degree program in, for instance, elementary education or information technology, such a change would represent a major expansion at the current degree level, since it constitutes a significant departure from the range of degree programs previously authorized.

3. **Abnormal board, administrative, or faculty turnover.** This category refers to circumstances in which the magnitude and/or manner of board, administration, or faculty turnover differs from normal attrition. If one or more key individuals resigns or is dismissed under negative circumstances, or if the departure of one or more key individuals is precipitated by a rift, such an event constitutes a substantive change which requires staff and/or Commission on Accreditation review in order to verify ongoing institutional stability.

4. **Academic calendar or credit values.** Examples include the following: (a) conversion from a quarter system to a semester system; (b) departure from established institutional practices and/or higher educational norms in terms of the amount of instructional contact hours required per credit hour; and (c) change from clock hours to credit hours.

5. **Modality.** This term refers to the way in which courses are primarily delivered: face-to-face (classroom instruction or faculty-directed learning which involves the instructor and student being in the same place at the same time), distance education (technology-based delivery where the instructor and student are separated by location and/or time), or correspondence education (instructional materials guide learning with limited instructor-student interaction, typically self-paced). Adding a modality not already part of an institution's approved accreditation scope is considered a substantive change.

6. **Extension site.** Extension education (including extension classes and extension sites) refers to a situation where students and faculty meet in classes held in a location removed from the main campus, and where less than 50 percent of an educational program may be earned.

7. **Distance education.** Distance education is defined as education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the other technologies listed.
8. **Correspondence education.** Correspondence education is defined as education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. The interaction between the instructor and student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced. Correspondence education is not distance education. Note: Correspondence education is not within ABHE’s scope of recognition by the U.S. Department of Education.

9. **Additional location.** Additional location, as defined by USDE regulations, refers to a location remote from the main campus where students and faculty regularly meet in classes and where students may complete 50% or more of course work toward requirements for one or more of the institution’s educational programs. Site visits are always required in connection with establishment of up to three additional locations, and will be conducted within six months of establishment of the location. In cases where an institution establishes more than three additional locations, ABHE has established guidelines governing the necessity of site visits and the manner in which additional locations will be monitored. These guidelines, and their accompanying procedures, are spelled out in ABHE’s Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns. ABHE will conduct site visits to a representative sample of at least 25 percent of an institution’s additional locations during an accreditation cycle.

10. **Branch campus.** A branch campus features administrative leadership, core faculty, facilities, student services, and a distinct business plan and budget. A site visit is required within six months of the establishment of a branch campus. Site visits to all existing branch campuses will be conducted at least once in an accreditation cycle. Guidelines for branch campuses are spelled out in ABHE’s Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns. Both the establishment of and discontinuation of a branch campus is a major substantive change.

### Principles Relating to Substantive Change

1. **Institutional autonomy.** The autonomy of each institution will be recognized. The Commission’s authority relates only to an institution’s accreditation. It cannot demand discontinuance or deferral of a proposed substantive change. It can only request that institutions take certain actions to avoid placing their status with the commission in jeopardy.

2. **Innovation.** The commission wishes to encourage sound innovation and development. The Commission’s Policy on Substantive Change is meant to ensure innovation and development through appropriate educational practices, not to stifle new ideas.

3. **Pace of change.** The Commission recognizes that during a time of rapid change, an institution may experience weakened compliance with the standards for accreditation. When multiple changes are compounded, they may require a new comprehensive evaluation of the institution. A comprehensive evaluation requires the submission of self-study documents addressing all of the ABHE standards, an on-site evaluation team visit, and a Commission decision to grant new accreditation encompassing the changes proposed. Changes that can trigger such a visit will include two or more of the following:
   
   a. Relocation or merger
   b. Programs that are a significant departure from previous offerings
c. Programs at a different level than previous offerings
d. Offerings provided through new modalities of instruction
e. The addition of offerings at locations other than the main campus

An institution on sanction or having a total weighted financial score below 1.0 that experiences two or more of the above factors within one year will be subject to a new comprehensive evaluation.

**Procedure for Gaining Approval of Substantive Change**

1. A candidate or accredited institution must, at least 6 months prior to implementation, notify the Director, Commission on Accreditation, in writing, of any contemplated change that may be substantive. Substantive change proposals must be submitted electronically via the Commission drop box at www.abhe-solutions.com by May 15 for a July decision; September 15 for a November decision, and December 15 for a February decision.

2. The Director, Commission on Accreditation will provide guidance to the institution as to whether the contemplated change is substantive and whether the change requires approval (major) prior to implementation or simply requires notification (minor) prior to implementation. Should an institution disagree with the Director, Commission on Accreditation’s determination as to the nature of the change, the matter will be referred to the Committee on Progress Reports and Substantive Change for a decision.

3. **Minor** changes may be implemented at the discretion of the institution upon notification to the Director, Commission on Accreditation. The Commission reserves the right to require additional documentation or a subsequent progress report on the change at its discretion.

4. Where a major substantive change is involved, a Substantive Change Request Proposal must be submitted based on the format available on the Commission website. The institution is responsible to provide thorough documentation relating to the proposed change. Such documentation must include, as a minimum, the purpose and rationale for the change in reference to the institutional mission and educational goals; evidence/findings of a careful assessment of the need and/or demand for the change; a comprehensive description of the change; responsible estimates of required resources (e.g., facilities, personnel, finances, learning resources, information technology, infrastructure); a plan for procurement and/or allocation of needed resources; any structural alterations necessary for implementation of the change; evidence of due consideration and authorization of the change through appropriate channels of institutional governance; the anticipated impact of the change upon institutional stability, and the effective date of the change (which cannot be retroactive). The proposal should also address fully the elements and provisions of applicable policies related to ABHE criteria, as noted above for various types of substantive changes. When the change involves a new location or new degrees, proof of governmental authorization, if applicable, is required.

5. **Major** changes must not be implemented by an institution until approval is received from the Commission on Accreditation. The Commission may approve the change, disapprove the change, or defer a decision pending the receipt of additional documentation.

   a. Approval of a substantive change is an indication that implementation is not likely to jeopardize the institution’s accreditation. At the committee’s option, it may (1) require no follow-up activity until the institution’s next scheduled reaffirmation, (2) require the submission of a progress report after a
specified period of time, (3) request that the institution host the Director, Commission on Accreditation or his representative for an on-site evaluation after a specified period of time, or (4) request that the institution host an evaluation team visit after a specified period of time.

b. Disapproval of a major substantive change is an indication that implementation will likely jeopardize the institution’s accreditation.

6. Approval will not be granted for any major substantive change that adversely affects the capacity of the institution to continue meeting the Standards. Approval is required before implementation of a major substantive change, and the effective date of the inclusion of the change within the institution’s scope of accreditation is the date on which the Commission approves the substantive change. Retroactive approvals will not be granted.

7. Should an institution proceed with implementation of a major substantive change after receiving disapproval from the Commission, a show cause order will automatically be issued.

A Statement on Confidentiality

The Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) is comprised of institutions of biblical higher education that hold accredited, candidate, applicant, or affiliate status. The ABHE Board of Directors and its related Committees have oversight of the Association operations. The ABHE Commission on Accreditation is an independent decision-making body that determines the status of institutions seeking to pursue or maintain accredited membership within the Association. The Commission on Accreditation has exclusive jurisdiction over all documents generated by or otherwise associated with accreditation processes. The Director, Commission on Accreditation, working with the Commission Chair, has primary responsibility to ensure the security of Commission records. The Director, Commission on Accreditation also exercises on behalf of the Commission the exclusive right to grant or deny access to Commission records to individuals on the basis of a legitimate “business need to know.” Directory information, including but not necessarily limited to, institutional and key official names, addresses, telephone, e-mail, and history of public accreditation actions (as required by law), may be disseminated unless specific lawful restrictions are stipulated in writing.

To properly evaluate an institution or program, the Commission on Accreditation must have access to all documents that give insight into the true condition of the institution or program. Refusal of an institution or program to provide full and honest disclosure of its affairs is sufficient justification for denial or withdrawal of applicant, candidate, or accredited status. The Commission and its representatives shall take appropriate measures in its own handling of information to maintain the privacy rights of individuals.

The Commission regards an institution or program’s self-study materials, evaluation documents, progress reports, and financial statements as confidential. The minutes of the Commission on Accreditation are also confidential.

Confidential materials are not available to the ABHE Board of Directors, non-Commission Association decision-making bodies, or the public at large. However, they are available to those with legitimate accreditation concerns on a “need-to-know” basis. They are also available to those agencies charged with evaluating the Commission on Accreditation for purposes of certifying its integrity on behalf of the general public.

Should an institution or program operate in a manner that raises public concern, the Commission will have the prerogative of disclosing publicly any confidential material required to explain the reason for its action regarding the applicant, candidate, or accredited status of the institution or program.

A Statement on Public Disclosure

ABHE will maintain and make available to the public, written materials describing:

1. Each type of accreditation and pre-accreditation (candidacy status) it grants;

2. The procedures that institutions or programs must follow in applying for accreditation or pre-accreditation;

3. The standards and procedures the Commission on Accreditation uses to determine whether to grant, reaffirm, reinstate, restrict, deny, revoke, terminate, or take any other action related to each type of accreditation and pre-accreditation that it grants;

4. The institutions and programs that it currently accredits or pre-accredits and, for each institution and program, the year that the Commission on Accreditation will next review or reconsider the institution or program for accreditation or pre-accreditation; and

5. The names, academic and professional qualifications, and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of —
   
   (i) The members of the ABHE policy and decision-making bodies; and

   (ii) ABHE’s principal administrative staff.

ABHE will notify relevant governmental agencies, accrediting bodies, and the public of decisions regarding an institution’s status as follows:

1. ABHE will provide written notice to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public no later than 30 days after it makes:
   
   (a) A decision to award initial accreditation or pre-accreditation to an institution or program.

   (b) A decision to renew an institution's or program's accreditation or pre-accreditation;

2. ABHE will provide written notice to the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, and the appropriate accrediting agencies at the same time it notifies the institution or program, but no later than 30 days after it reaches:
   
   (a) A final decision to place an institution or program on probation or an equivalent status.

   (b) A final decision to deny, withdraw, suspend, revoke, or terminate the accreditation or pre-accreditation of an institution or program.

   (c) A final decision to take any other adverse action. (ABHE does not consider the issuance of warning status to be an adverse action under this policy.)
ABHE will provide written notice to the public of the negative decisions listed in paragraphs seven 2 (a),(b), and (c ) above within 24 hours of its notice to the institution or program;

For any decision to deny, withdraw, suspend, revoke, or terminate the accreditation or pre-accreditation of an institution or program, ABHE will make available to the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, and the public, no later than 60 days after the decision, a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the Commission's decision and the official comments that the affected institution or program may wish to make with regard to that decision. If no comments are offered, ABHE will provide evidence that the affected institution has been offered an opportunity to provide official comment.

3. ABHE will notify the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and, upon request, the public if an accredited or pre-accredited institution or program—

   (a) Decides to withdraw voluntarily from accreditation or pre-accreditation, within 30 days of receiving notification from the institution or program that it is withdrawing voluntarily from accreditation or pre-accreditation; or

   (b) Lets its accreditation or pre-accreditation lapse, within 30 days of the date on which accreditation or pre-accreditation lapses.

Adopted October 2006, revised May 2010.
Procedures for Dealing with Conflicting Requirements of Oversight Bodies

Policy

An institution found to be out of compliance with an ABHE Standard because of a conflicting requirement of another accrediting body or governmental agency may appeal to the Commission on Accreditation for an alternative means of satisfying the ABHE standard.

Procedures

1. The institution must acknowledge the nature, extent, and implications of its need to seek alternative means of compliance of a Commission Standard.

2. The institution must provide documentation demonstrating that a conflict with other published requirements, in fact, exists and propose alternative means of compliance. The proposal must include a rationale demonstrating its reason for believing that the alternative will achieve a satisfactory result.

3. The institution’s proposal should be provided to the Committee on Criteria prior to the filing deadline of its first meeting following identification of the conflict.

4. The Committee on Criteria will review the proposal and prepare a recommendation for the consideration of the full Commission on Accreditation regarding the request.

5. The Commission on Accreditation will approve or reject the proposal for an alternative means of compliance with the Standard. In cases where the Commission on Accreditation rejects the proposed alternative means of compliance, it will endeavor to furnish materials and offer guidance as to how the institution may resolve the conflict.

Guiding Values

1. Exceptions to normal compliance with a Standard will be based on a genuine conflict with the requirements of another accrediting agency or governmental body, not simply a marketing issue.

2. The alternative proposed by the institution must reflect an understanding of the purpose for the ABHE requirement and an effort to fulfill the purpose of the ABHE Standard as fully as possible.

3. The institution must demonstrate that the courses or requirements used in place of the expectations of ABHE Standards for Accreditation result in similar or related competencies.

