



Petition for Substantive Change in Degree Program

for consideration by the ATS/COA Board of Commissioners

Commission-accredited schools must petition for approval prior to adding any new degree that is in a new degree category or represents a significant departure from its currently approved degrees (per Policies and Procedures, IV.D).

As noted in Policies and Procedures, IV.D.1, "The Board considers **offering a degree in a new category** to include offering for the first time a master's or doctoral degree in a category in which it does not currently offer an approved degree. Standard 4 lists three categories of master's degrees: MDiv, MA, and ThM; Standard 5 lists three categories of doctoral degrees: DMin, Other Professional Doctorates, and PhD/ThD. Offering a doctoral degree in a new category may also require a focused visit before approval, especially new PhD degrees (see III.D.1)."

The Board considers **offering a degree representing a significant departure from its approved degrees** to include offering a degree in a field outside of the school's current area(s) of expertise, offering half or more of a degree through Competency-Based Theological Education based on courses and/or credits, and/or programs that require significant additions in faculty, facilities, or finances.

Schools are to use this form to petition for each new substantive change by completing the relevant portion (i.e., submit one petition form for each new degree). In completing this form, please include links to additional documentation as requested or as deemed helpful. Your Commission staff liaison will contact you if there are any questions regarding this petition.

NOTE: As described in Policies and Procedures, IV.D.1, offering new degrees in the same category or changing the name of an already approved degree DOES NOT require prior approval from the Board. However, any such change (including discontinuing an approved degree; see III.L.1) DOES require notification to, and acknowledgement by, the school's Commission staff liaison at least 60 days prior to being implemented. CBTE programs delivering 25 to 49 percent of a program based on courses and/or credits should use the Notification Related to Degree Program while any program utilizing direct assessment should use the Petition for Educational Experiment on the ATS Petitions, Notifications, and Guidelines webpage. Any school on probation must petition for approval to offer an approved degree through a new delivery method or to change by 25 percent or more the total credits or content of an approved degree.

Please note: you are able to save and return to this form as needed. Click "Save" at the bottom of any page and enter your email address. An email will be sent to you from Jotform (via noreply@jotform.com) which contains a link to your form in progress.

i. Name of school: *

Click to select from menu

ii. Contact information for person submitting this form: *

First Name (MI)

Last Name

iii. Title: *

Position title of person submitting this form

iv. Email: *

A copy of your form will be sent to this address

v. Indicate the type of petition being submitted: *

Once petition type is selected, complete the items on the following pages.

Adding a New Degree

1. Name of new degree: *

Enter the full nomenclature (e.g., "Master of Arts," "Doctor of Theology," etc.), excluding any track/concentration.

2. Total semester credits required: *

For minimums, see relevant Standard (viz. 4.1, 4.6, 4.10, 5.1, 5.7, or 5.11). If using a system other than semester hours, please convert to semester hour credits (e.g., by multiplying quarter hours by 0.75), then be sure to note the difference between credit systems in the "Additional Comments" field on the final page. Email any clarifying questions to accrediting@ats.edu.

3. Describe the purpose and need of this degree: *

Consider providing link(s) to document(s) that describe this degree more fully.

4. Does this reflect a degree category that would be new for the school (cf. Policies and Procedures, IV.D.1)? *

☐ Yes

☐ Other

5. Does this represent a significant departure from already-approved degrees, in terms of expertise and/or significant additions needed in the areas of faculty, facilities, or finances? Clarify below in 5a-5c. *

☐ No

☐ Yes

5a. Faculty: *

Provide link to list of faculty teaching in program, with their qualifications.

5b. Facilities: *

Include adequacy of library resources (physical or digital) to support program.

5c. Finances: *

6. This degree will be delivered... (check all that apply) *

☐ onsite

online (school must have comprehensive distanced education approval)

☐ half or more through CBTE based on courses and/or credits (must complete part A. below)

☐ Other

7. What are the admissions requirements for this degree? *

NOTE: If this petition is for a new master's degree that admits students without a bachelor's, describe the "rigorous means" by which the school will determine that those students are prepared to do graduate-level work, per Standard 7.4; if this petition is for a new DMin degree that admits students without an MDiv, describe how the school will demonstrate that students meet the six criteria listed in Standard 5.5; the school may provide links to documents describing either of these special admissions processes.

