Institutional Accreditation Standards

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.

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

1. A clearly written mission statement 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.
4. Clearly articulated institutional goals that directly relate to the mission statement.
5. Clearly articulated student learning objectives for each educational program 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).
Institutional Accreditation Standards

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.

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

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.

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.
Institutional Accreditation Standards

STANDARD 3
INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

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 7), websites and other media/online presence, statements, and advertising that describe accurately and fairly the institution, its academic programs, its admissions requirements, its transfer credit policies and criteria, its articulation agreements, and its effectiveness claims.
2. Handbooks that describe and govern various institutional relationships with students, faculty, staff, and board, including appropriate policies, processes, and grievance procedures.
3. Evidence of effective policies that address protection of student privacy, transparency in safety and on-campus crime, and provision for redress of harassment (including sexual harassment) that might be experienced by institutional stakeholders (e.g., students, staff, faculty, administration, and board).
4. An institutional culture that fosters respect for diverse backgrounds and perspectives consistent with the institution’s mission.
5. Equitable and consistent treatment of employees and students consistent with appropriate published policies.
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 COA.
8. Integrity in financial matters and in compliance with applicable legal and governmental regulations.

Institutional Accreditation Standards

STANDARD 4
AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE

The institution is legally constituted as a nonprofit organization or is a nonprofit subsidiary of a parent organization, authorized by its state or province to operate as an educational institution and grant all degrees and/or offer credentials. The institution has its own 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. Enabling documents that establish the institution as a legal entity in its state or province; protect its mission/purpose, tenets of faith, and control; and provide a basis for governance and administration. Where an institution is a subsidiary of a parent organization, it must have its own enabling documents.

2. Evidence that the institution is authorized to award the credentials that it offers in all of the jurisdictions in which it operates.

3. A governing board that has the necessary authority and exercises legal power for the operation of the institution. Where an institution is a subsidiary of a parent organization, the institution must have its own governing board, including representatives from a broader pool than the sponsoring organization alone, and autonomy over institutional decisions.

4. Board membership that excludes all employees except the chief executive officer.

5. A governing board with 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 ethnicity, gender (where theologically appropriate), and professional competencies to serve the constituency effectively.


10. A process for effective recruitment, orientation, and development of board members to ensure stability and new membership.

11. A process for providing updates for board members on issues relative to institutional mission, finances, and programs.

12. Board policies and practices that clearly distinguish board and staff roles and that define the authority of the board and its limitations.

Institutional Accreditation Standards

STANDARD 5
ADMINISTRATION

The institution has a team of administrators that brings together its various resources and allocates them to accomplish institutional goals.

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

1. A chief executive officer who has the capacity, is sufficiently engaged with the institution, and has the professional qualifications to lead the institution toward the accomplishment of its mission.
2. A chief executive officer appointed by, reporting to, and evaluated on a regular basis by the board.
3. A clearly documented organizational structure appropriate to the size and scope of the institution that encompasses all units and roles.
4. Administrative leaders with education, experiences, and competencies appropriate to the discharge of their duties and to the level of education offered.
5. Ongoing assessment and enhancement of the performance of administrators.
6. Established written policies and procedures to promote effective operations.
7. Complete, accurate, and securely maintained administrative records.
8. Effective communication and collaboration with appropriate stakeholders.
Institutional Accreditation 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.

6a. HUMAN RESOURCES

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

1. An adequate number of qualified personnel to provide basic services to students, faculty, and administration.
2. Written policies and procedures for hiring, evaluating, promoting, and dismissing personnel based on principles of fairness and respect for individual rights.
3. Demonstrated commitment to provide adequate resources for employee welfare including professional development.
4. Policies and practices that support employee diversity appropriate to the institution’s theological and cultural context.
5. An organizational climate that encourages job satisfaction, collegiality, and respect among personnel.
6. Published and accessible descriptions of organizational structures, job responsibilities, and employee policies.
7. Appropriate provisions for the protection of personnel from threat of harm or loss, including emergency and crisis response measures.

