



The Association of Theological Schools The Commission on Accrediting

Frank M. Yamada • Executive Director

March 13, 2020

Dear friends,

In light of the impact of COVID-19/coronavirus-related issues, a number of member schools have inquired of the Commission whether they might make significant modifications to their spring teaching schedules. The Officers Committee of the ATS Board of Commissioners met today to affirm that, throughout this public health emergency, **schools may use online or other technologies to accommodate students on a temporary basis, waiving any applicable residential degree program requirements and waiving the need for comprehensive distance education approval for any schools without it.** “Online technologies” may include emails, phone calls, or videoconferencing, provided the school makes a good faith effort to maintain regular and substantive interaction.

While the Board is not requiring any sort of petition or formal approval process for this semester, **schools should notify their Commissions staff liaisons about any substantive changes they are making to their educational delivery this spring.** You can find your liaison’s name on your school’s page of the [ATS membership directory](#), or email accrediting@ats.edu for assistance. Your Commission staff liaison can also assist you with any petitions or approvals you might wish to submit for any substantive changes beyond the time period of this crisis. The Commission is also working on a case-by-case basis to address comprehensive and focused visits already scheduled for this spring. If you were to be involved on a visit, either as a volunteer or as a school, your staff liaison has likely already been in touch with you about this; please feel to check in with them if you have any questions.

Those of you in the United States have likely already seen the guidance from the [U.S. Department of Education](#) (dated 3/5/2020), regarding interruptions of study, flexibility, and Title IV and Veteran’s benefits issues. Each U.S. regional accrediting agency has also issued its own guidelines, which you will want to review if these relate to you, as well as to monitor the guidance coming from the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control](#) or the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

For further information on the impact on ATS events as well as ways in which we hope to support you during these complicated times, see our [website](#).

Best wishes to you and those you serve,

Frank Yamada
Executive Director
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