4. The institution must have a demonstrated history of compliance with the Commission’s Philosophy of Accreditation.

Adopted: February 2007
Procedures for Monitoring Annual Report Data

Introduction

Each year, ABHE member institutions are required to complete an Annual Report Form due November 1 that provides a great deal of data relative to the institution’s activities, enrollment, faculty, library, and financial resources, and results. Upon receipt of the completed Annual Reports, the ABHE staff assumes responsibility for monitoring the data presented and bringing to the attention of the Commission on Accreditation any issues of concern arising from their findings for review at the Commission’s subsequent February meeting. The monitoring process used by the ABHE staff is outlined in the steps described below:

Institutional Data

The Commission staff monitors this data to ensure that the Association Directory is up-to-date with current information. It also seeks to ensure that institutions are properly following the Commission’s substantive change policies with respect to teaching sites and educational modalities. In cases where it is apparent that an institution has reported extension locations, additional locations, branch campuses, and/or instructional modality that have not been previously approved under the Commission’s Policy on Substantive Change, the staff will contact the institution to determine why there is no record of a required approval. Such instances will also be reported along with the institution’s response to the Commission’s Committee on Progress Reports and Substantive Change (PRSC – accredited institutions) or the Committee on Applicant and Candidate status (APCAN – candidate institutions).

Enrollment Data

The Commission staff monitors enrollment data with particular attention to institutions that have experienced a 50 percent or greater increase in enrollment on campus or through the use of the distance education or correspondence education modalities. Where an institution has experienced a 50 percent increase in enrollment, the ABHE staff will alert the Secretary (U.S. Department of Education). The staff will also alert the Commission regarding those institutions experiencing 50 percent or greater growth so that the Commission at its regular meeting will be able to determine any special steps that should be taken to ensure that the institution is taking appropriate measures to accommodate its rapid growth. Institutions suffering a loss of enrollment of 15 percent or greater shall also be given special attention by the Commission to ensure that their stability is not jeopardized by the downturn in enrollment.

Student Achievement Data

The Commission staff will further monitor retention rates, program completion rates, and participation in the institution’s student ministries program. Institutions having values that are only half of the normative value for institutions in a given enrollment classification shall be brought to the attention of the appropriate Commission Committee (PRSC – accredited; APCAN – candidate) for its review.

Educational Staff

The Commission staff will review the data submitted regarding the extent of faculty resources and the level of faculty credentials. The Commission staff will report institutions having a faculty –student ratio greater than 25:1 or less than 10:1 shall be brought to the special attention of the appropriate Commission Committee (PRSC – accredited; APCAN – candidate) to determine if further monitoring is
Similarly, if it is apparent that 20 percent or more of faculty fail to meet expectations with respect to credentials, the reporting institution shall be brought to the attention of the appropriate Commission Committee to determine if further monitoring is needed.

Learning Resource Data

The Commission staff will review the data regarding learning resources. Institutions reporting an annual investment of two percent or less of their educational and general budget in learning resources will be reported to the appropriate Commission Committee (PRSC – accredited; APCAN – candidate) to determine if further monitoring is warranted. Institutions reporting a decrease in the size of their holdings of 20 percent or more shall also be identified for special Committee attention.

Financial Data

Institutions in the U.S. having a total weighted financial score of less than 1.5 where the highest possible score is 3.0 and the lowest possible score is a negative 1.0 shall be brought to the attention of the Commission’s Committee on Financial Exigency for special monitoring. Canadian institutions failing to meet more than two of the financial ratios expected by the form will be brought to the attention of the Committee on Financial Exigency. At the Director’s (Commission on Accreditation) discretion, an extreme negative score shall be a sufficient reason to identify a need to submit a Canadian institution to the Committee on Financial Exigency for special monitoring attention.

Tenets of Faith

The failure of an institution to affirm the ABHE Tenets of Faith shall be brought to the attention of the Commission on Accreditation.

The Commission on Accreditation’s Responsibility

Upon receipt of notice that the staff has identified an institution for special attention, the Commission will carefully review the institution with respect to the element(s) that caused the staff to place the institution on the Commission agenda. Data involving accredited institutions will be reviewed by the Committee on Progress Reports and Substantive Change. Data involving applicant and candidate institutions will be reviewed by the Commission’s Committee on Applicant Status. If, with respect to accredited institutions, the Commission concludes that special monitoring is required, the Commission may exercise a range of options that include the requirement of a progress report regarding the concern(s), a requirement that the institution host a staff visit for the purpose of investigating the concern(s), or a requirement that an institution host a focused visit by a team of evaluators. A failure to cooperate with the Commission’s request for a monitoring action will call into question an institution’s status with the Commission. Should the Commission determine that an institution’s data is unacceptable because of quality or stability issues, the Commission will take action to place the institution on sanction.

In the case of an applicant or candidate institution, any special monitoring function will normally be completed through a combination of the annual staff visit and the related annual progress report. A failure to address the Commission’s concerns will jeopardize the institution’s progress towards accreditation.

Adopted: April 2012
Policy on Closing an Institution

Preparing the Way

A decision to close an educational institution requires thoughtful planning and careful consultation with all affected constituencies. Every effort should be devoted to informing each constituency as fully as possible about the conditions requiring consideration of a decision of such importance, and all available information should be shared. Before closing, such alternatives as merging with another institution, forming a consortium, or participating in extensive inter-institutional sharing and cooperation should be carefully considered. As much as possible, the determination to close rests with the board of control.

Tradition and sentiment are important considerations, but sentimentality should not be allowed to determine events. A decision to close should never be made or reversed simply on the basis of fear, hopes, or aspirations that have little relation to reality. Neither should a decision be delayed to the point where the institution has lost its viability and its educational program no longer retains quality and integrity. Since the immediate interests of current students and faculty are most directly affected, their present and future prospects require especially sensitive attention and involvement.

It is assumed that closing an institution means a decision to permanently discontinue its educational activities, not merely to suspend them for an indefinite period in the hope that circumstances may someday permit their resumption. But it should be noted that most institutions of higher education are corporations established under the provisions of state or provincial law, and, as such, may have legal responsibilities (e.g., holding title to real property) that may necessitate the continued existence of the corporation after the educational activities of the institution have been terminated. Indeed, it is probable that such continued corporate existence, at least for a time, will prove to be the usual situation. It is unlikely that in most cases, corporate existence and educational activities can be terminated simultaneously.

Closing an Institution

A decision to close requires specific plans for providing in appropriate ways for the students, the faculty, the administrative and support staff, and for the disposition of the institution’s assets. Many considerations bear upon closing an educational institution and each situation will be unique. Public institutions, seminaries, church-related institutions—the nature and sponsorship of each institution requires different emphasis and pose particular conditions to be met in reaching and carrying out the ultimate decision. Nevertheless, general guidelines may be helpful to each institution considering closing.

This statement makes only incidental reference to such corporate responsibilities and always in the educational context. It is imperative, therefore, that a board of control considering institutional closure should be guided by these guidelines, by state or provincial educational authorities, and by the advice of legal counsel. Special counsel to advise with respect to problems of closing may be desirable for the institution. Institutional and specialized accrediting bodies should also be consulted and be kept fully apprised of developments.

1. **Students.** Students who have not completed their degrees should be provided for according to their academic needs. Arrangements for transfer to other institutions will require complete academic records and all other related information gathered in dossiers that can be transmitted promptly to receiving
institutions. Agreements made with other institutions to receive transferring students and to accept their records should be in writing. Should it be necessary for an institution to cease operations, any teach-out agreements with other institutions must be submitted to ABHE for approval. To be approved, teach out agreements must be made with institutions that are accredited by a USDE recognized agency. Such an agreement must ensure compatibility in content, quality and calendar between the program of instruction offered by the closing institution and the program to be completed at the receiving institution. The closing institution should seek to make its teach-out arrangements with institutions in the proximate geographical area. Further, instruction to complete the term must be provided at no additional cost to the student. Where financial aid is concerned, particularly federal or state grants, arrangements should be made with the appropriate agencies to transfer the grants to the receiving institutions. Where such arrangements cannot be completed, students should be fully informed. In cases where students have held institutional scholarships or grants and where there are available funds that can be legally used to support students while they complete degrees at other institutions, appropriate agreements should be negotiated. (ABHE will cooperate with USDE and the relevant state(s)/province(s) to minimize the negative impact of the closure for students.)

2. **Academic records and financial aid transcripts.** All academic, financial aid information, and other records should be prepared for permanent filing, including microfilming. Arrangements should be made with the state or provincial department of higher education or other appropriate agency for filing of student records. If there is no state or provincial educational agency that can receive records, arrangements should be made with another institution or university or with the state or provincial archives to preserve the records. Notification should be sent to every current and past student indicating where the records are being stored and what the accessibility of those records will be. Where possible, a copy of a student’s record should also be forwarded to the individual student.

3. **Completion of institutional obligations.** When a student chooses to continue at another institution but is within 18 months of completing an academic degree in the closing institution, arrangements may be made to permit that student to complete the requirements for a degree elsewhere but to receive it from the closed institution. This may require special action by the appropriate state or provincial agency. Such arrangements should also include provisions for continuing the institution’s accreditation only for this purpose by the accrediting agency involved. These steps normally require the institution to continue as a legal corporate entity for 12 to 18 months beyond the closing date, but any such arrangement must be established in careful consultation with the appropriate authorities and with their written consent.

**Provision for Faculty and Staff**

In every possible case, the institution should arrange for continuation of those faculty and staff who will be necessary for the completion of the institution’s work up to the closing date. When faculty and staff are no longer needed, the institution should make every effort to assist them in finding alternative employment. It should be understood that the institution can make no guarantees, but genuinely good faith efforts to assist in relocation and reassignment are essential. In the event that faculty or staff members find new positions, early resignations should be accepted.
The Final Determination

Determinations must be made to allocate whatever financial resources and assets remain after the basic needs of current students, faculty, and staff are provided. When the financial resources of the institution are inadequate to honor commitments, the board should investigate possible alternatives and protective measures available under applicable bankruptcy laws before deciding to close. If funds are insufficient to maintain normal operations through the end of the closing process, the institution should not overlook the possibility of soliciting one-time gifts and donations to assist in fulfilling its final obligations.

Every effort should be made to develop publicly defensible policies for dividing the resources equitably among those with claims against the institution. One of the best ways to achieve this goal is to involve potential claimants in the process of developing the policies. Time and effort devoted to carrying the process to a judicious conclusion may considerably reduce the likelihood of lawsuits or other forms of confrontation.

It is impossible to anticipate in advance the many claims that might be made against remaining resources of an institution, but the following three principles may be helpful to set priorities:

1. Students have the right to expect basic minimal services during the final semester, not only in the academic division but also in the business office, financial aid office, registrar’s office, counseling and other essential support services. Staff should be retained long enough to provide these services. It may be appropriate to offer special incentives to keep key personnel present.

2. Reasonable notice and explanation is given to all employees regarding the possibility of early termination of contracts. The reason for retaining some personnel longer than others should be based on the satisfaction of the minimal needs of students and the legal requirements for closing.

3. Every effort should be made to honor long-term financial obligations (loans, debentures, etc.) even though the parties holding such claims may choose not to press them.

The Closing Date

The board of trustees should take a formal vote to terminate the institution on a specified date. That date will depend on a number of factors including the decision to file or not to file for bankruptcy. Another key factor is whether or not all obligations to students will have been satisfactorily discharged. This is particularly important if the decision is made to allow seniors in their final year to graduate from the institution by completing their degree requirements elsewhere. If such arrangements are made, the board must be sure to take the legal action necessary to permit the awarding of degrees after the institution otherwise ceases to function. Normally, formal vote to award a degree is made after all requirements have been met, but it is legally possible to make arrangements for a student to complete the requirements for a degree at another institution and to receive the degree from the closed institution. These requirements must be clearly specified along with a deadline for completion. Also, the board must identify the person or persons authorized to determine whether or not these requirements have in fact been satisfied. Arrangements must be completed with the appropriate state and accrediting agencies in advance in order to assure that the degree is awarded by a legally authorized and accredited institution.
Disposition of Assets

In the case of a not-for-profit institution, the legal requirements of the state or provincial and, if applicable, federal government must be carefully examined with respect to the disposition of institutional assets. Arrangements for the sale of the physical plant, equipment, library, special collections, art, or other funds must be explored with legal counsel. In the case of wills, endowments, or special grants, the institution should, as much as possible, honor the wishes of donors, grantors, executors of estates, and other providers of special funds. State or provincial laws regarding the disposition of funds from a nonprofit institution must be meticulously followed.

All concerned state or provincial and, if applicable, federal agencies need to be apprised of the institution’s situation, and any obligations related to estate or, if applicable, federal funds need to be cleared with the proper agencies.

Other Considerations

The institution should establish a clear understanding with its creditors and all other agencies involved with its activities to assure that their claims and interests will not be subject to later legal proceedings that might jeopardize the records or status of its students or faculty.

Conclusion

The closing of an educational institution is never a happy event. Nevertheless, such action can be rendered less traumatic by careful attention to details of the legal and moral obligations of the institution. Closing will be marked by sadness, but well-planned and conscientious efforts to assure that the institution’s students, faculty, and staff will be optimally provided for and that assets will be used in ways that will honor the intentions of the original donors, should help in avoiding bitterness and rancor. A final report on the closing should be submitted to the appropriate accrediting and state or provincial agencies for their records.

