Theological Education

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Theological Education

Quality and Accreditation:
Final Report on the
Redeveloped Accrediting Standards

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Introduction

This is a unique edition of *Theological Education*. It constitutes the final report to the Association of work accomplished over the four years of the Quality and Accreditation Project. This work has been ably overseen and directed by a Steering Committee that was appointed in 1992, and by Daniel Aleshire and Michael Gilligan of the ATS staff.

The primary goal of the project has been to redevelop the ATS standards of accreditation. The Steering Committee has carefully attended to the design and conduct of a variety of activities during the past four years to engage Association member schools in conversations about what constitutes good theological education and good theological schools. Since 1994, the Steering Committee has coordinated the work of four Task Forces to construct the proposed redeveloped accrediting standards that are presented to the Association in their third and final draft form in this issue of *Theological Education.*

The work of the Steering Committee is highly commendable. What is more extraordinary, however, is that this has been a work of the Association as a whole. The 1994 Biennial Meeting, with the largest registration in ATS history, was devoted to a series of discussions about the qualities and characteristics of excellence that should guide the development of accrediting standards. Representatives from 29 ATS schools served as the Task Force members, more than 80 schools responded in writing to *Draft One*, and representatives from 134 schools participated in the regional meetings the Steering Committee sponsored in eight cities during late January and early February 1996. The project has engaged a variety of persons from a diverse group of institutions over a sustained period of time in a disciplined effort to determine the future course of ATS accreditation. These redeveloped standards are the result of the efforts of a large number of individuals, but more importantly, we believe, they are the work of the *entire* Association.

In addition to an introductory essay and the text of the redeveloped standards, this edition includes the formal recommendation from the Quality and Accreditation Project Steering Committee to the Association for action at the 1996 Biennial Meeting in Denver. This recommendation includes a procedure for implementation which is also published in this edition of *Theological Education*. Finally, the Commission on Accrediting, which has been working during this biennium to maintain ATS recognition by the U.S. Department of Education and the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation, and to review drafts of the redeveloped standards, is proposing several changes to the ATS accreditation procedures. Most of the changes are editorial, technical, and necessary to assure ATS compliance with external agencies. The text of the

Introduction

current procedures (pages 1-19 of *Bulletin 41*, Part 3) is reprinted in this issue alongside the revised text the Commission is proposing for adoption.

The work of the Quality and Accreditation Project has been supported in part by the ATS operating budget, but the primary funding has been provided by a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. The range of efforts this project has undertaken was possible only through the generous support of the Endowment, for whose leadership and long-standing advocacy of quality theological education in North America the Association is deeply indebted.

James L. Waits

The Quality and Accreditation Project

At its 1996 Biennial Meeting in Denver, The Association of Theological Schools will be invited to consider and adopt redeveloped standards of accreditation and revised accrediting procedures to support the implementation of those standards. These historic proposals are the fruit of four years of concentrated work, initiated at its 1992 Biennial Meeting in Pittsburgh, when the Association voted to authorize the Quality and Accreditation Project. This edition of *Theological Education* contains the complete text of the redeveloped standards, proposed to the Association by the Steering Committee of the Quality and Accreditation Project, and the revised procedures, proposed by the ATS Commission on Accrediting. The proposals from these two bodies, however, represent the culmination of four years of reflection, consultation, and discussion in which an extraordinary number of representatives from member institutions and other persons committed to the improvement of graduate theological education have participated. Within the past six months, two drafts of the redeveloped standards have been distributed to all the schools of the Association, and responses have been invited from every institution both in written form and through regional hearings about the draft. The proposal included here is a third draft which has been refined through this extensive process of consultation.

This introductory essay has been included to serve three purposes: to recapitulate the goals that have guided and the activities that have constituted the Quality and Accreditation Project; to describe the role and function of accreditation, the changing context in which accreditation takes place, and the distinctiveness of ATS accreditation within that context; and to present a brief overview of the proposed redeveloped standards, noting differences both from the current standards and from the most recently circulated *Draft Two*.

No introduction to these proposals would be complete without acknowledging the generous investment of many institutions and individuals in a lengthy process that has had only one goal: the improvement of graduate theological education in the United States and Canada. Whatever their shortcomings, these proposals represent four years of concentrated efforts to listen carefully, to speak clearly, and to foster respectfully the pursuit of quality that ATS member schools undertake. As the Association celebrates 60 years of leadership in this common enterprise, joined by an increasingly diverse community of partners, these redeveloped standards of accreditation are proposed to sustain the ATS commitment to quality in theological education, and to support its member schools in meeting the challenges of our day.

The Quality and Accreditation Project:
Goals and Activities, 1992-96

The Quality and Accreditation Project has been directed toward achieving five goals: (1) identifying the perceptions of quality that should guide the work of member institutions in the ATS, particularly as that work serves more diverse purposes across an increasingly diverse membership; (2) redeveloping the ATS accrediting standards in light of these perceptions of quality; (3) reviewing and revising the formally adopted procedures by which the Association conducts accreditation; (4) enhancing the personnel resources of the Association to support the increasingly heavy workload and more complex approaches accreditation requires; and (5) training chairs and members of ATS evaluation committees in the use of the redeveloped standards, once adopted.

Between 1992 and 1994, the work of the Quality and Accreditation Project focused on the first goal. The Steering Committee first framed the questions and devised activities that would help to identify the perceptions of quality that should inform ATS accreditation standards. A major consultation on quality in theological education was conducted in 1993. At this consultation, 50 people spent time in plenary sessions and four work groups addressing four questions that guided the first two years of this project: (1) what is the character of curriculum, formation, and cultivation of ministerial leadership in the good theological school? (2) what is the character of teaching, learning, and the scholarly task in the good theological school? (3) what is the character of administration and governance in the good theological school? (4) what is the character of resources needed for the good theological school? Each of the four work groups focused on one of these questions, and two persons from each group wrote an essay based upon the group's discussion. The essays were published in the spring 1994 edition of *Theological Education*, entitled "The Good Theological School."

This process of identifying perceptions of quality continued during the 1994 Biennial Meeting when the entire program was devoted to structured discussions of the four questions in small groups. These group discussions were summarized and the summaries published; by the conclusion of the Biennial Meeting, Association members had acted on Framework Statements intended to guide the subsequent work of redeveloping the accrediting standards. As the 1994-95 academic year began, the Framework Statement was published and distributed to all member institutions for their response and comment. Together, these efforts succeeded in identifying the range of characteristics that are seen by the Association's constituents as important in the "good theological school."

The achievement of this first goal of the project was significant for efforts related to all other goals, and it constituted a distinctive feature in the overall redevelopment process. Rather than revise the existing standards, the Quality and Accreditation Project invited the Association and its members to examine the values and assumptions that lie beneath the standards, hold them up to review, and determine the values and virtues that should form the foundation for accrediting standards.

During the second two years of the project, 1994-96, the focus shifted to the next goals: redeveloping the accrediting standards and revising the procedures and policies that guide the Association's work of accreditation.

The primary work of redeveloping the standards was completed by four Task Forces that worked from fall 1994 until fall 1995 to draft standards that reflected the counsel the Association had adopted in 1994 in the Framework Statement. These Task Forces also reviewed the standards of the six U.S. regional accrediting agencies with which ATS conducts joint evaluation visits, the regulatory requirements of the U.S. Department of Education, and the criteria for recognition of the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation. Each Task Force focused on the development of standards in specified areas, and each reviewed its proposal in the context of the proposals of the other Task Forces. The Steering Committee oversaw the year-long process, and brought together the drafts of the four Task Forces into a comprehensive document. *Draft One* of the redeveloped standards was circulated to all member schools for comment in October 1995. Based on the responses to *Draft One*, the Steering Committee authorized the changes for a second draft of the redeveloped standards. *Draft Two* was published and distributed in January 1996, and served as the basis for day-long discussions at eight regional meetings in late January and early February 1996. The Steering Committee reviewed the discussions from the regional meetings, incorporated suggested changes, and authorized the proposed redeveloped standards that are published in this issue of *Theological Education*. The publication of this proposal represents the attainment of the second, and most central, goal of the project—the redevelopment of ATS accrediting standards in light of the perceptions of quality and characteristics of excellence identified throughout this project.

During 1995-96, the Commission on Accrediting evaluated the existing procedures (which are currently published as pp. 1-19 of the ATS *Bulletin*, Part 3) in the context of the petitions for continued recognition which ATS had submitted to the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education, as well as in the context of the drafts of the redeveloped accrediting standards. The Commission's proposal for revised procedures and policies is also published in this edition of *Theological Education*.

The changes in accrediting procedures, unlike the changes in the proposed redeveloped standards, are revisions to enhance clarity, meet regulatory requirements placed on ATS by outside agencies, and coordinate some procedures with the redeveloped standards. The changes in procedures are related more to the way the Association does its work through the Commission on Accrediting than to the way schools do their work.

The fourth goal, to increase the professional and support staff, was addressed during the first two years of the project with the appointment of two new ATS staff members primarily focused on ATS accreditation. An additional support staff position, a technical assistant for accreditation, was created, and Kathryn Hepfer was employed in that role in 1992. Michael Gilligan was appointed Assistant Director of Accrediting early in 1994.

The final goal of the project, training chairs and members of ATS accreditation evaluation committees in the use of the redeveloped standards, remains to be undertaken during the 1996-97 academic year, based on the actions of the Association to adopt the redeveloped standards and revised accrediting procedures. During that year, such resources as the *Handbook of Accreditation*, which ATS makes available to schools to assist them in their self study and other ATS accreditation responsibilities, will need to be revised. Finally, the Association will begin to conduct workshops and other programs in such areas as institutional and educational evaluation to assist member schools in developing the skills needed to implement the redeveloped standards.

At the 1996 Biennial Meeting, the Association will consider action on the redeveloped accrediting standards 60 years after the then Conference of Theological Schools met for the first time under its new name, the American Association of Theological Schools, and adopted its first set of accrediting standards. Since 1936, efforts to review and revise the standards have been ongoing, reflecting the changing needs and roles of theological education, as well as the Association's commitment to improve theological education by responding to the life of religious communities, higher education, and the cultures of North America. They have been changed to distinguish institutional issues from educational program concerns, and have moved from addressing one or two educational programs to a considerable variety of them. The standards were last comprehensively reviewed during 1980-82, resulting in a number of revisions. The 1982 revisions introduced "institutional purpose" as an important element in ATS accreditation, affirmed earlier revisions regarding efforts to increase the participation of women and racial/ ethnic minorities in theological education, and underscored the *professional* educational nature of degree programs such as the Master of Divinity.

While the Quality and Accreditation Project has continued the historical ATS commitment to review and revise its accrediting standards, it constitutes a

unique effort in terms of its scope, approach, and design. This redevelopment of the standards has spent considerable time and effort in asking the "prior question" in a variety of settings: what patterns and understandings of good theological education should inform accrediting standards? As a result, the form and content of the proposed redeveloped standards seem more different from existing standards than previous revisions have seemed. These redeveloped standards both update long-articulated themes in ATS accrediting and introduce new themes. They reflect the influences ATS experiences as an agency in the changing work of higher education accreditation, the influences theological schools experience in the context of North American higher education, and the impact on schools of changing roles and expressions of organized religion in North American society. Like every other proposal regarding accrediting standards ATS has considered, these redeveloped standards are formed by a particular historical context and seek to address issues that emerge from that context; and like all the earlier standards, these will need changes and revisions, as the context changes once again.

The Purpose and Function of Accreditation in Higher Education

ATS accreditation is situated in the broader context of higher education accreditation in North America. While the function of accreditation varies between the United States and Canada, it is common to both countries, and in many ways, constitutes a unique North American invention that has been copied elsewhere in the world. Accreditation has also been a voluntary process in which schools hold themselves accountable to an agreed-upon set of standards through a process of peer review. While accreditation has meant and continues to mean more than one thing, it has historically and formally been understood as an evaluative process to determine if an institution has: (1) an appropriate purpose; (2) the resources necessary to accomplish its purpose; (3) the ability to demonstrate that it is accomplishing its purpose; and (4) the capacity to continue to be able to accomplish its purpose. Together, these four areas of evaluation identify the legitimate purpose of accreditation. It is a comprehensive pattern of evaluation applied to a process (educational efforts), located in an institution, that extends through time, and attempts to achieve certain goals (educational effects or outcomes).

The ATS redeveloped standards clearly implement a distinctive way of thinking about the role of accreditation. They resist the current tendency to assess theological schools only on the basis of their educational outcomes; instead, attention is directed to the process and resources necessary for achieving educational effects, while not neglecting to assess evidence that educational

goals have been achieved. These standards deliberately avoid assessing theological schools by some essentialism that treats schools as if they were not the products of differing religious sentiments, and themselves changing organizations.

Unfortunately, many observers expect accreditation to do things it has never done and is incapable of doing. For example, the U.S. Congress has attempted to use accreditation to reduce default rates on federally guaranteed loans. Faculties have pushed accreditation to support certain academic virtues and denounce others. Individuals have tried to find in accreditation a court of appeal to resolve their grievances with an institution. Accreditation does not support any of these functions very well; accreditation cannot resolve governmental problems about loan defaults, or determine which of competing academic guilds should have authoritative standing, or who has been treated unfairly by whom. Some want accreditation to function as the "Better Business Bureau" of higher education, and others would like it to be the *Consumer Reports*. While accreditation touches on both of these functions, its questions and methods are fundamentally different. When accreditation fails to function in ways it *cannot* function, people indict accreditation as weak and ineffective. But accreditation, like any complex activity, must be viewed in the context of its purposes. Accreditation serves the public by assuring that purposes are appropriate, resources are available, and that educational goals are being achieved. Accreditation serves the institution by providing a comprehensive basis for institutional improvement. In a sense, accreditation serves the public by evaluating *what* the institution does. It serves the institution by evaluating *how* it does its work and by identifying strengths and weaknesses in institutional and educational resources, processes, and results. When accomplished well, this process becomes the basis for institutional improvement.

ATS accreditation functions in the way that accreditation, in general, functions. In addition, ATS is able to conduct some very specific evaluation because it relates to one kind of special-purpose institution. Since its early days as the Conference of Theological Schools, ATS has been interested in what constitutes *theological* education: what subjects does it involve; what patterns of education should it employ; what perspectives, knowledge, abilities, and qualifications should it cultivate in students; what is the nature of preparation for ministerial service in the context of the various religious communities and traditions within North America? Over the past 60 years, ATS accreditation has come to embody perceptions about these questions.

Accrediting agencies are frequently divided into two kinds: institutional accreditors (such as the six regional agencies) and specialized or programmatic accreditors (such as social work, health professions, psychology, architecture,

teacher education, etc.). ATS is a combination of both kinds. The majority of ATS schools are freestanding institutions that must be evaluated by institutional accrediting standards. They also conduct programs to educate people for ministerial leadership or in the theological disciplines, and this activity requires the forms of evaluation in programmatic accreditation. Both the existing and the redeveloped accrediting standards reflect this dual role by including both institutional standards and degree program standards.

Because ATS accreditation gives specific attention to degree programs, it provides a public economy for these degrees. An ATS-approved M.Div., for example, will include instruction in the text, history, and doctrine; instruction in the social context in which religious communities exist; education to develop skills necessary for effective leadership in religious communities; and intentional efforts to help students mature in the qualities and capacities central for religious leadership. Schools cannot excuse themselves from addressing these areas of study, although they may vary greatly from one another in what they teach in each area. The redeveloped degree program standards continue the ATS effort to define for students, denominations, and other institutions of higher education the content and requirements of specific degrees.

The Comprehensively Redeveloped Accrediting Standards

ATS has functioned effectively for 60 years as an accrediting agency with periodic reviews and revisions in its standards. Why has the Quality and Accreditation Project invested so much energy in asking the "prior question" instead of revising the existing standards? Why has this revision been so comprehensive in scope? Several factors led to the more exhaustive approach.

The first is that the Association, with its 224 schools in 1996, has a very different constituency than it had in 1936. The first list of accredited schools was announced at the 1938 meeting in Toronto, and included 46 institutions: 10 university-related and 36 freestanding. The group was not only smaller than today's membership; it was notably more homogeneous. There were no Roman Catholic schools, and there were virtually no schools that would currently classify themselves as Evangelical. The ATS constituency reflected the Protestant establishment that had been the dominant 19th-century religious presence in North America. In 1996, approximately one-half of ATS schools are related to the mainline Protestant denominations that 45 of the original 46 accredited schools represented, and the other half are either Roman Catholic or identified as Evangelical Protestant. Of the 46 original schools, 25 were accredited with a notation that 10 to 49 percent of their enrollment were "persons without college graduation" who were studying alongside college graduates who were candi-

dates for theological degrees. Almost 25 percent of the students in the 46 accredited schools did not have baccalaureate degrees. Today, no accredited school has more than 10 percent of students enrolled without baccalaureate degrees. Few in the original group of schools offered more than one degree, but almost no accredited school in 1996 offers only one degree. The total enrollment of the 46 accredited schools in 1938 was 3,681; the enrollment of 192 accredited schools in 1995 was 51,712. (Four times as many schools have 15 times as many students.) The current ATS schools are considerably more diverse, offer more programs, and deal with a much larger number of more highly educated students who are preparing for a much wider variety of ministerial tasks.

Accreditation has also changed, perhaps even more dramatically than the ATS constituency. The most recent debates in accreditation have focused on the importance, if not centrality, of educational outcomes. The issue of educational outcomes is not a passing interest: it will continue to be a central issue in the evaluation of educational institutions. Other changes in accreditation have come as the result of governmental influences. In the United States, the 1992 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, and the resulting regulations to implement the legislation, have placed considerably increased pressure on accrediting agencies to provide "consumer protection" monitoring of higher education institutions on behalf of students and the public. This requirement pushes the tone of accreditation in more bureaucratic and investigative directions. Accrediting agencies have been criticized as ineffective, inattentive to quality standards, and using a peer review process that has the evaluators too closely affiliated with the evaluated. These criticisms have contributed to changes in national organizations related to accreditation and have pushed accrediting agencies to become more rigorous in evaluation, more deliberate in processes, and more assertive in efforts to assure quality.

The work of theological education is also changing because organized religion in North American society is changing. Some established Protestant denominations, with many ATS-affiliated theological schools, have experienced palpable weakening in numbers and social influence. By contrast, the number of Roman Catholics in the United States continues to grow, as does the number of persons wanting to serve the church in lay professional ministerial positions, but the number of candidates for ministerial priesthood continues to decline. Both the growth in membership and lay professional candidates and the decline in priestly vocations have dramatic influences on Roman Catholic theological education. Since World War II, the Evangelical Protestant community has established itself as a presence within North American religious life in rapidly growing Evangelical denominations, transdenominational networks, and extensive parachurch organizations. The patterns of religious leadership for

which many evangelical students are preparing are different from past patterns. Ministry in parachurch settings, tent-making ministries, and other forms of leadership are making unique demands on theological schools. These changes are occurring in the context of a changing cultural location of religion, evident in the shifting centers of power for organized religion—in terms of membership, dollars, and political influence—and in the normative patterns of education and life experience of applicants to theological schools.

The cumulative effect of the changed constituency of the ATS community of schools, changes in higher education accreditation, and changes in organized religion and its cultural location, has created the occasion for ATS to take a long look at the role and function of theological education. In periods of less intense or widespread change, a reasonable approach to revising accrediting standards is to review and revise as necessary. In those historical moments when both the kind and intensity of change is compounded, the effort must ask more fundamental questions of the enterprise, and consider the aims and purposes of theological education. This is not the first time the Association has asked these fundamental questions. In fact, similar questions during the early 1930s, especially the multivolume work of Mark A. May and his collaborators, contributed to the then Conference of Theological Schools' determination to constitute itself as an Association and begin to accredit theological schools. The work of the past four years has not raised questions for the first time, but has considered them in the context of many changing realities.

The proposed standards differ from the existing standards in many ways. Most of the differences, as well as the similarities, respond to the guidance of the Framework Statement developed by the Association at the 1994 Biennial Meeting. That framework identified several themes that the redeveloped standards should reflect. First, the present ATS standards contain much that is good that the redeveloped standards should continue. Second, the redeveloped standards should provide both for the needs of schools with differing purposes and mission, and for the public need for normative standards of educational and institutional quality. Third, the redeveloped standards should both define minimal acceptable criteria and encourage all schools to improve. Fourth, they should affirm the values that have emerged in theological schools over several decades, such as shared governance, collaboration, integration, and peer communities. The final theme noted in the Framework Statement was that the redeveloped standards should affirm the importance of theological schools' attending to their theological identity in all areas of their institutional operations and educational efforts.

The redeveloped standards reflect both change from and continuity with the existing standards. Some elements are entirely new. Section 1 of the General

Institutional Standards links Purpose, Planning, and Evaluation in a more definite way and introduces a heightened emphasis on evaluation. Section 2 articulates several aspects of institutional integrity in ways ATS standards have not addressed previously. Sections 3 and 4 are entirely new; they express fundamental perceptions about learning, teaching, and research in theological schools, as well as a basic understanding of the theological curriculum and its relationship to degree programs. The categories into which degree programs are organized have been revised to place emphasis on educational aims and goals. The section on governance addresses a broad range of issues not considered in the existing standards, such as shared governance, the nature of authority in theological schools, and the relationship of governance to leadership. In the section on resources, the standards give "access to" and "use of" resources equal force with "ownership of" resources. Other elements of the redeveloped standards continue emphases of the existing standards. Library, faculty, and extension education, for example, introduce some new concepts but restate much that is in the existing standards in these areas. The redeveloped M.Div. and D.Min. degree program standards are similar in many ways to the existing standards, but the other degree program standards have been more extensively redeveloped.

The redeveloped standards, overall, differ from the existing standards by introducing four important themes or emphases. First, they express a great deal more about characteristics of quality or excellence in institutional and educational efforts than do the existing standards. Much of the additional length in the redeveloped standards is attributable to the attempt to set forth understandings of quality and excellence. The redeveloped standards, then, have more instructive value than the existing standards. Second, the redeveloped standards focus significantly more attention on the formational issues of theological education. The earliest ATS standards constructed basic theological degrees in more purely academic terms, and revisions in the 1970s and 1980s increased an emphasis on professional standards. The 1996 redeveloped standards shift the focus to formational terms, reflecting a substantive change in how ATS standards conceive the aims and purposes of theological education. A third theme in the redeveloped standards has come from the Association's work during the past 15 years to address the globalization of and basic issues in theological education. While particularly reflected in sections 3 and 4, these major priorities of the Association have influenced many of the other redeveloped standards. Fourth, the redevelopment effort has sought to articulate assumptions that have been part of ATS accreditation rather than to trust that these underlying values will continue, unstated, to influence theological education.

Representatives from more than 134 ATS institutions participated in eight regional meetings to discuss *Draft Two* of the redeveloped standards. The

Steering Committee, in reviewing those meetings, attempted to be both responsive to the range of suggestions gathered in the regional meetings and faithful to the substance of the text, which had been widely endorsed as published in *Draft Two*. Because the final proposal of the redeveloped standards includes several changes from *Draft Two*, some additional comments may be helpful to readers.

The section on institutional purpose differs in two ways from *Draft Two*. First, it integrates purpose, planning, and evaluation and lays out general guidelines for overall evaluation. It also calls on schools to identify confessional commitments and doctrinal guidelines that influence institutional or educational efforts clearly in the context of institutional purpose. In subsequent standards, where these commitments and guidelines bear upon institutional policy, the formulaic phrase, "In the context of institutional purpose," appears. This formulation is intended to describe the way that member schools function as theological schools with theological commitments in the context of the values and commitments of the broader community of theological schools and North American higher education.

Draft Two was also revised to reflect advice from legal counsel specializing in higher education and accreditation issues, and suggestions from staff members of several of the U.S. regional accrediting agencies. These changes are primarily of technical wording rather than content. (ATS, for example, should use the term "procedural fairness" rather than "due process" because the latter term has particular legal connotations in the U.S.)

Many of the regional meetings involved discussions of extension education, and that section is perhaps the most changed from *Draft Two*. The revised section no longer uses "distance learning" for one kind of delivery, but describes extension education in four types. This section is now shorter because procedures for Commission approval were removed from the standard and placed into the proposal on procedures, which is also being formally considered for adoption by the Association at the 1996 Biennial Meeting.

Most of the regional meetings included discussions about the relationship between freedom of inquiry and confessional commitments in theological schools. The Steering Committee considered several different wordings and has proposed the wording in section 3 to convey more clearly the Association's respect for confessional commitments and freedom of inquiry.

Finally, this revision effort gave considerable attention to clarifying statements that were confusing to some readers, to check for consistency in the way language is used, and to provide editorial improvements.

Accrediting standards comprise a statement that a community of schools makes to the members of that community, to their constituents, and to the broader public about its understanding of what is appropriate and good in

institutional practice and educational result. The standards have integrity to the extent that they represent the highest common denominator across the community of schools. Do the standards hold the schools accountable to qualities that are worth the effort necessary to achieve them? Do the standards call schools to improvement? Standards lack integrity to the extent that they represent the lowest common denominator across the schools—suspiciously validating minimal expectations of good practice or barely acceptable results of educational efforts. The ATS redeveloped accrediting standards, as have previous ATS standards, seek to provide the highest common denominator across the institutionally and religiously plural community of ATS schools.

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The Quality and Accreditation Project Steering Committee
Katarina Schuth, Chair
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Recommendations of the Quality and Accreditation Project Steering Committee and the ATS Commission on Accrediting and Plan of Implementation

Recommendations

1. The Quality and Accreditation Project Steering Committee recommends the adoption of the redeveloped accrediting standards as published in this volume (pages 23 through 93), to be introduced into use according to the implementation plan detailed below.

2. The Steering Committee also recommends that the Commission on Accrediting undertake a study of the educational processes and outcomes of external independent study as related to graduate theological education degrees. On the basis of this study, section 10 of the redeveloped standards will be considered for review and revision no later than the ATS Biennial Meeting of June 2000.

3. The Commission on Accrediting recommends the adoption of the revised accrediting procedures as published in this volume (right-hand pages 97 through 143), to be effective for all ATS accreditation activities beginning with the 1996-97 academic year, with transitional procedures noted in the proposed plan of implementation.

Proposed Plan of Implementation for the Redeveloped Standards of Accreditation

Guidelines for Implementation: The redeveloped standards should be implemented in a way that provides sufficient time for institutions to adjust to the redeveloped standards. The plan of implementation provides for an interim period during which both the existing and redeveloped standards will be in force, allows schools time to address fully the redeveloped standards, and moves the Association toward functioning with a single set of standards as soon as possible. During this same period, the Commission on Accrediting will phase out the existing system of notations and introduce a new system of notations.

