ABHE
Commission on Accreditation

Institutional Accreditation
Standard 3: Authority and Governance
MAN-STD-INST-003

Adoption Date: February 2024
Applicable Policies: *Policy on Governance, Policy on Semi-Autonomous Institutions, Policy on State/Government Authorization*

Initial call for comment on current language in Standard 3. The ABHE Commission on Accreditation (COA) reviews one or more Standards for Accreditation annually. This process involves an initial call for public comment on the standards, consideration of comments received in proposing changes, a subsequent call for public comment on proposed changes, consideration of comments in revisions, and submission of proposed changes to the COA Delegate Assembly for discussion and vote.

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.