



The Association for
Biblical Higher Education
Commission on Accreditation

What's New

**Update on Accreditation
Standards and Policies**

February 2021

Policy/Standard Changes

- **Changes in Policies** – effective immediately
- **Changes in Standards** – institution has 2 years to implement

Conditions of Eligibility

- * **COE #1: (Tenets of Faith)**—The institution's board of control affirms agreement with and commitment to the ABHE Tenets of Faith, as evidenced by a copy of the Tenets of Faith signed annually by the chief executive officer of the institution.
- * **COE #2: (Nonprofit Status)**—Evidence that the institution is a nonprofit organization or the nonprofit subsidiary of a parent organization.

– adopted February 2019

Conditions of Eligibility

- * COE# 6: (Chief Executive Officer)—An institution must have a chief executive officer who has the **capacity and authority** to lead the institution toward the accomplishment of its mission.
- * COE #15: (Student Body)—An institution must have **sustained and viable student enrollment** in its education programs over the **past two years** (typically an FTE of 10 or headcount of 30 students or more)

– adopted February 2019

Institutional Standard 1

Mission, Goals, and Objectives

The institution has a written mission statement that is clear and appropriate to biblical higher education supported by clearly defined institutional goals and student learning objectives.

Institutional Standard 1

Mission, Goals, and Objectives

1. A clearly written mission state appropriate to biblical higher education.
2. **Evidence that the mission statement is** developed and periodically reviewed by broad representation from all sectors of the institution and ratified by the governing board.
3. Evidence that the mission statement guides faculty, staff, administration, and the governing board in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, and program development.

Institutional Standard 1

Mission, Goals, and Objectives

4. Clearly articulated institutional goals that directly relate to the mission statement.
5. Clearly articulated **student learning** objectives for each educational programs that support **fulfillment of the mission statement**.
6. **The mission statement, institutional goals, and student learning objectives are easily located on the institution's website and in its catalog(s).**

Adopted 2020 February

Institutional Standard 2

Assessment and Planning

The institution demonstrates that it is accomplishing and can continue to accomplish its mission, **fulfill goals and objectives**, and improve institutional effectiveness through an **ongoing system** of assessment and planning.

Institutional Standard 2

Assessment and Planning

1. **A written, comprehensive assessment plan that describes what data (qualitative and/or quantitative) the institution gathers to demonstrate fulfillment of institutional goals and student learning objectives and how and when data are gathered in an ongoing and structured way.**
2. **Clearly defined and measurable student learning outcomes that support mission fulfillment accompanied by metrics or other means that effectively assess whether or not the institution is achieving its stated objectives.**
3. **Student learning outcomes appropriate to the higher education credential to be awarded (certificate, associate, baccalaureate, master's, and/or doctoral study).**
4. **Use of multiple means to validate student learning outcomes.**

Institutional Standard 2 (continued)

Assessment and Planning

5. Ongoing assessment of operations and services to evaluate the extent to which these functions are effective in supporting mission fulfillment and improving institutional effectiveness.
6. Meaningful analysis of assessment data and use of results by appropriate constituencies in a clearly documented, ongoing planning process for the purpose of improvement in teaching, learning and institutional effectiveness.
7. A written, comprehensive institutional improvement plan based on assessment results and aligned with realistic resource projections.
8. The ongoing provision of reliable information to the public regarding **institutional performance** and student achievement, including graduation rates and employment rates for graduates of professional programs. Such outcomes data must be available via the institution's website through an easily identified link on the homepage.

Glossary Terms

- * **Goal:** A desire or ambition seeking to be accomplished. A goal is general in nature and typically not measurable. It may apply to an institution, program, et cetera.
- * **Objective:** An anticipated or intended result of an activity/set of activities that is specific and measurable. An objective communicates a sought-after or desired result.
- * **Outcome:** A consequence or end-result of an activity/set of activities that has been measured and can be demonstrated to be the product of those activities. An outcome communicates demonstrated result.