1996 - 1998   Comprehensive Accrediting Reviews and Approval of New Programs

1. Schools receiving a comprehensive accreditation visit during 1996-1997 may choose either the redeveloped or existing standards as the standards by

which they would prefer to be evaluated. (It is anticipated that most schools scheduled for fall 1996 reviews will choose the existing standards.)

2. Schools receiving a comprehensive accreditation visit during 1997-1998 would be evaluated according to the redeveloped General Institutional Standards, but could request that their individual degree programs be evaluated by the existing Degree Program Standards.

3. Petitions submitted to the Commission on Accrediting for the approval of new degree programs, substantive changes in existing degree programs, or new extension programs should be based on the redeveloped standards; and the Commission will base its responses on the redeveloped standards, beginning with its January 1997 meeting.

4. After June 1998, all decisions of the Commission on Accrediting will be based on the redeveloped standards.

1996 - 1998   Notations

1. Beginning with the adoption of the redeveloped standards, the Commission on Accrediting will take no new actions to impose notations from the existing system of notations, whether schools are being reviewed under the existing or the redeveloped standards during the 1996-1998 biennium.

2. Schools which, in June 1996, have notations from previous actions of the Commission on Accrediting will be requested to respond to the Commission by no later than May 1998, giving evidence to support their request for the removal of these notations.

3. During the 1996-1998 biennium, the Commission on Accrediting will develop a new system of notations to conform to the redeveloped standards and the revised procedures. The Commission will impose notations from this new system only in the context of its consideration of reports from comprehensive or focused visiting committees.

4. By June 1998, it is anticipated that the existing system of notations will have been entirely phased out and no longer be in effect. If a school has not been able to demonstrate satisfactorily that previously imposed notations should be removed, the Commission will structure an alternative strategy for the school's response by requiring written reports, by authorizing a focused visit to evaluate an institution that has carried a notation for a prolonged period of time, or by imposing a notation from the newly developed system.

**After June 1998   Actions of the Commission on Accrediting
and Responsibilities of Institutions**

1. All self-study reports and all evaluation visits conducted after June 1998 are to be based on the redeveloped standards of accreditation.

2. Notations recommended by visiting committees and/or imposed by the Commission on Accrediting will be from the new system of notations only, and will conform to the revised procedures for accreditation.

3. Schools that are scheduled for comprehensive evaluation visits from fall 2001 to spring 2006 will be requested to complete an internal evaluation based on the redeveloped standards before their scheduled visits, in order to move all member institutions to the single set of redeveloped standards. Schools will be requested to submit a written description of their internal review, according to a schedule to be developed and published by the Commission on Accrediting. It is anticipated that all reviews will be completed by spring 2001, i.e., five years following the adoption of the redeveloped standards.

Standards of Accreditation

Theological schools accredited by The Association of Theological Schools are special-purpose institutions of post-baccalaureate, higher education. Prior to meeting the standards of accreditation, these schools must demonstrate that they are qualified for membership in the Association by virtue of offering graduate theological degrees, functioning within the Jewish or Christian faiths, and demonstrating that their graduates serve in positions of religious leadership. The purpose of the Association is the improvement of theological education, which is implemented through ATS accreditation and by the programs and services the Association provides to member schools.

Since 1938, The Association of Theological Schools has maintained standards for the accreditation of member schools. The standards both define minimal requirements for accreditation and identify qualities associated with good institutional and educational practice; as such, they articulate the shared understandings and accrued wisdom of the theological school community regarding normative institutional performance. The standards have been periodically reviewed and revised since their inception; the present standards are the result of a comprehensive redevelopment process undertaken from 1992 through 1996.

These standards are the basis by which schools are evaluated for accredited status with the Association. More than previous editions of ATS standards, these standards seek to describe excellence in theological education in the context of the different purposes and constituencies of accredited schools. They provide the basis for ongoing institutional and educational improvement as well as descriptions of minimal expectations. The entire text comprises the accrediting standards. Within this text, the term "shall" is used to denote minimal expectations of accredited schools. Words such as "should" are used to identify characteristics of good practice and educational quality, and to set forth expectations for improvement of theological education.

The standards are implemented according to the procedures and policies published in the ATS *Bulletin*, Part 3, and are interpreted and administered by the Commission on Accrediting.

The most recent redevelopment of the ATS standards has taken place during a time of dramatic change, when schools have seen very rapid advances in both the quantity of available information and the technology by which that information is communicated and stored. This context of change has been problematic for the effort of redeveloping standards of accreditation. The nature of accrediting standards is to be more retrospective than prospective, more descriptive than anticipatory: they reflect common understandings and accrued

wisdom; they prescribe institutional and educational practices whose value has been tried and demonstrated. The impact of new information technologies for institutional and educational practice is anticipated in these standards, but minimal expectations are not prescribed, nor are best practices described, because the implications of technology for post-baccalaureate theological education have not yet been adequately determined.

The language of these standards reflects the belief that the theological character of schools is central to their identity. An attempt has been made to write the standards in a language that is theologically inclusive of the Association's member schools, but at various points in the standards, the language is more characteristic of some theological schools and their religious communities than of others. At these points of differences, translation into terms that reflect the school's theological character will be appropriate.

OUTLINE OF
ATS REDEVELOPED ACCREDITING STANDARDS

GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS

DEGREE PROGRAM STANDARDS

All degree program standards are organized according to the following common structure:

1   PURPOSE OF THE DEGREE

2   PRIMARY EDUCATIONAL GOALS

3   PROGRAM CONTENT, LOCATION, DURATION,
    AND ASSESSMENT

    3.1 Content
    3.2 Location
    3.3 Duration

4   ADMISSION AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

    4.1 Admission
    4.2 Distinctive Resources Needed

5   EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

**Advanced Programs Primarily Oriented Toward
Theological Research and Teaching**

General Institutional Standards

Theological schools accredited by ATS are different in size, structure, constituencies, patterns of governance, and diversity of degree programs. The General Institutional Standards apply across the range of diverse schools, even though they may be interpreted in slightly varying ways in different schools.

The sequence of the General Institutional Standards conveys an understanding of the work of theological schools and of the several elements that work requires.

The guiding elements of an educational institution are its *purpose* and the *evaluation* efforts used to identify how effectively is the institution fulfilling that purpose. Purpose includes the institution's fundamental identity and the primary activities that grow out of that identity. As theological schools, ATS-accredited institutions commit themselves to function with *integrity* in the context of a variety of expectations, both internal and external. These schools have, at their center, the work of *learning, teaching, and research* that together comprise theological scholarship. These activities are ordered to educational goals through the structure and purposes of the *theological curriculum*. While the ATS standards for individual degrees identify specific criteria for each degree program, the General Institutional standard on curriculum identifies overall goals and nomenclature as well as the function of curriculum in the context of the theological school.

The work of learning, teaching, and research, ordered to educational goals through the curriculum, requires many elements. The *library* gathers important resources together, makes them available, and cooperates in the school's curriculum. The *faculty* provides the expertise and guidance for the teaching-learning process and, with *students,* constitutes a community of faith, learning, and research. A theological school also requires a process and structure by which it governs its life and makes decisions, and the standard on *authority* and *governance* relates to this necessary element. Finally, theological education requires a variety of other *resources* in terms of people, finances, facilities, and information to accomplish its purpose.

1 PURPOSE, PLANNING, AND EVALUATION

Theological schools are communities of faith and learning guided by a theological vision. Schools related to The Association of Theological Schools conduct post-baccalaureate programs for ministerial leadership and in theological disciplines. Their educational programs should continue the heritage of theological scholarship, attend to the religious constituencies served, and respond to the global context of religious service and theological education.

1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 Each member school shall have a formally adopted statement of institutional purpose. The statement of institutional purpose should articulate the mission to which the school believes it is called and define its particular identity and values. When confessional commitments are central to the identity of a school, they shall be clearly articulated in the statement of purpose. The initiation, development, authorization, and regular review of this statement is the responsibility of the appropriate governing body, and the development should involve all appropriate constituencies (e.g., trustees, faculty, administration, staff, students, and ecclesiastical bodies).

1.1.2 Theological schools that are related to colleges or universities should support the purpose of the overall institution and develop their purpose statements in relationship to the institutions of which they are a part.

1.1.3 Purpose statements should be enabling and defining documents, and should be realistic and accurate. The adequacy of the purpose statement and the institution's ability to fulfill its mission are critical elements to the institution's integrity.

1.2 Planning and Evaluation

1.2.1 The purpose statement shall guide the institution in its comprehensive institutional planning and evaluation procedures, and in making decisions regarding programs, allocation of resources, constituencies served, relationships with ecclesiastical bodies, global concerns, and other comparable matters.

1.2.2 Evaluation is a critical element in support of integrity in educational efforts, institutional renewal, and individual professional development. Evaluation is a process that includes: (1) the identification of desired goals or outcomes for an educational program, or institutional service, or personnel performance; (2) a system of gathering quantitative or qualitative information related to the desired goals; (3) the assessment of the performance of the program, service, or person based on this information; and (4) the establishment of revised goals or activities based on the assessment. Institutions shall develop and implement ongoing evaluation procedures for employees, students, educational programs, and institutional activities.

1.2.3 A comprehensive evaluation process is the primary resource an institution uses to determine the extent to which it is accomplishing its purpose. The various institutional and educational evaluation procedures shall be analyzed, coordinated, and employed in comprehensive institutional planning.

2 INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

Institutional integrity is demonstrated by the consistency of a theological school's actions with commitments it has expressed in its formally adopted statement of purpose, with agreements it assumes with accrediting and governmental agencies, with covenants it establishes with ecclesiastical bodies, and with ethical guidelines for dealing with students, employees, and constituencies.

2.1 Schools accredited by The Association of Theological Schools shall carry out their educational programs and institutional activities according to the standards and procedures established by the Association and its Commission on Accrediting, communicate honestly and forthrightly with the Commission on Accrediting, comply with requests for information, and cooperate with the Commission in preparation for and conduct of visits.

2.2 With regard to state, provincial, and federal authorities, schools shall conduct their operations in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

2.3 The school shall ensure that all published materials, including catalogs, academic calendars, and promotional literature, accurately represent the institution to its various constituencies and publics, including students and prospective students. All charges and fees, including refund policies, should be fully disclosed. Schools should exercise care in advertising to portray the institution fairly and honestly to the public. Wherever appropriate, published institutional documents shall employ gender inclusive language with reference to persons.

2.4 The institution shall seek to treat students, faculty, administrators, employees, and the publics to which it relates in ethical ways. Such treatment includes, among other concerns, an equitable policy of student tuition refunds; nondiscriminatory practices in employment, insofar as such practices do not conflict with doctrine or ecclesiastical polity; clearly defined processes for addressing faculty, employee, and student grievances; and integrity in financial management.

2.5 Integrity in theological education includes institutional and educational practices that promote awareness of the diversity of race, ethnicity, and culture widely present in North America, and that enhance participation of persons of racial/ethnic minorities in institutional life. According to its stated purpose, the school shall seek to address the concerns of women and to increase their

participation in theological education. In all cases, schools shall seek to assist students in gaining the particular knowledge, appreciation, and openness needed to live and practice ministry effectively in changing cultural and racially diverse settings.

2.6 Institutions participating in federally guaranteed student financial assistance programs shall comply with prevailing governmental guidelines regulating these programs. Default rates on student loans above the federal threshold, or failure to comply with federal guidelines, is cause for review of an institution's overall conformity to ATS standards of accreditation.

2.7 For schools related to colleges or universities, integrity requires that these schools contribute to the overall goals of the larger institution and support its policies and procedures.

3 LEARNING, TEACHING, AND RESEARCH: THEOLOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP

A theological school is a community of faith and learning that cultivates habits of theological reflection, nurtures wise and skilled ministerial practice, and contributes to the formation of spiritual awareness and moral sensitivity. Within this context, the task of theological scholarship is central. It includes the interrelated activities of learning, teaching, and research.

3.1 Activities of Theological Scholarship: Learning, Teaching, and Research

3.1.0 Learning and teaching occur in the classroom and through experiences outside the classroom; the responsibilities of teaching and learning rest with both students and faculty; the collaborative nature of theological scholarship requires that people teach and learn from one another in communal settings; and research is integral to the quality of both learning and teaching.

3.1.1 *Learning*

3.1.1.1 Learning in a theological school should reflect the goals of the total curriculum and be appropriate to post-baccalaureate education.

3.1.1.2 Learning should cultivate scholarly discourse and result in the ability to think critically and constructively, conduct research, use library resources, and engage in the practice of ministry.

3.1.1.3 Learning should foster, in addition to the acquisition of knowledge, the capacity to understand and assess one's tradition and identity, and to integrate materials from various theological disciplines and modes of

instructional engagement in ways that enhance ministry and cultivate emotional and spiritual maturity.

3.1.2 *Teaching*

3.1.2.1 Teaching should involve faculty, librarians, and students working together in an environment of mutual learning, respect, and engagement.

3.1.2.2 Instructional methods should use the diversity of life experiences represented by the students, by faith communities, and by the larger cultural context. Instructional methods and the use of technology should be sensitive to the diversity of student populations, different learning styles of students, and the importance of communities of learning, and the instructional goals.

3.1.2.3 Courses are a central place of interaction between teachers and learners. The way the instructor arranges the work and structures the class should encourage theological conversation. Courses and programs of study should reflect an awareness of the diversity of worldwide and local settings. In the development of new courses and the review of syllabi, faculty should interact with one another, with librarians, with their students, with the church, and with the developing fields of knowledge. Course development and review best occur in the context of the goals of the entire curriculum.

3.1.3 *Research*

3.1.3.1 Research is an essential component of theological scholarship and should be evident in the work of both teachers and students. Theological research is both an individual and a communal enterprise, and is properly undertaken in constructive relationship with the academy, with the church, and with the wider public.

3.1.3.2 As a function of learning, research involves the skills needed both to discover information and to integrate new information with established understandings. As a function of teaching, research assimilates sources of information, constructs patterns of understanding, and uncovers new information in order to strengthen classroom experiences.

3.1.4 An institution shall demonstrate its ongoing efforts to ensure the quality of teaching, learning, and research within the context of its purpose, and as understood by the relevant scholarly and ecclesial communities.

3.2 Characteristics of Theological Scholarship

3.2.0 Patterns of collaboration, freedom of inquiry, relationships with diverse publics, and a global awareness are important characteristics of theological scholarship.

3.2.1 *Scholarly Collaboration*

3.2.1.1 The activities of theological scholarship—teaching, learning, and research—are collaborative efforts among faculty, librarians, and students, and foster a lifelong commitment to learning and reflection.

3.2.1.2 Scholarship occurs in a variety of contexts in the theological school. These include courses, independent study, the library, student and faculty interaction, congregational and field settings, and courses in universities and other graduate level institutions. In each of these settings, mutual respect among scholarly inquirers characterizes theological scholarship.

3.2.1.3 Collaboration and communication extend beyond the theological school's immediate environment to relate it to the wider community of the church, the academy, and the society. Theological scholarship is enhanced by active engagement with the diversity and global extent of those wider publics, and it requires a consciousness of racial, ethnic, gender, and global diversities. In accordance with the school's purpose and constituencies, insofar as possible, the members of the school's own community of learning should also represent diversity in race, age, ethnic origin, and gender.

3.2.2 *Freedom of Inquiry*

3.2.2.0 Both in an institution's internal life and in its relationship with its publics, freedom of inquiry is indispensable for good theological education. This freedom, while variously understood, has both religious roots and an established value in North American higher education. Theological schools have a responsibility to maintain their institutional purpose, which for many schools includes confessional commitments and specific responsibilities for faculty as stipulated by these commitments. Schools shall uphold the freedom of inquiry necessary for genuine and faithful scholarship, articulate their understanding of that freedom, formally adopt policies to implement that understanding and ensure procedural fairness, and carefully adhere to those policies.[1]

3.2.3 *Involvement with Diverse Publics*

3.2.3.1 Theological scholarship requires engagement with a diverse and manifold set of publics. Although the particular purpose of a school will influence the balance and forms of this engagement, schools shall assume responsibility for relating to the church, the academic community, and the broader public.

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[1]The Association has adopted a policy statement on "Academic Freedom and Tenure" and published it in the ATS *Bulletin*, Part 5.

3.2.3.2 Theological scholarship informs and enriches the reflective life of the church. The school should demonstrate awareness of the diverse manifestations of religious community encompassed by the term *church*: congregations, denominations, parachurch organizations, broad confessional traditions, and the church catholic. Library collections, courses, and degree programs should represent the historical breadth, cultural difference, confessional diversity, and global scope of Christian life and thought.

3.2.3.3 The theological faculty contributes to the advancement of learning within theological education and, more broadly, in the academic community, by contributions to the scholarly study of religion and by interpretation of the role of religion in higher education.

3.2.3.4 Theological scholarship contributes to the articulation of religion's role and influence in the public sphere. The faculty and administration should take responsibility for the appropriate exercise of this public interpretive role to enrich the life of a culturally and religiously diverse society.

3.2.4 *Globalization*

3.2.4.1 Theological teaching, learning, and research require patterns of institutional and educational practice that contribute to an awareness and appreciation of global inter-connectedness and interdependence, particularly as they relate to the mission of the church. These patterns are intended to enhance the ways institutions participate in the ecumenical, dialogical, evangelistic, and justice efforts of the church. The term *globalization* has been used to identify these patterns and practices collectively.

3.2.4.2 Globalization is cultivated by curricular attention to cross-cultural issues as well as the study of other major religions; by opportunities for cross-cultural experiences; by the composition of the faculty, governing board, and student body; by professional development of faculty members; and by the design of community activities and worship.

3.2.4.3 Schools shall develop practices of teaching, learning, and research (comprehensively understood as theological scholarship) that encourage global awareness and responsiveness.

4 THE THEOLOGICAL CURRICULUM

The theological curriculum is the means by which teaching and learning are formally ordered to educational goals.

4.1 Goals of the Theological Curriculum

4.1.1 In a theological school, the over-arching goal is the development of theological understanding, that is, aptitude for theological reflection and wisdom pertaining to responsible life in faith. Comprehended in this over-arching goal are others such as deepening spiritual awareness, growing in moral sensibility and character, gaining an intellectual grasp of the tradition of a faith community, and acquiring the abilities requisite to the exercise of ministry in that community. These goals, and the processes and practices leading to their attainment, are normally intimately interwoven and should not be separated from one another.

4.1.2 The emphasis placed on particular goals and their configuration will vary, both from school to school (depending on the understanding of institutional purpose), and within each school (depending on the variety of educational programs offered). The ordering of teaching and learning toward particular sets of goals is embodied in the degree programs of the school and in the specific curricula followed in those programs. The theological curriculum, comprehensively understood, embraces all those activities and experiences provided by the school to enable students to achieve the intended goals. More narrowly understood, the curriculum is the array of specific activities (e.g., courses, practica, supervised ministry, spiritual formation experiences, theses) explicitly required in a degree program. In both the more comprehensive and the more narrow sense, the entire curriculum should be seen as a set of practices with a formative aim—the development of intellectual, spiritual, moral, and vocational or professional capacities—and careful attention must be given to the coherence and mutual enhancement of its various elements.

4.2 Degree Programs

4.2.0 Degree programs approved by the ATS Commission on Accrediting are post-baccalaureate and fall into several groups. It should be noted that these categories are not mutually exclusive and that there is some natural overlapping among them. Programs at the level of the first graduate theological degree are of two main kinds: (1) some are oriented primarily toward ministerial leadership and (2) some toward general theological studies. Programs at the advanced level, normally presupposing a first theological degree, are of two main kinds: (1) those that focus upon advanced ministerial leadership and (2) those directed primarily toward theological research and teaching.

> 4.2.0.1 When ATS institutions offer more than one degree program, they shall articulate the distinctions among the degrees with regard to their educational and vocational intent. Institutions shall articulate the goals and

objectives of each degree program they offer and assure that the design of its curriculum is in accordance with institutional purpose and the ATS accreditation standards.

4.2.0.2 The number of students enrolled in any degree program shall be sufficient to provide a community of learning in that degree program.

4.2.0.3 Schools shall follow the recommended nomenclature for all ATS-approved degree programs. In cases where governmental licensing, charter requirements, or institutional federation agreements preclude use of recommended nomenclature, the Commission on Accrediting will consider alternate degree nomenclature. In cases where the standards provide alternate nomenclature for the same kind of degree program (e.g., M.R.E. or M.A. in Religious Education, Th.M. or S.T.M., Ph.D. or Th.D.), the nomenclature employed reflects the history or policies of the schools offering the degree programs.

4.2.0.4 Degree programs shall be approved by the Commission on Accrediting according to the Association's formally adopted procedures (cf. procedures).

4.2.1 *Basic programs oriented toward ministerial leadership*

4.2.1.1 Curricula for programs oriented toward ministerial leadership have certain closely integrated, common features. *First*, they provide a structured opportunity to develop a thorough, discriminating understanding and personal appropriation of the heritage of the community of faith (e.g., its Scripture, tradition, doctrines, and practices) in its historical and contemporary expressions. *Second*, they assist students in understanding the cultural realities and social settings within which religious communities live and carry out their missions, as well as the institutional life of those communities themselves. The insights of cognate disciplines such as the social sciences, the natural sciences, philosophy, and the arts enable a knowledge and appreciation of the broader context of the religious tradition, including cross-cultural and global aspects. *Third*, they provide opportunities for formational experiences through which students may grow in those personal qualities essential for the practice of ministry, namely, emotional maturity, personal faith, moral integrity, and social concern. *Fourth*, they assist students to gain the capacities for entry into and growth in the practice of the particular form of ministry to which the program is oriented. Instruction in these various areas of theological study should be so conducted as to demonstrate their interdependence, their theological character, and their common orientation toward the goals of the degree program. The educational program in all its dimensions should be designed and carried out in such a way as to enable students to function constructively as ministerial leaders in the particular communities in which they intend to work, and to foster an awareness of the need for continuing education.

4.2.1.2 The following degree nomenclature is included among these kinds of curricular programs: Master of Divinity; Master of Arts in Religious Education/Master of Religious Education; Master of Arts in _____ (e.g., Counseling); Master of Sacred Music/Master of Church Music.

4.2.2 *Basic programs oriented toward general theological studies*

4.2.2.1 First graduate theological degrees in basic programs oriented toward general theological studies have in common the purpose of providing understanding in theological disciplines. These programs may be designed for general knowledge of theology or for background in specific disciplines, or for interdisciplinary studies. They are intended as the basis for further graduate study or for other educational purposes. Nomenclature may differ according to the history of its use in the particular school. The curricula for these degrees should be developed in relation to the institution's distinctive goals for the programs. A critical investigation of Scripture, tradition, and theology is essential for all of the programs, while some may also emphasize research methods, teaching skills, or competence in specific theological disciplines. Depending on the intention of the degree, appropriate formational experiences are to be provided that will develop the qualities essential for the application of the degree. Adequate faculty and instructional resources must be available, with special attention given to particular areas of focus within the programs.

4.2.2.2 Degrees of this kind are offered with the following nomenclature: Master of Arts; Master of Arts (Religion); Master of Theological Studies.

4.2.3 *Advanced programs oriented toward ministerial leadership*

4.2.3.1 Advanced programs in ministerial leadership presuppose a basic theological degree. All are designed to deepen the basic knowledge and skill in ministry so that students may engage in ministry with increasing professional, intellectual, and spiritual integrity. Emphasis is upon the practice of ministry informed by analytic and ministerial research skills. Certain curricular features are common to the advanced programs in this category. Each degree program emphasizes the mastery of advanced knowledge informing the understanding of the nature and purposes of ministry, the competencies gained through advanced study, and the integration of the many dimensions of ministry. Each degree program includes the completion of a final culminating written project/report or dissertation. Schools offering any of these advanced degrees are expected to make explicit the criteria by which the doctoral level of studies is identified, implemented, and assessed.

4.2.3.2 Degrees offered in this broad category have the following nomenclature: Doctor of Ministry; Doctor of Missiology; Doctor of Education; Doctor of Musical Arts.

4.2.4 *Advanced programs primarily oriented toward theological research and teaching*

4.2.4.1 These programs oriented toward theological research and teaching presuppose a basic post-baccalaureate theological degree and permit students to concentrate in one or more of the theological disciplines. They equip students for teaching and research in theological schools, colleges, and universities, or for the scholarly enhancement of ministerial practice, or for other scholarly activities. They provide for both specialization and breadth in education and training; they provide instruction in research methods and procedures relevant to the area of specialization; and normally they provide training in teaching methods and skills, or in other scholarly tasks. Curricula for these programs provide, first of all, a structured opportunity to develop an advanced critical understanding and appreciation of a specific area of theological studies or in interdisciplinary relationships and cognate studies. Second, they assist students in understanding cultural realities and social settings within which religious communities and institutions of theological or religious education exist and carry out their missions, as well as the institutional life of these communities and institutions themselves. Third, they assist students to grow in those personal and spiritual qualities essential for the practice of scholarly ministry in theological environments. Fourth, they allow students to gain the capacities for teaching, writing, and conducting advanced research.

4.2.4.2 The nomenclature for advanced masters' degrees includes the Master of Theology and Master of Sacred Theology. The nomenclature for doctoral degrees oriented to research and teaching includes the Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of Theology.

4.3 Degree Program Standards

4.3.0 To provide for a common public recognition of theological degrees, to assure quality, and to enhance evaluative efforts, ATS establishes standards for each degree program. Each degree program should reflect the characteristics of the theological curriculum (see 4.1-4.2). The degree standards articulate the following requirements: purpose of the degree; primary goals of the program; program content, location and duration; admission and resource requirements; and educational evaluation. The degree programs offered by ATS-accredited institutions shall conform to these standards.

4.4 Other Instructional Programs

4.4.0 In addition to their degree programs, theological schools contribute to their various publics through other programs of learning and teaching. Although these programs do not culminate in degrees, they should be compatible with the institution's primary purpose of graduate theological education.

4.4.1 *Characteristics*

4.4.1.1 Programs that do not lead to degrees should remain appropriate to institutional purpose and will differ according to their student audience: for example, continuing education for clergy, programs for racial/ethnic or linguistic minority groups, or programs for enrichment.

4.4.1.2 Such programs should be conducted with the proper administrative and faculty oversight, including design, approval, staffing, financing, and evaluation.

