# Institutional Accreditation Standards

## 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.
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.
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.

**Applicable Policies:** *Policy on Academic Quality as Related to Institutional Mission; Policy on Closing an Institution; Policy on Conferral of Honorary Doctoral Degrees; Policy on Ethical Practices; Policy on Falsification of Data; Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status*

# Institutional Accreditation Standards

## 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.
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.
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.

**Applicable Policies:** *Policy on Academic Quality as Related to Institutional Mission; Policy on Outcomes*

# Institutional Accreditation Standards

## 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.
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.
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.

**Applicable Policies:** *Policy on Governance; Policy on Semi-Autonomous Institutions; Policy on State/Government Authorization*

# Institutional Accreditation Standards

## STANDARD 4
## ADMINISTRATION, STAFF, AND FACULTY

**The institution employs and supports competent personnel who effectively discharge their duties in support of mission achievement.**

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

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

1. A sufficient number of qualified personnel to provide services to all stakeholders.
2. A chief executive officer who has the character, capacity, and professional qualifications to fulfill the institution-specific role, and who is sufficiently engaged with the institution to lead toward the accomplishment of its mission.
3. A chief executive officer appointed by, reporting to, and evaluated on a regular basis by the board.
4. Administrative leaders with education, experience, capacity, and competencies appropriate to their specific duties and to the level of education offered.
5. Published policies and procedures relating to the recruitment, appointment, role and responsibilities, professional development, evaluation, promotion, termination, and welfare of institutional employees.
6. A clearly documented organizational structure appropriate to the size and scope of the institution that encompasses all units and roles and includes written job responsibilities.
7. Mission-driven values and practices that encourage job satisfaction and employee engagement.
8. Policies, procedures, and practices for the protection of personnel from threat of harm or loss, including security measures, crisis response measures, and protection of privacy.
9. Written policies and procedures to promote effective operations.
10. Complete, accurate, and securely maintained administrative records of institutional decision-making.

**Faculty**

Specific to faculty, an accredited institution is characterized by…

11. Committed Christian faculty members who engage in the academic, spiritual, and vocational development of students.
12. Faculty members who possess earned and appropriately documented degrees from institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), the U. S. Department of Education, or the appropriate provincial government.
13. Undergraduate faculty members who have earned a minimum of a master's degree and teach in an area of documented expertise. Graduate faculty members who have earned a terminal or doctoral degree and teach in an area of documented expertise. Faculty

credentials based on factors other than degrees earned are justified by appropriate documentation.

14. Published policies and procedures that delineate the authority and responsibility of the faculty for decision-making related to curriculum, program development, academic policies and procedures, graduation requirements, and other academic matters.
15. A faculty of sufficient size and expertise to support the institution's mission, ensure the quality of curriculum, and provide effective leadership of educational programs.
16. Systems for evaluating and improving instructional effectiveness to support student learning.
17. Published policies and procedures that address the intellectual property rights and academic freedom of faculty members.

**Applicable Policies:** *Policy on Ethical Practices; Policy on Semi-Autonomous Institutions*

# Institutional Accreditation Standards

## STANDARD 5
## FINANCIAL AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES

**The institution maintains and effectively manages the financial and physical resources necessary to achieve its mission.**

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

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

1. An annual independent, opinioned audit, prepared by a licensed accounting professional, approved by the board, and made available to the public.
2. Financial stability, including adequate revenue streams to realize institutional mission and sufficient financial reserves to enable effective response to unforeseen financial circumstances and enrollment fluctuations.
3. A budgeting process, informed by institutional planning, that serves as an effective instrument of financial oversight.
4. Risk management policies and procedures and adequate internal controls sufficient to safeguard assets and protect personnel from accusations of wrongdoing.
5. Adequate institutional resources, including financial resources, facilities, equipment, supplies, and technology to support its mission, achieve educational goals, and ensure continuity of offerings.
6. Sufficient personnel to adequately manage and maintain institutional resources.
7. Facilities and services compliant with applicable health, safety, and disability access codes.
8. Policies, procedures, and practices for effective maintenance and protection of institutional resources and users from threat of harm or loss, including security and crisis response measures.
9. Reliable technology platforms, training and support, and related policies and procedures, that support institutional mission and ensure accurate and secure institutional data.

