STANDARDS REVIEW

Report to the Membership

June 2025

TIME TO "LOOK AGAIN"
at the 2020 Standards and Policies

Required by COA Board Policy & USDE

BOC working committee Feb 2024
2 Commissioners & Commission staff

Peer review survey
Public call for comments
Biennial mtg structured review

Analysis of data
Proposal of amendments
Responses to input from BOC & schools

Significant Initial Input

106 peer reviewers

6 individual letters

400+ individuals from member schools

20 Commissioners

Commission staff

STRONG AFFIRMATION

For the ability of the Standards to:

- Promote the improvement and enhancement of theological education

- Recognize and respect member schools' missions and theological commitments

- Be sufficiently flexible to allow schools to respond creatively in pursuit of educational missions

- Help to keep schools focused on key principles such as mission and student outcomes

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED

Including:

- Strengthening schools' capacities in planning & evaluation
- Supporting faculty in the work of student formation
- Understanding and implementing shared governance
- Gaining deeper understanding of CBTE & Standards
- Deepening understanding of Standards – individual and collective
- Many additions to Self-Study Ideas

SIX BIG TOPICS (1-3)

Emerging from changing educational/technological landscape

GLOBAL AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

"What does global awareness mean?"

"...global awareness is essential for fostering empathy, tolerance, and collaboration..." Ruiz

CBTE

Creative Elements:

Students: learning outcomes, individual pathways

Faculty: generalists, mentors

Structures: data, finances, student services

BOC: Guidelines, webinars, petition

EMBEDDED SCHOOLS

Much attention present in Standards and Self-Study Ideas; more is added

Offering guidance that is attentive to the uniqueness of each embedded relationship

Clarifies shared governance

SIX BIG TOPICS (4-6)

Emerging from changing educational/technological landscape

GENERATIVE AI

Focus is *Generative* AI

Standards accommodate GenAI

Transparency is crucial

Many Self-Study Ideas added to support schools

Visitor education module added

PHD RESIDENCY

BOC is attending to growth of data via reports on educational experiments

"...schools are experimenting with a variety of models searching for a correct mix of flexible delivery and meaningful interaction."

DIGITAL LEARNING

Standards are "modality neutral"

"How does this work for a school that utilizes a digital library exclusively?" (Std. 6)

A SEVENTH BIG TOPIC: DIVERSITY

In response to spring 2025 Executive Orders,
sub-regulatory guidance,
and a subsequent risk assessment commissioned by ATS

The recent attention to diversity invites:

Consistent defining of the ATS core value of diversity throughout the Standards

Careful refining of diversity demographics

where appropriate

STANDARDS REVIEW TIMELINE 2024-2025

Appoint committee
Design process
Gather data

Continue analysis
Big Topics 4-6
Colloquy Std's 6-8

Fall 2024

Spring 2024

Spring 2025

Winter 2025

Analyse data
Big Topics 1-3
Std's/Ideas
Education:
Colloquy Std's 1-3
Webinar CBTE

Colloquy Std's 4-5,/9/10
Big Idea 7
Draft I – BOC

Draft I – Membership Webinar I June 20

STANDARDS REVIEW TIMELINE 2025-2026

Input from membership
Sept 15 deadline
Review & revisions
Webinar II
Review & revisions

Authorized Draft to Membership

Winter 2026

Fall 2025

Final draft to BOC for authorization

Spring 2026

June 2026

Vote by Membership at Biennial June 24

FINDINGS

Standards Review: Year One

The **Standards/Policies** largely meet current needs of schools.

Expanded **Self-Study Ideas** will help schools respond to changes in landscape.

New educational opportunities will support schools.

STANDARD 1

1.5 The school acts with integrity by valuing, defining, and demonstrating diversity within the context of its mission, history, constituency, and theological commitments. The school has a publicly available stance on diversity that describes its understanding of and commitment to this membership-wide shared value, and the school uses that stance to enhance ~~its~~ diversity **appropriate to its mission, history, constituency, theological commitments, and context.**

STANDARD 4

4.3	The Master of Divinity degree … has clearly articulated learning outcomes that address each of the following four areas, though the school may use different terms for these areas: (a) *religious heritage*, including understanding of scripture, the theological traditions and history of the school's faith community/**ies** and the broader heritage of other relevant religious traditions…

4.11	The Master of Theology degree has clearly articulated student learning outcomes that are appropriate to an advanced degree in theology and consistent with the school's mission and resources. ~~The degree has a A~~t least half of the coursework ~~in courses~~ is designed **specifically** for students in advan~~ced, academically oriented~~ degree programs (i.e., ThM/STM or PhD/ThD).