4.4.1.3 Faculty who teach in such programs should be appropriately qualified. Normally, qualification will be demonstrated by the possession of an appropriate graduate theological degree and by significant experience in the field in which one is teaching. Students in these programs should have appropriate access to the instructor and to learning resources commensurate with the level and purpose of the program.

4.4.2 *Types of programs*

4.4.2.1 Schools may offer programs of study consisting either of courses for which graduate academic credit is granted or educational events without such credit.

4.4.2.2 Programs of study that grant graduate credit are appropriate for enrichment, personal growth, the development of lay leaders, or special, non-degree emphasis for vocational ministerial leaders. Such programs require students to have a baccalaureate degree, or its educational equivalent, for admission and to complete a program comprising courses appropriate for graduate credit. Completion of the program of study results in some formal recognition, but not a degree. Credits earned toward these programs may subsequently be transferred into a graduate degree program.

4.4.2.3 Programs of study that do not carry academic credit may include courses, workshops, lectures, and other types of educational experiences on topics related to the theological curriculum or to the mission and ministry of the church. These programs and events may be designed for continuing education of ministers, for basic theological education, for personal enrichment, or for other purposes consistent with the character of the school. Because no academic credit is offered, those enrolled need not hold the baccalaureate degree. Requirements for admission to particular programs or events are at the discretion of the institution.

5 LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES

The library is a central resource for theological scholarship and the theological curriculum. It is integral to the purpose of the school through its contribution to teaching, learning, and research, and it functions as a partner in curriculum development and implementation. The library's educational effectiveness depends both on the quality of its collections and information resources and on the vision and organization of its administration. To accomplish its task, the library requires appropriate collections, effective information technology, and sufficient human and physical resources.

5.1 Library Collections

5.1.1 Theological study requires extensive encounter with historical and contemporary texts. While theological education is informed by many resources, the textual tradition is central to theological inquiry. Texts provide a point of entry to theological subject matter as well as a place of encounter with it. Theological libraries serve the church by preserving its textual tradition both in print and in electronic forms, for the current educational needs of faculty and students, and for the future.

5.1.2 To ensure effective growth of the collection, schools shall have an appropriate collection development policy. Collections in a theological school shall hold materials of importance for theological study and the practice of ministry that represent the historical breadth and confessional diversity of Christian thought and life. The collection shall include relevant materials from cognate disciplines and basic texts from other religious traditions, and demonstrate sensitivity to issues of diversity, inclusiveness, and globalization to ensure that theological learners and researchers have access to the variety of voices that speak to theological subjects.

5.1.3 Because libraries seek to preserve the textual tradition of the church, they may choose to build unique special collections, such as institutional, regional, or denominational archives.

5.1.4 In addition to print materials, collections shall include other media and electronic resources as appropriate to the curriculum, and ensure access to relevant remote databases.

5.1.5 The library should promote coordinated collection development with other schools to provide stronger overall library collections.

5.2 Contribution to Teaching, Learning, and Research

5.2.1 The library accomplishes its teaching responsibilities by meeting the bibliographic needs of the library's patrons, offering appropriate reference services, providing assistance in using information technology, teaching theo-

logical bibliography and research methods that foster knowledge of the litera-ture and enable students to locate resources, incorporating library research throughout the curriculum, and helping to serve the information needs of graduates, clergy, and the church.

5.2.2 The library promotes theological learning by providing programs that encourage patrons to develop independent research skills and by preparing them to engage in a lifelong learning process.

5.2.3 Theological research is supported through collection development and information technology and by helping faculty and students develop research skills.

5.2.4 The library should provide an environment conducive to learning and scholarly interaction.

5.3 Partnership in Curriculum Development

5.3.1 The library collaborates in the school's curriculum by providing collections and services that reflect the institution's educational goals.

5.3.2 Teaching faculty should consult with library staff to ensure that the library supports the current curriculum and the research needs of faculty and students. Library staff should participate in long-range curriculum planning and antici-pate future intellectual and technological developments that might affect the library.

5.4 Administration and Leadership

5.4.1 In freestanding theological schools, the chief library administrator has overall responsibility for library administration, collection development, and effective educational collaboration. The chief administrator of the library should participate in the formation of institutional policy regarding long-range educa-tional and financial planning, and should ordinarily be a voting member of the faculty. Normally, this person should possess graduate degrees in library science and in theological studies or another pertinent discipline.

5.4.2 When a theological library is part of a larger institutional library, a theological librarian should provide leadership in theological collection devel-opment and ensure effective educational collaboration with the faculty and students in the institution's theological school, and should ordinarily be a voting member of the theological faculty.

5.4.3 The library administrator should exercise responsibility for regular and ongoing evaluation of the collection, the patterns of use, services provided by the library, and library personnel.

5.5 Resources

5.5.1 Each school shall have the resources necessary for the operation of an adequate library program. These include human, financial, technological, and physical resources.

5.5.2 The professional and support staff shall be of such number and quality as are needed to provide the necessary services, and commensurate with the size and character of the institution. Professional staff shall possess the skills necessary for information technology, collection development and maintenance, and public service. Insofar as possible, staff shall be appointed with a view toward diversity in race, ethnicity, and gender. Where appropriate, other qualified members of the professional staff may also have faculty status. Institutions shall affirm the freedom of inquiry necessary for the role of professional librarians in theological scholarship.

5.5.3 An adequate portion of the annual institutional educational and general budget shall be devoted to the support of the library. Adequacy will be evaluated in comparison with other similar institutions, as well as by the library's achievement of its own objectives as defined by its collection development policy.

5.5.4 Adequate facilities include sufficient space for readers and staff, adequate shelving for the book collection, appropriate space for non-print media, adequate and flexible space for information technology, and climate control for all materials, especially rare books. Collections should be easily accessible and protected from deterioration.

5.5.5 Adequacy of library collections may be attained through institutional self-sufficiency or cooperative arrangements. In the latter instance, fully adequate collections or electronic resources are not required of individual member schools, but each school shall demonstrate contracted and reliable availability and actual use.

5.5.6 In its collaborative relationships with other institutions, a school remains accountable for the quality of library resources available to its students and faculty.

6 FACULTY

The members of the faculty of a theological school constitute a collaborative community of faith and learning, and are crucial to the scholarly activities of teaching, learning, and research. A theological school's faculty normally comprises the full-time teachers, continuing part-time teachers, and teachers who are engaged occasionally or for one time. In order for faculty members to accomplish their purposes, theological schools should assure them appropriate structure, support, and opportunities.

6.1 Faculty Qualifications, Responsibilities, Development, and Employment

6.1.1 Faculty members shall possess the appropriate credentials for graduate theological education, normally demonstrated by the attainment of a research doctorate or, in certain cases, a professional doctorate. In addition to academic preparation, ministerial and ecclesial experience is an important qualification in the composition of the faculty.

6.1.2 In the context of institutional purpose and the confessional commitments affirmed by a faculty member when appointed, faculty members shall be free to seek knowledge and communicate their findings.

6.1.3 Composition of the faculty should be guided by the purpose of the institution, and attention to this composition should be an integral component of long-range planning in the institution. Faculty should be of sufficient diversity and number to meet the multifaceted demands of teaching, learning, and research. Hiring practices should be attentive to the value of diversity in race, ethnicity, and gender. The faculty should also include members who have doctorates from different schools, and who exemplify various methods and points of view.

6.1.4 The faculty who teach in a program on a continuing basis shall exercise responsibility for the planning, design, and oversight of its curriculum.

6.1.5 Each school shall articulate and demonstrate that it follows its policies concerning faculty members in such areas as faculty rights and responsibilities; freedom of inquiry; procedures for recruitment, appointment, retention, promotion, and dismissal; criteria for faculty evaluation; faculty compensation; research leaves; and other conditions of employment. Policies concerning these matters shall be published in an up-to-date faculty handbook.

6.1.6 Theological scholarship is enriched by continuity within a faculty and safeguards for the freedom of inquiry for individual members. Therefore, each school shall demonstrate effective procedures for the retention of a qualified community of scholars, through tenure or some other appropriate procedure.

6.1.7 The institution should support its faculty through such means as adequate salaries, suitable working conditions, and support services.

6.1.8 The work load of faculty members in teaching and administration shall permit adequate attention to students, to scholarly pursuits, and to other ecclesial and institutional concerns.

6.2 Faculty Role in Teaching

6.2.1 Teachers shall have freedom in the classroom to discuss the subjects in which they have competence.

6.2.2 Faculty should endeavor to include, within the teaching of their respective disciplines, theological reflection that enables students to integrate their learning from the various disciplines, field education, and personal formation.

6.2.3 Faculty should be afforded opportunities to enhance teaching skills as a regular component of faculty development.

6.2.4 Appropriate resources shall be available to facilitate the teaching task, including but not limited to, classroom space, office space, and access to scholarly materials, including library and other information resources.

6.2.5 Schools shall develop and implement mechanisms for evaluating faculty performance, including teaching competence. These mechanisms should involve faculty members and students, as well as administrators.

6.3 Faculty Role in Student Learning

6.3.1 Faculty shall be involved in evaluating the quality of student learning by identifying appropriate outcomes and assessing the extent to which the learning goals of individual courses and degree programs have been achieved.

6.3.2 To assure the quality of learning, faculty should be appropriately involved in development of the library collection and other resources necessary for student learning.

6.3.3 Faculty should participate in practices and procedures that contribute to students' learning, including opportunities for regular advising and interaction with students, and attentiveness to the learning needs of diverse student populations.

6.3.4 Faculty should foster integration of the diverse learning objectives of the curriculum so that students may successfully accomplish the purposes of the stated degree programs.

6.4 Faculty Role in Theological Research

6.4.1 Faculty are expected to engage in research and each school shall articulate clearly its expectations and requirements for faculty research, and shall have explicit criteria and procedures for the evaluation of research that are congruent

with the purpose of the school and with commonly accepted standards in higher education.

6.4.2 Schools shall provide structured opportunities for faculty research and intellectual growth, such as regular research leaves and faculty colloquia.

6.4.3 In the context of its institutional purpose, each school shall ensure that faculty have freedom to pursue critical questions, to contribute to scholarly discussion, and to publish the findings of their research.

6.4.4 Faculty members should make available the results of their research through such means as scholarly publications, constructive participation in learned societies, and informed contributions to the intellectual life of church and society, as well as through their teaching.

7 STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADMISSION, SERVICES, AND PLACEMENT

The students of a theological school are central to the educational activities of the institution. They are also a primary constituency served by the school's curriculum and programs, and with the faculty, constitute a community of faith and learning. Schools are responsible for the quality of their policies and practices related to recruitment, admission, student support, and placement.

7.1 Recruitment

7.1.1 Schools shall be able to demonstrate that their policies and practices of student recruitment are consistent with the purpose of the institution.

7.1.2 In recruitment efforts, services, and publications, institutions shall accurately represent themselves as well as the vocational opportunities related to their degree programs.

7.2 Admission

7.2.1 In the development of admission policies and procedures, a theological school shall establish criteria appropriate for each degree program it offers. Admission criteria should give attention to applicants' academic, personal, and spiritual qualifications, as well as their potential for making a contribution to church and society.

7.2.2 Schools shall be able to demonstrate that they operate on a post-baccalaureate level, that the students they admit are capable of graduate-level studies, and that their standards and requirements for admission to all degree programs are clearly defined, fairly implemented, and appropriately related to the purpose of the institution.

7.2.3 Schools shall regularly review the quality of applicants admitted to each degree program and develop institutional strategies to maintain and enhance the overall quality of the student population.

7.2.4 Schools shall give evidence of efforts in admissions to encourage diversity in such areas as race, ethnicity, region, denomination, or gender.

7.2.5 Schools shall encourage a broad baccalaureate preparation, for instance, studies in world history, philosophy, languages and literature, the natural sciences, the social sciences, music and other fine arts, and religion.

7.3 Student Services

7.3.1 Policies regarding students' rights and responsibilities, as well as the institution's code of discipline, shall be clearly identified and published.

7.3.2 Schools shall regularly and systematically evaluate the appropriateness, adequacy, and use of student services for the purpose of strengthening the overall program.

7.3.3 Students should receive reliable and accessible services wherever they are enrolled and however the educational programs are offered.

7.3.4 Schools shall maintain adequate student records regarding admission materials, course work attempted and completed, and in other areas as determined by the school's policy. Appropriate backup files should be maintained and updated on a regular basis. The institution shall ensure the security of files from physical destruction or loss and from unauthorized access.

7.3.5 Institutions shall demonstrate that program requirements, tuition, and fees are appropriate for the degree programs they offer.

7.3.6 Institutions shall publish all requirements for degree programs, including courses, non-credit requirements, and grading and other academic policies.

7.3.7 Student financial aid, when provided, should be distributed according to the guidelines detailed in "Student Financial Aid" (see ATS *Bulletin 41*, Part 5).

7.3.8 Senior administrators and financial aid officers shall review student educational debt and develop institutional strategies regarding student's borrowing for theological education. Based on estimates of compensation graduates will receive, the school should provide financial counseling to students so as to minimize borrowing, explore alternative funding, and provide the fullest possible disclosure of the impact of loan repayment after graduation.

7.3.9 The institution shall have a process for responding to complaints raised by students in areas related to ATS accrediting standards, and schools shall maintain a record of such formal student complaints for ATS review.

7.4 Placement

7.4.1 In keeping with institutional purpose and ecclesial context, and upon student's successful completion of their degree programs, schools shall provide appropriate assistance to persons seeking employment relevant to their degrees.

7.4.2 Theological schools should monitor the placement of graduates in appropriate positions and review admissions policies in light of trends in placement.

7.4.3 The institution should, in the context of its purpose and constituency, act as an advocate for students who are members of groups that have been disadvantaged in employment because of their race, ethnicity, and/or gender.

8 AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE

Governance is based on a bond of trust among boards, administration, faculty, students, and ecclesial bodies. Each institution should articulate its own theologically informed understanding of how this bond of trust becomes operational as a form of shared governance. Institutional stewardship is the responsibility of all, not just the governing board. Good institutional life requires that all institutional stewards know and carry out their responsibilities effectively, as well as encourage others to do the same. Governance occurs in a legal context, and its boundaries are set by formal relationships with ecclesiastical authority, with public authority as expressed in law and charter, and with private citizens and other legally constituted bodies in the form of contracts. The governance of a theological school, however, involves more than the legal relationships and bylaws that define patterns of responsibility and accountability. It is the structure by which participants in the governance process exercise faithful leadership on behalf of the purpose of the theological school.

8.1 Authority

8.1.1 Authority is the exercise of rights, responsibilities, and powers accorded to a theological school by its charter, articles of incorporation and bylaws, and ecclesiastical and civil authorizations applicable to it or, the overall educational institution of which it is a part. A theological school derives from these mandates the legal and moral authority to establish educational programs; to confer certificates, diplomas, or degrees; to provide for personnel and facilities; and to assure institutional quality and integrity.

8.1.2 The structure and scope of the theological school's authority are based on the patterns of its relationship to other institutions of higher education or ecclesiastical bodies. Some theological schools have full authority for all institutional and educational operations. Other schools, related to colleges or universities, may have limited authority for institutional operations, although they

may have full authority over the educational programs. Still other schools are related to ecclesiastical bodies in particular ways, and authority is shared by the institution and the ecclesiastical body. All three kinds of schools have different patterns for the exercise of authority, and in some schools these patterns may be blended.

8.1.2.1 Schools with full authority shall have a governing board with responsibilities for maintaining the purpose, viability, vitality, and integrity of the institution; the achievement of institutional policies; the selection of chief administrative leadership; and the provision of physical, fiscal, and human resources. The board is the legally constituted body that is responsible for managing the assets of the institution in trust.

8.1.2.2 Schools where authority is limited by or derived from their relationship to a college or university shall identify clearly where the authority for maintaining the integrity and vitality of the theological school resides and how that authority is to be exercised in actual practice. Schools within universities or colleges should have an appropriate advisory board whose roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in the institution's official documents.

8.1.2.3 Schools with authority limited by their ecclesiastical relationships shall develop, in dialogue with their sponsoring church bodies, a formal statement concerning the operative structure of governance for the institution. This statement must make clear where the authority for maintaining the integrity and vitality of the school resides and how that authority is to be exercised in actual practice. In schools of this type, the authority of the governing board shall be clearly specified in appropriate ecclesiastical and institutional documents.

8.1.3 Governing boards delegate authority to the faculty and administration to fulfill their appropriate roles and responsibilities. Such authority shall be established and set forth in the institution's official documents and carried out in governing practices.

8.1.4 In multilocation institutions, the assignment of authority and responsibilities should be clearly defined in the institution's official documents and equitably administered.

8.2 Governance

8.2.1 While final authority for an institution is vested in the governing board and defined by the institution's official documents, each school shall articulate a structure and process of governance that appropriately reflects the collegial nature of theological education. The governance process should identify the school's constituencies and publics, recognize the multiple lines of accountability, and balance competing accountabilities in a manner shaped by the institution's charter, purpose, and particular theological and denominational commitments.

8.2.2 Shared governance follows from the collegial nature of theological education. Unique and overlapping roles and responsibilities of the governing board, faculty, administrators, students, and other identified delegated authorities should be defined in a way that allows all partners to exercise their mandated or delegated leadership. Governance requires a carefully delineated process for the initiation, review, approval, implementation, and evaluation of governing policies, ensuring that all necessary policies and procedures are in place. Special attention should be given to policies regarding freedom of inquiry, board-administrator prerogatives, procedural fairness, sexual harassment, and discrimination.

8.2.3 The collaborative nature of governance provides for institutional learning and self-correction, constantly developing the theological school's knowledge of specific tasks, and remaining alert to developments in other organizations and institutions.

8.3 The Roles of the Governing Board, Administration, Faculty, and Students in Governance Processes

The various roles that the board, the administrative leadership, and the faculty play in the development of policy and the exercise of authority should be clearly articulated. Because of their different histories and patterns of governance and administration, the role of the governing board varies from institution to institution; and the role also varies dependent upon the authority vested in the governing board and upon the institution's relationship to other educational and denominational structures.

8.3.1 *The Governing Board*

8.3.1.1 The governing board is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of the institution's integrity and its freedom from inappropriate external and internal pressures, and from destructive interference or restraints. It shall attend to the well-being of the institution by exercising proper fiduciary responsibility, adequate financial oversight, proper delegation of authority to the institution's administrative officers and faculty, and the maintenance of procedural fairness and freedom of inquiry.

8.3.1.2 The governing board shall be accountable for the institution's adherence to requirements duly established by public authorities and to accreditation standards established by The Association of Theological Schools and by any other accrediting or certifying agencies to which the institution is formally related.

8.3.1.3 In accordance with the school's purpose and constituencies, the governing board shall include individuals who possess the qualifications appropriate to the task they will undertake, and who reflect the desirability of diversity regarding race, ethnicity, and gender. As fiduciaries, they should commit themselves loyally to the institution, its purpose, and its

overall well-being. They should lead by affirming the good that is done and by asking thoughtful questions and challenging problematic situations. New members of the board should be oriented to their responsibilities, and the structures and procedures the board uses to accomplish its tasks.

8.3.1.4 Subject to the terms of its charter and bylaws, the board chooses the chief administrative leadership, appoints faculty, confers degrees, enters into contracts, approves budgets, and manages the assets of the institution. If, in accordance with an institution's specific character and traditions, certain of these powers are reserved to one or more other governing entities, the specific character of these restrictions shall be made clear.

8.3.1.5 The governing board shall require ongoing institutional planning and evaluation of outcomes to assure faithful implementation of the school's purpose, priorities, and denominational and theological commitments.

8.3.1.6 The governing board shall create and employ adequate structures for implementing and administering policy, and shall delegate to the school's chief administrative leadership authority commensurate with such responsibilities. In turn, it requires from these officers adequate performance and accountability.

8.3.1.7 In its actions and processes, the board serves in relationship to a variety of constituencies, both internal (e.g., administration, faculty, students, staff) and external (e.g., graduates, denominations, congregations, etc.) and should seek creative initiatives from all of these constituencies. Individual board members, who are drawn from various constituencies, shall exercise their responsibility on the behalf of the institution as a whole.

8.3.1.8 The board shall exercise its authority only as a group. An individual member, unless authorized by the board, shall not commit the institution's resources nor bind it to any course of action, nor intrude upon the administration of the institution.

8.3.1.9 The board shall have a conflict of interest policy. Ordinarily, members should not be engaged in business relationships with the institution, nor should they derive any material benefit from serving on the board. In the event that conflicts of interest arise, a board member must recuse himself or herself from any vote or participation in the board's decision on that issue.

8.3.1.10 Governing boards should be structured to conduct their work effectively. Board membership should be large enough to represent the institution's significant constituencies but not so large as to be unwieldy in its decision-making. The frequency of board meetings should be determined by the number and complexity of the issues the board is called upon to address. An executive committee of the board may be given the authority to address issues between meetings of the full board.

8.3.1.11 The board has the responsibility to hold itself accountable for the overall performance of its duties, and shall evaluate the effectiveness of its own procedures. It should also seek to educate itself about the issues it faces and about procedures used by effective governing bodies in carrying out their work. The board shall evaluate its members on a regular basis.

8.3.2 *The Administration*

8.3.2.1 Under the governing board's clearly stated policies and requisite authority, the chief administrative leadership is responsible for achieving the school's purpose by developing and implementing institutional policies and administrative structures in collaboration with the governing board, faculty, students, administrative staff, and other key constituencies.

8.3.2.2 Administrative leaders should implement the institution's theological convictions and shared values in the way they manage the school's financial, physical, and human resources; consult and communicate with constituencies; and ensure fairness in all evaluation and planning activities.

8.3.2.3 Administrative leaders and staff shall include, insofar as possible, individuals reflecting the institution's constituencies, taking into account the desirability of diversity in race, ethnicity, and gender. They should be sufficient in number and ability to fulfill their responsibilities. They should have adequate resources and authority appropriate to their responsibilities.

8.3.2.4 The responsibilities and structures of accountability shall be clearly defined in appropriate documents.

8.3.3 *The Faculty*

8.3.3.1 Within the overall structure of governance of the school, authority over certain functions shall be delegated to the faculty and structures devised by which this authority is exercised. Normally, the faculty should provide leadership in the development of academic policy, oversight of academic and curricular programs and decisions, establishment of admissions criteria, and recommendation of candidates for graduation. The faculty should participate in the processes concerning the appointment, retention, and promotion in rank of faculty members.

8.3.3.2 Beyond the matters specifically delegated to the faculty, the faculty should contribute to the overall decision-making as determined by the institution's structure of governance. Such involvement is particularly important in the development of the institution's purpose statement and in institutional evaluation and planning.

8.3.4 *Students*

8.3.4.0 Where students take part in the formal structures of governance, their roles and responsibilities should be clearly delineated.

9 INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

In order to achieve their purposes, institutions need adequate human, financial, physical, and institutional data resources. Because of their theological character, ATS schools give particular attention to human resources and to the quality of the institutional environment in which they function. Good stewardship requires attention by each institution to the context, local and global, in which it deploys its resources and a commitment to develop appropriate patterns of cooperation with other institutions, which may at times lead to the formation of clusters.

9.1 Human Resources

9.1.1 The theological school should value and seek to enhance the quality of the human lives it touches. The human fabric of the institution is enriched by including a wide range of persons. The institution should devote adequate time and energy to the processes by which persons are recruited, enabled to participate in the institution, nurtured in their development, and prepared for their various tasks within the institution. Human resources include students, faculty, administrators, support personnel, trustees, friends, church and public constituencies, volunteers, and external support and consultatives appropriate to the mission of the school.

9.1.2 Theological schools should support the quality of community through such means as policies regarding procedural fairness, discrimination, and sexual harassment.

9.1.3 The theological school shall: (a) engage the numbers and the qualities of human resources needed to implement the programs of the school in keeping with its purpose; (b) develop appropriate personnel policies and procedures to be approved by the board and implemented by the administration; (c) ensure that these policies are clear and adequately published; include reference to job performance evaluation, termination, sexual harassment or misconduct; and conform to applicable requirements mandated by federal, state, or provincial jurisdictions; (d) provide for equitable patterns of compensation; (e) provide clear written job descriptions for all members of the staff; and (f) provide appropriate grievance procedures.

9.2 Financial Resources

9.2.0 Because quality education and sound financial policies are intimately related, theological schools should be governed by the principles of good stewardship in the planning, development, and use of its financial resources. The financial resources should support the purpose of the school effectively and efficiently as well as enable it to achieve its goals. The financial resources of the school should be adequate to support the programs, personnel (faculty, staff, students), and physical plant/space both in the present and for the long term.

The financial resources should allow the school to anticipate and respond to external changes in the economic, social, legal, and religious environment.

9.2.1 *The Financial Condition of the School*

9.2.1.1 Theological schools should maintain the purchasing power of their financial assets and the integrity and useful life of their physical facilities. While year-to-year fluctuations are often unavoidable, schools should maintain economic equilibrium over three or more years, retain the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances, and show reasonable expectations of future financial viability and overall institutional improvement.

9.2.1.2 A theological school shall have stable and predictable sources of revenue such that the current and anticipated total revenue are sufficient to maintain the educational quality of the institution. Projected increases in revenue, including gift income, should be realistic. The use of endowment return to fund expenditures budgets should be prudent and in accordance with applicable law.

9.2.1.3 A theological school should normally balance budgeted revenues and expenditures while employing a prudent endowment spending rate.[2] Deficits weaken the institution and therefore should prompt the administration and trustees to take corrective action. A theological school shall be able to demonstrate that it has operated without cumulative losses across the last three years. If deficits have been recorded or are projected, the school shall have a plan to eliminate present and future deficits that is realistic, understood, and approved by the governing board. When reducing expenditures, the theological school should be mindful of its purpose and attend to the quality and scope of the degree programs.

9.2.1.4 Endowments (including funds functioning as endowment) are frequently a major source of revenue for schools. A theological school (or the larger organization of which it is a part) should adopt a prudent endowment spending formula that contributes to the purpose of the institution while enhancing the stability of revenue for the school. A school shall demonstrate evidence of adequate plans to protect the long-term purchasing power of the endowment from erosion by inflation. The school (or university, diocese,

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[2]The term "endowment spending rate" refers to a common budgeting rule adopted by governing boards. Such a rule limits or controls the consumption of return from the school's endowment (which for purposes of these standards includes all of a school's long-term invested assets, whether endowment, quasi-endowment, or other funds). A common endowment spending goal among colleges and universities with long-term assets, primarily invested in equities, is to budget as revenue five percent of a three-year average of the market value of all long-term invested assets.

order, or other larger organization of which it is a part) shall have formally adopted statements of investment policies and guidelines that set forth for trustees and investment managers the conditions governing the granting or withholding of investment discretion, investment goals of the institution, guidelines for long-term asset allocation, a description of authorized and prohibited transactions, and performance measurement criteria. Trustees should review these policies regularly.

