

The following ten principles do not have a one-to-one correlation with the ATS *Standards of Accreditation*, as some principles relate to several standards and some standards relate to several principles. Rather, these principles provide a broad basis for better understanding the standards and they articulate key commitments of the standards. Like the Commission standards, these principles use some terms that are intentionally not defined, given the diversity of the membership. For example, not all schools define formation or diversity the same way, but all schools must attend to formation and diversity in light of their distinctive missions and contexts.

These principles are not ranked or ordered, although all flow from the mission and commitments of The Association of Theological Schools and the Commission on Accrediting (see Preamble to the *Standards*). The word “graduate” in each statement below indicates that these principles are focused on the work of our members schools engaged in graduate, professional theological education, while recognizing that quality theological education is not limited to our schools or those modes of theological education.

The ten educational principles are:

1. *Theological education is rooted in theological values.* Graduate theological education embodies a community of faith and learning that is guided by a theological vision and that cultivates habits of theological reflection and service.
2. *Theological education prioritizes student learning and formation.* Graduate theological education demonstrates sound pedagogy and appropriate student learning outcomes in the context of a cohesive curriculum, and sees formation, even transformation, as central to students’ educational experience and to their vocational calling.
3. *Theological education requires communities of engagement.* Graduate theological education occurs within the context of regular and substantive interaction between teachers and learners and among learners within a viable community of learning, with “teachers” understood to include faculty, librarians, administrators, staff, and other appropriate stakeholders.
4. *Theological education is contextually appropriate.* Graduate theological education attends carefully to the contexts, communities, and constituencies in which, and for which, it is offered and responds to changing contexts with creativity and innovation.
5. *Theological education demonstrates diversity.* Graduate theological education values and demonstrates diversity in its many manifestations, including attention to intercultural competencies, global awareness and engagement, and underrepresented and marginalized groups.
6. *Theological education has appropriate institutional resources and support.* Graduate theological education demonstrates careful planning, sound budgeting, and good stewardship, with attention to the school’s financial, physical, technological, and library and information needs.

7. *Theological education requires sufficient and appropriate personnel.* Graduate theological education is highly relational, requiring enough faculty and staff who are appropriately qualified for and supported in their work and who provide support to students.
8. *Theological education requires a healthy institutional environment.* Graduate theological education depends on shared governance based on a bond of trust among boards, administrators, faculty, staff, students, and ecclesial or denominational bodies; it requires clear grounding in its mission and vision and effective patterns of leadership and management.
9. *Theological education demonstrates careful institutional planning and evaluation.* Graduate theological education builds from a clear sense of purpose, is undertaken through intentional processes of planning, is enacted through careful instructional and organizational design, and is evaluated in light of the mission and context of each school.
10. *Theological education depends upon integrity, trust, and mutual accountability.* Graduate theological education is offered by schools that act with integrity and trust, are committed to freedom of inquiry, and hold themselves accountable—to each other, to communities of faith, and to the broader public—for their quality, transparency, and authenticity.

Commission accreditation is grounded in these ten educational principles. It is expressed and interpreted by the [Standards of Accreditation](#) and Commission [Policies and Procedures](#) that have been adopted by the Commission's membership. It is supported by documents prepared by the ATS Board of Commissioners, including the Board *Procedures*, various Board guidelines and related documents, and the [Self-Study Handbook](#). The Commission makes a variety of educational and interpretive resources available to assist member schools, including workshops and online training resources, and each school is assigned a Commission staff liaison to support it in its work. For further information on the Board of Commissioners or on the processes of achieving and maintaining accreditation, see the materials available on the [Commission's website](#).