



Achieving ABHE Standards 7-9

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Principles of Accreditation

- Biblical higher education mission
- Patterns of compliance
- Compliance for all educational sites, instructional modalities, languages of instruction, pedagogical models
- Supports with evidence

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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.

Key Terms (consult the COA Standards and Policies Manual) – *Too many to list here!*

- **Academic Advising** – An interactive process in which a faculty member or trained advisor assists students to set and achieve academic goals, acquire information and services, and make responsible decisions consistent with interests, goals, abilities, and degree requirements.
- **Bible Engagement** – A process that connects individuals with the Bible and, thus, fosters the significant and positive influence of God's Word in all areas of life.
- **Theological Reflection** – The conscious examination of experiences and their meaning in light of biblical/theological truth.

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Standard 7: Academic Programs and Policies

Key Terms (consult the COA Standards and Policies Manual) – *Too many to list here!*

- **Credential** – All degrees and credit-bearing certificates, diplomas, or other recognized educational credentials awarded by an institution. Required credits may vary by state or province. Credentials must be approved by the COA in accordance with the *Policy on Substantive Change*.
- **Credit Hour** – A unit of measure representing the traditional academic value of learning activities. A semester credit hour represents 37.5 hours or more of academic engagement in instructor-designated learning activities for the average student (traditionally, a minimum of 50 minutes of instruction per week over a 15-week period, supplemented by two hours of preparation for each hour of instruction). A quarter credit hour represents 25 hours or more of academic engagement in instructor-designated learning activities for the average student (traditionally, a minimum of 50 minutes of instruction per week over a 10-week period, supplemented by two hours of preparation for each hour of instruction). A quarter credit hour is equivalent to 2/3 of a semester credit hour. The assignment of credit hours may be based on intended learning outcomes, verified through student achievement, that the institution determines are reasonably equivalent to a credit hour of student work.

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Key Considerations

Curriculum

Curriculum should be rigorous, support development of a biblical worldview, prepare graduates for effective engagement in diverse and multicultural contexts, and reflect higher education norms for levels of study.

Compliance for all for-credit offerings

The assumption of the standard is that requirements are met regardless of location, instructional modality, or language of instruction.

Credit hour requirements

Degrees and certificate/diploma programs are expected to meet all applicable credit hour requirements or the equivalent.

Doctoral education

EEs 24 and 25 relate specifically to doctoral programs.

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Standard 7: Academic Programs and Policies

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.

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Standard 7: Academic Programs and Policies

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.

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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.

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Standard 7: Academic Programs and Policies

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.

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Standard 7: Academic Programs and Policies

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.

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Standard 7: Academic Programs and Policies

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.

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Applicable Policies

See the current COA Standards and Policies Manual

- Policy on Adult Degree Completion Programs
- Policy on Bible/Theology Core
- 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 Distance Education*
- *Policy on Graduate Education*

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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.

Key Terms (consult the COA Standards and Policies Manual)

- **Information Literacy** – The ability to recognize information needs and locate, evaluate and use information effectively.
- **Learning Resources** – The information and services available to support teaching and learning, including text and digital resources, libraries, laboratories, networks, and equipment.

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Key Considerations

Learning resources collection

Learning resources should support program, course, and co-curricular offerings for study at all sites, in all instructional modalities, and for all languages of instruction.

Information and research support

Institutions are expected to provide library support services (research, circulation, reference, and other forms of support)

Staffing

The standard requires institutions to provide adequate staffing for learning resource/services, including a qualified director, regardless virtual or physical collection.

Information literacy

Institutions should be able to demonstrate that they employ intentional strategies to support development of information literacy skills.

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Standard 8: Learning Resources and Services

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.

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Standard 8: Learning Resources and Services

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.

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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.

Key Terms (consult the COA Standards and Policies Manual)

- **Holistic Development** – An approach that views each student as an integrated whole and attempts to stimulate growth in the totality of being (i.e., mind, body, soul, and spirit).
- **Community of Belonging** – An institutional ethos in which student, faculty, and staff are known, supported, and valued regardless of differences in demographic characteristics, background and experiences, or perspectives.
- **Ministry Preparation** – Cultivation of the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practical experiences necessary for effective service for Christ.
- **Spiritual Formation** – The process utilized by an institution to foster growth in Christian character and maturity.

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Key Considerations

Emphasis on student success

ABHE is committed to the success of every student enrolled at ABHE institutions and seeks to foster student success through its standards, policies, and processes. Our aspiration is that difference characteristics will not be predictors of student success at ABHE institutions.

Student support services

An institution's student services should be consistent with mission, focus on holistic development, address diverse needs, and support at-risk students regardless of location or instructional modality.

Student voice

Institutions are expected to create opportunities for student input to decision-making.

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Standard 9: Student Development and Success

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.

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Standard 9: Student Development and Success

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.

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Applicable Policies

See the current COA Standards and Policies Manual

- **Policy on Ethical Practices**

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