9.2.1.5 The financial condition of theological schools that are units of colleges or universities is influenced by the financial condition of the related institutions. These theological schools should enhance the well-being of the larger institution, while the larger institution should demonstrate appreciation for the special characteristics of theological schools.

9.2.2 *Accounting, Audit, Budget, and Control*

9.2.2.1 A theological school shall adopt internal accounting and reporting systems that are generally used in North American higher education. U.S. schools should follow the principles and procedures for institutional accounting published by the National Association of College and University Business Officers. Canadian schools should follow guidelines published by the Canadian Association of University Business Officers.

9.2.2.2 The institution shall be audited by an external, independent auditor in accordance with the generally accepted auditing standards for colleges and universities (not-for-profit organizations) as published by (for U.S. schools) the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants or (for Canadian schools) the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. If an institution is not freestanding, the larger organization of which it is a part (such as a university or diocese) shall provide an audit of the consolidated entity.

9.2.2.3 The institution shall obtain from an auditor a management letter and shall demonstrate that it has appropriately addressed any recommendations contained in the management letter.

9.2.2.4 A theological school shall ensure that revenues, expenditures, and capital projects are budgeted and submitted for review and approval to the governing board. Budgets should clearly reflect the directions established by the long-range plans of the school. Budgets should be developed in consultation with the administrators, staff, and faculty who bear responsibility for managing the institution's programs and who approve the disbursements.

9.2.2.5 A system of budgetary control and reporting shall be maintained, providing regular and timely reports of revenues and expenditures to those persons with oversight responsibilities.

9.2.2.6 While a theological school may depend upon an external agency or group (such as a denomination, diocese, order, foundation, association of congregations, or other private agency) for financial support, the school's governing board should retain appropriate autonomy in budget allocations and the development of financial policies.

9.2.3 *Business Management*

9.2.3.0 The institution's management responsibilities and organization of business affairs should be clearly defined, with specific assignment of responsibilities appropriately set forth. The financial management and organization as well as the system of reporting shall ensure the integrity of financial records, create appropriate control mechanisms, and provide the governing board, chief administrative leaders, and appropriate others with the information and reports needed for sound decision-making.

9.2.4 *Institutional Development and Advancement*

9.2.4.1 An institutional advancement program is essential to developing financial resources. The advancement program should be planned, organized, and implemented in ways congruent with the principles of the school. It should include annual giving, capital giving, and planned giving, and should be conducted in patterns consistent with relationships and agreements with the school's supporting constituencies. Essential to the success of the institutional advancement program are the role played by the chief administrative leader in fundraising, the leadership and participation of the governing board, graduates' participation, and involvement of faculty, staff, and volunteers. Advancement efforts shall be evaluated on a regular basis.

9.2.4.2 The intention of donors with regard to the use of their gifts shall be respected. The school should also recognize donors and volunteers appropriately.

9.2.4.3 When auxiliary organizations, such as foundations, have been established using the name and/or reputation of the institution, the school should be able to demonstrate that those organizations support institutional aspirations and are regularly audited by independent accountants.

9.3 Physical Resources

9.3.1 The physical resources include space and equipment as well as buildings and grounds. A theological school shall demonstrate that the physical resources it uses are adequate and appropriate for its purpose and programs, and that adequate funds for maintenance and capital renewal are budgeted.

9.3.2 Institutions shall make appropriate efforts to ensure that physical resources are safe, accessible, and free of known hazards. Insofar as possible, facilities should be used in ways that respect the natural environment.

9.3.3 Faculty and staff members should have space that is adequate for the pursuit of their individual work as well as for meeting with students. Physical resources should enhance community interaction among faculty, staff, and students, and should be sufficiently flexible to meet the potentially changing demands faced by the school.

9.3.4 The school should determine the rationale for its policies and practices with regard to student housing, and this rationale should be expressed in a clearly worded statement. Arrangements for student housing should reflect good stewardship of the financial and educational resources of the institution.

9.3.5 Facilities shall be maintained as appropriate so as to avoid problems of deferred maintenance. The institution should maintain a plan that provides a timetable for work and identifies needed financial resources.

9.3.6 When physical resources other than those owned by the institution are used by the school, written agreements should clearly state the conditions governing their use and ensure usage over a sufficient period of time.

9.4 Institutional Data Resources

9.4.0 For planning and evaluation, the school shall create and use various kinds of institutional data to determine the extent to which the institution is attaining its academic and institutional purposes and objectives. The school should provide for the financial costs of developing and maintaining this information. To the extent possible, it should use the most effective current technologies for creating, storing, and transmitting this information within the institution, and it should share appropriate information thus generated among institutions and organizations. The kinds of information and the means by which that information is gathered, stored, retrieved, and analyzed should be appropriate to the size and complexity of the institution.

9.5 Institutional Environment

9.5.1 The internal institutional environment makes it possible for the institution to maximize the various strengths of its human, financial, physical, and information resources in pursuing its stated goals. An institution's environment affects its resiliency and its ability to perform under duress. ATS accreditation evaluation will take into account the ways in which an institution uses its various resources in support of its institutional purpose.

9.5.2 The quality of institutional environment is cultivated and enhanced by promoting effective patterns of leadership and management, by providing

effective exchange of information, and by ensuring that mechanisms are in place to address conflict.

9.6 Cooperative Use of Resources

9.6.1 The theological school should secure access to the resources it needs to fulfill its purpose, administer and allocate these resources wisely and effectively, and be attentive to opportunities for cooperation and sharing of resources with other institutions. Such sharing involves both drawing upon the resources of other institutions and contributing resources to other institutions.

9.6.2 Access to the required resources may be achieved either through ownership or through carefully formulated relationships with other schools or institutions. These relationships may include, for instance, cross-appointments of faculty, cross-registration of students, rental of facilities, and shared access to information required by administrators, faculty, and students in the pursuit of their tasks. Whatever their reason or scope, collaborative arrangements should be carefully designed with sufficient legal safeguards and provisions for review, and with a clear rationale for involvement in such arrangements.

9.7 Clusters

9.7.1 Clusters are formed when a number of schools find that they can best operate by sharing resources in a more integral and systematic way and by establishing structures to manage their cooperative relationships.

9.7.2 The term "cluster" is meant to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. A variety of terms can denote these types of arrangements and a variety of approaches can make them work effectively. Schools should be creative and flexible as they seek to be good stewards of their resources. However devised, cluster arrangements should have clear structural components and effective patterns of operation.

9.7.3 *Structural components*

9.7.3.1 The core membership of a cluster comprises schools holding accredited membership within ATS, but clusters may include associate or candidate members of ATS, as well as other schools and agencies with compatible purposes.

9.7.3.2 Each cluster shall develop a clear definition of purpose and objectives that should be fully understood by the participating schools and their supporting constituencies and based on a realistic assessment that encompasses constituent needs, access of member institutions to one another, available resources, and degree programs offered by the cluster directly or enabled by it.

9.7.3.3 The structure of each cluster shall be appropriate to its purpose and objectives, providing proper balance between the legitimate autonomy of its member institutions and their mutual accountability in terms of their common purposes. An effective cluster arrangement frees students, faculty, and institutions to operate more effectively and creatively. The cluster shall have a clearly defined governance structure that has authority commensurate with responsibility. The governance should enable the cluster to set policies, secure financial support, select administrative officers, and provide other personnel functions.

9.7.3.4 The cluster shall be able to demonstrate financial support from various sources sufficient for the continuity of its functions and for the security of the faculty and staff it appoints, and should engage in appropriate financial planning.

9.7.3.5 These structures and resources shall be regularly evaluated and appropriately adjusted.

9.7.4 *Effectiveness*

9.7.4.1 Evidence of effective operation may include reciprocal flow of students, faculty, and information among the member institutions of a cluster, coordinated schedules and calendars, cross-registration, and common policies in areas such as tuition and student services. Requirements, especially in academic and graduate programs, are determined in such a way as to invite the sharing of resources. Duplication is avoided wherever possible.

9.7.4.2 If a school meets ATS accreditation standards only by virtue of affiliation with a cluster, this fact shall be formally specified in its ATS grant of accreditation.

10 EXTENSION EDUCATION

In order to meet the needs of their constituencies, theological schools may develop programs by which students can earn graduate credit for courses completed away from the institution's primary location. Programs of extension education shall be offered in ways that ensure: that courses that yield graduate credit maintain the educational integrity of post-baccalaureate study, that students receive academic support and essential services, that the formational components of theological education are effectively present, and that proper attention is given to the ATS standards for individual degree programs.

10.1 Purpose

10.1.0 The purposes for extension education efforts shall be congruent with the institutional purpose, appropriate to the students and context being served by such programs, and adequate to fulfill the purposes of the degree programs for which credits are being earned.

10.2 Types of Extension Education

10.2.1 For the purposes of these standards, extension education programs are grouped into four types. Each type has specific accrediting implications.

> 10.2.1.1 *Complete degrees*. This type of extension education offers all work necessary for completion of an ATS-approved degree at an extension site. Such programs shall provide all the educational and formational opportunities necessary to achieve the goals identified with each approved degree that can be earned at the location. The number, diversity, and sequence of courses available shall be adequate to fulfill all the stated purposes for the degree. Institutions shall assure that all appropriate institutional resources are available including: classroom facilities, library and information resources, faculty, administrative support services, and technological support appropriate for the administrative and educational needs of the program.

> 10.2.1.2 *Ongoing course offerings*. This type offers a range of courses for credit, but an ATS-approved degree cannot be earned without study at the institution's primary location that conforms to the residency requirement of the relevant degree program standard. For the portion of the degree program that can be completed at the extension site, the institution shall ensure that classroom facilities, faculty, administrative support, student services, and library and information resources are appropriate for the administrative and educational needs of the program.

> 10.2.1.3 *Occasional course offerings*. This type of extension education offers the occasional teaching of a course at a site because of the presence of a sufficient number of students at a location, or special resources available at

that location, or special events around which a course is built. Whenever such courses are offered, the institution should provide, in addition to instruction, access to resources students need for successful attainment of the courses' objectives.

10.2.1.4 *External independent study*. This type of extension education provides for-credit courses for individuals engaged in external independent study which includes any form of individualized study where regularly scheduled, in person conversations with faculty or other students are unlikely to occur. Such courses typically employ printed, audio, video, computer, or electronic communication as primary resources for instruction. Because of the formational requirements of most ATS degree programs, and the perceived relationship between intentional community and formation, not more than one-third of the total credits required for completion of an ATS-approved basic degree can be earned by external independent study. The institution shall demonstrate how credits earned by external independent study contribute to or accomplish the overall goals and standards for the degrees to which they are credited; how faculty maintain appropriate involvement in course design, delivery, and evaluation; how instructional resources for courses adequately support their goals and objectives; and how administrative services are provided to students enrolled in external independent study.

10.2.2 Programs of study and course curricula for extension education programs shall be established, approved, and reviewed by the regular institutional procedures regarding content, methods of instruction, use of electronic delivery systems, and standards and procedures of evaluation.

10.2.3 When a school contracts for educational services from another agency, the school is responsible for the academic quality and integrity of all such educational services provided by the other agency.

10.3 Library and Information Resources

10.3.1 Library and other information resources shall be available in such number and quality as needed to achieve the purposes of the educational program.

10.3.2 If the libraries of other institutions will be used to meet the needs of extension education programs, the ATS-member school shall have a written agreement with that library, shall be able to demonstrate that these libraries offer the functional availability and adequacy of resources and facilities, and be able to demonstrate that students are required to make appropriate use of these resources.

10.4 Faculty

10.4.1 In extension education, as in on-campus instruction, the variety and diversity of faculty shall be appropriate for the specific program being offered and sufficient to provide, with the students, a vigorous community of faith and learning. The role and function of faculty shall be determined by the purposes of both the extension program and the total institution.

10.4.2 Faculty participating in extension programs should be selected according to the procedures that govern personnel for the total institution, and possess credentials and demonstrated competence appropriate to the specific purposes of these instructional programs. Institutions shall provide a regular and formal procedure for evaluating faculty engaged in extension education.

10.4.3 The institution's full-time faculty shall share significant responsibility for academic oversight of extension education, as well as ensuring that the institution's goals and ethos are evident wherever the institution conducts its work. Full-time faculty teaching in extension programs should be available to students for consultation in addition to their availability when classes are in session.

10.4.4 Institutions that provide instruction for extension education courses by electronic delivery, such as interactive video, shall ensure that students at each site have access to on-site faculty support.

10.4.5 Adjunct and part-time faculty teaching in extension learning settings should have appropriate access to the administrative structures of the employing institution. They should receive a thorough orientation to the purposes of the extension education being offered, as well as to the purpose of the sponsoring institution.

10.5 Admission and Student Services

10.5.1 Admission requirements for students in extension education programs shall conform to appropriate ATS degree program standards. The institution shall ensure effective admission procedures and appropriate control.

10.5.2 Classes offered at extension sites should have enrollments sufficient to provide a community of inquiry stimulating peer interaction. Students preparing for vocational ministry shall also be afforded appropriate contextual learning opportunities and supervision in ministry.

10.5.3 Students shall have access to appropriate services, including: advisory and administrative support, program and vocational counseling, financial aid, and academic records. For extension education students, as for on-campus students, the policies and procedures governing financial assistance shall be published and administered equitably.

10.6 Administration, Governance, and Finance

10.6.1 Extension education shall have appropriate organizational structures and administrative processes that are well-defined, published, and clearly understood by all units of the institution. The administration of such courses and programs shall conform to the institution's regular procedures.

10.6.2 When administrative responsibilities for extension and distance learning programs are shared with local advisory groups or other entities, the functions and powers of those groups should be consistent with the institution's regular governance policies and procedures. Institutions planning extension education should consult with theological schools in the geographical area of the projected offerings, assess the needs for additional programs, and make use of faculty, courses, or facilities of other schools only by formal arrangements.

10.6.3 Institutions establishing extension education programs of study shall meet licensing or chartering regulations in the locations where the courses are offered.

10.6.4 Institutions shall provide adequate financial resources to ensure the educational quality of extension or education programs and maintain appropriate fiscal responsibility for the program.

10.7 Educational Evaluation

10.7.0 The institution shall undertake regular and systematic evaluation of extension education programs of study. Through this evaluation, the institution shall ascertain the degree to which institutional objectives and educational outcomes have been attained.

10.8 International Extension Programs

10.8.1 Extension education offered outside of North America shall meet all relevant ATS standards. Such programs should be initiated by church bodies or theological schools located in the host country, should be developed collaboratively with constituencies in the host country, and should reflect the cultural contexts in which the programs are offered.

10.8.2 The sponsoring institution shall demonstrate its capacity to maintain standards of academic quality in programs undertaken outside North America.

10.8.3 The school shall demonstrate that it has legal authority to offer courses or grant degrees, if required by the laws of the country where the program is offered.

10.8.4 Institutions that offer degrees or courses of study across the Canadian and United States border shall give appropriate attention to cultural differences, and

should consult with ATS member schools near the location where the course of study is to be offered.

10.9 Approval of Extension and Education Programs

10.9.0 Extension education programs offered by member schools shall be approved by the Commission on Accrediting according to the appropriate procedures (cf. procedures).

Degree Program Standards

The Association of Theological Schools identifies its expectations and requirements for the degrees offered by member schools in the following degree program standards. These standards for degree programs are intended to ensure a common understanding of the kind and quantity of academic work involved in a degree program undertaken at member schools, and to provide common public meaning for a degree, regardless of the ATS school that grants it.

The degree program standards are specific to each degree, but have a common framework that includes sections on purpose, educational goals, program content, location and duration; admissions criteria and distinctive resources needed to offer the degree; and educational evaluation. Schools accredited by ATS are required to offer degree programs that conform to these degree program standards and that are approved, on that basis, by the Commission on Accrediting.

While the degree standards are intended to ensure a common, public meaning for degrees granted by theological schools that are accredited by ATS, a member institution should implement its degree programs in ways that meet ATS standards *and* reflect the school's values and purpose. Thus, while the standards require schools to offer programs that provide opportunities through which students may grow in personal faith, emotional maturity, moral integrity and public witness, each school must determine the kind of opportunities that are appropriate to its institutional and religious commitments, as well as the characteristics that are reasonable indicators of moral integrity or personal faith, in the context of the school's institutional and theological commitments. The standards require institutions to assess the degree to which the goals of a degree program have been achieved, but schools must identify the qualities by which the attainment of goals will be assessed.

Because accreditation is somewhat distinctive in North American higher education, applicants for admission who have completed their prerequisite educational work outside North America will typically not present degrees from "accredited" schools, and the patterns of their previous education may be different from familiar patterns of education in North America. ATS member institutions are responsible for determining, for all applicants, the level of work that has been completed and whether the work represents the educational equivalent of specified, prerequisite degrees.

When a school offers more than one degree program, it is important that each program be designed in a way that ensures its educational integrity. While some courses in a degree program may also be used to satisfy requirements in

another degree, in most ATS-approved degree programs there will be some courses that are offered only for that program. In schools that offer both master's-level and doctoral programs, courses should be appropriate for each level, and generally offered for students at only one level, with exceptions made in only clearly defined cases. Moreover, in each degree program a sufficient number of students should be enrolled to ensure an appropriate community of learners focused on the purpose and goals of that degree.

Basic Programs Oriented Toward
Ministerial Leadership

MASTER OF DIVINITY (M.Div.)

1 PURPOSE OF THE DEGREE

1.0 The Master of Divinity degree is the normative degree to prepare persons for ordained ministry and for general pastoral and religious leadership responsibilities in congregations and other settings. It is the required degree for admission to the Doctor of Ministry degree program, and the recommended first theological degree for admission to advanced programs oriented to theological research and teaching.

2 PRIMARY GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

2.0 The goals an institution adopts for an M.Div. degree should take into account: knowledge of the religious heritage; understanding of the cultural context; growth in spiritual depth and moral integrity; and capacity for ministerial and public leadership.

3 PROGRAM CONTENT, LOCATION, AND DURATION

3.1 Content

3.1.0 The M.Div. program should provide a breadth of exposure to the theological disciplines as well as a depth of critical understanding within those disciplines. It should educate students for a comprehensive range of pastoral responsibilities and skills by providing opportunities for the appropriation of theological disciplines, for deepening understanding of the life of the church, for ongoing intellectual and ministerial formation, and for exercising the arts of ministry.

3.1.1 *Religious Heritage*: The program shall provide structured opportunity to develop a comprehensive and discriminating understanding of the religious heritage.

> 3.1.1.1 Instruction shall be provided in Scripture, in the historical development and contemporary articulation of the doctrinal and theological tradition of the community of faith, and in the social and institutional history of that community.

3.1.1.2. Attention should be given both to the broader heritage of the Christian tradition as such and to the more specific character of particular Christian traditions and communities, to the ways the traditions transcend particular social and cultural settings, and to the ways they come to unique expression in them.

3.1.1.3. Instruction in these areas shall be conducted so as to indicate their interdependence with each other and with other areas of the curriculum, and their significance for the exercise of pastoral leadership.

3.1.2 *Cultural Context*: The program shall provide opportunity to develop an understanding of the cultural realities and structures within which the church lives and carries out its mission.

3.1.2.1 The program shall provide for instruction in contemporary cultural and social issues and their significance for ministry. Such instruction should draw on the insights of the arts and humanities, the natural sciences, and the social sciences.

3.1.2.2 M.Div. education shall address the global character of the church as well as the multi-cultural and cross-cultural nature of ministry in North American society and in other contemporary settings. Attention should also be given to the wide diversity of religious traditions present in the social context.

3.1.3 *Personal and Spiritual Formation*: The program shall provide opportunities through which the student may grow in personal faith, emotional maturity, moral integrity, and public witness. Ministerial preparation includes concern with the development of capacities—intellectual and affective, individual and corporate, ecclesial and public—that are requisite to a life of pastoral leadership.

3.1.3.1 The program shall provide for spiritual, academic, and vocational counseling, and careful reflection on the role of the minister as leader, guide, and servant of the faith community.

3.1.3.2. The program shall provide opportunities to assist students in developing commitment to Christian faith and life (e.g., expressions of justice, leadership development, the devotional life, evangelistic witness) in ways consistent with the overall goal and purpose of the school's M.Div. program.

3.1.4 *Capacity for Ministerial and Public Leadership*: The program shall provide theological reflection on and education for the practice of ministry. These activities should cultivate the capacity for leadership in both ecclesial and public contexts.

3.1.4.1 The program shall provide for courses in the areas of ministry practice and for educational experiences within supervised ministry settings.

3.1.4.2 The program shall ensure a constructive relationship among courses dealing primarily with the practice of ministry and courses dealing primarily with other subjects.

3.1.4.3 The program shall provide opportunities for education through supervised experiences in ministry. These experiences should be of sufficient duration and intensity to provide opportunity to gain expertise in the tasks of ministerial leadership within both the congregation and the broader public context, and to reflect on interrelated theological, cultural, and experiential learning.

3.1.4.4 Qualified persons shall be selected as field supervisors and trained in supervisory methods and the educational expectations of the institution.

3.1.4.5 The institution shall have established procedures for selection, development, evaluation, and termination of supervised ministry settings.

3.2 Location

3.2.0 M.Div. education has as its broad goal the personal, vocational, spiritual, and academic formation of the student—a complex goal that cannot be attained solely by taking separate courses. Hence, the M.Div. cannot be viewed simply as an accumulation of courses taken, or of individual independent work, as if a comprehensive community of learning were of little importance. In order to ensure an appropriate educational community, at least one year of full-time academic study or its equivalent shall be completed at the main campus of the school awarding the degree, or at an extension site that has been approved for degree granting status.

3.3 Duration

3.3.0 In order to fulfill the broad educational and formational goals of the M.Div., the program requires a minimum of three academic years of full-time work or its equivalent.

4 ADMISSION AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Admission

4.1.1 The M.Div. is a post-baccalaureate degree. Admission requirements shall include: (1) a baccalaureate degree from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation or holding membership in the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, or the educational equivalent; (2) evidence of the commitment and qualities desired for pastoral leadership; and (3) the academic ability to engage in graduate education.

4.1.2 As many as 10 percent of the students in the M.Div. degree program may be admitted without possession of the baccalaureate degree or its educational equivalent, if the institution can demonstrate by some objective means that these persons possess the knowledge, academic skill, and ability generally associated with persons who hold the baccalaureate degree. Admission of such applicants should be restricted to persons with life experience that has prepared them for theological study at the graduate level.

4.2 Distinctive Resources Needed

4.2.1 The M.Div. degree, as the basic degree offered by ATS-accredited institutions, requires the resources identified in General Institutional Standards 1-10. In addition, M.Div. students shall have access to community life that provides informal educational experiences, a sustaining religious fellowship, and adequate opportunity for reflection upon the meaning of faith in its relation to education for ministry. M.Div. education is enhanced by faculty and community resources that support the goals of general education for ministerial leadership.

4.2.2 *Faculty*

> 4.2.2.1 Faculty shall relate the insights of their disciplines to the practice of ministry, and shall be attentive to students' spiritual development and professional growth.

> 4.2.2.2 Faculty resources should include some persons who are currently engaged in parish, congregational, or specialized ministerial leadership.

4.2.3 *Community Resources*

> 4.2.3.1 The theological school shall maintain a vital relationship with the religious community or communities to which it is related and other support systems both to ensure that students have meaningful ministry contexts in which to work, and to facilitate the placement of graduates.

> 4.2.3.2 An open and mutually enhancing relationship with other theological schools, universities, professional schools, and social agencies should be maintained insofar as that relationship contributes to the accomplishment of the program's goals.

5 EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

5.1 The institution offering the M.Div. shall be able to demonstrate the extent to which students have met the various goals of the degree program.

5.2 The institution shall maintain ongoing evaluation to determine the extent to which the degree program is meeting the needs of students and religious communities, and the institution's overall goals for the program.

MASTER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (M.R.E.)
MASTER OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (M.C.E.)
MASTER OF ARTS in RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(M.A. in Religious Education)
MASTER OF ARTS in CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
(M.A. in Christian Education)

1 PURPOSE OF THE DEGREE

1.0 The primary purpose of degrees with these various titles is to equip persons for competent leadership in various forms of educational ministry in congregations and other religious institutions.

2 PRIMARY GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

2.0 Primary goals for this kind of degree program include: (1) the capacity for critical and constructive theological reflection regarding the content and processes of educational ministry; (2) understanding of the educational, social, and behavioral sciences that undergird educational practice, as well as the cultural contexts in which educational ministry occurs; (3) growth in personal and spiritual maturity; and (4) skill in teaching and in the design, administration, and assessment of educational programming.

3 PROGRAM CONTENT, LOCATION, AND DURATION

3.1 Content and Requirements

3.1.0 Degree programs oriented to leadership in educational ministry should provide instruction in the wide range of theological disciplines as well as other disciplines critical for educational practice, and they should include a variety of educational contexts and approaches. The program should facilitate interaction among the various areas of study and the practices of educational ministry.

3.1.1 *Religious Heritage*: The program shall provide basic instruction in the religious heritage, including Scripture, theology, history of the tradition, and other appropriate areas of study.

3.1.2 *Cultural Context*: The program shall provide instructional settings and opportunities for students to gain understanding of the context of teaching and learning in congregational life; to develop the capacity to design and maintain educational programming that is sensitive to developmental, family, and cultural influences on children, youth, and adults; and to develop skill in assessing and relating to the cultural contexts in which congregations serve.

3.1.3 *Personal and Spiritual Formation*: The program shall provide opportunities through which the students may grow in personal faith, emotional maturity, moral integrity, and public witness.

3.1.4 *Educational Practice*: The program shall provide structured opportunities for students to gain skill in understanding and practice of educational areas of study, including history and philosophy of education, teaching and learning, administration, and the behavioral and social sciences. The program shall also provide students with supervised experiences in educational ministry. These experiences should be of sufficient duration and intensity to provide opportunity to gain expertise in the tasks of ministerial leadership and to reflect on interrelated theological, cultural, and experiential learning. The theological school shall select qualified persons as field supervisors and train them in supervisory methods and the educational expectations of the institution. Schools shall also have a procedure for selection, development, evaluation, and termination of supervised ministry settings.

