

Policy on Confidentiality

Key to Changes: **Delete**, **Add**

The Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) is comprised of institutions of biblical higher education that hold accredited, candidate, applicant, or member status. The ABHE Board of Directors and its related Committees have oversight of Association operations. The ABHE Commission on Accreditation (COA) is an independent decision-making body that determines the status of institutions seeking to pursue or maintain accredited membership within the Association. The COA has exclusive jurisdiction over all documents generated by or otherwise associated with accreditation processes. The COA Executive Director working with the COA Chair, has primary responsibility to ensure the security of COA records. The COA Executive Director also exercises on behalf of the COA the exclusive right to grant or deny access to COA 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 COA 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 COA and its representatives will take appropriate measures in its own handling of information to maintain the privacy rights of individuals.

The COA regards an institution or program’s self-study materials, evaluation documents, progress reports, and financial statements as confidential. The minutes of the COA 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 COA for purposes of certifying its integrity on behalf of the public.

Should an institution or program operate in a manner that raises public concern, the COA 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. **Should the COA be contacted by the media regarding a COA-accredited, candidate, or applicant institution, the Executive Director or designee will inform the institution’s CEO.**

Revised October 1983, 1990, 1992; August 2007, November 2007, **PROPOSED January 2023**