6b. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

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

1. Evidence of financial stability documented by independent, opinioned audits, prepared by a licensed accounting professional, approved by the board, and made available to the public.
2. A budgeting process that serves as an effective instrument of financial oversight and planning.
3. The cultivation of adequate revenue streams sufficient to realize institutional goals.
4. Risk management policies and procedures sufficient to safeguard assets and promote effective stewardship of resources.
5. Appropriate board oversight of financial management to meet public accountability obligations.
6. Sufficient financial reserves to enable effective response to unforeseen financial circumstances and enrollment fluctuations.
7. Adequate internal controls to safeguard assets and protect personnel from accusations of wrongdoing.
8. 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 facilities, equipment, and supplies are adequate to support institutional mission, to achieve educational goals, and to ensure continuity of offerings.
2. Sufficient personnel and procedures to maintain physical resources adequately.
3. Evidence that physical resource needs are identified and addressed in the planning process.
4. Facilities and services compliant with applicable health, safety, and disability access codes.
5. Appropriate provisions for the protection of physical resources from threat of harm or loss, including crisis response measures.

6d. TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .
1. Appropriate technology to support the institution’s educational and operational effectiveness.
2. Systematic allocation of resources to maintain current and support future technological capacity.
3. Ongoing training and support for technology personnel and users, including staff and students.
4. Clearly stated policies and procedures regarding technological resources, services, and security, including compliance with privacy regulations.

[Applicable Policies: Policy on Semi-Autonomous Institutions]
Institutional Accreditation 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, student financial services 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. Student recruitment policies and practices that encourage ethnic and gender diversity appropriate to the institution’s theological and cultural context.


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, applied consistently in the admissions process, and appropriate to the level of education.
2. Evaluation procedures that reasonably ensure admitted students have attained the requisite educational level and possess the ability to achieve their educational goals successfully.
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 applicants who are not adequately prepared for their desired level of study.

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

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .
1. Accurate financial aid information in regard to scholarships, grants, loans and refunds that is published and made available to prospective and enrolled students.
2. Evidence that financial aid practices meet regulatory and reporting requirements.
3. Financial counseling services provided to help students make decisions regarding alternatives for financing their education and to inform students who receive financial assistance of any repayment obligations.

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

7d. RETENTION

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .
1. Adequate resources and services to address the needs of at-risk students and improve student retention.
2. An assessment process that measures and improves student retention and completion.
Institutional Accreditation 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, including 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. Appropriately qualified personnel who 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 levels of student satisfaction and of acting to address issues identified in the assessment process.
7. Opportunities for students to provide input in institutional decision-making.
8. Published procedures for and records of addressing formal student complaints and grievances.
Institutional Accreditation 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, promotes the well-being of faculty, and supports the faculty’s role in decision-making.

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 professional vitae.)
3. Undergraduate faculty who have earned a minimum of a master’s degree and teach in 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 and professional expertise, 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, termination of faculty, and the safeguarding of intellectual property rights based on principles of fairness and regard for the rights of individuals.
7. Systems for evaluating and improving the instructional effectiveness of all faculty.
8. Evidence of faculty contribution to student learning, scholarship, institutional development, ministry, and community service.
9. Support for the professional advancement and development of core and adjunct faculty, as appropriate to the institutional mission.
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 and 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 and the level of education offered.

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 that is consistently applied to the certification of graduates.

5. A faculty that is involved in academic-related decision-making processes especially related to admissions criteria, curriculum, and student development.
Institutional Accreditation Standards

STANDARD 10
LEARNING RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The institution ensures the availability of and access to learning resources and services of appropriate form, range, depth, and currency to support the curriculum regardless of location, instructional modality, or language of instruction.

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

1. A written learning resource purpose statement and objectives, consistent with the institutional mission and educational outcomes.
2. Appropriate written policies and procedures relating to the management of learning resources and services for all instructional modalities and languages of instruction.
3. Sufficient funding, staff, technology infrastructure, virtual or physical presence and policies to procure and maintain appropriate learning resources and services for all instructional modalities and languages of instruction.
4. The availability of reference, technical, and circulation services and other means of support to meet the research and information needs of students and faculty for all instructional modalities and languages of instruction.
5. Promotion in all instructional modalities and languages of instruction to enhance student and faculty awareness of available resources and services.
6. Documentation of participation in library and resource sharing networks or other agreements that involve the use of learning resources and services, if applicable.
7. Joint participation of library personnel and faculty in curriculum planning, the analysis of resource and service adequacy, the selection of learning resources, and review of learning resource policies for all instructional modalities.
8. Policies, procedures, technology infrastructure, and virtual or physical presence that ensure access to and security of learning resources and the privacy of patron data.
9. A collection of appropriate learning resources based on the curriculum, course offerings, instructional modalities, usage demands, and languages of instruction.
10. Effective leadership by a credentialed director with faculty status.
11. Effective collaboration between the library and information technology personnel for the development, maintenance, and enhancement of the technology infrastructure to provide access to all learning resources and services.
12. Ongoing outcomes assessment of learning resources and services and their utilization by the learning community for the purpose of improvement.
13. Curricular requirements, instruction, and reference services supporting development of information literacy competencies for all instructional modalities and languages of instruction.
Institutional Accreditation 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 all programs supporting development of a biblical worldview and some programs orientated specifically to full-time vocational ministry.