3.2 Location

3.2.0 As degree programs in which persons are educated for a form of ministerial leadership, these programs require a comprehensive community of teachers and peers who have opportunity for common experiences over time. To accomplish these goals, at least one year of full-time academic study or its equivalent must be earned on the campus of the institution granting the degree, or in an extension center where alternative resources and systems have been developed to ensure an appropriate educational community (cf. 10 Extension and Distance Education Programs).

3.3 Duration

3.3.0 The program of study should be of sufficient duration to acquire the basic knowledge and skills for effective educational ministry practice. The broad educational and formational goals of the program require two years of full-time academic work, or its equivalent.

4 ADMISSION AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Admission

4.1.1 Persons seeking admission to this kind of degree program should possess a baccalaureate degree from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation or holding membership in the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, or the educational equivalent, and appropriate indicators of the intellectual, personal, vocational, and spiritual aptitude for leadership in educational ministry.

4.1.2 As many as 10 percent of the students in this degree program may be admitted without possession of the baccalaureate degree or its educational equivalent, if the institution can demonstrate by some objective means that these persons possess the knowledge, academic skill, and ability generally associated with persons who hold the baccalaureate degree. Such applicants should be restricted to persons with life experience that has prepared them for graduate theological education.

4.2 Distinctive Resources Needed

4.2.0 In addition to the resources identified in General Institutional Standards 1-10, schools shall have a variety of resources to support this kind of degree program.

4.2.1 The faculty shall include a sufficient number of full-time faculty with expertise in the various educational and ministry disciplines. In order to guarantee multiple perspectives and approaches, as well as sufficient attention to advising students and assisting in their vocational formation, the school shall provide the equivalent of more than one full-time faculty member in this area. A school can demonstrate the adequacy of faculty resources by two or more full-time faculty in the area, or one full-time faculty member and several qualified part-time faculty members, or comparable staffing patterns. Institutions may extend the adequacy of faculty resources through cooperative relationships with other theological schools or institutions with graduate departments of education.

4.2.2 The institution shall give appropriate attention to library collections and information resources necessary for study in education and cognate disciplines, such as educational databases and church education curriculum resources.

4.2.3 Schools shall demonstrate that students have sufficient opportunity to work with trained supervisors in meaningful ministry contexts, which requires appropriate relationships with local congregations and religious institutions.

5 EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

5.1 The institution offering the M.R.E. or comparable degree programs shall be able to demonstrate the extent to which students have met the various educational goals of the program.

5.2 Institutions shall have a process for assessing the extent to which the degree program is meeting the needs of students and religious communities, and the overall educational goals for the program.

MASTER OF ARTS *in* [specialized ministry] (M.A. *in*)

1 PURPOSE OF THE DEGREE

1.0 The primary purpose of degrees that ATS designates as M.A. *in* (area of specialized ministry) is to equip persons for competent leadership in some form of specialized ministry in congregations and other settings. The degree program may focus, for example, on youth ministry, counseling, missions, or social ministries.

2 PRIMARY GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

2.1 Primary goals for this kind of degree program include: (1) the capacity for critical and constructive theological reflection regarding the content and processes of the areas of specialized ministry; (2) skill in the design, implementation, and assessment of ministry in these specialized areas; (3) an understanding of the various disciplines that undergird the area of specialized ministry; and (4) growth in personal and spiritual maturity.

2.2 Because these programs may vary considerably with the size of the institution and the specialized ministry practices of the denominations or religious communities to which the theological school relates, each program shall clearly identify the ministerial roles that graduates of the degree might assume and shall articulate the particular educational goals of the degree program.

3 PROGRAM CONTENT, LOCATION, AND DURATION

3.1 Content and Requirements

3.1.1 Degree programs oriented to specialized ministerial leadership should provide instruction in the wide range of theological disciplines as well as those disciplines critical for the practice of the specialized ministry.

> 3.1.1.1 *Religious Heritage*: The program shall provide instruction in the religious heritage, including Scripture, theology, and history of the tradition.

> 3.1.1.2 *Cultural Context*: The program shall provide instructional settings and opportunities for students to gain understanding of the context of the specialization in the broader range of ministerial practice and the purposes of the church, and to develop appropriate understanding of the broader social context in which the specialized ministry is performed.

3.1.1.3 *Personal and Spiritual Formation*: The program shall provide opportunities through which students grow in personal faith, emotional maturity, moral integrity, and public witness.

3.1.1.4 *Specialization*: The program shall provide structured opportunities for students to gain understanding and skill in practice related to the areas of specialization, to acquire the capacity to design and maintain effective practices and programs in the areas of the specialty, and to develop skill in assessing the efforts and contributions of the specialized ministry.

> 3.1.1.4.1 The program shall provide students with supervised experiences in the area of the ministry specialization. These experiences should be of sufficient duration and intensity to provide opportunity to gain expertise in the tasks of ministerial leadership and to reflect on the interrelated theological, cultural, and experiential learning.

> 3.1.1.4.2 The theological school shall select qualified persons as field supervisors and train them in supervisory methods and the educational expectations of the institution.

> 3.1.1.4.3 In programs of study that might lead to licensure or certification by a professional or ecclesiastical authorizing authority, practica and other requirements should conform to generally accepted standards of the area of specialty.

3.2 Location

3.2.1 As degree programs educating persons for specialized ministerial leadership, these programs require a comprehensive community of teachers and peers who have opportunity for common experiences over time. The equivalent of at least one full-time academic year of work must be earned on the campus of the institution granting the degree.

3.2.2 If requirements can be completed in extension centers or by other means of distance learning, the institution must be able to demonstrate how the community of learning, education for specialized skills, and formational elements of the program are made available to students.

3.3 Duration

3.3.0 The program of study should be of sufficient duration to permit the student to acquire the basic knowledge and skills for thoughtful and effective practice in the area of the specialized ministry. The range of disciplines to be studied, appropriate contextual and supervised field education opportunities, and the formational goals of the program require the equivalent of two years of full-time academic work.

4 ADMISSION AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Admission

4.1.1 Persons seeking admission to this kind of degree program should possess a baccalaureate degree from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation or holding membership in the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, or the educational equivalent, and appropriate indicators of the intellectual, personal, and vocational aptitude for leadership in the specialized ministry.

4.1.2 As many as 10 percent of the students in these degree programs may be admitted without possession of the baccalaureate degree, or its educational equivalent, if the institution can demonstrate by some objective means that these persons possess the knowledge, academic skill, and ability generally associated with persons who hold the baccalaureate degree. Such applicants should be restricted to persons with life experience that has prepared them for graduate theological study.

4.2 Distinctive Resources Needed

4.2.0 Institutions should be able to demonstrate that they have a variety of resources to support programs educating people for specialized ministry indicated by the degree nomenclature.

4.2.1 A sufficient number of full-time faculty should have expertise in the various disciplines related to the specialized ministry area. The value of multiple perspectives and approaches, as well as adequate faculty for advisement and vocational formation, requires more than one full-time faculty member functioning in the area of specialization identified in the degree's nomenclature. A school can demonstrate the adequacy of faculty resources by two or more full-time faculty in the area, or one full-time faculty member and several qualified part-time faculty members, or comparable staffing patterns. Institutions may extend the adequacy of faculty resources through cooperative relationships with other theological schools or institutions with appropriate graduate departments in the area of the specialty.

4.2.2 The institution shall give appropriate attention to library collections that provide learning resources for study in specialized areas, as well as other appropriate information and media resources for graduate instruction in the area of specialization.

4.2.3 Programs shall provide students with sufficient opportunities to work with trained supervisors in contexts appropriate for the specialized ministry. The institution should maintain appropriate educational relationships with congregations, counseling centers, or community organizations; and should have procedures for the selection, evaluation, and termination of supervised ministry sites.

5 EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

5.1 The institution offering the M.A. *in* [specialized ministry] shall be able to demonstrate the extent to which students have met the various goals of the degree program.

5.2 Institutions also shall have an ongoing process for assessing the extent to which the degree program itself is meeting the needs of students and religious communities, and the overall institutional goals for the program.

MASTER OF CHURCH MUSIC (M.C.M.)
MASTER OF SACRED MUSIC (M.S.M.)
MASTER OF MUSIC in CHURCH MUSIC
(M.M. in Church Music)
MASTER OF ARTS in CHURCH MUSIC
(M.A. in Church Music)

1 PURPOSE OF THE DEGREE

1.0 The purpose of these degrees is to equip persons for competent leadership in church or sacred music in congregations and other settings.

2 PRIMARY GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

2.0 Primary educational goals include: (1) capacity for constructive theological reflection, (2) an understanding of music theory and history, (3) competence in an applied music performance area, (4) skill in conducting and leadership of musical ensembles, (5) knowledge of church music literature, (6) capacity to lead a comprehensive program of church music education, and (7) growth in personal and spiritual maturity.

3 PROGRAM CONTENT, LOCATION, AND DURATION

3.1 Content

3.1.1 *Religious Heritage*: The program shall provide basic instruction in Scripture, theology, and history of the tradition, including worship, liturgy, and hymnology.

3.1.2 *Musical Arts*: The program shall provide graduate level instruction in the various musical arts and training in performance skill areas. ATS recommends that the degree program follow the guidelines of the National Association of Schools of Music for the musical arts requirements in master's level work.

3.1.3 *Personal and Spiritual Formation*: The program shall provide opportunities through which the student may grow in personal faith, emotional maturity, and moral integrity.

3.1.4 *Music Ministry Leadership*: The program shall include opportunities for students to gain skill as conductors of musical ensembles and leaders of worship, preferably in supervised ministry contexts. These opportunities should reflect concern for the relationship of the churches' worship and ministry, and awareness of the multi-cultural and cross-cultural nature of ministry in North American society.

3.2 Location

3.2.0 As a degree preparing persons for ministerial leadership in church music, this degree requires a comprehensive community of teachers and peers who have opportunity for common experiences over time, as well as access to studio and ensemble resources and the range of courses in musical arts and theological studies. To accomplish these goals, the degree must be completed on the campus of the institution granting the degree, or if the degree is granted by affiliation with a school or department of music located in another institution, on the campuses of the two institutions.

3.3 Duration

3.3.0 This degree program requires the equivalent of two years of full-time academic study.

4 ADMISSION AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Admission

4.1.1 Persons seeking admission to this program should possess (a) a baccalaureate degree program approved by the National Association of Schools of Music, or (b) meet the standards of the bachelor of music degree as prescribed by NASM, or (c) take instruction (without graduate credit) until the competencies assumed by (a) or (b) are met.

4.1.2 Member institutions shall require qualifying and/or placement exams of all graduate applicants. If deficiencies are indicated, remedial work may be required without graduate credit.

4.2 Distinctive Resources Needed

4.2.1 In addition to the general theological school faculty resources, this program requires sufficient, qualified faculty who can provide instruction in the range of musical arts disciplines, performance areas, conducting, and ensemble leader-

ship; and who can promote integration of music specialization within the broader context of ministry.

4.2.2 Schools offering this degree shall have adequate facilities for graduate instruction in the musical arts, such as appropriate studio and practice space.

4.2.3 These programs also require library collections including musical scores, recordings, books, periodicals, and other media that support graduate instruction and faculty research in the various disciplines related to the musical arts.

5 EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

5.1 The institution offering masters' degrees in church or sacred music shall be able to demonstrate the extent to which students have met the various goals of the degree program.

5.2 Institutions shall have an ongoing process for assessing the extent to which the degree program itself is meeting the needs of students and religious communities, and the overall institutional goals for the program.

Basic Programs Oriented Toward General Theological Studies

MASTER OF ARTS (M.A.)
MASTER OF ARTS (RELIGION) (M.A.R.)
MASTER OF ARTS (THEOLOGICAL STUDIES)
(M.A. in THEOLOGICAL STUDIES)
MASTER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES (M.T.S.)

1 PURPOSE OF THE DEGREE

1.0 The purpose of these degree programs is to provide a basic understanding of theological disciplines for further graduate study or for general educational purposes. The specific nomenclature for these degree programs, which are governed by the same standards, may be chosen according to an institution's specific purpose in offering the program or to reflect the needs and interests of the students enrolled.

2 PRIMARY GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

2.0 The goals an institution adopts for these degree programs should include the attainment of a survey knowledge of various theological disciplines, or focused knowledge in a specific discipline, or interdisciplinary knowledge.

3 PROGRAM CONTENT, DURATION, AND LOCATION

3.1 Content and Requirements

3.1.1 Depending on the goals of the specific degree, the program of study shall include exposure to the broad range of theological disciplines or to the focused study of a theological discipline in depth and in the context of the broader theological disciplines.

3.1.2 In addition to course work, these degrees should require a concluding exercise that allows for a summative evaluation; this exercise may be a thesis in the area of concentration, a comprehensive examination, or another summative process of evaluation.

3.1.3 The study of languages shall be required if a level of competence in a language is integral to the specific degree program.

3.2 Duration

3.2.0 Normally these degrees require two academic years of full-time study or the equivalent. In some cases, however, persons admitted with some advanced theological study or with prior extensive undergraduate studies in religion and/or other appropriate foundational areas may complete the program with one year of full-time course work, in addition to the thesis and/or comprehensive examination.

3.3 Location

3.3.0 Because of the research required in these degree programs, courses should be provided on the institution's main campus or in an approved branch or extension site that provides access to appropriate resources of faculty, library, and a community of peers pursuing similar programs of study.

4 ADMISSION AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Admission

4.1.1 Admission to any of these degree programs requires a baccalaureate degree from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation or holding membership in the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, or the educational equivalent. Students should have the interests, aptitudes, and personal qualities necessary for the particular application of the degree they are seeking.

4.1.2 Admission to these degrees should be offered to students whose background and academic records indicate the ability to engage in graduate-level study for academic pursuits or personal development.

4.2 Distinctive Resources Needed

4.2.1 In general, adequate faculty, library resources, and support services shall be available to sustain students in these programs. Where concentrations are offered in specific disciplines, more than one faculty member shall teach in the discipline, and special attention must be given to the faculty and library resources in those areas.

4.2.2 Students should be provided with guidance and support for the particular vocational decisions related to the purposes of their programs.

5 EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

5.1 The institution offering the degree shall be able to demonstrate the extent to which students have met the various goals of the degree program.

5.2 The institution shall have an ongoing method for assessing the extent to which the degree program itself is meeting the needs of students and religious communities, and the overall institutional goals for the program.

**Advanced Programs Oriented
Toward Ministerial Leadership**

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY (D.Min.)

1 PURPOSE OF THE DEGREE

1.0 The purpose of the Doctor of Ministry degree is to enhance the practice of ministry for persons who hold the M.Div. degree and have engaged in ministerial leadership.

2 PRIMARY GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

2.1 The goals an institution adopts for the D.Min. should include an advanced understanding of the nature and purposes of ministry, enhanced competencies in pastoral analysis and ministerial skills, the integration of these dimensions into the theologically reflective practice of ministry, new knowledge about the practice of ministry, and continued growth in spiritual maturity.

2.2 Programs may be designed to advance the general practice of ministry in its many forms or to advance expertise in a specialized area of ministerial practice (e.g., pastoral care, preaching, missions).

3 PROGRAM CONTENT, LOCATION, AND DURATION

3.1 Content and Requirements

3.1.1 D.Min. programs shall provide advanced-level study of the comprehensive range of theological disciplines that provides for:

> 3.1.1.1 An advanced understanding and integration of ministry in relation to the various theological disciplines;

> 3.1.1.2 The formulation of a comprehensive and critical understanding of ministry in which theory and practice interactively inform and enhance each other;

> 3.1.1.3 The development and acquisition of skills and competencies, including methods of pastoral research, that are required for pastoral leadership at its most mature and effective level; and

> 3.1.1.4 A contribution to the understanding and practice of ministry through the completion of doctoral-level project/ thesis.

3.1.2 The D.Min. program shall provide for varied kinds of learning, including:

3.1.2.1 Peer learning and evaluation as well as self-directed learning experiences;

3.1.2.2 Significant integrative and interdisciplinary activities involving the various theological disciplines and careful use of the student's experience and ministerial context as a learning environment;

3.1.2.3 Various opportunities for learning and using the disciplines and skills necessary for the D.Min. project including sustained opportunities for study and research on the campus of the institution offering the degree; and

3.1.2.4 Opportunities for personal and spiritual growth.

3.1.3 The program shall include the design and completion of a written doctoral-level project that addresses both the nature and the practice of ministry. The project should be of sufficient quality that it contributes to the practice of ministry as judged by professional standards and has the potential for application in other contexts of ministry.

3.1.3.1 The ministry project should demonstrate the candidate's ability to identify a specific theological topic in ministry, organize an effective research model, use appropriate resources, and evaluate the results, and should reflect the candidate's depth of theological insight in relation to ministry.

3.1.3.2 Upon completion of the doctoral project, there shall be an oral presentation and evaluation. The completed written project, with any supplemental material, should be accessioned in the institution's library.

3.2 Location

3.2.1 The program shall provide for substantial periods of interaction on a campus of the member institution to ensure:

(a) Sufficient opportunity for disciplined reflection on one's experience and needs for educational growth;
(b) Sustained involvement with regular full-time faculty and appropriate adjunct faculty;
(c) Extended involvement in peer learning; and
(d) Access to the resources of the institution, such as the library and academic and professional advising.

3.2.2 Some D.Min. course work may occur away from the main campus of the institution, and the program should make effective educational use of the candidate's ministerial context.

3.3 Duration

3.3.0 The D.Min. program shall require the equivalent of one full year of academic study and, in addition, the completion of the project. Normally, the degree shall require not less than three nor more than six years to complete, although the Commission on Accrediting may approve alternative degree designs.

4 ADMISSION AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Admission

4.1.1 Admission to the D.Min. program requires the possession of an ATS-approved M.Div. degree or its educational equivalent. Ministerial experience is not considered the equivalent of or a substitute for the M.Div. degree.

4.1.2 Because the achievement of a new level of competence in the practice of ministry is a program goal, requirements for admission also include at least three years of experience in ministry subsequent to their first graduate theological degree, and evidence of capacity for an advanced level of competence and reflection.

4.1.3 If a school offers specialized D.Min. programs, it should set appropriate standards for admission to such programs.

4.2 Distinctive Resources Needed

4.2.0 In addition to a community of peer learners that is adequate both in number and quality for advanced study, the degree requires particular faculty, library, and academic support resources.

4.2.1 Schools shall have faculty and other instructional personnel in adequate numbers to staff the program and with the competencies required for the specific goals of the general or specialized programs.

   4.2.1.1 Program administrative procedures should include faculty in determining the program goals, provide for the evaluation of all participating faculty, and make available opportunities for faculty development in relation to the D.Min. program.

   4.2.1.2 Teaching responsibility in the D.Min. program for regular faculty should be assigned in a manner comparable to that for other degree programs in that institution.

   4.2.1.3 When needed competencies are not available in the regular faculty, adjunct faculty shall be employed. Whenever adjunct faculty, qualified

mentors, or other personnel are employed, they shall receive appropriate orientation to the purposes and expectations of the D.Min. program, and their roles shall be exercised in full collaboration with regular faculty.

4.2.1.4 It is expected that faculty in the D.Min. program shall be committed to structuring learning experiences that are oriented to the professional practice of ministry. Whenever needed, schools shall have effective procedures of faculty development to achieve the particular competencies required for teaching in this program.

4.2.2 Library resources and services shall be of sufficient kind and substance to support the D.Min. program and its goals. This will include adequate existing collections, appropriate collection development, and adequate services and staffing.

4.2.3 The regular academic support services and resources of the school (e.g., recruitment, admissions, academic records, academic advisement, faculty consultation and evaluation) shall be available for the D.Min. program and its students.

5 EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

5.1 Institutions offering the D.Min. degree shall be able to demonstrate the extent to which students have met the goals of the degree program.

5.2 The institution shall also maintain an ongoing evaluation by which it determines the extent to which the program is meeting the needs of students and the overall institutional goals of the program.

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (Ed.D.)

1 PURPOSE OF THE DEGREE

1.0 The purpose of the Doctor of Education degree is to equip persons for denominational or interdenominational leadership positions in the field of religious education, and for teaching and research.

2 PRIMARY GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

2.0 The goals an institution adopts for this program should include mastery of educational disciplines, graduate level understanding of theological disciplines, and capacity to engage in administration, teaching, and research.

3 PROGRAM CONTENT, DURATION, AND LOCATION

3.1 Content and Requirements

3.1.1 The program shall provide for advanced study in several areas, including: theological disciplines; behavioral sciences (e.g., in human development, learning theory, etc.); the social sciences (e.g., regarding culture and context in which religious communities function, social change, etc.); philosophy and education; and measurement and evaluation.

3.1.2 The program shall include a culminating dissertation, written project, or report of field research reflecting a high quality of research skill applied to some problem or area of religious education.

3.1.3 The program shall require demonstrated competence in modern languages, statistics, or other research tools determined by the student's research or professional needs.

3.2 Duration

3.2.0 The program normally requires the equivalent of two years of full-time academic study, plus the time needed to complete a doctoral thesis or dissertation.

3.3 Location

3.3.0 Courses, seminars, and colloquia for the degree shall be completed on the main campus of the institution offering the degree. If course work completed at other institutions is to be accepted for credit in an ATS-approved doctoral program, that work shall have been eligible for credit in the doctoral programs offered by the institution at which it was completed.

4 ADMISSION AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Admission

4.1.1 Admission should be based upon the possession of an ATS-approved M.A./M.R.E. degree, or its educational equivalent.

4.1.2 Applicants must also demonstrate promise of contribution to the educational leadership in churches and denominations.

4.2 Distinctive Resources Needed

4.2.1 There shall be faculty members who are specialists in the field of religious education, including a sufficient number in the cognate theological disciplines

that are integral to the Ed.D. program. Faculty shall have proven competence in teaching and research, with established reputations for scholarship. They should have published the results of their own scholarly work and be currently engaged in productive research.

4.2.2 The program should have ready access to sufficient material in religious education, education, related behavioral and social sciences, and the theological disciplines to enable it to achieve its goals and objectives. It should also include or have ready access to educational technologies, educational laboratories, clinical training, and other learning media as required to accomplish its objectives.

5 EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

5.1 The institution shall be able to demonstrate that students completing the Ed.D have a comprehensive and critical understanding of the educational and theological disciplines, the competence to conduct original research that can contribute to their field, the capacity to teach with skill, and potential to provide leadership for education and ministry.

5.2 An institution shall maintain an ongoing evaluation by which it determines the extent to which the program is meeting the needs of students and the institution's overall goals for the program.

DOCTOR OF MISSIOLOGY (D.Miss.)

1 PURPOSE OF THE DEGREE

1.0 The primary purposes of the Doctor of Missiology (D.Miss.) include: preparing persons for denominational or interdenominational leadership roles in cross-cultural ministries; educating persons with specialized expertise in missiology and its cognate disciplines; and training persons for research and teaching in these disciplines.

2 PRIMARY GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

2.0 The goals an institution adopts for this program should include mastery of the missiological and cognate disciplines, an advanced understanding of theological disciplines and their relationship to missiology, ability to provide leadership in cross-cultural ministries, and the capacity to engage in research and teaching.

3 PROGRAM CONTENT, LOCATION, AND DURATION

3.1 Content and Requirements

3.1.1 The program shall provide for advanced study in several discipline areas, including:

> 3.1.1.1 The appropriate theological disciplines that undergird doctoral level study of ministry across socio-cultural boundaries;

> 3.1.1.2 The social science disciplines (anthropology, cross-cultural studies, contextual studies) needed for cross-cultural ministry both in North America and around the world; and

> 3.1.1.3 Appropriate area studies (culture, history, context, current events in specified areas of the world) and study of world religions.

3.1.2 Language requirements will ordinarily include at least one language other than English and such other languages, statistics, or social research methods as are desirable for a student's research area.

3.1.3 The program shall include the completion of a culminating dissertation, research project, or report of field research that demonstrates a high level of research skill applied to a problem in the field.

3.2 Location

3.2.1 Courses, seminars, and colloquia for the degree shall be completed on the main campus of the institution offering the degree. If course work completed at other institutions is to be accepted for credit in an ATS-approved doctoral program, that work shall have been eligible for credit in the doctoral programs offered by the institution at which it was completed.

3.2.2 Because of the potential field work components in some D.Miss. degrees, it may be necessary to complete some work away from the main campus of the institution offering the degree.

3.3 Duration

3.3.0 The program normally requires the equivalent of two years of full-time study plus sufficient time to complete the culminating dissertation research project, or field research report.

4 ADMISSION AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Admission

4.1.1 Admission to the D.Miss. shall be based on the possession of an ATS-approved M.Div. or its educational equivalent, or a master's degree in an appropriate theological or missiological discipline.

4.1.2 Applicants should have at least two years of appropriate field experience in cross-cultural ministry.

4.2 Distinctive Resources Needed

4.2.1 Institutions offering this degree program should have a core of faculty members with cross-cultural experience who are specialists in missiology, as well as a sufficient number of faculty with expertise in the cognate disciplines that are integral to the D.Miss. program, such as sociology and anthropology. Faculty shall have proven competence in teaching and research, with a record of publication, and be currently involved in research.

4.2.2 There shall be ready access to sufficient library resources in missiology and related disciplines to enable the program to achieve its stated goals at the professional doctoral level.

5 EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

5.1 The institution shall be able to demonstrate that students completing the D.Miss. have a comprehensive and critical understanding of the disciplines of their doctoral study, the competence to conduct research that can contribute to their fields, and the capacity to teach with skill and to provide leadership in cross-cultural ministry.

5.2 An institution shall maintain an ongoing evaluation by which it determines the extent to which the program is meeting the needs of students and the institution's overall goals for the program.

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS (D.M.A.)
DOCTOR OF CHURCH MUSIC (D.C.M.)
DOCTOR OF SACRED MUSIC (S.M.D.)

1 PURPOSE OF THE DEGREE

1.0 The purpose of these degrees is to equip persons for teaching, research, and leadership in church and sacred music.

2 PRIMARY GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

2.0 The goals an institution adopts for these programs should include mastery of the various disciplines included in the study of music, including the liturgical and historical repertory of church music; competence in a performance area; and capacity to engage in research and teaching.

3 PROGRAM CONTENT, DURATION, AND LOCATION

3.1 Content and Requirements

3.1.1 The program shall provide for advanced study in several areas, including: liturgy, hymnology, theory, musicology, composition, and conducting.