NOTE: The most recent comprehensive reference work, which includes summaries of state regulations regarding disposition of records and dissolution of nonprofit institutions and universities, is the following:


Policy Concerning the Conferring of Honorary Doctoral Degrees

The practice of awarding honorary degrees on worthy candidates can be a means of appropriate recognition for outstanding service if done wisely and selectively.

The following guidelines should be observed by those ABHE member institutions that choose to confer honorary degrees:

1. The institution shall secure appropriate approval prior to offering honorary degrees, if required by the state or province in which the institution is located.

2. The number of honorary degrees conferred in any given year should be limited, usually no more than two.

3. Candidates for honorary degrees ought to be limited to those whose life and service record has been demonstrated to be of particularly outstanding merit exemplifying the institution’s mission and goals over a lengthy period of time, usually over several decades.

4. Honorary degrees ordinarily should not be conferred on any active trustee, administrator, faculty or staff member.

5. Honorary degrees ordinarily should not be awarded to former trustees, administrators, faculty or staff members until at least six months has elapsed after their association with the institution.

6. The degree nomenclature used ordinarily should be such as is normally understood as an honorary nature. For example:

   The Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) or D.D. might be conferred for outstanding lengthy service in some avenue of Christian ministry involving gospel proclamation. The Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) or D.Litt. might be conferred for outstanding lengthy service in some avenue of literary ministry. The Doctor of Civil Law (honoris causa) or D.C.L. might be conferred for outstanding lengthy service in some avenue of community service ministry.

7. Candidates for honorary degrees must be approved by the board of trustees, as is required of regular degree candidates of the institution.

8. Both the recipient and the conferring institution should be honored in the granting of a degree (honoris causa).

Adopted February 1994
Policy on Ethical Practices

It is the intent of the Association for Biblical Higher Education to express the ethical ideals of the Christian faith in all of its practices and to require that all member institutions or programs follow sound principles of integrity.

Commission Practices

1. ABHE’s Commission on Accreditation considers for accreditation only those institutions and programs that have as their primary purpose the preparation of students for Christian ministries.

2. ABHE’s Commission on Accreditation considers an institution or program only upon the request of its chief administrative officer and permits the withdrawal of the request at any time prior to action by the Commission on Accreditation.

3. ABHE’s Commission on Accreditation selects evaluation team members on the basis of their competence as educators, their ability to assess programs of biblical higher education, and their acceptability to the institution or program to be evaluated. No individual can serve as both consultant and evaluator for an institution or program during a given cycle of accreditation.

4. ABHE’s Commission on Accreditation follows sound evaluation procedures that ensure: (1) thoroughness and accuracy in the securing of information, (2) good communication at every point among all parties involved in the process, (3) due regard for the protection of an institution with respect to the confidentiality of documents and reports, (4) ethical and professional practices of evaluators during, preceding, and following the visit, (5) non-acceptance of honoraria by Commission representatives from an institution (except for scheduled fees) during an institution’s or program’s accreditation process, (6) expeditious handling of steps in the accreditation process, (7) an absence of conflicts of interest within decision-making bodies, (8) prompt notification of commission actions on membership status, including the reasons for action, and (9) complete and accurate records, including at least the last full review, of the accreditation process of each institution or program and all actions taken regarding its status with the Commission.

5. ABHE’s Commission on Accreditation seeks to conduct its activities with a view to economy of operation and reasonable cost to its institutions.

6. ABHE’s Commission on Accreditation avoids showing favoritism in the endorsement of vendors seeking entry into the biblical higher education market. The Association reserves the right to inform its members of advantageous services and products. Such information is not to be considered an endorsement.

Institutional Practices

1. **Policy on description of credentials offered.** In their public documents, institutions shall carefully and accurately define the nature and use of each certificate, diploma, and degree awarded. Such definitions must be consistent with the institutional or programmatic mission, the specifications of ABHE Standards, the requirements of state regulatory bodies, and accepted conventions among recognized institutions of higher education.
2. **Policy on the acceptance of transfer credit.** Responsibility for sound practices in accepting transfer credits rests primarily on member institutions and programs. However, since practices of individual institutions and programs affect the prestige and standing of the entire association, ABHE has taken action to endorse the “Statement on Transfer and Award of Academic Credit” ratified September 28, 2001 by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation, the American Council on Education (ACE), and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO). The statement is included in this ABHE Manual. Additionally, ABHE has adopted “Guidelines for Validation of Credit Earned in Unaccredited Institutions,” included in this Manual, to foster the transfer of credit.

3. **Transfer of students.** Christian comity, as well as professional ethics, requires an institution to honor the disciplinary actions taken by other institutions. Accordingly, the status of a student’s withdrawal will be verified before his application is accepted, and if the withdrawal is dishonorable, the application will not be accepted unless a satisfactory disposition is made. Discretion should be exercised in considering applications from students who have not succeeded academically. In most cases, a student who cannot make acceptable grades in another institution setting will also fail in an institution of biblical higher education.

4. **Identification of status: accredited and candidate.** Each member institution or program is responsible in its advertising and in all official statements to make clear whether its status with the Commission is at the accredited or candidate level. Usually a simple statement such as the following will suffice: “(institution or program name) is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of ABHE” or “(institution name) is a candidate for accreditation with the Commission on Accreditation of ABHE.” Whenever the status is identified in advertising or public documents, it should include the Commission’s address and phone number.

   If accreditation does not extend to the entire institution, as denoted by its legal or customary title, but extends only to a particular unit or programs within the institution, all publicity shall clearly indicate the limits of such accreditation.

5. **Use of emblem.** The Association emblem may be used by both accredited and candidate institutions, but the latter must always use the term “Candidate for Accreditation” immediately below the emblem proper.

6. **Reference to educational boards and agencies.** If reference is made to publications by the U.S. Department of Education, the proper wording is “listed by” because the U.S. Department of Education does not accredit institutions. If reference is made by states or Canadian provinces, the wording should be appropriate to the usage of the particular governmental body. For example, in New York, curricula are “registered.” In many states, institutions are “approved” with respect to their total program; in many they are “accredited” or “certified” only with respect to their teacher education program.

7. **Description of Bachelor of Theology program.** It is important to describe the five-year Bachelor of Theology program as an undergraduate program and the degree as an undergraduate degree. This conforms to ABHE policy and will help distinguish the B.Th. as a three-year program resting upon a two-year liberal arts foundation from the B.D./M.Div. program as a three-year curriculum resting upon a four-year liberal arts base.

8. **Accuracy in advertising.** All published materials relating to the courses offered, physical equipment, scholastic standing of faculty members, financial reports, statements of student fees and charges, and
similar topics shall be such as will accurately portray the institution and program to the public, and will be
descriptive of what the student will actually encounter when he/she enters the institution. Members are not
to mislead the public by presenting themselves as some other type of institution. Published lists of
enrollment shall clearly distinguish resident institution or program-credit students from noncredit and
distance education enrollees. All financial reports must be strictly accurate and free from misleading
claims. Institutions and programs are requested to refrain from the use of superlatives when describing
themselves. It is not in good taste to exalt one’s institution or program in such a way that it reflects on the
program, quality, or prestige of other Christian institution.

9. **Refunds.** ABHE institutions must have an equitable refund policy under which they shall make refunds of
unearned tuition, required fees, and room and board charges (where paid to the institution) to students who
do not matriculate or do not complete the period of study for which payment has been made.

10. **Financial operations.** ABHE institutions must maintain a high level of integrity in their financial
operations, including the preparation and availability to the public of the latest statement of financial
activities.

11. **Transfer of faculty and staff members.** ABHE members shall exercise due courtesy and practice
Christian comity toward one another in the transfer of faculty or staff members. Faculty or staff members
shall be free to correspond with other institutions regarding positions; in this case, the administration
approached is not under obligation to notify the administration of the current employing institution.
Likewise, it is not considered a breach of comity for administrators of one institution to initiate inquiries
directly with faculty or staff members of another institution. However, in this latter case, Christian courtesy
demands that the administration of the correspondent be informed of the overture before a firm offer is
extended.

12. **Dismissal of faculty or staff members.** ABHE members shall provide a fair and reasonable process and
exercise Christian charity in the dismissal of faculty and staff members. If performance has been
unsatisfactory, the member shall be counseled and given a reasonable opportunity to improve his
performance before dismissal action is taken. Where dismissal is necessitated by financial constraints or
cutbacks in institutional programs, reasonable efforts should be made to minimize hardships and assist the
member in relocating. Where dismissal action is contemplated because of alleged violations of moral or
ethical standards, every effort shall be made to ascertain the truth of the allegations before action is taken.
In taking dismissal action, institutions shall demonstrate Christian love for the individual and respect for his
privacy.

13. It is considered a violation of this policy for institutions to dismiss faculty or staff members for the purpose
of voiding retirement obligations.

14. **Interinstitutional competition.** ABHE institutions and programs shall have the right to compete in the
academic market place for both students and funds. In so competing, they shall consider their stewardship
responsibilities and shall seek to maximize the use of scarce resources for the advancement of Christ’s
cause. It is doubtful that good stewardship is exercised when one institution establishes offerings at some
distance from its own campus in close geographical proximity to another member having a similar
theological persuasion and scope of offerings. Should an institution or program decide to establish such
offerings, it shall notify the local ABHE member of its intentions prior to implementation of the distant
offerings. Further, it shall refrain from making presumptions about the availability of local institutional
resources, such as the library, for use by its own students. In all cases, it shall secure the local institution’s or program’s prior agreement for such use.

15. Nondiscrimination. ABHE institutions or programs shall practice nondiscrimination on the basis of gender (as permitted ecclesiastically and theologically), race, disability or national origin. This fact shall be stated in the catalog and other relevant literature.

16. Degree program cancellation. ABHE institutions and programs are responsible to be sufficiently adept at institutional planning that weak degree programs can be phased out over time rather than being cancelled abruptly. When trends indicate that a program does not have long-range viability, advertisement and recruitment for that program should cease so that freshmen will not enroll in it. The institution or program, however, retains the obligation to see students enrolled in the program through to the completion of the degree program. Should emergency circumstances demand immediate cancellation of a program, the institution has the obligation to facilitate the transfer of students to institutions where the degree program is offered. Students should not be inconvenienced by an institution’s decision to cancel a program abruptly.

Policy on a Semi-Autonomous Institution

Policy

The Commission recognizes a variety of patterns regarding institution sponsorship and organizational structure. These include sponsorships that may range from a local church at one end of the spectrum to a for-profit organization at the other.

Areas of Concern

These arrangements typically involve inherent weaknesses:

1. The facilities of the sponsoring organization may not be altogether suitable for institutional purposes.

2. The board or governing body of the sponsoring organization may spend the majority of its time addressing issues unrelated to the institution.

3. The chief executive officer of the sponsoring organization may lack the administrative gifts and/or knowledge necessary to provide leadership for an institution of higher education.

4. The sponsoring organization’s treasurer or financial staff may lack expertise in higher education accounting.

5. The sponsoring organization’s library collection, if one exists, is typically too small and narrow to support an institution’s curriculum. Because a full-time faculty core is often lacking, heavy reliance is placed upon part-time and adjunct professors.

6. The intermingling of assets between two organizations can be problematic. This is especially true when assets are intermingled between a for-profit organization and a not-for-profit organization.

7. The most serious issue, however, is that the institution’s welfare is most often heavily dependent upon the welfare of the sponsoring organization. Should the sponsoring organization experience difficulty-financial or otherwise-the institution may be the first to suffer.

Despite these potential issues, there is a possibility that an institution sponsored by another organization may have an excellent financial base, a separate governing board for each corporation, a broad base for student recruitment, a full-time core of qualified faculty, a good institutional library, a separate system of financial accounting, and other characteristics that facilitate the achievement of true higher education.

Required Qualities

The Commission’s main concerns are for institutional stability and education excellence. An institution sponsored by another organization, whether for-profit or not-for-profit, is expected to satisfy the “Principle for Accreditation.” However, the following institutional qualities are expected of an institution sponsored by another organization:
Organization and administration:

1. **Board of control.** Institutions sponsored by another organization should have a separate charter and governing board from that of the sponsoring organization. There may be representatives from the board or stakeholders of the sponsoring organization, on the institutional board. However, its board must include others from a broader pool of persons than the sponsoring organization alone. The governing board must give its full attention to institutional matters.

2. **President.** The institutional president must have knowledge of biblical higher education. Should he/she also serve as a chief officer in the sponsoring organization, the president’s schedule must either reflect an adequate amount of time to fulfill the obligations of an institutional president’s role or a substantial administrative structure, comprised of qualified personnel, must be in place to provide for continuity and stability in the chief administrative function.

3. **Administration.** The institution must have administrators such as a chief academic officer, a chief student-personnel officer, a chief financial officer, and a librarian adequate to serve the needs of the Institution. If these individuals are also qualified to provide instruction, their teaching loads must be limited so that they can adequately fulfill their administrative responsibilities.

4. **Business administration, development, and public relations.** The institution’s business and financial management must be separate from that of the sponsoring organization. In the case of any intermingling of assets, the higher education institution’s share should be clearly identified in the financial statements. A clear delineation of assets is particularly important where the sponsoring organization is a for-profit corporation. Development and public relations activities should be conducted in such a way as to maximize the effectiveness of efforts in the areas of student recruitment, public relations, and fund raising.