8. What are the student learning outcomes for this degree and how will they be evaluated? *

Consider providing link(s) to additional documentation (e.g., curricular requirements and evaluation plan).

9. If an MA-level degree, how does the school primarily define this program? *

Click to select from menu

Otherwise, for a degree other than MA-level, please select "N/A" above.

10. If an advanced degree (ThM and doctoral-level degree), describe the adequacy of faculty and library resources to support the program. *

If not a doctoral-level degree, please type "N/A"

Part A. Delivering half or more of the program via competency-based theological education based on courses and/or credits

Complete this section only if the program will utilize CBTE for half or more of the program.

A-1. Describe the rationale for the CBTE program, including what needs it will meet and how it aligns with the school's mission, with a succinct description of the program (see Standard 1.1) *



A-2. Describe the program's clearly articulated competencies and how those align with the expectations of the applicable degree program standards. Include competency definitions and behavioral-based performance indicators that potential graduates must demonstrate in order to earn the desired credential. Describe structured learning activities designed, reviewed, and approved by faculty that utilize new learning to help students move from their current levels of performance to achieve intended outcomes. Describe the learning activities associated with each competency, such as seminars, synchronous or asynchronous online sessions, reading and writing assignments, exams, ministry activities, study groups, mentoring sessions, church-based activities, etc., and how they fulfill the learning outcomes for the degree program and meet particular course requirements (see Standards 3, 4, and 5). *



A-3. Summarize how competencies listed above were developed, including the involvement of faculty and other professionals (e.g., church leaders), with some indication that graduates of the program will find appropriate placements (see Standards 7.10-11 and 8.8). *



A-4. Summarize here and provide the link to a coherent plan for evaluating the program's competencies, including direct and indirect measures and especially performance-based assessment tools, as well as clear rubrics and benchmarks, that are aligned with criteria named in course learning outcomes requiring students to demonstrate a pre-determined level of achievement (mastery) of all competencies and completion of required credits before any degree is awarded (see Standards 2.5-6 and the appropriate degree program standards). *



A-5. Describe the involvement of qualified faculty engaged in the design, delivery, and oversight of program content and in the evaluation of how and how well the competencies are achieved, as well as other persons or agencies involved in student evaluations. The petition must list faculty and others involved, including their roles, specific activities, and relevant qualifications (see Standard 8). *



A-6. Describe how the program will require regular and substantive interaction between qualified faculty and students, as well as among a viable student community of learning, since CBTE is not a form of correspondence education (not allowed under ATS Commission Standards); see Standard 3.9 for requirements for "regular and substantive interaction," and the related Self-study Ideas for examples. *



A-7. Clarify how, where, and when the program will be delivered, giving attention to issues of location (e.g., onsite, offsite, online), of building a community of learning, and of degree length (how long it will typically take to complete). If the program is to be offered in other countries and/or other languages, describe the school's resources and capacities to support students in those other countries and/or other languages (see Standard 1.4). *

A-8. Describe how the program gives due attention to formation, including—as appropriate to the degree—intellectual, human, spiritual, and vocational formation, as well as how any required supervised ministry experiences will be provided and evaluated. Describe both a) how students in the program will be mentored, and b) the difference between the roles of mentor and faculty, the training, development, and ongoing evaluation of mentors to ensure consistency in mentoring and achievement of outcomes (see Standard 3.1 and the appropriate degree program standards). *

A-9. Describe the support services and resources that will be available to students, including library services and resources, technology services and resources, and student services and resources, and how those will be delivered, as well as the qualifications of those delivering those resources and services (see Standards 6.2, 7.5, and 10.9). *

A-10. Describe how the CBTE program meets graduate-level workload expectations equivalent to those of more traditional courses and credits in the program. Demonstrate that the work required and the outcomes achieved are comparable to current generally accepted standards of graduate education, e.g., the normal expectations and calculations used for credit hours. A CBTE program must demonstrate that it has appropriate rigor and quality consistent with the norms of graduate theological education and with the ATS Commission Standards of Accreditation (see Standard 3.2). *

Changing delivery or content of certain approved degrees

See Policies and Procedures, IV.D.1. Following are three examples of when to use this petition form: (i) a school on probation begins to offer at least half of an already approved degree through a new modality; (ii) a school on probation changes the content of an already approved degree by at least 25 percent, e.g., reducing or replacing the number of required courses by 25 percent or more (adding a new specialization to an approved degree does not require notification or a petition); and (iii) a school adopts a competency-based theological education model based on courses and/or credits for more than half of an existing approved degree program.