3.1.2 The program shall provide for the study of foreign languages as appropriate for advanced scholarly work in music.

3.1.3 The program shall contain a major emphasis on musical performance.

3.1.4 The program shall include some comprehensive assessment of doctoral-level knowledge of the course of studies, and a culminating dissertation, reflecting a high quality of research skill.

3.2 Duration

3.2.0 The program requires the equivalent of three years of full-time study beyond the M.C.M./M.S.M.

3.3 Location

3.3.0 Courses, seminars, and colloquia for the degree shall be completed on the main campus of the institution offering the degree. If course work completed at other institutions is to be accepted for credit in an ATS-approved doctoral program, that work shall have been eligible for credit in the doctoral programs offered by the institution at which it was completed.

4 ADMISSION AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Admission

4.1.1 Admission should be based on: (a) completion of an NASM/ATS-approved master's degree program, or (b) demonstration that the candidate has the competencies provided by the M.C.M./M.S.M. degree in church music as prescribed by NASM or (c) an acceptable plan for completing these requirements in the course of study for the doctorate if the student has not met them through other prerequisites.

4.1.2 Admission should be based on appropriate performance and academic ability as well as the potential to contribute to leadership in church music.

4.2 Distinctive Resources Needed

4.2.1 There shall be faculty members who are specialists in the field of church music, including a sufficient number to instruct students at the doctoral level in the variety of relevant disciplines. Faculty shall have proven competence in teaching and research, with established reputations for scholarship. It is desirable that they should have published the results of their own scholarly work and be currently engaged in productive research.

4.2.2 The program shall provide ready access to resources for the development of performance skills and opportunities to lead ensembles.

4.2.3 The program shall have adequate library resources for research in the fields of music, especially church music, including access to scores, musical texts, recordings, books, and other media.

4.2.4 ATS strongly recommends that any institution offering the research/performance doctorate in music have programmatic accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Music.

5 EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

5.1 The institution shall be able to demonstrate that students completing these degrees have a comprehensive and critical understanding of the music disciplines, advanced performance skills, the competence to conduct original research that can contribute to their field, and the capacity to teach with skill.

5.2 An institution shall maintain an ongoing evaluation by which it determines the extent to which the program is meeting the students' needs and the institution's overall goals for the program.

Advanced Programs Primarily Oriented
Toward Theological Research and Teaching

MASTER OF THEOLOGY (Th.M.)
MASTER OF SACRED THEOLOGY (S.T.M.)

1 PURPOSE OF THE DEGREE

1.1 The purpose of this degree is to provide a fuller mastery of one area or discipline of theological study than is normally provided at the M.Div. level. The program may serve a variety of aims: further graduate study at the doctoral level, preparation for some forms of teaching, the scholarly enhancement of ministerial practice, or disciplined reflection on a specialized function in ministry.

1.2 The nomenclature, Master of Theology (designated as M.Th.), is also used in some Canadian institutions for programs of continued study of theological disciplines or specialization in an area of ministry practice.

2 PRIMARY GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

2.0 The primary goals an institution adopts for these programs should include an advanced understanding of a focused area or discipline in the context of general theological study, capacity to use research methods and resources in the discipline, and the ability to formulate productive questions.

3 PROGRAM CONTENT, LOCATION, AND DURATION

3.1 Content and Requirements

3.1.1 The program of study shall consist of regular course work and forms of independent study and research under faculty supervision.

3.1.2 To encourage an appropriate level of academic engagement, at least one-half of the work required shall be in courses designed for students in advanced programs.

3.1.3 Requirements for language study and other disciplines necessary for research should be appropriate to the field of specialization, typically one ancient language and one modern language.

3.1.4 Degree requirements should ordinarily include a thesis demonstrating scholarly competence and an examination covering the area of the thesis and major specialization.

3.2 Location

3.2.0 The program shall be undertaken chiefly in courses offered on the institution's main campus, and there should be a sufficient number of students to provide a peer community for mutual criticism and stimulus.

3.3 Duration

3.3.0 The program shall require one year of full-time study or its equivalent.

4 ADMISSION AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Admission

Admission to the program shall require the M.Div., or first graduate theological degree providing equivalent theological background, or its educational equivalent, and evidence of aptitude for advanced theological study.

4.2 Distinctive Resources Needed

4.2.1 Faculty teaching in this program should be actively engaged in research that provides effective models of theological research for students, and should be of sufficient number to provide a variety of scholarly perspectives.

4.2.2 The library shall have collections of sufficient quality to support research in the disciplines in which the Th.M./S.T.M. is offered, as well as appropriate databases and other scholarly resources.

5 EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

5.1 The institution shall be able to demonstrate that students completing the degree have a comprehensive and critical understanding of the disciplines that have been the focus of their study and appropriate scholarly research skills.

5.2 An institution shall maintain an ongoing evaluation by which it determines the extent to which the program is meeting students' needs and the institution's overall goals for the program.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D.)
DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY (Th.D.)

1 PURPOSE OF THE DEGREE

1.0 These degree programs are intended primarily to equip persons for vocations of teaching and research in theological schools, colleges, and universities, or for the scholarly enhancement of ministerial practice. The same overall aims and standards apply to both the Ph.D. and the Th.D.; the nomenclature differs according to the history of its use in a particular school.

2 PRIMARY GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

2.1 The goals an institution adopts for the research doctorate should include: a comprehensive knowledge of the disciplines of study; competence to engage in original research and writing that advance theological understanding for the sake of church, academy, and society; and a breadth of knowledge in theological and religious studies and in other academic disciplines.

2.2 The program should also enable the student to develop a sense of and a commitment to the vocation of theological scholarship in its dimensions of teaching, learning, and research.

3 PROGRAM CONTENT, LOCATION, AND DURATION

3.1 Content and Requirements

3.1.1 The program of study shall either presuppose or provide a grounding in the content and methods of theological studies in general, as a basis for the development of specialized competence.

3.1.2 The program shall facilitate an orderly progression of studies toward its goals within a specified length of time, allowing students sufficient flexibility to meet professional interests and special needs.

3.1.3 The curriculum shall include training in the research methods and procedures relevant to the area of specialization. Attention should be given not only to commonly accepted approaches, but also to newly emerging possibilities for framing inquiries and organizing and examining data.

3.1.4 The program shall assist students to grow in those qualities essential for practice of scholarly ministry in theological environments.

3.1.5 Opportunities shall be provided for instruction in teaching methods and for the development of competence in teaching.

3.1.6 The program shall include course work, comprehensive examinations, and the writing of a doctoral dissertation.

3.1.6.1 The course work shall include a majority of courses intended for doctoral students or students in other advanced programs oriented to theological research and teaching.

3.1.6.2 During both their course of studies and their dissertation research, students shall be required to use competently the language(s) in which relevant primary texts are written, as well as those in which there is important secondary material. Normally, this would include at least one ancient and one or more modern languages. Students engaged in theological disciplines that use behavioral or social scientific research methods shall be required to demonstrate competence in these research methods.

3.1.6.3 Students are expected to devote the kind of attention to their doctoral programs that ensures opportunity for intensive study, research, and interaction with other students.

3.2 Location

3.2.0 Courses, seminars, and colloquia for research doctoral degrees shall be completed on the main campus of the institution offering the degree. If course work completed at other institutions is to be accepted for credit in an ATS-approved research doctoral program, that work shall have been eligible for credit in the research doctoral programs offered by the institution at which it was completed.

3.3 Duration

3.3.0 The total time devoted to the program shall include the equivalent of two years of full-time course work and sufficient time to prepare for comprehensive examinations, to acquire teaching skills, and to conduct the research for and writing of a doctoral dissertation.

4 ADMISSION AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Admission

4.1.1 Admission to the program shall require the M.Div., or first graduate theological degree providing equivalent theological background, or its educational equivalent.

4.1.2 Admission should be selective and offered only to students who have demonstrated the intellectual ability, the preparation, and the motivation for a scholarly vocation.

4.1.3 Because of the importance to scholarly growth of a sustained period of study in residence, admission should not be offered unless financial resources and arrangements are available to enable students to engage in full-time study for at least a significant part of their program.

4.1.4 The number of students admitted in each field should be sufficient to provide a community of peers but should not be so large as to imperil the quality of instruction.

4.2 Distinctive Resources Needed

The institution shall demonstrate the availability of resources in addition to those necessary for master's level degree programs.

4.2.1 The faculty shall be broadly representative of the areas or disciplines of theological inquiry, including at least two faculty specialists in each field in which doctoral students may specialize, and a sufficient number in cognate fields to support the program.

4.2.1.1 The faculty should have been trained in a variety of graduate institutions and should include a variety of scholarly viewpoints and approaches. Working relationships with faculty in other graduate institutions, in both research and graduate instruction, should be encouraged.

4.2.1.2 In general, faculty members should be competent in teaching and research, with a record of contributions to their disciplines. They should have published the results of their own scholarly work and should be currently engaged in significant research.

4.2.1.3 Faculty members shall be willing and able to offer guidance to doctoral students throughout the course of the program, both with regard to their development as scholars (e.g., in tutorials and independent study projects and in the writing of the dissertation) and with regard to their development as teachers and prospective colleagues in the academic profession.

4.2.1.4 The teaching and administrative loads of graduate faculty members—both junior and senior—shall be limited to permit ample time for attending to the needs of graduate students and for faculty research. The faculty shall participate in making academic policies relevant to the program.

4.2.2 Freedom of inquiry is fundamentally important for research doctoral programs. The institution must assure that not only faculty but also students have freedom to conduct research in their respective disciplines and, within any formally adopted confessional commitments of the institution, the freedom to communicate the findings of their research.

4.2.3 The institution shall allocate sufficient financial resources to support research doctoral education.

4.2.4 Research doctoral programs require substantial library holdings and facilities. Provision shall be made for the development and maintenance of research-quality collections and appropriate databases in each field of doctoral studies, together with collections in closely related fields. Adequate study carrels, technological support, and acquisitions and reference staff shall be ensured.

4.2.5 Where the faculty of a school participates to a significant degree in a doctoral program offered under the auspices of another institution (or of another division of its own institution), the school shall account for this use of its resources.

5 EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

5.1 The institution shall assess the quality of its research doctoral program by evaluating its staffing, requirements, and the scope of resources required in light of the range of fields in which the degree may be earned.

5.2 For the sake of the program as well as of the individual student, students should be carefully evaluated after a year of study so that those who do not show sufficient signs of promise can be so advised.

5.3 The institution shall be able to demonstrate that students completing the research doctorate have a comprehensive and critical understanding of the disciplines of their doctoral study, the competence to conduct original research that can contribute to their fields, and capacity to teach with skill and contribute to the scholarly enhancement of ministerial practice.

5.4 An institution shall maintain an ongoing evaluation by which it determines the extent to which the program is meeting students' needs and the institution's overall goals for the program.

Criteria for Admission, Transfer of Credits, Shared Credit in Degree Programs, and Advanced Standing Related to ATS-Approved Degree Programs

A.1 *Admission*

A.1.0 While each degree program a theological school offers should have particular admission requirements, all master's level programs share the following common requirements:

> A.1.0.1 Students must possess a baccalaureate degree from a member institution of the Association of Universities and Colleges or an institution accredited by a United States agency recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation, or the educational equivalent of the baccalaureate degree.

> A.1.0.2 Educational equivalent of the baccalaureate degree shall be determined on the basis of undergraduate work commensurate in kind, quality, and amount typical of North American baccalaureate degree programs.

> A.1.0.3 Exceptions to the baccalaureate degree requirement are noted in the ATS standards for individual degrees.

> A.1.0.4 When an institution admits students to graduate courses, who lack the baccalaureate degree or its equivalent, the institution must limit the number of such students in any course or class to 20% or fewer of that course's enrollees. Within this limitation, all students in a class are included, whether registered for credit or as auditors.

A.2 *Transfer of Credits*

A.2.1 A theological school has the right and responsibility to determine if it will accept credits for work completed at other institutions toward the degrees it grants.

A.2.2 If an institution determines that it will accept transfer credits, it should ensure that courses in which the credits were earned were eligible for graduate credit in the institution at which they were taken, and preferably, were completed at an institution accredited by a recognized accrediting body.

A.3 *Shared Credit in Degree Programs*

A.3.1 Institutions have the right to determine if credits applied toward other graduate degrees can be transferred to the institution's ATS-approved degree programs. If an institution determines it will accept credits applied to other

graduate degree programs, not more than half of the credits required for the other degree may be transferred into an ATS-approved degree program, and not more than half of the credits required by an ATS-approved degree may be granted on the basis of transfer credits.

A.3.2 Students may be either simultaneously or sequentially enrolled in two masters' programs as long as each degree program has a clear integrity and meets the stated standards. The programs may in some instances use the same resources and be overlapping. The total time required will be determined by the demands of the two degrees combined, but must conform to the stipulations on shared credit in degree programs in A.3.1 above.

A.4 *Advanced Standing*

A.4.1 Institutions may admit students with advanced standing, if they so choose. If they do admit students with advanced standing, they may grant such standing: (1) *without credit* by exempting students from some courses but not reducing the total number of academic credits required for the degree, or (2) *with credit* by reducing the number of hours required for the degree. The term "Advanced Standing," in these standards, is distinct from "transfer of credits," and refers to decisions about students' competence when no transcripts of graduate credit are presented.

A.4.2 If the institution chooses to grant advanced standing with credit, it must determine by appropriate written and oral examination that students have the knowledge, competence, or skills that would normally be provided by the specific courses for which they have been admitted with advanced standing.

A.4.3 Advanced standing with credit cannot be automatically granted on the basis of ministerial or life experience or the content of undergraduate work.

A.4.4 If advanced standing is granted with credit on the basis of appropriate evaluation, not more than one-sixth of the total credits required for an ATS-approved degree may be granted in this way.

Recommended Changes to the
ATS Policies and Procedures
for Accreditation

Introduction

Over the years, ATS has adopted a variety of policies and procedures that govern the way in which the Commission on Accrediting conducts ATS accreditation. The redevelopment of the accrediting standards has presented the occasion to review these procedures and policies. The existing procedures are published in the ATS *Bulletin 41*, Part 3, pages 1-19. The existing text is reprinted here on the even-numbered pages, and the proposed revised text on the odd-numbered pages. To aid in interpretation, commentary about reasons for changes is provided in the text, enclosed in boxes. The revisions are proposed in response to a number of factors.

First, and perhaps the most obvious, many changes are proposed simply to provide greater clarity, precision, and ease of comprehension; and to use language that is compatible with the redeveloped standards. Most of the proposed revisions are editorial.

Second, ATS conducts its accreditation in the context of external forums of accountability such as the United States Department of Education (USDE) and the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA) and must demonstrate that it conducts accreditation according to U.S. Department of Education regulations and CORPA criteria in order to maintain recognition by both entities. For example, the requirement of a site visit when a school begins an extension education program at which 50 percent of the credits for a degree can be earned is a procedure required by the USDE, as is the stipulation that candidacy cannot be extended for more than a stated maximum number of years, and that notations be addressed by an institution within a designated time frame. CORPA criteria require that ATS have policies that letters reporting Commission actions be mailed within 30 days of the Commission meeting, and that schools be consulted with regard to the size of a committee that will conduct a visit. These are criteria reflecting good practice for accrediting agencies, which is CORPA's primary concern. In many cases, ATS has followed these practices without formally adopted procedures that required the practice. The reviews that ATS has undergone with both USDE and CORPA during the past two years have identified the need to introduce several changes in the revised text. For the most part, these changes relate to the way in which the Commission must do its work, not to requirements which the Commission places on schools.

Third, some changes are introduced to this text because they have, over many years, become standard operating procedure for ATS but have not been widely published. For example, most of the procedures for review of applicant schools that appear in the revised procedures have been used by the Commission to review applicants for a number of years, but they have been communicated only through instructions to applicant schools. The revisions to the statement on "complaints" state the formal process the Commission has adopted and used to guide its responses to complaints. These statements are included in the revised text to provide a broader public record of existing Commission policies and procedures.

Fourth, these proposed procedures also contain a few substantial changes or additions to formal ATS procedures. For example, ATS currently has no way to indicate major problem areas in an institution other than to place a school on probation. These procedures introduce an action, similar to one used by most of the regional accrediting agencies, that is designated as "warning." This would be a non-public action by which the Commission could signal its concern regarding significant accrediting problems, short of placing an institution on probation. Another proposed change is necessary to implement the redeveloped standards, if adopted. In order for the redeveloped standards to support institutional and educational improvement, a procedure is proposed whereby areas of needed improvement would be clearly noted as a formal part of the ATS accreditation process.

Finally, some changes are proposed that focus these procedures more specifically on the accreditation work of the Association. The constitution, for example, contains procedures for appeal both for the actions of the Association, its staff, or committees, and for the actions of the Commission. Both areas of appeal are included in the existing procedures text but only the appeals process for accrediting actions is included in the proposed text. Reference is made to the other aspects of appeals in the ATS constitution, which is published each biennium as part of the ATS *Bulletin*.

Together, these proposed changes update and clarify procedures related to ATS accreditation, ensure external publics of the consistent conduct of ATS accreditation, and give the ATS accrediting procedures coherence with the proposed redeveloped standards.

Procedures Related to Membership

I.   *Attaining Associate Membership*

   A.   Criteria for associate membership

      1.   The school shall have an adequate number of properly qualified professors working full time at post-college theological education. Normally, this will involve at least one full-time person in each of the appropriate disciplines of theological education.

      2.   The school shall have a student body of sufficient size to provide for a community of peer influence and support appropriate for graduate education. Ordinarily all theological students shall hold an accredited baccalaureate degree.

      3.   The educational program of the school shall consist of graduate-level studies in the broad range of the theological disciplines designed for preparation for ministry.

      4.   The school shall evidence openness to the community of theological schools as demonstrated by:

         a.   regular participation of faculty and staff in professional society meetings;

         b.   an openness to cooperative relationships with present ATS member schools; and

         c.   a commitment to participate in the larger community comprising theological education, and especially openness to the diversity which characterizes that community.

      5.   The school shall present evidence that it is carrying on an educational program of sufficient quality, stability, and permanence by:

         a.   possession of adequate physical facilities;

         b.   a library which compares in size of collection and adequacy of support with other associate member schools;

         c.   a governance and administrative structure which carries out the functions characteristic of North American institutions;

         d.   adequate financial resources; and

Procedures Related to Membership and Accreditation

I. *Associate Membership*

   A. Associate members are institutions in the United States and Canada which have met the criteria for associate membership prescribed by the Association, have been recommended for associate membership by the Commission on Accrediting, and have been elected by a two-thirds majority of the accredited 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 Commission.

   B. Criteria for associate membership

   1. The school shall demonstrate that it meets the ATS constitutional requirements for institutional membership in the Association.

   2. The school shall have 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 first theological degree offered by the school.

   3. The school shall demonstrate that it 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.

   4. The school shall have 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.

   5. The educational program of the school shall consist of graduate-level studies in the broad range of the theological disciplines designed for preparation for ministry.

   6. The school shall give evidence of openness to the community of theological schools as demonstrated by all of the following:

      a. regular participation of faculty in activities of professional or learned societies;

      b. an openness to cooperative relationships with current ATS member schools; and

e. such other supporting instructional resources as may be required for the program.

6. The school shall have a sufficient degree of autonomy to determine and carry out its basic purposes. Such autonomy does not preclude the advantages which may accrue from interinstitutional sharing of resources.

B. Steps to associate membership

1. The school should complete a minimum of one academic year in which the conditions for associate membership have been attained. There shall have been a staff on-site visit for assessment of (a) the manner in which the conditions for associate membership have been met and (b) the future viability of the school. This requirement will be waived where a cluster or merger can demonstrate continuity with schools already holding membership.

2. Request for admission to associate membership should be addressed to the Association's office.

3. The ATS Annual Report form and an application for associate membership, including the constitutional waiver regarding appeals, shall be completed and forwarded to the Association's office. Ordinarily, a member of the staff will conduct a brief visit to the school prior to action by the Commission on Accrediting.

4. Following the study of the data from the report and supplementary evidence, the Commission on Accrediting may:

a. propose the school for associate membership (election shall be by the accredited members of the Association);

b. delay action for clearly stated reasons, permitting the school to correct any deficiencies; or

c. deny the request for associate membership. (When an application has been denied, an interval, to be determined by the Commission on Accrediting, shall be required before reapplication shall be considered.)

C. Maintenance of associate membership

1. The school shall continue to meet minimal requirements for membership and standards of education which satisfy conditions defined by the ATS. Notations will be used to call attention to minor deviations. Probation will be imposed where a school falls significantly below minimal requirements.

   c. a commitment to participate in the larger community of theo-logical education, and especially a recognition of the diversity that characterizes the community.

7. The school shall demonstrate that it is conducting an educational program of quality, stability, and permanence by:

   a. adequate physical facilities

   b. a library that is adequate in the following ways to support graduate degree programs: holdings, staff, access to electronic information resources, and space for collection, study, and services;

   c. adequate financial resources; and

   d. other institutional and educational resources required for the program.

8. The school shall have 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.

C. Attaining associate membership

1. The chief administrative officer of an institution initiates the process by requesting an application from the Commission on Accrediting.

2. The school shall complete the application form and submit it for ATS staff review.

3. If ATS 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 ATS constitutional requirements and the criteria for associate membership, as well as its stability and future viability.

4. In consultation with ATS staff, the school shall provide letters of support from ATS member institutions.

5. The Commission on Accrediting will review the school's application, staff report, letters of support from ATS member institutions, and the school's signed constitutional waiver and consent form

2. The school shall make an annual report of its operations on the forms provided.

3. The school shall pay annual dues as prescribed by the Association.

4. A school may on its own initiative withdraw as an associate member or from the status of candidacy for accredited membership.

Proposed changes for associate membership include the introduction of a five-year term for associate members (Proposed I.A). Previously, associate membership has been granted for an indefinite period of time. This revised policy will require schools that can meet the criteria for candidacy to move toward that status, rather than remain indefinitely as associate members. Issues of equity with accredited schools and of public accountability prompt this proposal.

In addition to the five-year term for associate membership, other proposed changes involve: a policy that clarifies that initiation of membership lies with the institution, not the Association (Proposed C.1), a procedure for monitoring the term limitation (Proposed D.4), and actions to enforce the term limit (Proposed E.2).

II. *Attaining Candidate for Accredited Membership*

A. Criteria for candidate for accredited membership

1. The applicant institution shall provide the Commission on Accrediting with reasonable assurance that it will comply with General Institutional Standards by the end of the self-study process and that

regarding appeals as a basis for the Commission's decision. The Commission may take one of several actions:

    a.   propose the school for associate membership to the accredited 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 Commission on Accrediting, will be required before any new application will be considered.)

D. Maintaining associate membership

    1.   The institution shall continue to meet the requirements for associate membership and conduct its degree programs in conformity to ATS degree program standards.

    2.   The institution shall complete the ATS annual report forms.

    3.   The institution shall pay annual dues as prescribed by the Association.

    4.   During the fifth year of its associate membership, the institution shall make a comprehensive report to the Commission on Accrediting, petitioning for either renewal as an associate member or candidate for accredited status.

E. Withdrawal from membership

    1.   A school may, on its own initiative, withdraw as an associate member, by written notice to the Commission on Accrediting.

    2.   If the Commission determines that an institution should move toward candidacy but it declines to do so, the Commission may recommend to the Association that the institution be withdrawn from membership.

II. *Candidate for Accredited Membership*

A. Candidate for accredited membership is granted to those institutions in the United States and Canada, which after review on the basis of Association standards and procedures, have been formally authorized by vote of the Commission on Accrediting to begin the self-study process. Candidacy for accredited status is granted for a period of two

the degree programs in which at least 50 percent of its students are registered will meet the specific degree standards.

2. The applicant institution shall demonstrate that it has the resources and capacity to complete satisfactorily a self-study process and report within the normal two-year period.

B. Steps to candidate for accredited membership

1. An associate member school desiring to become a candidate for accreditation, which believes its institutional standards are sound and that those degree programs in which at least a majority of its students are registered will be approved, shall have its chief administrator notify the Association staff. Normally an on-site visit by staff will be made to collect information for the Commission on Accrediting. Based on the data supplied by the institution and the visit, the Commission may award candidate for accredited status and authorize the school to engage in a self-study process in preparation for an accrediting visit. This status is normally limited to two years duration.

2. A non-member institution which believes its institutional base as indicated by the General Institutional Standards is sound and that those degree programs in which at least a majority of its students are registered will be approved, and desiring to enter the Association initially at the candidate for accreditation level, shall also notify staff. Normally an on-site visit by staff will be made to collect information for the Commission on Accrediting. Based on the data supplied by the institution and the visit, the Commission may recommend to the accredited members of the Association that the applicant be elected to membership at candidate for accreditation level. When so elected, the institution is authorized to engage in the self-study process in preparation for an accrediting visit.

C. Maintenance for candidate for accredited membership

1. The institution shall demonstrate evidence of progress in the self-study process.

2. The school must submit information annually on its operation. The information from those reports is used by the Commission on Accrediting as one indication of the progress being made.

3. The school pays annual dues as prescribed by the Association.

years. By special action of the Commission on Accrediting, candidacy may be extended for one year at a time, but in no case can candidacy extend beyond a total of five years. ATS recognizes candidacy for accredited status as its official *pre-accredited* status.

B. Criteria for candidate for accredited membership

   1. The applying institution shall be able to demonstrate that either it is, or by the conclusion of the self-study process will be, operating according to the ATS general institutional and individual degree standards, and that it has the institutional capacity to evaluate its institutional and educational effectiveness.

   2. The applicant institution shall demonstrate that it has the resources and capacity to complete satisfactorily a self-study process and report within the normal two-year period.

C.   Attaining candidate for accredited status by associate members

   1. The chief administrative officer of an associate member school desiring candidacy status should notify ATS staff in writing that the school intends to petition the Commission on Accrediting for candidacy for accredited status.

   2. The applicant school shall undertake an internal study of its readiness for candidacy for accredited status. The Commission on Accrediting will provide guidance for this internal study.

   3. Upon the school's completion of this internal study, an ATS staff member will review the study, conduct a staff visit, and prepare a report regarding the school's compliance with the general institutional and degree program standards.

   4. The Commission on Accrediting will base its decision regarding candidacy on the institution's internal study report, on the report of the staff visit, and on its assessment of the extent to which the institution will be able to meet the ATS accrediting standards by the conclusion of the candidacy period. The Commission may:

       a. grant candidacy for a period of two years; or

       b. deny the candidacy petition.