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 lifelong learning commensurate with the level of education offered.

2. A written statement of program-specific student outcomes for each academic program and a coherent program of study to achieve them.

3. Evidence that the integration of curricular components supports development of a biblical worldview.

4. A curriculum taught with sensitivity to the cultural context in which students serve or may serve.

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 and level of education offered.

7. A curriculum content and level of education appropriate to the degree 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 minimum of 120 semester hours (180 quarter hours) for a baccalaureate degree, and a minimum of 60 semester hours (90 quarter hours) for an associate degree.

10. A core of Bible/theology studies equivalent to 30 semester hours (45 quarter hours) for a four- or five-year baccalaureate degree, 24 semester hours (36 quarter hours) for a Canadian three-year baccalaureate degree, 18 semester hours (27 quarter hours) for a non-traditional degree completion program or transfer students needing fewer than 60 semester hours (90 quarter hours) to complete a baccalaureate degree, and 12 semester hours (18 quarter hours) for an associate degree or one- or two-year certificate program.

11. A core of general studies equivalent to 30 semester hours (45 quarter hours) for a
baccalaureate degree or 15 semester hours (24 quarter hours) for an associate degree, with one or more courses drawn from each of the following four disciplines: Communication, Humanities/Fine Arts, Natural Science/Mathematics, and Social/Behavioral Sciences.

12. A core of professional studies equivalent to a minimum of 18 semester hours (27 quarter hours) for a baccalaureate degree, which are selected to equip students for professional positions or ministry service.

13. The delineation of expectations for ministry-oriented and professionally-oriented programs that include practical experiences and applied knowledge through practicums, internships, or other appropriate means.

[Applicable Policies: Policy on Adult Degree Completion Programs; Policy on the Conferral of Honorary Doctoral Degrees; Policy on Biblical and Theological Studies; Policy on Canadian Institution Degree Programs; Policy on General Studies; Policy on International Education Programs; Policy on Two-Year Programs]

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

14. A minimum of 30 semester hours (45 quarter hours) for a graduate degree.

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 level of professional practice.

17. Programs that ensure students develop and demonstrate significant ability to think biblically in relation to their academic or professional disciplines through prerequisites, curricular requirements, or program-level learning outcomes.

18. Appropriate prerequisite and/or curricular requirements to ensure that students are capable of pursuing advanced studies in the discipline.

19. A culture of learning that cultivates critical thinking, theological reflection, spiritual formation, and effective ministry or professional practice.

20. The delineation of expectations for ministry-oriented and professionally-oriented programs that include practical experiences and applied knowledge through practicums, internships or other appropriate means.

11b. MINISTRY FORMATION

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 ongoing program review and assessment of outcomes that results in program improvement.
7. Evidence that academic credit given for practicums, internships, or other practical learning experiences, 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 the point of selection of a program to graduation from that program.
2. An academic calendar that meets state, provincial, and federal regulations and considers regional higher educational patterns.
3. The award of academic credit commensurate with normative academic and/or governmental definitions that may be based upon intended learning outcomes.
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. Evidence that courses and programs offered in alternative academic patterns are consistent with other offerings of the institution.
2. Adequate staffing, facilities, and technology to support programs in all delivery modes.
3. 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.

[Applicable Policies: Policy on Instructional Modalities; Policy and Procedures for Educational Sites Geographically Separate from the Main Campus; Guidelines for Sharing Online Courses, Guidelines for Ensuring Integrity in Distance Education and Correspondence Studies]