**Applicable Policies:** *Policy on Semi-Autonomous Institutions*

# Institutional Accreditation Standards

## STANDARD 6
## ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

**The institution develops and implements an enrollment management plan that is consistent with its mission and addresses recruitment, admissions, and student financial services.**

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

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

1. A written, mission-focused enrollment management plan that addresses recruitment, admissions, and student financial services, is appropriate to the level of education, and is consistently applied in the admissions process.
2. Admissions requirements and student financial services that are clearly communicated to prospective students.
3. The allocation of resources and authority to support effective recruitment, admissions, and student financial service efforts.
4. Student recruitment and admissions policies and practices that are directed toward students whose spiritual commitments, educational goals, and interests are consistent with the intended outcomes of the institution, and that promote diversity of ethnicity and sex appropriate to the institution's theological and cultural context.
5. Evaluation procedures and/or programs that reasonably ensure admitted students have attained the requisite educational level, possess the ability to achieve their educational goals successfully, and are adequately prepared for their desired level of study and instructional modality.
6. Accurate and fair descriptions of the institution's admissions policies, transfer credit and prior learning policies and criteria, articulation agreements, and effectiveness claims in institutional publications (print and electronic), statements, and advertising.
7. Accurate financial aid information regarding scholarships, grants, loans, and refunds that is published and made available to prospective and enrolled students.
8. Financial aid practices that meet applicable regulatory and reporting requirements.
9. Financial counseling services that help students make financial decisions regarding their education and inform students receiving financial assistance of related repayment obligations.

**Applicable Policies:** *Policy on Transfer and the Award of Academic Credit; Policy on Validating Credits Earned at Unaccredited Institutions*

# Institutional Accreditation Standards

## STANDARD 7
## ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

**The institution's academic programs are designed with appropriate curricula, policies, and practices to impart the knowledge, skills, and practical experiences necessary for lifelong learning, vocational competence, and development of a biblical worldview regardless of location, instructional modality, or language of instruction.**

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

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

1. Academic programs designed with content and rigor characteristic of higher education, and the knowledge and skills needed for lifelong learning commensurate with the level of education offered.
2. Curriculum designed to support development of a biblical worldview through Bible engagement and theological reflection.
3. Curriculum designed to prepare graduates for effective engagement in diverse and multicultural contexts.
4. Curriculum that progresses from foundational to advanced studies appropriate to the degree and level of education offered.
5. Practical experiences and application of knowledge through practicums, internships, course-embedded experiential learning, or other appropriate means for ministry and professional programs.
6. A cycle of regular academic program review that supports program planning and improvement.
7. An academic advising system that guides the student from the point of program selection to graduation.
8. An academic calendar that meets state, provincial, and federal regulations and considers regional higher educational patterns. Clear, published policies govern any alternative patterns utilized.
9. Published policies for awarding academic credit commensurate with normative academic and/or governmental definitions, including credit awarded based on direct assessment of intended learning outcomes, if applicable.
10. A system of grading, and associated policies and procedures, that reflects integrity, ensures fairness and consistency, conforms to higher education norms, and facilitates transferability of students' academic credits.
11. Appropriate measures to ensure that the student receiving credit is the person completing the work, and notification in writing at the time of registration or enrollment of any additional charges associated with verification of student identity.
12. Advanced standing policies for master-level programs ensuring that a minimum of 50% of semester hours applied to degree requirements are awarded from curricula designed for and delivered at the graduate level.

13. Policies ensuring that a minimum of 25% of semester hours required for an undergraduate degree and 33% of semester hours required for a graduate degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree.
14. A clear and publicized statement of faculty-adopted graduation requirements consistently applied to the certification of graduates.
15. A system of accurate and secure student record keeping consistent with state, provincial and/or federal regulations.