       If it denies the request for candidacy, the Commission shall provide reasons for its action and notify the school of additional responses required to qualify for candidacy.

Proposed changes related to candidate for accredited status (1) clarify that the initiation of the process lies with the institution (Proposed II.C.1 and II.D.1) and (2) require schools to conduct internal studies of their readiness for candidacy prior to an ATS staff visit (Proposed II.C.2 and II.D.2).

D. Attaining candidate for accredited status as initial ATS membership

1. An institution that is not a member of the Association may seek initial membership in the Association as a candidate for accredited status; the chief administrative officer shall write to the Commission on Accrediting expressing the school's intent to begin the application process and to seek candidacy.

2. In addition to completing the application for initial membership, as well as the steps outlined above in I.C.1, I.C.2, and I.C.4, the school shall provide an internal study of its qualifications and readiness for candidacy.

3. After review of the application and the internal study, ATS staff will conduct a site visit and prepare a report regarding the school's compliance with the general institutional and degree program standards.

4. On the basis of the school's application, internal report, and the report of the staff visit, the Commission on Accrediting may take one of several actions:

   a. propose the school to the Association for initial ATS membership as an associate member;

   b. propose the school for initial ATS membership as a candidate for accredited status, upon the Association's action on the application;

   c. delay action for clearly stated reasons, permitting the school to address deficiencies; or

   d. deny the request for simultaneous approval of associate membership and candidacy. (When an application has been denied, the Commission on Accrediting shall determine an interval of time to be required before reapplication will be considered.)

E. Maintaining candidate for accredited membership

1. The institution shall demonstrate evidence of progress in the self-study process.

2. The institution shall continue to meet criteria for candidacy and conduct its degree programs in conformity with ATS degree program standards.

III. *Attaining Accredited Membership*

    A. Criteria for accredited membership

        1. A theological school seeking initial institutional accreditation and approval for one or more degree programs shall meet the General Institutional Standards (See *Bulletin 41,* Part 3).

        2. For a theological school to be placed on or to remain on the list of accredited institutions, at least 50 percent of its students must be registered in degree programs which meet the Association's standards. It is expected that all degree programs offered shall meet these standards. A school shall have four years from the graduation of the first student from a new degree program to achieve full approval for that program. Failure to receive approval within this time limit will endanger the continuance of institutional accredited membership.

    B. Steps to accredited membership

        1. Candidates for accreditation shall engage in the self-study process which usually requires a period of from six to eighteen months. The ATS *Handbook of Accreditation* and staff consultation are available. If the accrediting visit is to be a joint endeavor with a regional agency, the school should utilize both associations' self-study instructions. While each institution is encouraged to be creative in describing and analyzing its strengths and weaknesses, it is expected that the general institutional and appropriate degree standards will be addressed in the self-study report.

        2. The Commission on Accrediting will examine the report and determine whether it provides a sufficient basis for an on-site visiting committee. When the Commission responds affirmatively, a committee will be authorized and staff will make the appropriate

      3.   The institution shall complete the ATS annual report forms.

      4.   The institution shall pay annual dues as prescribed by the Association.

F.   Withdrawal from Candidacy

A school may, on its own initiative, withdraw from candidate for accredited status at any time during its term of candidacy, by written notice to the Commission on Accrediting.

III. *Accredited Membership*

  A. Accredited members are institutions in the United States and Canada which, after review on the basis of Association's standards, are voted by the Commission on Accrediting into accredited membership.

  B. Criteria for accredited membership

      1.   Accredited institutions shall demonstrate that they operate according to the ATS general institutional standards.

      2.   All graduate degree programs offered by accredited members of the Association shall meet the degree program standards and be approved by the Commission on Accrediting.

      3.   All extension education offerings that provide graduate credit toward ATS-approved degrees shall be approved by the Commission on Accrediting.

  C. Attaining accredited membership

      1.   Candidates for accreditation shall engage in the self-study process, following the guidance provided in the ATS *Handbook of Accreditation.* On-site staff consultation is available to schools in the self-study process. The general institutional and appropriate degree standards must be addressed in the self-study report.

      2.   The Commission on Accrediting will examine the self-study report and determine whether it provides a sufficient basis for an on-site committee visit. If the Commission approves the self-study report and authorizes an initial accreditation visit, an evaluation committee will be appointed. If the Commission finds the self-study report inadequate, a visiting committee will not be authorized but staff will be instructed to work with the institution to make the changes necessary to permit future consideration.

arrangements. The committee will visit the campus and prepare a written report (see VIII below). If the Commission finds the self-study report inadequate, staff will be instructed to work with the institution to strengthen the program for future consideration.

3. The visiting committee will spend two or three days on the campus and prepare a written report evaluating the institution in the light of the Association's standards. This report in first and final drafts will be sent both to the school and the Commission. To insure due process the school is encouraged to send responses to both drafts both to the committee chairperson and directly to the Commission.

4. Acting on the data in the committee report and its recommendations, the Commission may respond in one of three ways:

   a. accredit the institution for offering the designated degree programs. Appropriate report-back procedures or notations may be utilized. Initial accreditation is normally for five years;

   b. provisionally accredit the institution for one or more of its degree programs, with appropriate notations. Provisional accreditation is for a period of two years, after which an additional on-site visit will be conducted. The institution is expected to supplement the original self study by describing the improvements attained during the period of provisional accreditation. Following the second visit, the Commission may choose to grant accreditation for five years, continue provisional accreditation for one or two years, or remove the institution from the Association's accredited member list. If accreditation is removed, specific reasons for the decision will be stated in writing to the school which shall have the right of appeal; or

   c. deny accreditation to the institution. In this event specific reasons will be stated in writing to the school which shall have the right of appeal.

5. The Commission recognizes the possibility of the accreditation of schools which have attained and currently meet minimum requirements for associate membership in ATS and which claim eligibility for accreditation by virtue of resources available through membership in a cluster or by contractual arrangement with another accredited institution. Accreditation involves thorough assessment indicating adequate strength of the institution itself, actual availability and use of resources claimed, and evaluation of the cluster of which the school is a part according to ATS "Criteria for Clusters." It is granted for a term of two to five years initially and for five to 10 years thereafter. Listing in publications both of the ATS and of the school is to state explicitly "accredited by the ATS as a participating member of _____."

3. The evaluation committee will conduct a two-to-three day visit to the campus and prepare a written report evaluating the institution in the light of the Association's standards, following the procedures for evaluation committees published in the ATS *Handbook of Accreditation*.

4. Based on the committee report and its recommendations, the Commission may act in one of three ways:

    a. Accredit the institution and approve its degree programs for a period of three to five years;

    b. Provisionally accredit the institution and approve its degree programs (Provisional accreditation is for a period of two years, after which an additional on-site visit will be conducted. The institution is expected to supplement the original self study by describing the improvements attained during the period of provisional accreditation. Following the second visit, the Commission may choose to grant accreditation for five years, continue provisional accreditation for one or two years, or remove the institution from the Association's accredited member list. If accreditation is removed, specific reasons for the decision will be stated in writing to the school, which shall have the right of appeal.); or

    c. Deny accreditation to the institution. In this event, specific reasons will be stated in writing to the school.

5. It is possible for schools that meet the ATS constitutional criteria for membership but that are not individually eligible for accredited membership to qualify for accreditation by virtue of resources available through membership in a cluster or by contractual arrangement with another accredited institution. Accreditation requires assessment of the strength of the individual institution, the availability and actual use of resources claimed, and adequacy of the cluster of which the school is a part. Listings in publications, both of ATS and of the school, shall state explicitly that such an institution is "accredited by The Association of Theological Schools by virtue of affiliation with _____."

D. Maintaining Accredited Membership

1. The institution shall maintain standards defined by the Association and abide by the procedures of the Association and its Commission on Accrediting.

2. The institution shall complete the ATS annual report forms.

6. A school may, of its own initiative, withdraw an application for candidacy or accreditation at any time prior to the Commission hearing on the application.

The only changes proposed for accredited membership are editorial or organizational. No new expectations are introduced. The text in Proposed III.D.1, III.D.2, and III.D.3 replaces the current text in Current V.A, V.B, and V.C.

IV. *New Degree Programs*

A. New degree programs shall not be announced without prior concurrence by the Commission on Accrediting.

B. A theological school which is considering the possibility of an additional degree shall notify ATS staff for consultative guidance regarding procedures and standards. It shall then submit a report for consideration by the Commission. The report shall include: (1) the appropriateness of this projected degree program in the light of the institution's mission and purpose; (2) its detailed design (program features, relation to other degrees, resources available, conformity to the standards, etc.); and (3) its impact on the programs already offered.

C. If the projected degree program is another master's level degree, preliminary approval by the Commission may be awarded on the basis of the data in the written report. If the proposed degree is at the doctoral level, an accrediting visit focused on the new program will be conducted before the program is given preliminary approval and announced.

D. After a degree program has existed sufficiently long to permit extended evaluation, usually requiring the graduation of at least one class, the institution shall seek full approval for the program. This will require submission of documentation describing the full history of the degree, and (at the Commission's discretion) may require an additional on-site visit.

3. The institution shall pay annual dues as prescribed by the Association.

4. The institution shall, at intervals specified by the Commission on Accrediting, complete a process of comprehensive institutional self study and prepare for regular scheduled visits of evaluation committees.

E. Withdrawal from membership

A school may, on its own initiative, withdraw from accredited status with the Association, by written notice to the Commission on Accrediting.

IV. *Procedures for Approval of New Degree Programs*

A. New degree programs shall not be announced without prior approval by the Commission on Accrediting.

B. A school considering the introduction of a new degree program shall notify ATS staff and seek consultative guidance. It shall then submit a petition for consideration by the Commission on Accrediting. The petition shall follow the guidelines established by the Commission, including: (1) an evaluation of the appropriateness of the proposed degree in the light of the institution's mission and purpose; (2) a detailed description of the design of the proposed degree (program features, compliance with the standards, resources available, relation to other degrees); (3) the institution's assessment of the new degree's impact on the programs already offered; and (4) an analysis of the financial support for the new degree and its impact on the institutional budget.

C. If the proposed degree program is at the master's level, preliminary approval by the Commission may be granted on the basis of the written petition. If the proposed degree is at the doctoral level, preliminary approval will be considered only after a focused evaluation visit has been conducted.

D. Initial approval of a degree program is designated as "*preliminary approval.*" This designation is recognized by the Commission on Accrediting as a formally approved status.

E. After a degree program has been offered for a sufficient period of time to permit extended evaluation, usually requiring the completion of all degree requirements by at least one group of students, the institution shall seek "*ongoing approval*" for the program by petitioning the Commission and supplying appropriate documentation of its comprehensive evaluation of the program.

V. *Maintenance of Accredited Membership*

  A. The school must maintain standards defined by the ATS.

  B. The school must submit information annually on its operation. The information from these reports is used by the Commission on Accrediting in imposing notations, initiating reinspection, or taking other steps necessary to the maintenance of the Association's standards.

  C. The school shall pay annual dues as prescribed by the Association.

The revised procedures introduce a new section (Proposed V),which describes the procedures for approval of extension education programs. Currently, the procedures of approval are embedded in the existing standard on "Extension and Distance Education." The procedures, originally published in *Draft Two* as part of the redeveloped section on "Extension Education," have been deleted from that section and inserted in the revised procedures as Proposed V.

VI. *Enforcement of Standards for Accredited Members*

  A. Through periodic reevaluations

    1. Periodic reevaluations occur at the expiration of a prior accrediting action. Initial accreditation is limited to no more than five years;

V. *Procedures for Approval of Extension Education Programs*

   A. Institutions shall seek appropriate Commission action for all programs of extension education. The procedures for review and approval of extension education programs of study vary with the type of program.

   B. *Complete Degrees*. The offering of a full degree program in extension requires consultation, a written proposal, and a site visit prior to an action by the Commission on Accrediting. The school shall obtain preliminary approval before the degree program is implemented and degree candidates are admitted, and ongoing approval may be granted only after a review of the program following the completion of the program by the first graduates.

   C. *Ongoing course offerings*. The establishment of an extension in which a school intends to offer a variety of courses over time requires a written proposal to the Commission on Accrediting prior to the first offering of courses. Sites where courses are offered on an ongoing basis will be visited and evaluated as part of ATS comprehensive reviews. If more than half of the course work required for any ATS-approved degree may be completed at the extension center, a site visit shall be conducted prior to approval of the extension for offering as many as half the courses needed for a degree.

   D. *External Independent Study*. Prior approval by the Commission on Accrediting is required for implementation of external independent learning programs or courses. The Commission will evaluate written proposals in light of the degree program standards and the overall standards for extension education. In some cases, a site visit will be required.

   E. *International extension education*. Institutions seeking to implement programs outside North America that involve either ongoing offering of courses or a full degree program must have the prior approval of the Commission on Accrediting. In its proposal, the school shall clearly identify the need the program seeks to meet in the context of the priority for indigenous theological education. After its review of the written proposal, the Commission will ordinarily require a site review before it considers granting approval for ongoing programs outside North America.

VI. *Enforcement of Standards for Accredited Members*

   A. Through comprehensive evaluation visits

      1. Periodic reevaluations occur in the six months before the expiration of a grant of accreditation. The grant of initial accreditation is

reaffirmation to no more than 10 years. In each instance decisions may be for shorter periods of time with reasons given for the action in each case.

2. Institutions shall engage in a full institutional self study in preparation for each periodic visit. Self study entails both an internal institutional process and written report of the findings. The process shall normally involve all segments of the community (administration, trustees, faculty, students, alumnae/i) and include both descriptive and analytical data indicating the institution's self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses. The self-study report shall be submitted at least 60 days before the scheduled visit to the ATS staff, who shall in consultation with the chairperson of the visiting committee have responsibility for determining whether the document is an adequate basis for conducting the visit. If there is a decision to postpone a visit because of inadequate documentation, the institution shall have right of appeal to the next session of the Commission on Accrediting.

3. A visiting committee will be chosen in accord with Section VIII of these procedures, and staff will make arrangements for a visit.

4. Visiting committees will prepare reports for the Commission on all evaluations with attention given to the provisions of III. B. 3 of these procedures.

B. Through special reevaluations

1. Special reevaluation visits may be made for any one of several reasons:

   a. a school's invitation to the Commission;

   b. the decision to offer a new degree program, as noted in section IV of these procedures;

   c. a decision by the Commission based on information which may lead the Commission to conclude that reevaluation is advisable; or

   d. any indication that the quality of a school's programs may have been adversely affected.

2. The Commission will require such reports from the school as are appropriate to the situation, will authorize such staff or other visitors as are appropriate, and will instruct visitors as to what reporting is appropriate to the situation.

limited to five years and reaffirmation to 10 years. The Commission may grant accreditation for shorter periods of time, with reasons given for the action in each case. Because accreditation is an ongoing relationship between the ATS Commission on Accrediting and the school, the Commission may authorize a visit prior to the scheduled visit for reaffirmation.

2. Institutions shall engage in a comprehensive institutional self study in preparation for each periodic visit. Self study entails both an internal institutional process and a written report of the findings. The self study shall follow the guidance provided in the *Handbook of Accreditation*. In some cases, as described in the *Handbook*, the Commission may approve a special design for a self study that allows an institution to focus on identified areas of need.

3. The self-study report shall be submitted, at least 60 days before the scheduled visit, to the ATS staff who, in consultation with the chairperson of the visiting committee, will have responsibility to determine whether the document is an adequate basis for conducting the visit or whether the visit should be postponed. If the visit is postponed by ATS staff for more than one semester, the institution shall have the right of appeal at the next scheduled meeting of the Commission on Accrediting.

4. The Commission will publish the names of schools receiving a comprehensive evaluation visit in a given year, and request comment from other ATS member institutions.

B. Through focused evaluation visits

1. Focused evaluation visits may be authorized by the Commission as a response to any of the following:

a. a school's invitation to the Commission;

b. a school's decision to offer a new degree program, as noted in section IV of these procedures;

c. a school's decision to offer more than 50 percent of the courses for an approved degree at a new location;

d. a change in ownership or substantive change in the pattern of control of the institution;

e. the receipt of other information which leads the Commission to conclude that a focused visit is advisable; or

Proposed VI.B.1.c and VI.B.1.d are required by USDE regulations.

The inclusion of Proposed VI.C clarifies the Commission's existing practice of requiring follow-up reports as part of Commission actions.

Formally designating areas of needed improvement (Proposed VI.D) is proposed as a new procedure. It would constitute a formal mechanism to focus ATS accreditation on institutional and educational improvement.

The time limit for notations (Proposed VI.E.3) is required by USDE. During 1996-97, the Commission on Accrediting will complete a new system of notations to use in accrediting actions, as outlined in the plan of implementation (p. 13). The current set of notations will be phased out by 1998.

C. Through the use of published notations

1. Definition: The notations reflect principles contained in the accrediting standards, and they indicate how and when, in the Commission's judgment, these principles are not being adequately translated into practice in those schools on which the notations are imposed.

2. Use: Notations are published in the Association's annual *Membership List* following the name of the accredited schools on which they have been imposed.

3. A school may petition the Commission on Accrediting with evidence for the removal of notations.

f.   any other indication that the quality of a school's programs may have been adversely affected by changes in circumstances, or the receipt of a formal complaint against the institution.

2.   In preparation for focused visits, the Commission may require reports from the school as are appropriate to the situation, authorize staff or other visitors as appropriate, and provide instruction for the school and the visitors regarding the committee's report to the Commission. The expectations for a focused visit will be described to the school in the context of a written prospectus prepared for the visit.

C.   By requiring schools to make follow-up reports

The Commission may require schools to make follow-up reports on the basis of: (1) reports to the Commission from committees conducting evaluation visits; or (2) prior Commission actions; or (3) issues of concern; or (4) areas identified for improvement.

D.   Through the Commission's identification of areas of needed improvement

Institutional self-study reports and the reports of evaluation committees shall identify areas of needed improvement. In its actions based on these reports, the Commission on Accrediting may identify areas in the school's institutional or educational efforts that should be the focus of improvement. When such areas have been identified, subsequent accreditation reviews will assess the improvement the school has made. Commission actions identifying areas of needed improvement shall be clearly related to the standards of accreditation.

E.   Through the use of published notations

1.   Notations are imposed by the Commission to denote standards that are inadequately implemented by the school.

2.   Notations are published in the Association's *Membership List* as part of the institution's formal accredited status with ATS.

3.   Within two years following the imposition of a notation, the school shall provide evidence to the Commission on Accrediting as to why the notation should be removed. Failure to have a notation removed by the specified time period will lead to an adverse accrediting decision. In certain cases, the Commission may extend the period the notation is imposed.

The revised procedures introduce a new category of Commission action: warning (Proposed VI.F). This new policy is being recommended to provide the Commission with an intermediate level of expressing serious concerns between the imposition of notations and the placing of an institution on probation.

D. Through the use of probation

1. Probation is designed to meet the case of major inadequacy in a school, an inadequacy not sufficiently indicated by notations, but which in the judgment of the Commission on Accrediting may be remedied within a relatively short but specified period of time.

2. No institution will be placed on probation without an on-site visit having been conducted by the Commission. The visiting committees will prepare a written report and submit it to the school for its response. The report and the response shall be examined by the Commission and serve as the basis for its decision.

3. In any action placing a school on probation the Commission on Accrediting will state in writing the reasons for the action and the conditions removing probation from the school.

4. The time assigned to a school for the remedial action required for the removal of probation shall be not less than 12 nor more than 24 months. (The school itself, of course, may be able to fulfill these conditions in a shorter period.) Extension of probation is not permitted.

5. At the end of the probationary period the Commission on Accrediting will either sustain or withdraw a school's accreditation. If the latter, the Commission may not restore accreditation until at least five years after the beginning of probation.

F.   Through the use of warning

1.   When the Commission on Accrediting determines that an accredited institution has major inadequacies with regard to one or more standards, it may place an institution on warning. In its action to place an institution on warning, the Commission will identify the standards that it judges to be inadequately met by the school and describe its expectations regarding the changes necessary to meet the standards.

2.   Warning may be imposed for a period not to exceed one year, after which time the Commission will consider either removing the warning or authorizing a visit to determine if probation should be imposed.

3.   Warning is not a public sanction, and this status will not be published in the ATS *Membership List*. During the period within which the warning is in force, the institution's accredited status is affirmed.

G.   Through the use of probation

1.   Probation is designed to meet the case of major inadequacy in a school that has not been sufficiently addressed during the period of warning.

2.   No institution will be placed on probation without an on-site visit. Normally, this will follow a previous action of the Commission placing the school on warning, but probation can be imposed without the prior imposition of warning. The visiting committee will prepare a written report and submit it to the school for its response. The visiting committee's report and the school's response will be considered by the Commission and will serve as the basis for its decision.

3.   In any action placing a school on probation, the Commission on Accrediting will identify the standards that it judges to be inadequately met by the school and describe its expectations regarding changes necessary to meet the standards.

4.   The time assigned to a school for the remedial action required for the removal of probation will be not less than 12 nor more than 24 months. If a school demonstrates that the conditions to remove probation have been met prior to the end of the period of probation, the school may petition the Commission for early consideration of removal of probation. Extension of probation is not permitted.

6. When probation is given a school, the action of the Commission on Accrediting will be announced in the usual way in bulletins and reports. The school will be continued in the list of accredited schools, but following its name will appear a note, "Probation (date) to (date)."

7. The Commission on Accrediting will be responsible for studying information duly submitted to it concerning a school on probation and, for purposes of comparison, normally will employ in the reinspection at least one of the original committees.

E. Through withdrawal of accreditation

If, after an on-site visit, examination of a committee's report, and receiving a school's response, the Commission determines that a school has sustained such adverse major changes as to make impossible correction within a two-year period, it may vote to withdraw institutional accreditation. In this case reaccreditation shall follow the "steps of accreditation" noted above. Such an application will not be considered in less than three years from the withdrawal action.

F. Adverse accrediting actions

Adverse accrediting actions are defined as denial of accreditation, placing a school on probation, or withdrawal of accreditation.

VII. *The Commission on Accrediting*

A. Composition

In accordance with the Constitution the composition of the Commission should reflect due regard for the pluralistic nature of the Association.

B. Procedures

1. Wherever possible one member of the Commission shall be assigned to a visiting committee.

2. Members of the Commission shall absent themselves from discussion and voting on matters having to do with their own schools.

3. In making its decisions about accreditation and notations, the Commission shall receive the self study of the school under consid-

5. At the end of the probationary period, a visit by an evaluation committee will be conducted to bring a report to the Commission as to whether the school's accreditation should be reaffirmed or withdrawn.

6. When probation is imposed upon a school, the action of the Commission on Accrediting will be communicated in the ATS *Bulletin* and reports. The school will continue to appear in the list of accredited schools, but following its name will appear the note, "Probation (date) to (date)."

H. Through withdrawal of accreditation

1. If, after a period of probation, an on-site visit, examination of the visiting committee's report, and receipt of a school's response, the Commission on Accrediting determines that a school has failed to demonstrate that it can or will function according to the standards of accreditation, it may withdraw institutional accreditation.

2. Once accreditation is withdrawn, an institution may not apply for reaccreditation for a period of three years. Application will follow the procedures outlined in section III above.

I. Adverse accrediting actions

Adverse accrediting actions by the Commission are defined as denial of accreditation, placing a school on probation, or withdrawal of accreditation.

VII. *The Commission on Accrediting*

A. Composition and Duties

1. The composition of the ATS Commission on Accrediting is defined by the ATS Constitution and should reflect the various constituents of the Association.

2. In the context of its constitutional duties to make decisions regarding accreditation, the Commission is responsible for adopting and overseeing policies and procedures that ensure thorough and fair evaluation of schools, and for consistently applying Association procedures and accrediting standards.

3. The Commission on Accrediting has three primary duties on behalf of the Association: (1) compilation and maintenance of the list of schools accredited in accordance with the standards determined by

eration, the written report of the visiting committee, the recommendations of the committee which have been shared with the school at the exit interview, the responses of the institution to both the report and the recommendations, and it shall then make its decisions on the basis of that material, of its overall knowledge of the Association, and its ongoing experience in the application of the standards of the Association.

4. The Commission's preliminary consideration of committee reports shall be done by subcommittees. Members of the Commission shall not serve on a subcommittee considering a report from a committee on which they have served.

5. Members of the Commission shall not vote on decisions about schools they have visited.

6. A school desiring to pursue some specific matter connected with decisions of the Commission may, in consultation with staff, arrange an appearance before the Commission or a subcommittee of the Commission.

Several changes are proposed regarding the Commission on Accrediting. Proposed VII.A.3 identifies the responsibility of the Commission to develop policies that guide schools, evaluation committees, and the Commission in ATS accreditation. Proposed VII.A.4 designates the Commission as the ATS entity responsible for bringing recommendations for changes in accrediting standards to the Association (a CORPA requirement). Proposed VII.B.5 is a policy required by CORPA and has been the Commission's policy, although not previously written. Proposed VII.B.6 is a policy required by USDE regulations and, from ATS experience with schools that have closed, represents a necessary requirement for good practice.

the Association, including the authority to add schools to the list; (2) the undertaking, on an ongoing basis, of a review of accredited schools for continued inclusion on the list of accredited schools, including all aspects of ATS accreditation pursuant to the procedures and standards of the Association; and (3) the review and recommendation of applicant schools to the Association for membership.

4. The Commission is also responsible for regular and continuous review of the accrediting standards and for bringing recommendations for changes to the Association.

B. Procedures

1. Members of the Commission must absent themselves from discussion and voting on matters having to do with schools in which they are currently or have been previously employed and schools which they have attended as students.

2. In making decisions following evaluation committee visits, the Commission will consider the self study of the school under consideration, the written report of the visiting committee, the committee's recommendations contained in that report, and the responses of the institution to both the report and the recommendations. The actions that the Commission takes will be based on these materials, and will reflect both the Commission's experience of applying the Association's standards and the decisions it has made regarding other institutions.

3. Subcommittees of the Commission will give preliminary consideration to visiting committee reports and recommendations. Members of the Commission may not serve on a subcommittee considering a report from a visiting committee of which they were a member, nor may they vote on decisions about schools they visited.

4. Any school about which the Commission is considering an accreditation action has the right to request an appearance by its designated representatives before the Commission or a subcommittee of the Commission.

5. Letters reporting the Commission's actions will be sent to schools no later than 30 days from the date of the action.

6. If the Commission receives information that the closing of an institution is planned, or determines that an institution is in danger of closing, the institution shall be required to provide a plan detailing agreements with other institutions and the means of

VIII. *Visiting Committees*

A. Visiting committees for on-site visits (whether for initial accreditation or reevaluation) shall be selected from a list of evaluators approved by the Commission on Accrediting.