Glossary Terms

- * **Student Learning Objective:** An anticipated or intended measurable result of a learning activity/set of activities describing what a student will know, be able to do, or believe/affirm.
- * **Student Learning Outcome:** A measured or demonstrated end-result of a learning activity/set of activities evidencing what a student knows, can do, or believes/feels.
- * **Program Objectives:** An anticipated or intended result of completing of an academic program. Program objectives should be measurable and stated in terms of what a student completing the program will know, be able to do, or believe/feel.

Policy on Exceptions due to Regional Crisis or Pandemic

- * Provides for response in time of crisis at federal, state/provincial/territorial, or local level that makes its impossible for normal institutional operations and/or accreditation functions continue without temporary exceptions
- * Temporary exceptions must comply with applicable laws and regulatory provisions in the jurisdiction(s) impacted by crisis as well as any directives from USDE or state/provincial offices
- * Possible Exceptions
 - * Temporary offering of all courses via distance education; temporary suspension of classes/out-of-class learning activities; temporary shift to company-based educational assignments; temporary suspension of ministry formation, chapel, field education that requires close contact and/or travel; temporary switch to pass/fail grading; temporary suspension of students services where the situation prevents reasonable access/engagement; Temporary suspension of decision-making bodies meetings

CHEA Compliance Issues

- * **CHEA is concerned about our institutions demonstrating that they provide academic quality to their students.**
- * **Meeting the Standards is NOT the definition or proof of quality**
- * **Each institution must publicly identify and demonstrate with evidence that it is meeting its own outcomes.**
- * **The evidence of meeting those outcomes must be provided on the institution's website. The information must be easily accessible and in a logical location for a person unfamiliar with one's institution.**
- * **COA Staff/Academic Evaluators of Evaluation Teams will be reviewing institutional websites to verify compliance and, if needed, working with institutions that have questions/demonstrate weakness in meeting this expectation.**

Policy on Outcomes

- * **Outcomes must:**

- * Support mission fulfillment; be measurable; be accompanied by metrics or other means to assess fulfillment; use multiple means of assessment for validation

- * **Mission Fulfillment**

- * student learning outcomes must factor significantly into fulfillment of instructional and program objectives
- * When an institution offers multiple academic programs, program objectives must align with the mission. Program outcomes may be used as an indicator of fulfillment of program objectives, institutional objectives, and/or institutional mission

- * **Measurability**

- * Can use qualitative and quantitative measures as well as other unique approaches (testimonials from supervisors)
- * Outcomes should reflect observations concerning all students (aggregate results)
 - * Sampling techniques need to yield conclusions accurate to total population

Policy on Outcomes

- * **Effective Assessment of Fulfillment**

- * There should be defined indicators of success = benchmarks (comparison of institution to others) and targets (comparison of institution to own ideal)
- * When an institution falls short in meeting indicators of success, it is expected to have and implement an Institutional Improvement Plan that articulates both action step and resources needed for improvement to achieve objectives
- * Reasonable majority of students must be achieving the outcome for claims that the institution fulfills the outcome (e.g., 75% of student population)

- * **Multiple Means of Validation**

- * Institutions should have more than a single source or assessment tool for determining fulfillment of objectives
- * Preference given to indicators that directly assess demonstration of knowledge/skills
- * Course grades NOT a primary means for demonstrating outcomes achievement

Policy on Outcomes

* **Public Access to Outcomes Data**

- * Student Achievement Outcome and performance data **MUST** be available on website through an easily identified link on institution's homepage
- * Reasonable link name is one that prospective students, parents, donors, accreditors, regulators, and general public would readily identify as the location of such data.
 - * Student Achievement; Outcomes Data; Institutional Effectiveness; Consumer Information
- * Should not be more than two or three clicks (at most!) to present data

* **Meaningful Data**

- * Data should be meaningful to public
- * Percentages should include research population size and reference years data reflects; terms should be defined (e.g., graduation rate should include specific numbers **AND** the process used to reach the percentages)
- * **USE** provided rubric located in Policy on Outcomes

Outcomes Rubric

Unsatisfactory Achievement of Expectation	Minimal Achievement of Expectation	Substantial Achievement of Expectation	Exemplary Achievement of Expectation
No institutional objective is clearly defined.	Some institutional objectives are clearly defined.	Most institutional objectives are clearly defined.	All institutional objectives are clearly defined.
No institutional objective supports mission fulfillment.	Some institutional objectives support mission fulfillment.	Most institutional objectives support mission fulfillment.	All institutional objectives support mission fulfillment.
No program student learning objective is clearly defined.	Some program student learning objectives are clearly defined.	Most program student learning objectives are clearly defined.	All program student learning objectives are clearly defined.