**Institutional Community**

1. **Community Life.** The institution should establish a community with an identity separate from that of the sponsoring organization. Students should feel that they are attending an institution of higher education, not participating in an activity of a local church or business operation.

2. **Faculty.** A majority of the teaching must be accomplished by a faculty that receives compensation from the institution commensurate with their responsibilities. Faculty members must possess qualifications appropriate to their instructional responsibilities. The diversity of personnel available should be adequate to support the institution curriculum.

   Faculty must be regarded as a responsible body that actively participates in the establishment of the institution’s objectives and curricular programs.

3. **Library.** Library holdings must belong to the institution of higher education, not the sponsoring organization. The library collection must adequately support the institution’s curriculum.

Adopted May 2007
Policy on Notification of Lapse or Withdrawal of Accreditation or Candidacy

Upon receipt of written notice from an institution, ABHE will notify the U.S. Secretary of Education, the appropriate State/Provincial licensing or authorizing agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and, upon request, the public if an accredited or candidate institution or program:

1. Decides to withdraw voluntarily from accreditation or candidate status.

2. Lets its accreditation or candidate status lapse.

ABHE will provide this notification within 30 days of receiving written notice from the institution or program that it is withdrawing voluntarily from accreditation or candidacy.

Adopted October 2006
Guidelines for Sharing Online Courses

Collaborative agreements in sharing electronically delivered online courses are a tremendous benefit to many schools. It allows schools to begin offering online courses without the need to develop their own technical structure, and it enables schools to provide a few courses for a few students without significant financial drain. The Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) does not wish to discourage this at all. However, the association does want to provide some guidelines that should be helpful when a school enters into an agreement with a provider of online courses/programs. In this document, school will refer to the institution that places their students in a provider’s courses or programs; provider will refer to the institution or company that provides the courses or programs.

The issue of importance relates to meeting all the appropriate accreditation requirements (Comprehensive/Programmatic Standards and Policies). All institutions offering online courses, including those that outsource through some form of collaborative agreement, are ultimately responsible for the education and for meeting accreditation standards related to the online courses. The following items should be considered:

1. Has the provider formally adopted, and do they comply with, the Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs?

2. Has the provider formally adopted, and do they comply with, an accepted standard for quality online courses? (An example would be the Quality Matters: Quality Assurance in Online Learning standard.)

3. Does the provider comply with the ABHE “Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns?”

Consider, for example, these statements from the AHBE Manual (revised 2007):

- The qualifications of alternative academic pattern faculty must be commensurate with those of on-campus faculty.

  Note: Schools must be able to document that those who teach the online classes their students are in have appropriate academic credentials. Schools using a provider of online courses should have access to transcripts of all persons who teach their students.

- Faculty involved in the development and implementation of offerings using alternative academic patterns are provided appropriate support and training to ensure their effectiveness.

  Note: Schools should be able to document the type, quality, and extent of the training and support given to all online instructors at providing institutions/companies. It is an advantage to have someone from the school go through the provider’s training for firsthand experience. Copies of provider faculty surveys may also be helpful in demonstrating compliance with the policy requirements.

- Alternative academic pattern courses must be systematically evaluated to determine if course objectives are being met. Records that deal with academic and other matters must be maintained and safeguarded by the parent institution.
Note: Schools should request assessment reports from the provider of online courses demonstrating how courses are being evaluated and how improvement is being made based on the assessment. Data from provider's courses must be included in the overall assessment of the school. Schools may wish to request a copy of the provider’s assessment plan as a resource document.

- Adequate student support services, such as admissions, financial aid, academic and personal counseling, registration, and oversight must be provided for in alternative academic patterns. The security of personal information is protected.

  Note: Schools should be able to document both their own services to students and the services offered by the providers. This is especially important as it relates to technical support and support after normal business hours and on weekends. Student satisfaction surveys collected by the school or the provider are critical documentation.

- Personnel providing services to students employing alternative academic patterns are provided appropriate support and training to ensure their effectiveness in meeting student needs.

  Note: Schools should be able to document how the personnel providing service to online students are trained and supported regarding their involvement with students. This should include both the school and provider.

- Qualified faculty and adequate instructional and technical support, facilities, supplies, library, and other resources that support the classes taken must be provided in alternative academic patterns.

  Note: Schools must provide, or have provided, support, technology services, and library/research resources that are adequate to accomplish appropriate research at a level comparable to students in traditional programs. Schools should gather information regarding how the resources are being used. Library resources should include access to a college library with electronic access to available books and a process for receiving and returning books. It should also include access to digital books, journal articles (full-text), and other tools that can be used.

- Institutions will utilize the Best Practices in Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs developed by the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET).

  Note: Schools, along with the provider, should be familiar with the Best Practices document and operate according to it.

4. Can the school substantiate that the Comprehensive Standards/Programmatic Standards as they relate to the Best Practices document are being met both by the school and the provider?

5. Has the provider formally adopted the ABHE Tenets of Faith?

6. If the provider is an education institution, is it accredited by a recognized accrediting association (CHEA and USDE approved)? If appropriate, is the provider approved by the State Department of Education? Has its online program been evaluated and approved?
Note: If the provider is an education institution, the school should request a copy of their most recent self-study, team reports, responses to the reports, and the letter granting or reaffirming accreditation. If follow-up reports are required, the school should request copies of these and all subsequent action of the accrediting association. These items should become part of the school’s documentation and resource collection and should be included in the self-study and site team evaluation as related to the online program. Documentation should include any actions from the State Department of Education.

7. Schools should maintain copies of the course syllabi for every class their students take from a provider where the class is directly transcripted by the school. The syllabi should include instructor information, course description, textbooks, learning objectives, policies, evaluation requirements, and schedule.

8. When a school is preparing for a site visit, the school should consult with the Site Team Chair concerning what records from the provider the Team will want to review. For instance, the school might provide the Team Chair with a list of all classes that were outsourced and then ask which faculty files the team would like to review. The school must make certain all the appropriate documentation is available.

Note: Schools going through a site visit may wish to have a representative from the provider available to answer specific questions related to the provided classes.

9. Schools considering using a provider for electronically delivered classes should research carefully the various options and request recommendations. Schools must be careful that the costs related to outsourcing classes does not negatively impact the school. Financial integrity in dealing with a provider and students is imperative.

10. When using a provider for electronically delivered courses, the school and the provider should carefully examine what is required by the comprehensive/programmatic standards and policies to ensure that they are being met for all classes.

Note: Schools may wish to have a representative from the provider available to answer specific questions related to all the items listed above during the self-study process.

Adopted: March 2007
Guidelines for Ensuring Integrity in Distance Education and Correspondence Studies

ABHE requires that institutions take appropriate steps to ensure that every student who registers for distance education or correspondence education course or program credits is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. Institutions shall have written policies governing measures undertaken to verify the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework offered via distance education and correspondence studies. ABHE, in evaluating an institution offering distance education and/or correspondence education, will verify that the institution has a written policy governing this process and that the policy is being effectively implemented.

The following methods are suggested as measures that institutions may take, at their option, to ensure the required level of integrity. Ordinarily, a combination of the methods identified below will be utilized:

1. Authenticate the student through a secure login and pass code.
2. Require major exams to be proctored by a responsible party who, as part of the proctoring process, verifies the identity of the student and certifies in writing that the examination was taken under the conditions required by the course.
3. Validate the student’s identity via a government issued photo ID.
4. Conduct random interviews of a sampling of DE students, at some point during a course, asking focused questions about course content and student-generated products to verify the student’s knowledge of course materials.
5. Employ available software applications and services to ensure that student-produced materials are not plagiarized (for example, turnitin.com)
6. Require students to sign an “academic honesty” statement at the end of the course, asserting that the work done for the course has been their own. The signature will be a necessary requirement for passing the course. Students must be notified of this requirement at the outset of the course.
7. Employ new or other technologies and practices that prove effective in verifying student identity.

In efforts to ensure integrity, institutions must use processes that protect student privacy. They must also notify students of any projected additional student financial charges associated with the verification of student identity at the time of registration or enrollment.

Adopted April 2010
Guidelines for Doctoral Programs

ABHE’s accrediting function is recognized by the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education. Within the Council, ABHE is one of eight member accrediting bodies that offer international accreditation services. All of the Council members assume responsibility for the oversight of graduate education and nearly all members accredit institutions that provide doctoral level education, especially theoretically based doctoral education. The ABHE Commission on Accreditation has endorsed the benchmarks identified in the material below. ABHE accredited institutions are encouraged to consider the benchmarks and use them for guidance in evaluating any doctoral level studies that they either currently offer or anticipate offering in the near future.

The Beirut Benchmarks

Developed and unanimously endorsed
by participants in the
ICETE Doctoral Consultation
Beirut, Lebanon
March 2010

Doctoral study within an evangelical Christian institution is founded on an understanding of knowledge that is more than academic. In the Bible, acquiring and exercising wisdom involves a combination of faith, reason and action. It requires

- right belief and committed trust in the living God ("the fear of the LORD is the first principle of wisdom"),
- creative and humble use of the rationality God has granted to humans made in his own image, and
- appropriate living in the world to reflect God’s calling and participate in God’s mission.

Doctoral study, therefore, pursued on such a foundation, will be confessional, rational and missional. For a Christian, doctoral study is one dimension of what it means to "love the LORD your God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength."

Within such a framework of Christian identity and commitment, the doctoral qualification will be awarded to students who are church members commended for faithful discipleship and recognized leadership, and who demonstrate the following qualities through appropriate examination:

1. **Comprehensive understanding**, having demonstrated a breadth of systematic understanding of a field of study relevant to the Christian community of faith, and mastery of the skills and methods of research appropriate to that field.
2. **Critical skills, faithfully exercised**, having demonstrated their capacity for critical analysis, independent evaluation of primary and secondary source materials, and synthesis of new and inter-related ideas through coherent argumentation, and their commitment to exercise such skills on the foundation of biblical faithfulness to Jesus Christ and his church.
3. **Serious inquiry with integrity**, having demonstrated the ability to conceive, design and implement a substantial project of inquiry resulting in a sustained and coherent thesis, and to do so with Christian and scholarly integrity.
4. **Creative and original contribution**, having produced, as a result of such disciplined inquiry, a creative and original contribution that extends the frontiers of knowledge, or develops fresh insights in the articulation and contextual relevance of the Christian tradition, some of which merit national or international refereed publication.
5. **Contextual relevance**, having shown their capacity, in the course of their doctoral program and in their expectation of its future potential, for biblically-informed critical engagement with the realities of their cultural contexts.
6. **Ability to communicate**, having shown an ability in communicating about their area of expertise to peer-level academic audiences, and, where appropriate, to non-specialists in local Christian communities and the wider society in culturally relevant ways, including their mother tongue, for example through teaching, preaching or writing.

7. **Missional impact**, having shown that they are committed, and can be expected, to use the fruit of their doctoral study, the skills it has given them and the opportunities it affords them, to promote the kingdom of God and advance the mission of the church (both local and global), through Christ-like and transformational service, to the glory of God.

Participants in the
ICETE Doctoral Consultation
Beirut, Lebanon
March 2010

Bernhard Ott, European Evangelical Accrediting Association (EEAA), Switzerland
Bulus Galadima, ECWA Theological Seminary Jos (JETS), Nigeria
Carver Yu, China Graduate School of Theology (CGST), Hong Kong
Chris Wright, Langham Partnerships International (LPI), UK
Chuck Van Engen, Latin American Leadership Development Program (PRODOLA), Costa Rica
Daniel Koh, Trinity Theological College (TTC), Singapore
Davi Charles Gomes, Andrew Jumper Presbyterian Post-Graduate Centre (CPAJ), Brazil
Douglas Carew, Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST), Kenya
Elie Haddad, Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS), Lebanon
Ian Payne, South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS), India
Ian Shaw, Langham Partnerships International (LPI), UK
Las Newman, Caribbean Graduate School of Theology (CGST), Jamaica
Luke Cheung, China Graduate School of Theology (CGST), Hong Kong
Oscar Campos, Seminário Teológico Centroamericano (SETECA), Guatemala
Parush Parushev, International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS), Czech Republic
Paul Bowers, International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE), USA/Africa
Paul Sanders, International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE), France/Lebanon
Ralph Enlow, Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE), USA
Riad Kassis, Overseas Council International (OC), Lebanon
Scott Cunningham, Overseas Council International (OC), USA/Africa
Sergiy Sannikov, Euro-Asian Accrediting Association (E-AAA), Ukraine
Theresa Roco Lua, Asia Graduate School of Theology (AGST), Philippines
Weanzana wa Nupanga, Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de Bangui (FATEB), Central African Republic

Also endorsed by
- the Governing Board of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE)
  - Langham Partnership International (LPI)
  - Overseas Council International (OCI)
  - Asia Theological Association (ATA)
- Association for Evangelical Theological Education in Latin America (AETAL)
  - Euro-Asian Accrediting Association (E-AAA)
- South Pacific Association of Evangelical Colleges (SPAEC)
- Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA)
- Commission on Accreditation, Association for Biblical Higher Education
Constitution and Bylaws
Adopted by Delegate Assembly, February 2009
Amended February 2010, February 2013
Association for Biblical Higher Education  
In  
Canada and the United States  

Constitution  

Article I — Name  
The name of this organization shall be the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) in Canada and the United States.  

