

Exploring the Proposed ABHE Standards 1-3

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ABHE Principles of Accreditation

- An ABHE COA-accredited institution documents that it is in accord with the Association for Biblical Higher Education's Tenets of Faith and has a mission statement appropriate to biblical higher education as defined below:

Higher education in which the Bible is central, and the development of Christian life and ministry is essential. A biblical higher education requires of all students a substantial core of biblical studies, general studies, and ministry formation experiences and integrates a biblical worldview with life and learning. An institution of biblical higher education offers curricula that fulfill its overriding purpose to equip all students for ministry in and for the Church and the world.

- An ABHE COA-accredited institution demonstrates patterns of evidence that indicate substantial compliance with the Conditions of Eligibility and Standards of Accreditation. An ABHE COA-accredited institution can be reasonably expected to continue to (1) achieve its stated mission, (2) substantially comply with the Standards of Accreditation, and (3) pursue ongoing institutional improvement.

ABHE Principles of Accreditation

- An ABHE-COA accredited institution demonstrates compliance with the Standards of Accreditation for all educational sites, instructional modalities, languages of instruction, and pedagogical models, including competency-based and direct assessment programs.
- An ABHE COA-accredited institution documents its compliance with the Standards of Accreditation with appropriate evidence. When a Standard requires a policy statement, the policy is (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. For more information, see the *Policy on Academic Quality as Related to Institutional Mission*.

Standard 1: Integrity and Mission

The institution operates with integrity and has an institutional mission appropriate to biblical higher education.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

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

1. Integrity in all operations, including financial management, admissions, academic programs, student services, media, and institutional governance.
2. Fulfillment of applicable Commission policies and requirements as demonstrated by honest, complete, and timely communication with the Commission regarding compliance with all oversight agencies.
3. Written policies and documented processes (including grievance procedures with consistent record-keeping) that govern various relationships within the institution (including those with students, faculty, staff, and board members) to ensure equitable and consistent treatment and avoid inherent conflicts of interest.

Standard 1: Integrity and Mission

4. Published policies and procedures 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 (including students, staff, faculty, administration, and board members).
5. Institutional values and practices that foster respect for diverse backgrounds and perspectives consistent with the institution's mission.
6. A board, faculty, and staff reflective of the diversity of the institution's constituency and the students it serves, and consistent with institutional theological distinctives.
7. Institutional values and practices that foster an educational community of belonging and service for students, employees, alumni, and other institutional constituents.
8. A clearly written mission statement appropriate to biblical higher education, developed and periodically reviewed by broad representation from all sectors of the institution, and ratified by the governing board.

Standard 1: Integrity and Mission

9. A mission statement easily located on the institution's website and in its catalog(s).
10. A mission statement that guides faculty, staff, administration, and the governing board in operations, planning, resource allocation, and program development.

Standard 2: Institutional Planning and Assessment

The institution's system of ongoing institutional planning and assessment demonstrates that it accomplishes and can continue to accomplish its mission and provides opportunities for systematic institutional and program improvement.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

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

1. A written, comprehensive assessment plan that describes the systematic collection of evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of the institution's operations and services and the fulfillment of student learning outcomes at institutional and program levels. The assessment plan explains how and when data are gathered in an ongoing and structured way.

Standard 2: Institutional Planning and Assessment

2. Clearly defined and measurable outcomes for operational units, support services, and academic programs (including general education and Bible/theology components of undergraduate degree programs) that align with institutional mission. Student learning outcomes are appropriate to the credential awarded and are accompanied by multiple measures that effectively assess the extent to which students are achieving the program's stated outcomes.
3. Implementation of the assessment plan for operational units, support services, and academic programs evidenced by documented analysis of assessment data and use of results by appropriate constituencies for the purpose of improvement and planning.
4. Outcomes data, disaggregated in missionally relevant ways, used to demonstrate a commitment to the success of all students in attaining intended learning outcomes.

Standard 2: Institutional Planning and Assessment

5. The ongoing provision of reliable and current information to the public including graduation and retention rates, employment rates for professional programs, and licensure pass rates for programs where licensure is expected. Required outcomes data are available via the institution's website through an easily identified link on the homepage.
6. Written institutional improvement plans describing future objectives, developed with broad representation from all sectors of the institution and its stakeholders, informed by assessment and institutional needs, aligned with realistic resource projections, and accompanied by consistent reporting on plan achievement.
7. Evidence that assessment data informs ongoing institutional decision-making and a sound budgeting process in alignment with institutional planning.
8. Leadership of planning and assessment by a director or directors with related job responsibilities.

Standard 3: Authority and Governance

The institution has legal authority to operate in its state or province, and in all other jurisdictions in which it operates, and has a governing board with legal and fiduciary authority to exercise appropriate oversight of the institution.

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, statements of faith, and control; and provide a basis for governance and administration. Where an institution is a subsidiary of a parent organization, the institution has its own enabling documents.

Standard 3: Authority and Governance

2. Authorization to award the credentials that it offers in all the jurisdictions in which it operates, including distance education.
3. A governing board that exercises legal authority for the institution and ensures institutional integrity, with autonomy to make decisions in the best interest of the institution. Where an institution is a subsidiary of a parent organization, the institution has its own governing board that includes representatives from a broader pool than the governing board of the sponsoring organization alone and exercises autonomy over institutional decisions.
4. Published board policies and practices that define the board's authority and limitations and clearly distinguish board and staff roles.
5. Board membership that excludes all employees except the chief executive officer. The chief executive officer does not serve as a board officer.

Standard 3: Authority and Governance

6. A conflict-of-interest policy, regularly affirmed by each board member, that protects the board from undue influence related to financial interests, contracts, employment, family relationships, or other personal interests.
7. A process for effective recruitment, orientation, and development of board members to ensure board stability and engagement and identify new members.
8. Appropriate board oversight of financial management to meet public accountability obligations.
9. Ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the board and its members, including analysis of assessment data and use of results for the purpose of improvement.