Outcomes Rubric

No objective is stated in measurable terms.	Some objectives are stated in measurable terms.	Most objectives are stated in measurable terms.	All objectives are stated in measurable terms.
No student learning is effectively measured by assessment methods and metrics.	Some student learning is effectively measured by assessment methods and metrics.	Most student learning is effectively measured by assessment methods and metrics.	All student learning is effectively measured by assessment methods and metrics.
No indicators of achievement (benchmarks) are defined for outcomes.	Some indicators of achievement (benchmarks) are defined for outcomes.	Most indicators of achievement (benchmarks) are defined for outcomes.	All indicators of achievement (benchmarks) are defined for outcomes.
No outcome benchmarks are rigorous enough to verify objectives are met.	Some outcome benchmarks are rigorous enough to verify objectives are met.	Most outcome benchmarks are rigorous enough to verify objectives are met.	All outcome benchmarks are rigorous enough to verify objectives are met.

Outcomes Rubric

No outcomes evidence objectives are being met.	Some outcomes evidence objectives are being met.	Most outcomes evidence objectives are being met.	All outcomes evidence objectives are being met.
Graduation/transfer-out rates over the last 3 years consistently do not meet ABHE expectations.*	Graduation/transfer-out rates over the last 3 years marginally or inconsistently meet ABHE expectations.*	Graduation/transfer-out rates over the last 3 years consistently exceed ABHE minimum expectations by a small margin.*	Graduation/transfer-out rates over the last 3 years consistently exceed ABHE minimum expectations by a large margin.*
Retention rates over the last 3 years do not meet ABHE expectations.*	Retention rates over the last 3 years marginally or inconsistently meet ABHE expectations.*	Retention rates over the last 3 years consistently exceed ABHE minimum expectations by a small margin.*	Retention rates over the last 3 years consistently exceed ABHE minimum expectations by a large margin.*

REVISED Policy on Academic Quality as Related to Institutional Mission

ABHE accredited institutions will have up-to-date, clearly articulated statements of mission, institutional goals, and student learning objectives that are appropriate to higher education and designed to equip student for a life of service to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (see Policy on Outcomes).

This statement will be demonstrated in the following manner:

- * ABHE accredited institutions will have defined student learning outcomes and documented evidence that the outcomes are being achieved.**
- * ABHE accredited institutions will offer educational programs, student learning experiences, and support services that meet the needs of the student population serviced and result in student success. Evidence is reflected in acceptable graduation/transfer out and retention rates (as communicated in the *Policy and Procedure for Monitoring Annual Report Data*)**

REVISED Policy on Academic Quality as Related to Institutional Mission

- * ABHE accredited institutions will engage students with faculty who are committed to the institutional mission and competent in their instructional disciplines. The evidence of these qualities is reflected in the percentage of student credits taken with faculty holding the appropriate academic preparation and professional expertise (as communicated in the *Policy and Procedure for Monitoring Annual Report Data*)**
- * ABHE accredited institutions will demonstrate the resources necessary to fulfill the mission of the institution and sustain its educational programs. The evidence of these qualities is reflected in a satisfactory Financial Responsibility Composite Score and positive responses to the Financial Compliance Questions on the Annual Report. (See the *Policy and Procedure for Monitoring Annual Report Data*)**

PROPOSED Condition of Eligibility #25

COE 25. Arbitration. An institution must agree in writing to submit any dispute involving the final denial, withdrawal, or termination of accreditation to initial arbitration prior to any other legal action.