Article II — Mission  
The mission of the Association for Biblical Higher Education is to enhance the quality and credibility of postsecondary educational institutions that distinctively engage students in biblical, transformational, experiential, and missional higher education. The Association seeks to fulfill its mission by:  

1.1. Articulating biblical higher education’s distinctives and communicating the excellence and effectiveness of its members to internal and external stakeholders, including prospective students and parents, donors, students, alumni, faculty, the higher education community, the church, governmental and regulatory entities, and society.  

1.2. Providing professional resources and services that exemplify and stimulate excellence among administrators, trustees, faculty, and students at member and affiliate institutions.  

1.3. Fostering networking and synergy among member and affiliate institutions and with the broader higher education community.  

1.4. Supporting the work of a separate and independent Commission on Accreditation to assure quality and integrity among biblical higher education institutions and programs through accreditation standards and peer review processes. (Hereafter in the Constitution and related Bylaws, the term institution shall be understood to apply also to qualified educational units or programs where appropriate.)  

Article III — Tenets of Faith  

We believe that there is one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.  

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his virgin birth, in his sinless life, in his miracles, in his vicarious atonement through his shed blood, in his bodily resurrection, in his ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in his personal and visible return in power and glory.
We believe that man was created in the image of God, that he was tempted by Satan and fell, and that, because of the exceeding sinfulness of human nature, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for salvation.

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life, and by whom the church is empowered to carry out Christ’s Great Commission.

We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost; those who are saved unto the resurrection of life and those who are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

**Article IV — Membership**

Membership in the Association is institutional, not individual. Institutions which have been granted accredited or pre-accredited (candidate) status by the Commission on Accreditation (c.f., Article VII) are considered members whose delegates are eligible to participate in Association governance according to provisions of Article V.

Institutions for which the Commission on Accreditation has granted accreditation to one or more educational units or programs are also considered members whose delegates are eligible to participate in association governance subject to provisions of Article V.

Applicant status is a non-member classification granted to qualifying institutions that, having met the Commission’s *Conditions of Eligibility*, are actively pursuing accreditation.

Affiliate status is a non-member designation for institutions that are not seeking accreditation with the Commission on Accreditation. Applicant and Affiliate institutions may receive and contribute to the Association’s programs, resources, networks, and services, but may not claim ABHE accreditation and are not eligible to participate in Association governance.

**Article V — Delegate Assembly**

Delegates of member institutions (c.f., Article IV) constitute the Association’s Delegate Assembly. The Bylaws stipulate delegate eligibility and member institution representation criteria.

**Section 1. Regular meetings**

Regular meetings of the Delegate Assembly shall be held annually, at a time and place to be determined by the Board of Directors. Public notification of all regular meetings shall be made at least 60 days in advance, by announcement at the prior annual meeting or publication in an official print or electronic instrument of the Association. The total of eligible and certified institutional delegates present at a regular meeting shall constitute a quorum.

**Section 2. Special meetings**

Special meetings may be called by the Board of Directors at any time, provided that the purpose of the meeting shall be stated in the notices calling the same. Such notices shall be disseminated at least one month before the
date of such meeting. The right of initiative in calling a special session shall be granted each member of the
Association. A petition for same, stating the reasons therefore, and signed by official representatives of at least
twenty percent of the Association membership may be filed with the Board Chair at any time and shall be
considered sufficient reason for such a call, whereupon the Board of Directors shall call the special session, setting
the time and place.

Section 3. Purposes and Prerogatives

3.1 Budget adoption. The Delegate Assembly shall adopt the annual Association budget, including
Association membership dues.

3.2 Board Representation. The Delegate Assembly shall elect ten (10) members of the Board of Directors to
serve 4-year terms of office on a rotating basis, in accordance with corresponding Bylaws.

3.3 Commission on Accreditation. The Delegate Assembly shall elect twelve (12) Commission on
Accreditation members to serve 4-year terms of office on a rotating basis, in accordance with
 corresponding Bylaws.

3.4 President. The delegate assembly shall ratify the Board’s initial appointment of the Association’s
President by a two-thirds majority.

3.5 Accreditation Standards. The delegate assembly shall ratify proposals of the Commission on
Accreditation to establish and/or amend accreditation Standards and related policies, in accordance with
 corresponding Bylaws.

Article VI — Board of Directors

The Board of Directors shall be composed of ten (10) members elected by the delegate assembly and two (2)
public members appointed by the board. It shall be responsible to exercise fiduciary, strategic, and generative
leadership in pursuit of the Association’s mission and to establish policies, parameters, and plans to which the
Association President is accountable. Representation on the board of the Association’s national, theological,
ecclesiastical, enrollment, gender, and ethnic diversity shall be in accord with the Policy Regarding the Nominating
Committee. The Board functions as the decision-making body of the Association for purposes of granting Affiliate
status.

Section 1. Officers

The Board of Directors shall designate from among its elected members the following officers: chair, vice chair,
secretary, and treasurer. These officers shall constitute the Executive Committee. In selecting the executive
committee, the Board shall take care to provide for the continuity and stability of the Board and the Association.

Executive committee members are the designated officers of the corporation and serve as the Association’s audit
committee.

1.1. Chair. The chair will preside at Board of Directors, Executive Committee, and Association Delegate
Assembly meetings. The chair exercises leadership in formulating the Board’s agenda and working with
the Association’s chief executive officer to ensure integrity and effectiveness in achieving the Association’s mission, implementing its policies, and serving its constituents.

1.2. **Vice Chair.** The vice chair will preside in the absence, incapacity, or recusal (i.e., due to conflict of interest) of the Chair and carry out such other responsibilities as may be delegated by the chair.

1.3. **Secretary.** The secretary shall ensure that minutes of the Board of Directors and Association Delegate Assembly meetings are accurately recorded, properly approved, appropriately disseminated, and adequately secured.

1.4. **Treasurer.** The treasurer shall work with the Association’s chief executive, auditor, and financial advisors to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the Association’s financial activities and statements. The treasurer shall report annually to the Association’s Delegate Assembly regarding the Association’s audited financial statements and shall present the Board’s budget recommendations for Delegate Assembly ratification.

**Section 2. Terms of office**

Elected members of the Board of Directors shall serve a four-year term and may be elected to a successive four-year term, after which they may not be re-elected for at least 4 years. Board members shall be elected annually according to rotating classes for staggered four-year terms. Board members serving three years of an unexpired term will be deemed to have served a full term. Public members of the Board will be appointed by the Board to four-year terms and may not succeed themselves.

**Section 3. Vacancies**

Any vacancies that may occur on the Board of Directors may be filled by vote of the remaining Board members until the next annual Delegate Assembly meeting.

**Section 4. Qualifications**

All elected members of the Board of Directors shall be officially and actively connected with an Association member institution (see Article IV above). Elected Board members whose official connection with an Association member institution is severed may, at the discretion of the Board, continue to serve on the Board until a replacement is elected at the next official meeting of the Delegate Assembly. Board-appointed public members may not be employed or otherwise unofficially or officially associated with Association member institutions and must otherwise conform to the Association’s *Policy on Public Representatives*.

**Article VII — Commission on Accreditation**

**Section 1. Nature and function**

A separate and independent Commission on Accreditation exercises authority over accreditation decisions, policies, procedures and peer review processes. Through its *Standards* and peer review accreditation process, the
Commission is responsible to ensure institutional quality and integrity and to serve as a catalyst toward excellence among institutions in accord with the Association’s educational distinctives.

Section 2. Goals

To implement its purpose of accreditation, the Commission on Accreditation seeks to fulfill the following goals:

2.1.1 To establish policies and procedures that safeguard the integrity and external recognition of accreditation’s quality assurance peer review processes.

2.1.2 To promulgate to the Delegate Assembly accreditation standards that induce an institution or program to achieve the following objectives:

2.1.2.1 Provide evidence that it has established and documented the adequate and increasingly effective achievement of a soundly conceived educational mission that is clearly understood and supported, serves the cause of Christ, and is consonant with the distinctives of the Association;

2.1.2.2 Provide evidence that it has established and documented the adequacy and increasing effectiveness of structures and procedures for governance and administration to achieve its mission;

2.1.2.3 Provide evidence that its faculty, instructional, and facility resources are adequate and increasingly effective in achieving the institutional mission and producing student learning and development;

2.1.2.4 Provide evidence that has established and documented the appropriateness and increasing effectiveness of curricular content and structures consonant with its mission its and corresponding student learning goals;

2.1.2.5 Provide evidence that it has established and documented appropriate and increasingly effective programs for student admissions, development, and services consistent with its mission and corresponding student learning goals.

2.1.3 To establish a curriculum and develop a program and supporting resources for orienting and training Commissioners and peer evaluators in the implementation of the Commission’s accreditation Standards, policies and procedures.

Article VIII — Amendments

Section 1. Substantive amendments

Amendments to the Constitution may be made at any regular meeting of the Delegate Assembly, provided that the proposed amendment(s) shall be disseminated among the membership 60 days prior to the meeting at which it is to be considered. Those delegates present at a duly called Delegate Assembly meeting shall constitute a quorum. A two-thirds vote of all delegates present shall be necessary for adoption of Constitutional amendments.
Section 2. Editorial amendments

Editorial amendments, including but not limited to: nomenclature consistency and updates, compositional and grammatical corrections or modifications, clarification of ambiguities, and other amendments intended to ensure the accuracy and consistency of this Constitution without introducing substantive alterations, may be effected on behalf of the Delegate Assembly by the Board of Directors on an “act and inform” basis. Such editorial changes will be considered ratified when reported to the Delegate Assembly unless specific delegate action is undertaken to declare the proposed amendments substantive, in which case they will be nullified pending Delegate Assembly approval by means of the normal amendment procedures specified above.

***
Bylaws

Article I — Accredited Membership

Section 1. Requirements for Accreditation

1.1. Each accredited institution must freely subscribe to the Tenets of Faith, evidenced by an annual reaffirmation as an official act of its board of control at the time of filing the Association’s annual report.

1.2. Each accredited institution must maintain accredited status with the Commission on Accreditation.

1.3. Each accredited institution must fulfill Commission on Accreditation annual reporting requirements with timeliness and accuracy.

1.4. Accredited member institutions must pay annual Commission on Accreditation dues and promptly meet all financial obligations related to accreditation services and peer review processes. Each accredited institution is by virtue of such status an Association member and, as such, must also pay annual Association dues according to the budget established by the Board of Directors and approved by the membership.

Section 2. Procedures for Attaining Accredited Status

2.1. An institution eligible for and desiring accredited status will conduct an institutional self-study with respect to its own mission and objectives and the Commission on Accreditation’s Comprehensive Integrated Standards. As a condition for an evaluation team visit in view of initial accreditation, the institution will submit to the Commission on Accreditation self-study materials consisting of an assessment plan, compliance document, and institutional planning document.

2.2. Representatives of institutions pursuing accredited status are expected to actively partake of Commission on Accreditation self-study training events and resources.

2.3. Each institution pursuing accredited status will submit annual progress reports to the Commission on Accreditation for a determination whether adequate progress is being made.

2.4. Subject to review of the institution’s self-study documents, the Commission on Accreditation will authorize appointment of an evaluation team to visit the institution in order to, (1) verify claims made in the institution’s self-study materials; (2) formulate recommendations relative to the institution’s compliance with the Commission’s Comprehensive Integrated Standards; and (3) make an overall recommendation regarding the institution’s readiness to receive accredited status. The evaluation team will communicate both its findings and recommendations to the Commission on Accreditation via a written team report. The institution will receive a copy of the team report, which it is free to distribute, and must provide the Commission with a written response to the team report. All fees and expenses associated with an evaluation team visit will be the responsibility of the hosting institution.
2.5 Institutional representatives will be given an opportunity to appear before the Commission on Accreditation in connection with its review of self-study materials and evaluation team reports and determination whether to grant or deny accredited status or defer action. The Commission’s decision will be based upon the Principle for Accreditation, i.e., that the institution is substantially achieving and can be reasonably expected to continue to achieve, the Comprehensive Integrated Standards for accreditation, and that the institution has demonstrated its commitment to an ongoing pursuit of excellence. If accredited status is denied, the institution must wait one year before being able to reapply at the level of its choice.

2.6 In accord with the Commission’s Policy and Procedures for Appeals, an institution may appeal a denial of its request for accredited status.

2.7 An institution may voluntarily withdraw its request for accredited status, without prejudice, at any time prior to the decision of the Commission on Accreditation.

Section 3. Maintaining Accredited Status

3.1 Each accredited institution must host a supplemental evaluation visit by a member of the Commission professional staff during year three of the initial 5-year accreditation period.

3.2 During the fourth year of the initial 5-year accreditation period, and every ten years thereafter, each accredited institution will conduct an institutional self-study with respect to its own mission and objectives and the Commission’s Comprehensive Integrated Standards for accreditation. The institution will submit for Commission on Accreditation review its self-study materials, consisting of an assessment plan, compliance document, and an institutional planning document.