B. Prospective evaluators may be recommended for inclusion on the approved list by executive officers of member institutions or affiliates.

C. The list of evaluators will be made up of persons who have participated in the regularly scheduled orientation and/or training program sponsored by the Commission on Accrediting.

D. Evaluators for a particular visit shall be selected by the staff under the supervision of the Commission with due consideration of the goals and programs of the institution and in consultation with the institution, and with at least one person not a member of the Commission on Accrediting or the Executive Committee.

E. In cooperative visits with other accrediting associations, the composition of the committee will be negotiated and members of joint committees will be mutually acceptable to the participating agencies.

F. Visiting committees normally spend approximately three days on on-site visits, but that time may be adjusted in view of the size of the school and the overall situation.

G. Members of visiting committees serve without remuneration except for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses, including travel, sustenance, maintenance, and costs incurred.

The expanded guidelines regarding evaluation committees include revisions in: Proposed VIII.A to identify publicly the *Handbook of Accreditation* as the reference for evaluation committee processes, which is current ATS practice, and Proposed VIII.C and Proposed VIII.D to include elements required by CORPA criteria for recognition and USDE regulations about identifying conflict of interest.

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support necessary to allow students to complete the degree programs to which they were admitted in a manner and at a cost consistent with their enrollment in the institution that is closing.

7. Accreditation is a continuing relationship between an institution and the Association which is subject to review and consideration.

VIII. *Evaluation Committees*

A. Committees evaluating institutions for initial accreditation, for reaffirmation of accreditation, and for focused visits will be selected according to procedures adopted by the Commission on Accrediting and published in the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

B. The Commission and its staff will receive nominations for potential visitors from the executive officers of any ATS-related institution.

C. The Commission will provide the resources, training, and staff support to ensure informed and responsible work by members of evaluation committees.

D. Evaluation committee members will be selected by ATS staff, under the supervision of the Commission and in consultation with the institution to be visited, and with due consideration of the purpose and programs of the institution. At least one member of the committee will not be a member of the ATS Commission on Accrediting or the ATS Executive Committee. Schools may object to the appointment of persons to a committee if the appointee has attended the school as a student or been employed by the institution. The number of persons appointed to visiting committees will vary according to the nature of the visit, and will be determined in consultation with the institution.

E. In cooperative visits with another accrediting agency, the composition of the committee will be negotiated with that agency to ensure that all committee members are mutually acceptable.

F. Comprehensive evaluation visits normally require the equivalent of three days on-site at the institution, but that time may be adjusted in view of the size of the school and its overall situation. Committees conducting focused visits normally spend the equivalent of one or two days on-site at the institution.

G. Members of evaluation committees serve without remuneration except for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses, travel, meals, and other costs incurred.

The revisions to the policy on disclosure and confidentiality are editorial and organizational. The policy remains the same. Some clarification is added regarding institutional responsibilities to disclose accredited status (as required by the USDE).

IX. *Policy on Disclosure and Confidentiality*

A. Accredited status

1. In accordance with the constitutional requirement that the Commission "maintain a list of accredited theological schools," following each semi-annual meeting of the Commission such a *Membership List* shall be issued as Part 7 of the ATS *Bulletin.* Where reference is made in a school publication to the status of a school, such statements shall comply with the designations in the *Membership List* as to accreditation, candidacy, and all programs.

2. No adverse accrediting action shall be published until the constitutional period for receiving an appeal shall have expired. In the event of a timely appeal, no publication of the action shall be done until the appeal procedure has been followed to its conclusion.

3. The Commission recommends the following form for disclosing in catalogs, advertisements, brochures and other publications that the institution is a member of the ATS: (name of institution) is an associate member of, or a candidate for accreditation with, or accredited by The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

4. Because the ATS as an institutional accrediting agency also approves degree programs, it is appropriate to say that the (name) degree program is approved by the ATS. Institutions are accredited; degree programs are approved. It is inappropriate to use the phrase "fully accredited" or "full accreditation" because no partial accreditation is possible.

5. Accreditation is a continuing relationship between an institution and the Association which is subject to periodic reconsideration or consideration when necessary. The timing of the next scheduled evaluation may be noted but should not be emphasized unduly.

6. An institution on probation must disclose this status when it refers to its accreditation by the ATS.

H. Committees are responsible for conducting their work and preparing their reports according to the guidelines provided by the Commission in its *Handbook of Accreditation*.

IX. *Policy on Disclosure and Confidentiality*

A. Accredited Members

1. Institutions 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 accreditation status, approved degree programs, and approved locations for offering degrees if other than the institution's primary location. If the institution is on probation, this status shall also be disclosed.

2. The ATS *Membership List* reports the formal accredited status of schools and will not be published until the constitutional period for receiving appeals of Commission actions has expired. No adverse accrediting action will be published while undergoing review. Adverse accrediting actions are defined in section VI.I, above.

B. Associate and Candidate Members

1. The institution shall publish its formal status with the Association.

2. The Commission will publish a list of associate member schools and schools that have been granted candidacy for accredited status in the ATS *Membership List*.

C. Self-study reports

1. An institution may release for internal or public distribution the contents of its self study.

2. The Commission on Accrediting may permit representatives from member institutions access to another institution's self-study report to aid in the self-study process. This access will be permitted only if an institution has given prior approval for use of its self study in this way. The Commission may also approve the use of self-study reports by educators who are conducting research, the purpose of which is the improvement of the accrediting process. The Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the U.S.

B.   Associate membership

   1.   The Commission will maintain a list of associate member schools in the ATS *Membership List,* Part 7 of the ATS *Bulletin.*

   2.   Any published reference to the relation of the school to the ATS shall comply with the designation in the *Membership List* as to associate membership.

C.   Self-study reports

   1.   An institution may release for internal or public distribution the contents of its self study.

   2.   The Commission may permit representatives from other member institutions access to an institution's self study if helpful to their own self-study processes. This will be done only if an institution has given prior approval for this type of usage. The Commission may also allow the self studies to be used by educators who are conducting research, the purpose of which is the improvement of accrediting process and which has been approved by the Commission on Accrediting or the Executive Committee. The Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education may be allowed access to self studies, but only in conjunction with the process of recognition.

D.   Visiting committee reports

   1.   Reports on accreditation visits shall be made available as part of the accreditation process to governing boards and faculties by the chief executive officers of schools being initially accredited or reevaluated.

   2.   If, in the judgment of the Commission on Accrediting, a school publishes selected portions of a report on an accreditation visit in such a way as to distort the total import of that report, the Commission has the authority to release the full text of the report in question.

   3.   An institution may release its visiting committee report. It must, however, make clear that the document is a report of the visiting committee to the Commission on Accrediting and is not an action of the Commission.

   4.   The recommendations of the visiting committee to the commission shall not be published by the institution since only the actions of the Commission embody the final recommendations for the school.

Department of Education may be allowed access to self-study reports in conjunction with the process of recognition that the ATS Commission on Accrediting undergoes with these entities.

D. Evaluation committee reports

1. As part of the accreditation process, reports prepared by ATS evaluation committees shall be made available to governing boards and faculties by the chief executive officers of schools.

2. An institution may make public the report of an evaluation committee, although this is not mandatory and is not advisable prior to formal Commission action. If the institution makes a report public, it must make clear that the document is a report of the evaluation committee to the Commission on Accrediting and is not an action of the Commission.

3. The recommendations of the evaluation committee to the Commission shall not be published by the institution. Only the actions of the Commission comprise the formal accreditation.

4. If, in the judgment of the Commission on Accrediting, a school publishes selected portions of a report on an accreditation visit in such a way as to distort the overall import of that report, the Commission has the authority to release the full text of the report in question.

5. The Commission will not release evaluation committee reports to the public. With the approval of the institution, the Commission may approve access to a report to those conducting research that contributes to the improvement of the accrediting process. Visiting committee reports may be examined by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education only in the context of reviews of ATS by those agencies, for the purpose of recognition. Evaluation committee reports will also be shared with regional accrediting agencies in the case of dually accredited schools.

E. Other accrediting documents

1. Minutes of the Commission on Accrediting are available to the members of the Commission. A summary report of all actions of the Commission is published in the ATS *Bulletin*.

2. An institution which has officially appealed an adverse action of the Commission may request those sections of official minutes which pertain to the adverse action.

5.   The Commission will not release visiting committee reports to the public. With the approval of the institution, the Commission may allow access to a report to those conducting research, the purpose of which is the improvement of the accrediting process and which is approved by the Commission on Accrediting or the Executive Committee. For the purposes of the recognition process only, visiting committee reports may be examined by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education. The Commission may also share the visiting committee reports with regional accrediting commissions of higher education.

E.   Other accrediting documents

1.   Minutes of the Commission on Accrediting shall be available to the Commission members and Executive Committee members. A summary report of all actions of the Commission is published in the ATS *Bulletin,* Part 6.

2.   An institution which has officially appealed a negative action of the Commission may request those sections of official minutes which pertain to the negative actions.

3.   Correspondence between the Commission and a member or applying institution shall be treated confidentially by both parties.

4.   Institutional progress and follow-up reports will not be released to the public by the Commission. These reports, however, may be released by the institution after action has been taken by the Commission.

5.   The Commission may share correspondence between itself and members or applying institutions with the appropriate regional accrediting commissions of higher education; with the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education in conjunction with the recognition process; and, where applicable, the state or provincial office of higher education.

F.   Public statements by institutions

If an institution uses the public forum to take issue with a negative Commission on Accrediting action relating to that institution, the chair of the Commission may make available to the public any information pertinent to the negative decision. This is not to apply to the announcement by an institution that it intends to appeal a negative action.

3. Correspondence between the Commission and a member or applying institution shall be treated confidentially by both parties.

4. Institutional progress and follow-up reports will not be released to the public by the Commission. These reports, however, may be released by the institution after action has been taken by the Commission.

5. The Commission will share its correspondence to member schools with the appropriate regional accrediting agencies; with the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education in conjunction with the recognition process; and, as required, with appropriate state or provincial authorities.

F. Public statements by institutions

If an institution uses the public forum to take issue with a Commission on Accrediting action relating to that institution, the chair of the Commission may make available to the public any information pertinent to the decision. "Taking issue in a public forum" does not include an announcement by an institution that it intends to appeal an action of the Commission.

G. Disclosure by the Commission of information about member or applying institutions

Upon inquiry, the Commission will release the following information about member or applying institutions:

1. Candidate or accredited status of a school.

2. Associate membership.

3. The date of associate membership, candidacy, and initial accreditation.

4. The date of the last comprehensive evaluation and of the next scheduled comprehensive evaluation.

5. The date of the next scheduled focused visit.

6. The date of formal application for membership if the application is in process of consideration.

7. The date of denial or removal from candidacy.

8. Institutions removed from associate, candidate or accredited membership, placed on probation, or withdrawing from candidacy or accredited membership shall be so noted in the ATS *Membership List.*

9. Institutions denied membership, or removed from candidacy or accredited membership, or placed on probation, or withdrawing from candidacy or accredited membership shall be so noted in the summary report of the Commission actions in ATS *Bulletin,* Part 6. The ATS *Membership List,* Part 7, shall not be approved for publication until 30 days after the normal time for receipt of Commission actions.

10. The submission date and action taken on the most recent written report required by the Commission.

11. The Commission action subsequent to the last evaluation regarding accreditation or candidacy status.

12. Whether an institution has appealed an adverse accrediting action of the Commission and also the status and outcome of such appeal.

13. Actions of the appropriate appeal bodies with reasons for the actions.

G. ATS disclosure of information about member or applying institutions

1. Upon inquiry, the Commission will release the following information about member or applying institutions:

   a. Membership and accredited status.

   b. The dates when associate membership, candidacy, and initial accreditation were obtained.

   c. The dates of the last comprehensive evaluation and of the next scheduled comprehensive evaluation.

   d. The date of the next scheduled focused visit and formal reasons for the visit.

   e. The date a formal application for membership began and the estimated date a decision on the application will be made.

   f. The date of denial of associate membership, denial of candidacy, or removal from candidacy.

   g. The submission date and action taken on the most recent written report required by the Commission.

   h. The Commission action subsequent to the last evaluation visit regarding accreditation.

   i. Whether an institution has appealed an adverse accrediting action of the Commission and the status and outcome of such appeal.

   j. Actions of the appropriate appeal bodies with reasons for the actions.

2. The ATS *Membership List* will identify institutions removed from associate, candidate, or accredited membership; placed on probation; or withdrawing from candidacy or accredited membership.

3. The Commission on Accrediting summary report, published biennially, identifies institutions denied membership, or removed from candidacy or accredited membership, or placed on probation, or withdrawing from associate, candidate, or accredited membership during the period of that report.

4. In all cases of adverse accrediting actions, a public statement about the action will be prepared in consultation with the institution for

14. In all cases of adverse accrediting actions (cf. Procedures Relating to Membership VI, F), the Commission will give the institution written reasons for its decision. A public statement about the action will be prepared in consultation with the institution for response to inquiries. The Commission reserves the right to make final determination of the nature and content of the public statement.

Because the focus of the revised procedures is primarily ATS accreditation and the work of the Commission on Accrediting, the ATS constitutional procedures for appeals regarding non-accrediting actions (Current X.B) are deleted. They remain a part of the ATS Constitution, are binding on the Association, and continue to be referenced in Proposed X.D. Because procedures concerning appeals are directly related to the ATS Constitution, no changes other than editing for grammar or punctuation are introduced in Proposed X.

X. *Appeals* (cf. ATS *Constitution,* Article XI, Appeals)

A. Unless otherwise specified, the time for indicating an appeal shall be within 30 days from receipt of the written action and the appeal shall be in writing.

B. Actions of officers, staff, or committees

1. Actions of officers, staff, or committees by which a member school believes itself treated in a manner inconsistent with the policies and procedures of this Association or on the basis of inadequate information may be appealed by addressing the Executive Director or the President who will attempt by informal means to arrive at a satisfactory resolution. The response to a written appeal including relevant specifics shall be communicated in writing.

2. If a satisfactory conclusion is not reached through negotiation, a written appeal, accompanied by a consent and waiver in the form prescribed by the President or Executive Committee, together with supporting evidence that will clearly depict the grievances involved may be presented to the Executive Committee with the right of personal appearance by the moving party/parties. The decision of the Executive Committee shall be final and binding as shall be provided in the consent and waiver. The decision of the Executive Committee including relevant specifics shall be communicated in writing to the moving party/parties.

response to inquiries. The Commission reserves the right to make final determination of the nature and content of the public statement. The Commission will identify the reasons for the adverse accrediting action in the public statement.

X. ***Appeals of Actions by the Commission on Accrediting*** (cf. ATS *Constitution,* Article XI, Appeals)

A. Unless otherwise specified, the time for requesting an appeal shall be within 30 days from receipt of the letter reporting the Commission action. The request for an appeal shall be in writing.

B. Regarding actions of the Commission on Accrediting other than refusal of membership or accreditation, or the removal of accreditation:

1. If the institution believes that the action of the Commission is unjust or based on erroneous information, the institution shall, either on its own initiative or at the invitation of the Commission, first arrange to meet with at least three members of the Commission to seek a mutually satisfactory resolution. The Commission's response to a written appeal, including relevant specifics, shall be communicated in writing.

2. If, after such consultation, the institution believes the action of the Commission still to be unjust or based on erroneous information, it shall have the right to appeal in writing within 60 days of the receipt of the written findings, to the Appeals Panel. Within 120 days after receiving the notice of appeal, accompanied by a consent and waiver to be bound by the provisions therein and hereof, the Appeals Panel shall arrange for a hearing to review: (1) the findings of the Commission on Accrediting and (2) the position of such member. The Commission on Accrediting and the moving party/

C. Actions of the Commission on Accrediting other than refusal of membership or accreditation, or the removal of accreditation

1. If the institution believes that the action of the Commission is unjust or based on erroneous information, the institution shall on its own initiative or at the invitation of the Commission first arrange to meet with at least three of the members of the Commission to seek a mutually satisfactory resolution. The response to a written appeal including relevant specifics shall be communicated in writing.

2. If after such consultation the institution believes the action of the Commission still to be unjust or based on erroneous information, it shall have the right to appeal in writing within 60 days of the receipt of the written findings, to the Appeals Panel. Within 120 days after receiving the notice of appeal accompanied by a consent and waiver to be bound by the provisions therein and hereof, the Appeals Panel shall arrange for a hearing to review (1) the findings of the Commission on Accrediting and (2) the position of such member. The Commission on Accrediting and the moving party/parties shall have the right to representation in person. The decision of the Appeals Panel including relevant specifics shall be communicated in writing and shall be final and binding in accordance with the consent and waiver referenced herein (and as submitted concurrent with the appeal procedures).

D. Actions refusing associate membership, candidate for accredited membership, accredited membership; or removing accreditation or candidacy for accreditation

1. In the event the Commission on Accrediting shall receive an application for membership, whether at the associate or candidate or accredited level, or a request for candidacy for accreditation from an associate member, then it shall, prior to any further undertakings, obtain from the institution a consent and waiver, in the form prescribed by the Commission on Accrediting, that such institutions shall be bound by the procedures hereafter set forth.

2. In the event the Commission on Accrediting shall find, in writing, that an applicant seeking membership does not meet the conditions or standards established by the Association, or it does so recommend but the Association does not elect to membership in response to the recommendation, or, in the event that the Commission on Accrediting removes an institution's candidacy for accredited status, places an institution on probation, or removes accredited status from an institution, then the institution shall have the right, within 30 days of its receipt of the written findings, to appeal to the Appeals Panel, which appeal shall be heard in the manner provided in Section X, C, 2 above.

parties shall have the right to representation in person and by counsel, if desired. The decision of the Appeals Panel, including relevant specifics, shall be communicated in writing and shall be final and binding in accordance with the consent and waiver referenced herein (and as submitted concurrent with the appeal procedures).

C. Regarding actions refusing associate membership, candidate for accredited membership, accredited membership; or removing accreditation or candidacy for accreditation:

1. In the event the Commission on Accrediting shall receive an application for membership, whether at the associate or candidate or accredited level, or a request for candidacy for accreditation from an associate member, it shall, prior to any further undertakings, obtain from the institution a consent and waiver, in the form prescribed by the Commission on Accrediting, that such institutions shall be bound by the procedures hereafter set forth.

2. In the event the Commission on Accrediting shall find, in writing, that an applicant seeking membership does not meet the conditions or standards established by the Association; or it does recommend the applicant but the Association does not elect the applicant to membership in response to the recommendation; or, in the event that the Commission on Accrediting removes an institution's candidacy for accredited status, places an institution on probation, or removes accredited status from an institution; then the institution shall have the right, within 30 days of its receipt of the written findings, to appeal to the Appeals Panel, which appeal shall be heard in the manner provided in Section IX, B. 2 above.

3. The Commission on Accrediting encourages institutions, following the procedure outlined in Section IX.C.1 above, to arrange a meeting with at least three members of the Commission on Accrediting to seek a mutually satisfactory resolution prior to an appeal to the Appeals Panel. The response of the Commission, including relevant specifics, shall be communicated in writing. The decision of the appeals panel is final and binding, unless the institution chooses to appeal to an appellate committee.

4. In the event the Appeals Panel shall rule in a manner not acceptable to the institution, then the institution shall have the right of appeal by writing, within 90 days of receipt of such written decision, to the President of the Association requesting appointment of an Appellate Committee to hear the appeal and make final determination with respect to the issues involved.

3. The Commission on Accrediting encourages institutions, following the procedure outlined in Section X, C, 1 above, to arrange a meeting with at least three members of the Commission on Accrediting to seek a mutually satisfactory resolution prior to an appeal to the Appeals Panel. The response of the Commission, including relevant specifics, shall be communicated in writing.

4. In the event the Appeals Panel shall rule in a manner not acceptable to the institution, then the institution shall have the right of appeal by writing, within 90 days of receipt of such written decision, to the President of the Association requesting appointment of an Appellate Committee to hear and make final determination with respect to the issues involved.

The Appellate Committee, consisting of five persons, shall be composed as follows:

The first two shall be members of the Commission on Accrediting for institutions of postsecondary education of the regional association responsible for the area in which the institution is geographically located, or, if in Canada, from a roster proposed by the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, one such member to be appointed by the institution, the other by the President of the Association. The third and fourth members of the Appellate Committee shall be appointed from among the full-time faculty or administrative staff of the accredited members of the Association (persons so selected not presently serving on either the Executive Committee or the Commission on Accrediting), one chosen by the institution, the other by the President of the Association. The four members of the Appellate Committee so selected shall choose as chair the fifth member from a panel of persons knowledgeable of accreditation nominated by the Association of American Law Schools or, if in Canada, from a panel nominated by a comparable agency.

In the event an appeal is not undertaken by the institution in the manner provided above, then the decision of the Appeals Panel shall be final and binding. In the event the appeal procedure, as the same relates to the appointment of the Appellate Committee consisting of five persons, is availed of, then the decision of that committee shall be final and binding upon the Association and the institution.

The committee so selected shall be compensated for all expenses incurred plus (for those members outside ATS) a per diem rate for attendance at hearings. Costs and compensation herein provided shall be paid by the party against whom the final decision is rendered, save and except a written agreement between the Association and the appellant entered into at the time the appeal is taken.

5. The Appellate Committee, consisting of five persons, shall be composed as follows:

   The first two shall be members of the Commission on Accrediting for institutions of postsecondary education of the regional accrediting agency responsible for the area in which the institution is geographically located, or, if in Canada, from a roster proposed by the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, one such member to be appointed by the institution, the other by the President of the Association. The third and fourth members of the Appellate Committee shall be appointed from among the full-time faculty or administrative staff of the accredited members of the Association (persons so selected not presently serving on either the Executive Committee or the Commission on Accrediting), one chosen by the institution, the other by the President of the Association. The four members of the Appellate Committee so selected shall choose as chair the fifth member from a panel of persons knowledgeable of accreditation nominated by the Association of American Law Schools or, if in Canada, from a panel nominated by a comparable agency.

6. The decision of the Appellate Committee is final and binding upon the Association and the institution.

7. The Appellate Committee members shall be compensated for all expenses incurred. Persons not related to ATS institutions shall be paid a per diem for their involvement. Costs and compensation of the Appellate Committee shall be paid by the party against whom the final decision is rendered, save and except a written agreement between the Association and the appellant entered into at the time this appeal is undertaken.

8. Both the institution and the Commission shall have the right to representation in person and by counsel, if they so choose.

D. Actions of the Association, ATS Committees, and ATS Staff

The ATS Constitution defines patterns of appeal regarding actions of the Association as a whole, its committees (other than the Commission on Accrediting), and ATS staff.

E.   Actions of the Association

If the membership by vote declines to elect an institution to member-
ship, then the institution shall have the right to appeal in writing to the
Executive Committee within 30 days of its written notice of the actions
of the Association. The appeal will be heard in the manner provided in
Section D, 1, b. The institution will have the right of further appeal to an
Appellate Committee as provided in Section D, 1, c., except that the
decisions of the Executive and the Appellate Committees shall have
bearing directly on the granting of the status of membership.

XI.   *Complaints*

The Association has an obligation to the various publics which it serves to give
responsible consideration to any complaints which may be made against any
accredited school. To this end the Commission on Accrediting will expect such
to be filed with Association staff in writing together with substantial documen-
tation as may be appropriate for the particular circumstance. While the Associa-
tion does not assume any responsibility for or obligation to adjudicate indi-
vidual grievances, it may nonetheless choose to investigate the conditions
pertaining to such when there may be indications that the quality of a school's
programs and its general institutional integrity and welfare are involved.
Complaints should be addressed to the executive director of the Association.
When the Association does investigate a complaint, any written report shall be
given to all parties involved.

> The revised procedures for complaints (Proposed XI) include the policy the
> Commission has adopted and used to respond to complaints. Some of the
> wording reflects USDE regulations. Proposed XII.B and Proposed XII.C are
> policies required by the USDE when one USDE-recognized accrediting
> agency is working with another USDE-recognized agency.

XII. *Dual Accreditation*

Any institution seeking or holding accreditation by more than one Commission
on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA) or U.S. Department of
Education recognized accrediting body must describe itself in identical terms to
each recognized accrediting body with regard to purpose, governance, pro-
grams, degrees, diplomas, certificates, personnel, finances, constituents, and
must keep each accrediting body appraised of any change in its status with one
or another accrediting body.

XI. *Complaints*

The Association has an obligation to the various publics it serves to give responsible consideration to complaints that may be made against any accredited school. The Commission on Accrediting maintains policies and procedures for reviewing and responding to complaints. The complaint must be filed in writing, together with substantial documentation, as appropriate for the circumstance. The Commission will determine if the complaint has standing with reference to any membership criteria or accreditation standard of the Association. If the complaint has standing, the Commission will conduct an investigation. The Commission will communicate its conclusions and actions to the institution and the parties raising the complaints. The Commission on Accrediting assumes no responsibility for or obligation to adjudicate individual grievances. The Commission will not investigate a complaint while the complainant is engaged in a civil suit against a member school.

XII. *Dual Accreditation*

A. Any institution seeking or holding accreditation by more than one accrediting body recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation or the U.S. Department of Education must describe itself in identical terms to each recognized accrediting body with regard to purpose, governance, programs, degrees, diplomas, certificates, personnel, finances, and constituents; and must keep each accrediting body apprised of any change in its status with one or another accrediting body.

B. The Commission on Accrediting will withhold actions granting reaffirmation of accreditation, granting candidacy for accredited status or extending the term of candidacy to any institution that is currently subject to (1) an adverse accrediting action by another accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, or (2) an action by an appropriate governmental authority that may lead to suspension, relocation or termination of the school's legal authority to provide degree-granting higher education. If after review the Commission determines that the institution is in compliance with ATS standards, it will proceed with the actions appropriate to ATS procedures, criteria, and standards.

C. The Commission on Accrediting will withhold actions granting reaffirmation of accreditation, granting candidacy for accredited status, or extending candidacy status to a college-related or university-related theological school, if the institution to which it is related is currently subject to (1) an adverse action by another accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, or (2) an interim action by a governmental agency leading to suspension, revocation or termination of the institution's authority to offer degree-granting higher education. If, after review, ATS determines to grant candidacy, initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation to schools related to colleges or universities, subject to the conditions noted above, the Commission will provide an explanation for its action to the U.S. Secretary of Education, and to the recognized accrediting agency.