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

16. The equivalent of a minimum of 120 semester hours for a baccalaureate degree and 60 semester hours for an associate degree.
17. A core of Bible/theology studies equivalent to a minimum of 30 semester hours for a four- or five-year baccalaureate degree, 24 semester hours for a Canadian three-year baccalaureate degree, 18 semester hours for a non-traditional degree completion program or transfer students needing fewer than 60 semester hours to complete a baccalaureate degree, and 12 semester hours for an associate degree or one- or two-year certificate or diploma program.
18. A core of general studies equivalent to a minimum of 30 semester hours for a baccalaureate degree or 15 semester 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.
19. The equivalent of a minimum of 18 semester hours of professional and/or ministry studies for a baccalaureate degree.

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

20. The equivalent of a minimum of 30 semester hours for a master's degree, 72 semester hours for the Master of Divinity degree, and 30 semester hours beyond the master's degree for a doctoral degree.
21. Appropriate prerequisite and/or curricular requirements to ensure that students are prepared to pursue graduate studies.
22. Cohesive curriculum designed to advance students' academic knowledge, research skills, and professional expertise substantially beyond that required of undergraduate programs.
23. Curricular requirements that ensure students demonstrate significant ability to engage in biblical integration and theological reflection in relation to their academic or professional disciplines through prerequisites, curricular requirements, or program-level learning outcomes.
24. Doctoral-level programs that build upon and advance students beyond the levels of knowledge and competence required of master-level programs, if applicable.
25. Doctoral-level programs that ensure doctoral students demonstrate comprehensive understanding and mastery of the knowledge and skills appropriate to the field of study, if applicable.

**Applicable Policies:** *Policy on Adult Degree Completion Programs; Policy on Biblical and Theological Studies; Policy on Canadian Institution Degree Programs; Policy on Certificate, Diploma, and Two-Year Degree Programs; Policy on Competency-Based Education and Direct Assessment; Policy on General Studies; Policy on Instructional Modalities; Policy on International Education Programs; Policy on Transfer and the Award of Academic Credit; Policy on Validating Credits Earned at Unaccredited Institutions; Guidelines for Doctoral Programs; Guidelines for Ensuring Integrity in Distance Education and Correspondence Studies; Guidelines for Sharing Online Courses*

# Institutional Accreditation Standards

## STANDARD 8
## LEARNING RESOURCES AND SERVICES

**The institution secures, maintains, and ensures access to a collection of learning resources and services necessary to support the research and information needs of the learning community regardless of location, instructional modality, or language of instruction.**

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

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

1. Published policies and procedures relating to the management, access, and security of learning resources and services.
2. Physical and digital resources that effectively support access to and security of learning resources and services.
3. A collection of learning resources appropriate to the institution's curriculum, co-curriculum, and course offerings with regard to content, format, usage, and currency.
4. Availability of reference, technical, circulation services, and other means of support to meet the research and information needs of the learning community.
5. Appropriate documentation of participation in, and regular review of, resource sharing networks or other cooperative agreements that involve the use of learning resources and services, if applicable.
6. Adequate library staffing, including effective leadership by a director with a graduate degree in library sciences or a related field, and faculty status.
7. Meaningful collaboration of library personnel and faculty in curriculum planning and learning resource development.
8. Curricular requirements, instruction, and reference services supporting development of information literacy skills.

# Institutional Accreditation Standards

## STANDARD 9
## STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESS

**The institution provides services that contribute to the holistic development, care, and success of students and are appropriate to the level of education and instructional modality.**

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

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

1. Services that demonstrate a commitment to the holistic development of students and are consistent with institutional mission and an educational community of belonging.
2. Services that address diverse student needs, abilities, and cultures regardless of location or instructional modality.
3. Services that address the needs of at-risk students and improve student achievement and retention.
4. Clear, timely, and ongoing communication with students regarding available support services.
5. A commitment to spiritual formation that fosters student personal faith and spiritual development.
6. Academic and/or co-curricular ministry preparation of all students to be effective witnesses, servants, and workers in the church and the world.
7. Systems that encourage student input for the purpose of institutional decision-making.