3.3 During the fifth year of the initial accreditation period, and every ten years thereafter, an evaluation team will be appointed to visit the institution in order to, (1) verify claims made in the institution’s self-study materials; (2) formulate recommendations relative to the institution’s continued compliance with the Commission’s Comprehensive Integrated Standards for accreditation; and (3) make an overall recommendation regarding the reaffirmation of the institution’s accredited status. In rare instances, an institution may request the Commission to adjust its scheduled review cycle. The only grounds upon which such an adjustment may be considered are (a) a mature institution’s desire to synchronize institutional review cycles with another recognized institutional accreditor, or (b) a verifiable natural catastrophe. In cases where a cycle adjustment would exceed five years for initial accreditation or ten years for reaffirmation, the Commission will require submission of an interim ABHE standards compliance report, a focused evaluation team visit, and a reaffirmation decision by the Commission for a term not to exceed ten years. The evaluation team will communicate both its findings and recommendations to the Commission on Accreditation via a written team report. The institution will receive a copy of the team report, which it is free to distribute, and must provide the Commission with a written response to the team report within the specified period of time. All fees and expenses associated with an evaluation team visit are the responsibility of the hosting institution.

3.4 When considering reaffirmation cases, the Commission will request that institutional representatives appear before it only if the team recommends that the institution be placed on Warning or Probation, receive a Show-Cause Order, or have its accredited status withdrawn. The Commission’s decision, with
respect to the reaffirmation of accredited status, will be based upon the Principle of Accreditation outlined above. The ABHE Policy and Procedures for Appeals does not permit appeal of a Commission sanction. However, when the Commission issues a sanction, official written correspondence with the institution will indicate that the institution may, at its option, request an on-site visit by a Commission representative. The purpose of the on-site visit would be to ensure that the decisions of the Commission would be based on the most accurate assessment possible of prevailing conditions at the institution.

3.5 In accord with the Commission’s Policy and Procedures for Appeals, an institution may appeal the termination of its accredited status.

3.6 Accreditation is not guaranteed for any length of time. Negative developments at an institution, with respect to the Comprehensive Integrated Standards, may trigger a review that could result in the loss of accreditation.

Section 4. Termination of Accreditation

Accreditation, which also entails removal from institutional Association membership, may be terminated by the Commission on Accreditation as follows:

4.1 Official written notice of voluntary withdrawal.

4.2 Withdrawal of accredited status by the Commission on Accreditation. An institution may appeal this action in accord with the Commission’s Policy and Procedures for Appeals.

4.3 Failure to submit satisfactory required reports to the Commission on Accreditation in a timely fashion or nonpayment of annual membership dues upon receipt of an invoice. In extenuating circumstances, a grace period of up to six months may be requested.

4.4 Failure to send a delegate to the annual Delegate Assembly meeting for two consecutive years.

Article II — Candidate Membership

Section 1. Requirements for Candidate (Pre-accredited) Status

1.1. Each candidate institution must freely subscribe to the Tenets of Faith, evidenced by an annual reaffirmation as an official act of its board of control at the time of filing the Association’s annual report.

1.2. Each candidate institution must maintain candidate status with the Commission on Accreditation.

1.3. Each candidate institution must fulfill Commission on Accreditation annual reporting requirements with timeliness and accuracy.

1.4. Candidate institutions must pay annual Commission on Accreditation dues and promptly meet all financial obligations related to accreditation services and peer review processes. Each candidate institution is by virtue of such status an Association member and, as such, must also pay annual Association dues according to the budget established by the Board of Directors and approved by the membership.
1.5. Each candidate institution must submit an annual progress report to the Commission on Accreditation.

1.6. Each candidate institution must demonstrate, in the judgment of the Commission on Accreditation, adequate progress in moving toward accredited status.

Section 2. Procedures for Attaining Candidate Status

2.1 An institution eligible for and desiring candidate status will host an initial consultative visit by a member of the Commission professional staff. In addition to providing information regarding the accreditation and self-study processes, the consultant will analyze the institution in relation to the Commission’s Comprehensive Integrated Standards and provide a report offering professional observations and improvement/compliance recommendations.

2.2 Representatives of institutions pursuing candidate status are expected to actively partake of Commission on Accreditation self-study training events and resources.

2.3 Each institution pursuing candidate status will submit annual progress reports to the Commission on Accreditation for a determination whether adequate progress is being made.

2.4 The institution will conduct an institutional self-study with respect to its own mission and objectives and the Commission’s Comprehensive Integrated Standards. The institution will submit self-study materials, consisting of an assessment plan, compliance document, and an institutional planning document to the Commission on Accreditation.

2.5 An evaluation team will be appointed to visit the institution in order to, (1) verify claims made in the institution’s self-study materials; (2) formulate recommendations relative to the institution’s achievement of the Commission’s Comprehensive Integrated Standards; and (3) make an overall recommendation regarding the institution’s worthiness for candidate (pre-accredited) status. The evaluation team will communicate both its findings and recommendation to the Commission on Accreditation via a written team report. The institution will receive a copy of the team report, which it is free to distribute, and must provide the Commission with a written response to the team report. All fees and expenses associated with an evaluation team visit are the responsibility of the hosting institution.

2.6 Institutional representatives will be given an opportunity to appear before the Commission on Accreditation as it reviews all materials and determines whether to grant or deny candidate status or defer action. The Commission’s decision will be based upon whether the institution can be reasonably expected to achieve accredited status within a maximum of five years. If candidate status is denied, the institution must wait one year before being able to reapply at the level of applicant status.

2.7 In accord with the Commission’s Policy and Procedures for Appeals, an institution may appeal a decision to deny candidate status.

2.8 An institution may voluntarily withdraw its request for candidate status, without prejudice, at any time prior to the decision of the Commission on Accreditation.
Section 3. Termination of Candidate (Pre-accredited) Status

Candidate status termination, which also entails removal from institutional Association membership, may be effected by the Commission on Accreditation as follows:

3.1 Official written notice of voluntary withdrawal.

3.2 Withdrawal of candidate status by the Commission on Accreditation. An institution may appeal this action in accord with the Association’s Policy and Procedures for Appeals.

3.3 Failure to submit satisfactory required reports to the Commission on Accreditation in a timely fashion or nonpayment of Association or Commission on Accreditation membership dues and/or other financial obligations upon receipt of an invoice. In extenuating circumstances, a grace period of up to six months may be requested.

3.4 Failure to send a delegate to the annual Delegate Assembly meeting for two consecutive years.

Article III — Applicant Status

Section 1. Definition

Applicant status is a pre-membership status established by the Commission on Accreditation in order to foster the developmental engagement of institutions with the Commission and its staff toward eventual candidate (pre-accredited) or accredited status. Applicant institutions are strongly encouraged to attend and observe (without vote, as per Constitution, Article IV) all Association Delegate Assembly meetings and to avail themselves as fully as possible of Association and Commission resources and services.

Section 2. Procedures for Attaining Applicant Status

2.1 An institution eligible for and desiring applicant status will provide the Commission on Accreditation, (1) an official letter from the chief executive officer stating the board of control’s desire for the institution to pursue accreditation with the Association; (2) a completed ABHE application form; (3) an official statement from the chief executive officer reflecting a board of control decision to affirm support of the ABHE Tenets of Faith; and (4) a document that demonstrates compliance with the Commission’s Conditions of Eligibility.

2.2 The Commission will review all materials and determine whether to grant or deny applicant status or defer action. The Commission’s decision will be based upon whether the institution (1) is in compliance with the Commission’s Conditions of Eligibility and (2) appears realistically capable of achieving candidate status within a maximum of five years. If applicant status is denied, the institution must wait one year before being able to reapply.

2.3 In accord with the Commission’s Policy and Procedures for Appeals, an institution may appeal a decision denying applicant status.
2.4 An institution may voluntarily withdraw its request for applicant status, without prejudice, at any time prior to the decision of the Committee on Applicant and Candidate Status.

Section 3. Requirements for Applicant Institutions

3.1 Each applicant institution must freely subscribe to the Tenets of Faith, evidenced by an annual reaffirmation as an official act of its board of control at the time of filing the Association’s annual report.

3.2 Each applicant institution must fulfill Commission on Accreditation annual reporting requirements with timeliness and accuracy.

3.3 Each applicant institution must pay annual Commission on Accreditation dues and promptly meet all financial obligations related to accreditation services and peer review processes. Each applicant institution must also pay annual Association dues according to the budget established by the Board of Directors and approved by the membership.

3.4 Each applicant institution must submit an annual progress report to the Commission on Accreditation.

3.5 Each applicant institution must demonstrate, in the judgment of the Commission on Accreditation, adequate progress toward achieving Candidate status.

Section 4. Termination of Applicant Status

Applicant status with the Commission on Accreditation may be terminated by:

4.1 Official written notice of voluntary withdrawal.

4.2 Withdrawal of applicant status by the Commission on Accreditation. An institution may appeal this action in accord with the Commission’s Policy and Procedures for Appeals.

4.3 Failure to submit satisfactory required reports to the Commission on Accreditation in a timely fashion and payment of annual membership dues upon receipt. In extenuating circumstances, a grace period of up to six months may be requested.

4.4 Failure to demonstrate, in the judgment of the Commission on Accreditation, adequate progress toward achieving Candidate status.

Article IV — Appeal Procedures

The Commission on Accreditation shall adhere to the principle of due process and provide appeal procedures for each step of the accrediting process. These procedures are presented in detail in the Association’s Policy and Procedures for Appeals.
Article V — Affiliate Status

Affiliate status is available to credible institutions of biblical higher education who presently lack either readiness or inclination to pursue ABHE accreditation but who seek the benefits of ready access to ABHE services, resources, and networking. Affiliate institutions are not eligible to participate in the governance of the Association through the annual Delegate Assembly.

Article VI — Board of Directors

Section I. Nomination and election

1.1. Nomination. A nominating committee shall be appointed by the Board of Directors and shall submit to the annual Delegate Assembly a slate of two or more names for each Board elective position (excluding public members who are appointed by the Board). The Nominating Committee shall ensure that the Board of Directors’ national, theological, ecclesiastical, enrollment, gender, and ethnic diversity shall be in accord with the Policy Regarding the Nominating Committee. Nominations of eligible and willing individuals may also be submitted from the Delegate Assembly meeting floor.

1.2. Election. Board nominees, with any other eligible persons nominated from the floor, shall be voted upon until a candidate receives a majority vote, which shall constitute an election.

Section 2. Duties

2.1 The Board of Directors is charged with formulating and implementing policies and carrying out the purposes of the Association.

2.2 The Board of Directors shall have the right and authority to represent the Association in all matters during the interim between meetings of the Delegate Assembly.

2.3 The Board of Directors will, with the approval of the Association membership, engage a chief executive officer (president) to serve under its direction in promoting the affairs of the Association and the cause of biblical higher education generally.

Article VII — President

Section 1. Selection

1.1. A President shall be engaged by the Board of Directors, subject to ratification by the Association membership, to serve as the Association’s chief executive officer. When the position becomes vacant, the board shall appoint a search committee to develop and disseminate appropriate criteria, solicit and screen nominations, and recommend qualified candidates to the board, which shall, in turn, present one candidate to the Association’s member institutions for ratification by two-thirds majority vote.

1.2. The Board-appointed search committee will develop and disseminate specific candidate criteria in the event of a presidential vacancy. General presidential qualifications shall include evidence of authentic
Christian experience and agreement with the Association’s Tenets of Faith, knowledge and experience with higher education and accreditation processes, evidence of executive leadership ability, and communication skills necessary to represent the Association well at public and governmental levels.

Section 2. Duties

2.1 The President shall serve under the direction of the Board of Directors in promoting the affairs of the Association and the cause of biblical higher education in general.

2.2 The President shall attend the meetings of the board on a nonvoting basis, and shall consult with the Board chair and Executive Committee for guidance as necessary between meetings.

2.3 The Board of Directors shall establish and make available to Association member institutions a written position description describing the President’s general and specific duties corresponding to the Association’s mission and goals (c.f., Constitution, Article II).

2.4 The President shall be accountable to the board in terms of written Standing Policies that delineate executive parameters and priorities.

2.5 The President shall employ and ensure appropriate supervision of all Association staff; ensure appropriate coordination of the work of the Association with the Commission on Accreditation; and cooperate with the Commission Director and staff to ensure that the Commission on Accreditation maintains its “separate and independent” status in accordance with the requirements of Section 602.14(b)&(c) of U.S. Department of Education Title IV regulations. Specifically, the President is responsible to cooperate with the COA Director to ensure the integrity and independence of Commission on Accreditation finances, resources, processes, decisions, and records.

Section 3. Term of Office

3.1 The President serves at the pleasure of the Board. For the sake of stability and continuity, however, the following terms of office are established: initial term – three years; subsequent terms – five years. The Board of Directors shall conduct a formal review of the President’s performance, including solicitation of member feedback, one year prior to term expiration and at other times deemed necessary.

3.2 Any proposed resignation, non-renewal, or termination, either on the part of the board or the President, shall require six-month notice to the other party, except when the board undertakes measures for removal of the President for cause.