STANDARD 5

5.3   The Doctor of Ministry degree has clearly articulated student learning outcomes that are consistent with the school's mission and resources and address the following … (d) *personal and spiritual maturity* that enables graduates to ~~reinvigorate~~ **confirm** and deepen their vocational calling.

5.4   The degree culminates with a written project that explores an area of ministry related to the student's vocational calling, utilizes appropriate research methodologies and resources, **is appropriately rigorous for a doctoral degree**, and generates new knowledge regarding the practice of ministry.

5.15   The Doctor of Philosophy degree requires at least half of the coursework to be completed on the school's main campus. For appropriate reasons, the school may petition for an exception to residency that replaces on-campus coursework with synchronous online courses **and/**or with courses offered at additional locations…

STANDARD 6

6.7   The library curates and organizes a coherent collection of resources sufficient in quality, quantity, currency, and depth to support the school's courses and degree programs, to encourage research and exploration beyond the requirements of the academic program, and to enable interaction with a wide range of **theological, cultural, and global** perspectives.

STANDARD 7

7.3   The school has clearly defined admissions policies appropriate to each degree program it offers and to the school's mission and vision. These policies are fairly implemented and encourage diversity appropriate to the school's **mission, history, constituency**, context, and theological commitments.

7.5   The school has appropriate, reliable, and accessible support services and programming for all students. These services are regularly evaluated to ensure they are appropriate and adequate for the school, its degree programs, its delivery modes, and ~~the diversity of~~ its **entire** student community.

7.11   Admissions policies and curricula are regularly reviewed and adjusted to ensure that students ~~are~~ **may be** adequately prepared to serve in their particular vocational contexts.

STANDARD 8

8.2   The composition of the faculty is sufficient in number, ~~and~~ diversity, **and educational preparation** ~~demographically and educationally~~ to achieve the school's mission, in light of the number and nature of its degree programs, the size and composition of its student body, and the scope of its theological commitments...

8.8   The faculty role in teaching and learning includes faculty sharing their expertise with students, using effective pedagogies, being available to students, providing regular and prompt feedback to students, respecting and engaging the ~~diversities~~ **various backgrounds and experiences** that students bring to their educational ~~experiences~~ **pursuits**, and enhancing stud~~ents' capacities~~ to serve in a religiously diverse, multicultural, and globally interconnected world.

STANDARD 9

9 Opening Paragraph .... **Effective** ~~G~~**governance** is based on a bond of trust among boards, administrators, faculty, staff, students, ecclesial or denominational bodies, **and embedding institutions when applicable**, where shared governance is clearly defined and appropriately implemented.

9.3   The school has clear and current documents that describe its governing body's authority, responsibilities, composition, and governance processes. ~~Common responsibilities include~~ **Normally, the governing body ensur**~~esing~~ the school's mission is met; set~~sting~~ priorities for the school through strategic planning; select~~sing~~, care~~sing~~ for, evaluate~~sing~~, and, when necessary, dismiss~~esing~~ the school's chief executive officer; delegat~~esing~~ appropriate authority to school administrators and faculty; and manage~~sing~~ the school's finances and other assets by approving budgets, entering into contracts, preserving endowed funds, and ensuring annual independent audits.

STANDARD 9

9.6 ~~Shared governance~~ **The school** recognizes the appropriate roles and expertise of key constituencies**.** ~~Shared governance~~ **The school** understands **that institutional stewardship is a shared responsibility and that** decisions of the governing body are enhanced by seeking the wisdom of the community in collaborative ways, where that is feasible and appropriate, especially decisions impacting the school's educational quality and financial sustainability**.**

9.7 The school's governing body delegates to the administration the authority to administer policies and decisions **of the governing body ~~and to~~** manage the school's resources and operations within any appropriate guidelines set by the governing body.

STANDARD 10

10 Opening Paragraph … Schools give particular attention to their greatest resource, **their** people, by building communities where all persons are valued, respected, and enabled to use their gifts in ways that serve well the mission.

10.1   The school has a core of employees (staff and faculty) who are well qualified, adequately supported, fairly compensated, and sufficient ~~in number and diversity~~ to achieve the school's mission in light of its size, structure, and theological commitments.

CALL FOR COMMENTS
DEADLINE SEPT 15

https://www.ats.edu/StandardsReview2025

standardsreview@ats.edu

Proposed revisions of the Standards, presentation slides, webinar recording, & input form located at:

https://www.ats.edu/StandardsReview2025

Input may also be submitted to standardsreview@ats.edu