

# Frequently Asked Questions About Accreditation

## INFORMATION FOR INSTITUTIONS SEEKING ATS COMMISSION ON ACCREDITING MEMBERSHIP

### **Does the ATS Commission on Accrediting approve undergraduate programs?**

The COA accredits institutions offering post-baccalaureate professional theological programs (master's and doctoral levels). It does not approve undergraduate programs.

### **What are the categories of Commission on Accrediting membership?**

The categories of membership include Candidate for Accredited Membership and Accredited Membership.

Candidate for Accredited Membership schools are authorized by the Board of Commissioners to begin the self-study process. Candidate for Accredited Membership is granted for a period of two years. The Commission recognizes Candidate for Accredited Membership as its official *preaccredited* status.

Accredited Members are institutions which, after review on the basis of Commission standards, are voted by the Board of Commissioners into accredited membership.

### **How long does the accreditation process take and what are the steps in obtaining accreditation?**

The timeline of the accreditation process varies. A grant of Associate Membership by ATS, the first step in the process, is for a period of five years. The institution must be elected by a two-thirds majority of the Association member schools at an ATS Biennial Meeting (held in even numbered years). Click on the link under [The Association > Procedures for Membership](#).

The next step, candidacy for accredited status, begins when the institution has been formally authorized by vote of the Board of Commissioners to begin the self-study process. The school must petition the Board for candidacy status, which could be at any time during the five-year term of Associate Membership in ATS. Candidacy status is granted for a period of two years. The applying institution must be able to demonstrate that either it is, or by the conclusion of the self-study process will be, operating according to the Commission's general institutional and individual degree program standards and that it has the institutional capacity to evaluate its institutional and educational effectiveness. Click on the link under [Commission on Accrediting > Procedures](#) (II. Candidate for Accredited Status).

To move to full accreditation, the institution submits its self-study to the Board of Commissioners for review. If the Board approves the self-study, it will authorize an initial evaluation visit. After a team evaluation visit, a report and recommendations will be presented to the Board, and the Board will either grant initial accreditation for a period of up to five years or deny accreditation. Degrees granted prior to initial accreditation are not retroactively approved. Click on the link under [Commission on Accrediting > Procedures \(III. Accredited Membership\)](#).