3.3 Removal for cause other than financial necessity may involve immediate suspension, with pay, pending the outcome of a fair and reasonable process. Causes for removal may include immorality, deviation from the Association’s Tenets of Faith, incompetence, insubordination, malfeasance, or financial necessity. A fair and reasonable process shall consist of (1) written notice as to cause of suspension, (2) opportunity to confront any accusers and to provide supporting testimony, (3) opportunity for a hearing by an impartial body of not less than three persons appointed by the Board of Directors, and (4) adequate notice as to the time and place of hearing and adequate time to prepare a defense.
3.4 Temporary vacancies may be filled by an acting or interim chief executive officer at the discretion of the Board of Directors, subject to reporting and ratification at the next regular Association Delegate Assembly.

**Article VIII — Delegate Assembly**

**Section I. Delegates and Visiting Representatives**

1.1. Association member institutions shall be entitled to representation at Delegate Assembly meetings on the following basis:

1.1.1. One delegate for each member institution holding programmatic accreditation.

1.1.2. One delegate for each member institution holding institutional accreditation with a Fall FTE student enrollment (as per the ABHE annual report form) of 200 or less.

1.1.3. Two delegates for each member institution holding institutional accreditation with a Fall FTE student enrollment (as per the ABHE annual report form) of 201 to 400.

1.1.4. Three delegates for each member institution holding institutional accreditation with a Fall FTE student enrollment (as per the ABHE annual report form) of more than 400.

**Section 2. Voting Privileges**

2.1 Each delegate shall have one vote. Proxy voting shall not be permitted.

2.2 Accredited member institution delegates shall have full privileges of voting.

2.3 Candidate member institution delegates shall have the privilege of discussion from the floor and of voting by acclamation. They shall not exercise the privilege of nominating or voting on officers or of voting on a roll call or on amendments to the Constitution or Bylaws.

**Section 3. Quorum**

Those delegates present at a duly called meeting of the Delegate Assembly shall be considered a quorum. A majority of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum for its meetings.

**Section 4. Parliamentary Law**

All business meetings of the Delegate Assembly shall be conducted according to the accepted rules of parliamentary procedure.

**Section 5. Standing Committees**

The delegate assembly may, upon recommendation by the Board of Directors or Commission on Accreditation, establish standing committees, the nature, composition, purposes, and parameters of which shall be designated at
the time of their establishment. Such committees will report to the Delegate Assembly at each regular meeting.

**Article IX — Commission on Accreditation**

**Section I. Nomination and Election**

1.1. **Nomination.** A nominating committee shall be appointed by the Commission on Accreditation and shall submit to the annual Delegate Assembly a slate of two or more names for each Commission elective position (excluding public members who are appointed by the Commission). In cases where an incumbent is eligible to serve an additional term, the nominating committee may choose to nominate only the incumbent. The nominating committee shall ensure that the Commission’s national, theological, ecclesiastical, enrollment, gender, and ethnic diversity shall be in accord with the *Policy Regarding the Nominating Committee*. Nominations of eligible and willing individuals may also be submitted from the Delegate Assembly meeting floor.

1.2. **Election.** Commission nominees, along with any other eligible persons nominated from the floor, shall be voted upon until a candidate receives a majority vote, which shall constitute an election.

1.3. **Terms of Office.** Elected commissioners will serve for four-year staggered terms and may succeed themselves for a second term after which they may not be re-elected for four years. Public members of the Commission will serve a four-year term and may not succeed themselves.

1.4. **Vacancies.** Commissioners serving three years of an unexpired term will be deemed to have served a full term.

**Section 2. Composition**

2.1 The Commission on Accreditation will consist of fifteen (15) Commissioners, comprised as follows: twelve (12) elected from among accredited member institutions, including representation among appropriately qualified administrators and appropriately qualified academicians; and three (3) public representatives, not associated with an ABHE member, applicant, or affiliated institution, at least one of whom is an active ministry practitioner.

2.2 Commissioners, except for public members, will be elected by Delegate Assembly majority. A Commission-appointed nominating committee shall submit a slate of two or more eligible candidates for each Commission vacancy. This nominating committee shall ensure that representation on the Commission of member institutions’ national, theological, ecclesiastical, enrollment, gender, and ethnic diversity shall be in accord with the *Policy Regarding the Nominating Committee*. Nominations of eligible and willing individuals may also be submitted from the Delegate Assembly meeting floor. The Public members shall be appointed by the Commission on Accreditation.

**Section 3. Organization**

3.1 The Commission on Accreditation will annually elect the following officers: Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. Incumbent Commission officers may be re-elected within the parameters of an individual’s Commission tenure.
3.2 Each Commissioner will be assigned to one or more standing committees established by the Commission in order to facilitate efficient and thorough disposition of the Commission’s ongoing monitoring, periodic review, and decision-making functions.

3.3 The Chair, in consultation with the Commission professional staff, will develop the Commission’s agenda and will chair meetings of the Commission. The Vice Chair will preside in the absence, incapacity, or recusal (i.e., due to conflict of interest) of the Chair.

3.4 The Commission Chair will appoint the chairs and secretaries of the Commission’s various standing committees.

3.5 The Commission Secretary will serve as secretary for all meetings of the Commission and will be responsible for placing in the custody of the Commission staff the final minutes for all committee and Commission deliberations.

Section 4. Responsibilities

4.1 The Commission on Accreditation will have the authority to grant candidate and accredited status, and to reaffirm accreditation. It will also have authority to place institutions on warning or probation, issue show-cause orders, and withdraw applicant, candidate, or accredited status.

4.2 The Commission on Accreditation will establish its own budget independently of review or consultation with any other entity or organization. As part of this process, it will establish a schedule of fees related to its accreditation services. The Commission will pay fair market value for its proportionate share of personnel, services, equipment and facilities that it uses jointly with the ABHE membership Association.

4.3 The Commission, through a designated standing committee, will monitor the progress of applicant and candidate institutions and call for special reports and visits. The Commission will act as a whole with respect to any committee recommendations for withdrawal of status.

4.4 The Commission, through a designated standing committee, will study proposals for changes in or additions to the Association’s Conditions of Eligibility, Principle of Accreditation, Comprehensive Integrated Standards and Programmatic Accreditation Standards (including Essential Elements), and the Association’s policies and procedures for accreditation. The committee’s recommendations will be forwarded to the Commission as a whole, and then to the membership for approval.

4.5 The Commission, through a designated standing committee, will monitor the progress of accredited institutions experiencing financial difficulties, call for focused reports and visits, and approve special financial reports. The Commission will act as a whole with respect to any recommendations of the committee for warning, probation, issuance of a show-cause order, or withdrawal of status.

Section 5. Meetings

The Commission on Accreditation will meet at least annually. In order to facilitate circumstances where member institutions are entitled to have representatives appear before the Commission, a Commission meeting will normally occur immediately prior to the Association Annual Meeting. Committees will normally meet just prior to the meeting
of the entire Commission. If necessary, the Commission may also have a midyear meeting. The precise time and place of meetings will be determined by the Commission chair in consultation with the Commission professional staff. Public notification of all regular meetings shall be made at least 60 days in advance, by announcement at the prior annual meeting or publication in an official print or electronic instrument of the Association.

Section 6. Appeals

Appeals concerning certain decisions of the Commission on Accreditation may be made by an institution’s chief executive. Such appeals will be processed in accord with the Commission’s Policy and Procedures for Appeals.

Section 7. Director, Commission on Accreditation

The Commission on Accreditation will be served by a Director who will exercise primary oversight of and responsibility for Commission on Accreditation activities.

The Director’s qualifications shall include extensive experience with higher education accreditation and peer review processes; evidence of authentic Christian experience and agreement with the Association’s Tenets of Faith; evidence of executive administrative ability; evidence of supervisory skills; and written and oral communication skills necessary to formulate and promulgate Commission standards, policies, and procedures to internal and external publics and peer and governmental agencies which exercise a recognition function.

7.1 Duties

7.1.1 The Director is responsible to ensure compliance with Commission on Accreditation directives and resource its separate and independent efforts to develop and implement accreditation standards and processes.

7.1.2 The Commission on Accreditation, in consultation with the Association President, shall develop and make available to Association member institutions a written position description describing the Director’s general and specific duties corresponding to the Commission on Accreditation’s purposes and goals (c.f., Constitution, Article VII).

7.1.3 The Director shall be accountable to the Commission on Accreditation for diligently and consistently ensuring that staff, consultants, and peer evaluators conform to the Commission’s Standards, policies, and publications for institutional and peer evaluator guidance.

7.1.4 The Director shall be responsible to employ and ensure appropriate supervision of all Commission staff; facilitate, resource, and coordinate the work of the Commission on Accreditation; and maintain the integrity and independence of Commission on Accreditation finances, resources, processes, decisions, and records.

7.1.5 The Director shall exercise leadership in working with the Commission on Accreditation to develop and implement its annual budget in conformity with applicable Commission policy and procedures.

7.1.6 The COA Director is accountable to the Commission to ensure the Commission’s separate and independent status in keeping with Section 602.14(b) & (c) of U.S. Department of Education regulations.
7.2 Term of office

7.2.1 The Director serves at the pleasure of the President and Commission on Accreditation. For the sake of stability and continuity, however, the following terms of office are established: initial term—three years; subsequent terms—five years.

7.2.2 The Commission on Accreditation will conduct a formal review of the Director’s performance one year prior to term expiration and at other times deemed necessary. The Association President may make recommendations to the Commission on Accreditation regarding the Director’s renewal, non-renewal, or developmental goals.

7.2.3 For the sake of stability and continuity, other than for cause, resignation, non-renewal, or termination will normally require 120 days’ notice on the part of either party.

7.2.4 Removal for cause other than financial necessity may involve immediate suspension, with pay, pending the outcome of a fair and reasonable process. Causes for removal may include immorality, deviation from the Association’s Tenets of Faith, incompetence, insubordination, malfeasance, or financial necessity. A fair and reasonable process shall consist of (1) written notice as to cause of suspension, (2) opportunity to confront any accusers and to provide supporting testimony, (3) opportunity for a hearing by an impartial body of not less than three persons appointed by the Board of Directors, and (4) adequate notice as to the time and place of hearing and adequate time to prepare a defense.

7.2.5 Temporary vacancies may be filled by an acting or interim director at the discretion of the Commission Chair, in consultation with the Association President, subject to reporting and ratification at the next regular Commission on Accreditation meeting.

Article X — Accreditation Standards

Section 1.

Final authority for determining accreditation Standards shall reside in the Association Delegate Assembly.

Section 2.

Recommended changes or additions to the Commission on Accreditation’s Standards shall be acted upon by the Association Delegate Assembly upon recommendation of the Commission on Accreditation.

Article XI — Ethical Practices

A code of ethics relative to comity, relationships among member and affiliate institutions, transfer of faculty members or students, advertising accuracy, adherence to catalog statements, and kindred subjects shall be adhered to by member and affiliate institutions. The Commission on Accreditation shall have power to impose sanctions up to and including withdrawal of accreditation for infractions of the code of ethics.
Article XII — Dissolution

The Association for Biblical Higher Education exists as an extension of its member institutions and operates for their primary benefit. All assets of the Association are owned by its membership. In the event of dissolution, after satisfaction of all legal obligations, any remaining assets shall be liquidated and resulting monies distributed pro rata to the membership existent at that time upon the basis of the most recent membership assessment.

Article XIII — Amendments

Section 1. Substantive Amendments

These Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote at any duly called meeting of the Association Delegate Assembly.

Section 2. Editorial Amendments

Editorial amendments, including but not limited to nomenclature consistency and updates, compositional and grammatical corrections or modifications, clarification of ambiguities, and other amendments intended to ensure the accuracy and consistency of these Bylaws, any Association policies or procedures, and any Commission on Accreditation Standards, policies, or procedures without introducing substantive alterations, may be effected on behalf of the Delegate Assembly by the relevant representative decision making body (i.e., Board of Directors or Commission on Accreditation) on an “act and inform” basis. Such editorial changes will be considered ratified when reported to the Delegate Assembly unless specific delegate action is undertaken to declare the proposed amendments substantive, in which case they will be nullified pending Delegate Assembly approval by means of the normal amendment procedures specified above.
Glossary

Ability to Benefit
A United States Department of Education stipulation that an admitted student can be reasonably expected to complete the program.

Academic Calendar
The method by which an institution structures most of its courses throughout the year.

Academic Freedom
The intellectual that gives to members of the academic community the right to examine data, question assumptions and advance ideas within the context of the institution’s mission and doctrinal position.

Academic Advising
A plan under which each student is served by a faculty member or trained adviser to help plan and implement short- and long-term academic and vocational goals.

Academic Discipline
A field of study that is identified as the focus of an instructor or group.

Academic Division
A group of related departments organized under a director or division chair.

Academic Department
A unit within the institution that offers instruction within a specific area and is generally supervised by a chair. (Sometimes called a Division in smaller schools.)

Academic Program
A coherent collection of courses and other learning experiences that lead to a certificate or degree, and are designed to meet specific educational objectives.

Academic Support Department
A department unit in an institution designed to service academic programs, e.g., library, admissions, records, student development.

Accelerated Curriculum
An educational format that requires significantly less time in classrooms than a traditional format.

Accreditation
Recognition that an educational institution is voluntarily maintaining the standards of a non-governmental accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

ADA
The American Disabilities Act that defines an institution's responsibilities to service physically challenged students.
Administrative Support Department
An institutional department/unit designed to service the institution as a whole, e.g., accounting, communications, physical plant, development.

