

## Procedures Related to Membership in The Association of Theological Schools

### I. Membership eligibility criteria of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (the Association)

- A. The school is located in the United States or Canada, offers graduate, professional theological degrees, and is demonstrably engaged in educating professional leadership for communities of the Christian and Jewish faiths.
- B. The school has operated long enough, typically three or more years, for at least one group of students to have earned all necessary credits and to have graduated with the Master of Divinity degree or the first theological degree offered by the school.
- C. The school has an adequate number of properly qualified professors working full time at post-baccalaureate theological education. Normally, this adequacy will be represented by the equivalent of six to ten full-time faculty.
- D. The school has a student body of sufficient size to provide for a community of peer learning appropriate for graduate education. Ordinarily, all students in the theological school shall hold an accredited baccalaureate degree.
- E. The educational program of the school consists of graduate-level studies in the broad range of the theological disciplines designed for preparation for ministry.
- F. The school evidences openness to the community of theological schools as demonstrated by all of the following:
  1. regular participation of faculty in activities of professional or learned societies;
  2. an openness to cooperative relationships with current Association member schools; and
  3. a commitment to participate in the larger community of theological education, and especially a recognition of the diversity that characterizes the community.
- G. The school conducts an educational program of quality, stability, and permanence by having:
  1. adequate physical facilities;
  2. a library that is adequate in the following ways to support graduate degree pro-

grams: holdings, staff, access to electronic information resources, and space for collection, study, and services;

3. adequate financial resources; and
4. other institutional and educational resources required for the program.

- H. The school has a governance and administrative structure appropriate to the institution and characteristic of North American institutions and a degree of autonomy sufficient to determine and carry out its basic purposes, including authority to oversee its academic programs.

### II. Associate membership

- A. Associate members are institutions in the United States and Canada that have met the membership eligibility criteria prescribed by the Association, have been recommended for associate membership by the Board of Directors (the board), and have been elected by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Association present and voting at a meeting of the Association. Associate membership is granted for a term of five years. The term may be renewed by action of the board.
- B. Attaining associate membership
  1. The chief administrative officer of an institution initiates the process by requesting an application from the Association.
  2. The school shall complete the application form and submit it for review by staff of the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools (the Commission).
  3. If the Commission staff determines, on the basis of the written application, that the school may qualify for associate membership, a one-day staff visit will be scheduled. The staff visit will involve an assessment of the school's compliance with the membership eligibility criteria, as well as its stability and future viability.
  4. In consultation with the Commission staff, the school shall provide letters of support from Association member institutions.
  5. The board will review the school's application, the Commission staff report, letters of

support from Association member institutions, and the school's signed waiver and consent form regarding appeals as a basis for the board's decision. The board may take one of several actions:

- a. propose the school for associate membership to the members of the Association;
  - b. delay action for clearly stated reasons, permitting the school to correct any deficiencies and resubmit its application; or
  - c. deny the request for associate membership. (When an application has been denied, an interval, to be determined by the board, will be required before any new application will be considered.)
- C. Maintaining associate membership
- 1. The institution shall continue to meet the membership eligibility criteria and conduct its degree programs in conformity to the Commission's degree program standards.
  - 2. The institution shall complete the Commission's annual report forms.
  - 3. The institution shall pay annual dues as prescribed by the Association.
  - 4. At the end of each five-year term of its associate membership, if the institution has not petitioned the Board of Commissioners for candidate for accredited status, it shall make a comprehensive report to the ATS board, petitioning for renewal as an associate member.

D. Candidate status

In response to a petition from an associate member school, the Board of Commissioners may confer candidate for accredited status on the school.

E. Withdrawal from membership

- 1. A school may, on its own initiative, withdraw as an associate member by written notice to the board.
- 2. If the board determines that an institution should move toward candidacy but it declines to do so, the board may recommend

to the Association that the institution be withdrawn from membership.

**III. Full membership**

- A. Full members are institutions in the United States and Canada that meet the membership eligibility criteria prescribed by the Association and have been reclassified as a full member of the Association by virtue of being accredited by the Commission.
- B. Maintaining full membership
  - 1. The institution shall continue to meet the membership eligibility criteria and to be accredited by the Commission.
  - 2. The institution shall complete the Commission's annual report forms.
  - 3. The institution shall pay annual dues as prescribed by the Association.
- C. Withdrawal from membership

A school may, on its own initiative, withdraw as a full member by written notice to the board.

**IV. Policy on disclosure and confidentiality**

A. Members

Each member institution shall publish its formal status with the Association. Full members shall disclose their complete accredited status in their bulletin, calendar, or catalog and give the Association's mailing address and phone number. References shall comply with the designations in the *Membership List* as to membership status.

B. The Association

- 1. The Association will publish a list of associate member schools in the *Membership List*.
- 2. Upon inquiry, the Association will release the following information about member or applying institutions:
  - a. Membership status.
  - b. The dates when associate membership, candidacy status, and full membership were obtained.
- 3. The *Membership List* will identify institutions removed from associate or full membership or withdrawing from associate or full membership.