Additional Instruction Location
An off-campus location at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.

Administration
An executive group of officers (such as president, provost, vice president, dean, treasurer, or development officer) who have the major responsibility for the direction and operation of the institution.

Alternative Academic Patterns
Education that takes place in a manner other than the traditional, on-campus pattern.

Annual Plan
A written document that identifies the institution’s specific initiatives for one year.

Assessment
An on-going effort to determine the institution’s effectiveness in meeting its goals and objectives.

At-Risk Students
A phrase used to describe students who have been under-served by educational or social systems.

Attrition
The percentage of eligible students who elect to discontinue an academic program.

Authorization
Documents that validate an institution’s legal right to operate within the state or province.

Autonomy
The freedom that an institution has to be self-governing.

Bible College
A Bible college is an institution of higher education in which the Bible is central and the development of Christian life and ministry is essential. A Bible college education requires of all students a substantial core of biblical studies, general studies and Christian service experiences and integrates a biblical world view with life and learning. It offers curricula that fulfills its overriding purpose to equip all students for ministry in and for the Church and the world.

Biblical/Theological Studies
A group of courses that incorporate major direct engagement with the Biblical text.

Biblical World View
A comprehensive conception of life, culture and the world from a biblical perspective.
Branch Campus
A geographically separate unit with its own facilities, curricula, faculty and instructional resources but operated under the parent institution for the purpose of offering full programs of study.

Bylaws
A set of rules adopted by an institution to supplement its constitution and regulate its affairs.

Campus Culture
The ethos of the institution which reflects its values.

Career and Placement Services
A range of services to help students determine a career path and find employment in that career. These might include such services as aptitude and vocational testing, resume writing, interviewing for job searches, or posting of employment positions.

Certification
The process of receiving approval in a specific area by demonstrating that requirements usually stipulated by a governmental body or professional agency have been met.

Christian Service (Student Ministry)
A ministry requirement that is viewed as an integral part of the student’s educational program and results in the formation of the student’s philosophy of ministry.

Co-Curricular
Organized student activities that complement the student’s educational program. They may be required (co-curricular) such as chapel or voluntary (extra-curricular) such as athletics.

Commission on Accreditation
An elected body from the ABHE membership that has the final responsibility for evaluating the degree to which institutions meet the Commission’s Standards and the subsequent granting of accreditation status.

Completion Rates
The percentage of students who complete their program within 150% of the normal (or expected) time for completion.

Compliance Document
A self-study report based on research to provide evidence that the institution adequately meets the Commission’s accreditation Standards.

Conditions of Eligibility
Twenty-two standards of the Commission for which compliance must be demonstrated before applicant status will be granted.

Conflicts of Interest Policy
A board-approved policy designed to identify and limit the benefits that a board member or employee may receive through a business arrangement with the institution.
Constituency, External
Groups and individuals who are stakeholders in the mission of the institution without holding any formal role within the institution, such as alumni, donors, employers of alumni, churches.

Constituency, Internal
Groups and individuals who are stakeholders in the mission of the institution and who hold formal roles within the institution, such as students, faculty, staff, administration, trustees, alumni.

Constitution
A written document that defines the purpose, sources of control, doctrinal position and core values of an institution. It typically has a rigorous amendment process.

Contact Hour
A unit of measure representing an hour of instruction given to students. For each hour of in-class instruction, two hours of out-of-class academic work is normally expected.

Correspondence Education
Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. The interaction between the instructor and student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced. Correspondence education is not distance education. Note: Correspondence education is not within ABHE’s scope of recognition by the U.S. Department of Education.

Course Objectives
A statement of the expected benefits that a student will realize from a specific course. These outcomes should be expressed in terms of the student.

Credit Hour
A unit of measure representing the traditional academic value of learning activities. A semester credit hour represents a minimum of 50 minutes of instruction per week over a 15-week period, supplemented by two hours of preparation for each hour of instruction for the average student; or the equivalent amount of time (37.5 hours) in instructor designated learning activities. A quarter credit hour represents a minimum of 50 minutes of instruction per week over a 10-week period, supplemented by two hours of preparation for each hour of instruction for the average student; or the equivalent amount of time (25 hours) in instructor designated learning activities. A quarter credit hour is equivalent to 2/3 of a semester credit hour. Time for final examinations is outside these specifications. The assignment of credit hours may be based on intended learning outcomes, verified through student achievement, that the institution determines are reasonably equivalent to a credit hour of student work.

Deferred Maintenance
Identified campus facility and grounds repairs or improvements needed with an indication of targeted dates for their completion.

Degree Completion Program
The final portion of a baccalaureate degree program of at least 120 semester credits offered by a baccalaureate degree-granting institution, often in a non-traditional format.
Descriptive Standards
Commission Standards that express the general characteristics of academic excellence and are designed to enable an institution to measure its educational effectiveness.

Distance Education
Education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the other technologies listed.

Diversity
The degree to which an institution reflects difference within the constituency, provides exposure, promotes understanding, and expresses appreciation with respect to matters such as ethnicity, race, religion, gender, political orientation or age.

Employee Welfare
The concern that an institution demonstrates for its employees especially in terms for salaries, benefits and professional development.

Enrollment Management
An institutional process to monitor the factors that are influencing recruitment, admissions, retention and attrition.

Extension Site/Center
A location at which the institution offers less than 50 percent of an educational program.

External Audit
A review of the institution's financial records by a certified firm that includes an opinion statement.

External Degree Program
A complete program of study that does not require extensive on-campus attendance.

Factors of Financial Stability
A published standard developed by the Accrediting Commission to evaluate an institution's fiscal stability.

Faculty, Adjunct
Normally faculty serving in a temporary or auxiliary capacity to teach a specific course on a course-by-course basis.

Faculty, Administrative
Full-time employees whose primary responsibility is administration but who also may teach.
Faculty, Instructional  
Full-time faculty whose primary responsibility in the institution is teaching.

Faculty, Part-Time  
Faculty members whose primary responsibility is not to the institution, but who teach courses on a regular basis.

Faculty/Staff Handbooks  
Written documents that describe policies and procedures that pertain to faculty or staff and terms of employment including benefits and expectations.

FERPA  
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act which defines the rights of students and their families.

Fiduciary Funds  
Resources held and administered by an institution when it is acting in a capacity for individuals, private organizations or governments and therefore cannot be used to support the institution’s programs.

Field Education  
An in-context learning experience that combines practical experience and reflection and generally occurs off-campus in a setting that relates to the student’s professional goals. May result in academic credit.

Financial Aid  
Grants, loans, assistant ships, scholarships, fellowships, tuition waivers, tuition discounts, veteran’s benefits, employer assistance and other monies provided to students to meet expenses.

First-time Student  
A student attending any post-secondary institution for the first time. This includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended a post-secondary institution for the first time in the prior summer term and students who entered with advanced standing from high school.

Full-time Student  
A student who in a semester carries at least 12 semester credits as an undergraduate, or nine as a graduate student (or the equivalent in quarter hours).

GED  
A General Education Development certificate equivalent to a high school diploma and earned through examinations.

General Studies  
Courses that provide a general knowledge of the presuppositions that form the basis for one’s world view or the focus on the acquisition and awareness of culture and the general skills needed in life.

Gifted Students  
A student whose past academic performance is recognized to be superior.
Goals
An identification of the ends to which the institutional mission is directed.

Governing Board
A group of elected or appointed individuals who are legally responsible for the institution.

Graduation Rates
The percentage required for disclosure under Student Right-to-Know and calculated by the total number of completers within 150% of normal time.

Grievance Procedures
A process whereby a student or employee may register a concern or complaint with the appropriate officials with a view to resolution.

Higher Education
Formal academic education at the post-secondary level that normally results in academic credentials.

Holistic Development
An educational program that views students as integrated wholes and attempts to stimulate growth in the totality of their being.

Honors Program
A program for students offering opportunities and recognition for advanced educational enrichment, specialization, acceleration or independent study.

Human Resources
The personnel available to enable an institution to realize its mission and goals.

Independent Study
Academic work usually undertaken outside the regular classroom structure but supervised by an instructor.

Information Literacy
The ability to gain access to information from various print and non-print sources including computers and technologically-supported resources.

Instructional Delivery System
The methodology used to provide instruction.

Integration
A conscious attempt to find commonalities in the academic components of a curriculum.

Inter-Disciplinary
A curriculum or course that consciously applies the methodology and language from one academic discipline to another to examine a central theme.

Internal Controls
A comprehensive system of procedures to ensure sound fiscal management.
Investment Policy
A board-approved policy designed to guide those responsible for the institution’s assets.

Learning Community
A group of individuals united with a common goal of gaining information and knowledge at a particular location or contact avenue.

Learning Outcomes
Expected impact that a program’s educational activities will have upon the student.

Learning Resources
The wide array of information and services available to support education, including libraries, databases, laboratories, networks, and equipment.

Library
An organized collection of printed, microform and audiovisual materials administered as a unit and made accessible to students and faculty.

Licensure
The permission needed from an appropriate authority to engage in an educational or professional activity.

Long-Range Plan
A written document that generally identifies the institution’s future initiatives for three or more years.

Matriculation
Enrollment in an educational institution with intent to complete the designated program.

Ministry Formation
An educational process designed to help a student to develop a commitment and competency in ministry.

Mission
An institution’s purpose.

Mission Statement
A concise statement that expresses the institution’s intentions and context.

New Student Orientation
A program offered at the outset of a student’s experience addressing academic, social, emotional and intellectual issues.

Nomenclature
A standardized system of terms used to define academic achievements.

Non-Profit School
An educational institution that is not maintained for the purpose of making a profit.
Objective Data
Research that is based on objective facts such as test results or statistical data.

Objectives
Specific means by which the institutional goals will be attained.

Open Admission
A policy under which virtually all secondary school graduates or students with a GED equivalency diploma are admitted with minimal regard for academic record, test scores or other qualifications.

Operations Manual
A written document that describes the organizational structure, decision-making processes, institutional management policies and procedures and job descriptions for employees.

Outcome Measurements
The means used to determine whether a department, program or course is achieving its objectives.

Outcomes
The expected results that should occur when the institution’s mission and goals are realized.

Planning Document
A written description of the institution’s plans for the next years including time frames and strategies to achieve these plans.

Planning Process
An on-going systematic procedure involving institutional personnel in analyzing and evaluating assessment data and determining the future direction of the institution.

Prescriptive Standards
Commission Standards that express specific characteristics of academic excellence and minimal expectations.

Privacy Rights
Freedom from unauthorized intrusion into a student or employee’s personal affairs.

Professional Development Program
A planned program for faculty and staff acquisition of knowledge and development of skills.

Professional Studies
Courses that provide an understanding of and competence in a vocational field.

Program/Curricular Objectives
The expected student outcomes that will result upon completion of an academic program.

Qualified Personnel
Those who have appropriate competencies for their responsibilities, often shown through degrees and experience consistent with industry standards.
Qualitative Measures
Academic evaluation procedures that utilize subjective data such as interviews, surveys or personal assessments.

Quantitative Measures
Academic evaluation procedures that utilize statistical comparisons of objective data such as pre- and post-testing, graduation rates, or job placement rates.

Reference Services
Assistance provided by professional librarians to students or faculty in their research efforts.

Remedial Services
Instruction designed for students deficient in general competencies necessary for post-secondary studies. These courses often grant credit that does not count toward graduation.

Retention Rates
The percentage of students who persist in their educational program.

School
An organized unit within a university structure that offers academic programs, is supervised by a dean and supported by designated faculty.

Spiritual Formation
The process utilized by an institution to encourage growth in Christian maturity.

Staff
Non-administrative and non-instructional personnel who provide support services to the institution.

Standards for Accreditation
A written statement of the criteria by which an institution can measure its educational effectiveness and the Commission on Accreditation can determine an institution’s accreditation status.

Strategic Plan
A written document that identifies the means by which the institution’s goals will be realized, including time lines, cost analysis, actions to be completed, and person(s) charged with the execution of the tasks.

Subjective Data
Research data that is based on personal opinion or evaluation obtained from interviews, surveys, or similar instruments.

Student Development
An area of an educational institution whose primary objective is to support students in their pursuit of intellectual, social, physical, spiritual and professional development.

Student Ministry
A ministry requirement that is viewed as an integral part of the student’s educational program and results in the formation of the student’s philosophy of ministry.
Teaching Load
The assigned responsibilities of an instructor that include both teaching and non-teaching activities.

Technological Resources
Electronic and other means used to enhance and advance instruction, research and institutional quality.

Terminal Degree
A degree that is considered the appropriate preparation for teaching at the post-secondary level, usually a doctor's degree, but may include certain professional degrees such as the MSW, MLS, MBA, or MFA. In some academic disciplines, ThM or MDiv are not considered terminal.

Traditional Academic Patterns
Academic patterns that are usually by semester (two semesters of about 15 weeks each), trimester (three periods of about 12 weeks each) or quarter system (three or four quarters of about 10 weeks each).

Transfer Credit
Academic credits completed at another institution, and applied to an academic program in process according to the institution's policies.

Under-Represented Population
A percentage of the institution's population that is significantly lower when compared to the total constituency.

Vision
A description of the dream of the leadership that drives the institution.

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