1. Name of approved degree(s) affected: *

Submit separate forms per degree, unless the date in #2 below aligns for every change—in which case, use semicolon (;) to distinguish multiple degrees.

2. Date when change(s) will take effect: *

Month Day Year

3. Indicate the type(s) of change being submitted (check all that apply and complete each corresponding section below):

- ☐ Changing the delivery method for an approved degree (including CBTE): Part A, below
- ☐ Changing the content of an approved degree by at least 25 percent: Part B, below

Part A. Changing the delivery method of an approved degree

A-1. Previous delivery method(s) of the approved degree(s):

(e.g., delivered on-campus)

A-2. New delivery method of approved degree: *

A-3. Briefly describe the reason(s) for and extent of the change in delivery: *

A-4. If at a location other than the main campus, is this additional location already approved to offer at least half of a degree? *

Please Select

A-5. If delivered via distance/online, has the school been granted comprehensive distance education approval? *

Please Select

A-6. Will more than half of the degree be offered via competency-based theological education using courses and/or credits? *

Please Select

A-7. Describe the rationale for the CBTE program, including what needs it will meet, how it aligns with the school's mission, and a succinct description of the program (see Standard 1.1). *

A-8. Describe the program's clearly articulated competencies and how those align with the expectations of the applicable degree program standards. Include competency definitions and behavioral-based performance indicators that potential graduates must demonstrate in order to earn the desired credential. Describe structured learning activities designed, reviewed, and approved by faculty that utilize new learning to help students move from their current levels of performance to achieve intended outcomes. Describe the learning activities associated with each competency, such as seminars, synchronous or asynchronous online sessions, reading and writing assignments, exams, ministry activities, study groups, mentoring sessions, church-based activities, etc., and how they fulfill the learning outcomes for the degree program and meet particular course requirements (see Standards 3, 4, and 5). *

A-9. Summarize how competencies listed above were developed, including the involvement of faculty and other professionals (e.g., church leaders), with some indication that graduates of the program will find appropriate placements (see Standards 7.10-11 and 8.8). *

A-10. Summarize here and provide the link to a coherent plan for evaluating the program's competencies, including direct and indirect measures and especially performance-based assessment tools, as well as clear rubrics and benchmarks, that are aligned with criteria named in course learning outcomes requiring students to demonstrate a pre-determined level of achievement (mastery) of all competencies and completion of required credits before any degree is awarded (see Standards 2.5-6 and the appropriate degree program standards). *

A-11. Describe the involvement of qualified faculty engaged in the design, delivery, and oversight of program content and in the evaluation of how and how well the competencies are achieved, as well as other persons or agencies involved in student evaluations. The petition must list faculty and others involved, including their roles, specific activities, and relevant qualifications (see Standard 8). *

A-12. Describe how the program will require regular and substantive interaction between qualified faculty and students, as well as among a viable student community of learning, since CBTE is not a form of correspondence education (not allowed under ATS Commission Standards); see Standard 3.9 for requirements for “regular and substantive interaction,” and the related Self-study Ideas for examples. *

A-13. Clarify how, where, and when the program will be delivered, giving attention to issues of location (e.g., onsite, offsite, online), of building a community of learning, and of degree length (how long it will typically take to complete). If the program is to be offered in other countries and/or other languages, describe the school's resources and capacities to support students in those other countries and/or other languages (see Standard 1.4). *

A-14. Describe how the program gives due attention to formation, including—as appropriate to the degree—intellectual, human, spiritual, and vocational formation, as well as how any required supervised ministry experiences will be provided and evaluated. Describe both a) how students in the program will be mentored, and b) the difference between the roles of mentor and faculty, the training, development, and ongoing evaluation of mentors to ensure consistency in mentoring and achievement of outcomes (see Standard 3.1 and the appropriate degree program standards). *

A-15. Describe the support services and resources that will be available to students, including library services and resources, technology services and resources, and student services and resources, and how those will be delivered, as well as the qualifications of those delivering those resources and services (see Standards 6.2, 7.5, and 10.9). C-10. Describe how the CBTE program meets graduate-level workload expectations equivalent to those of more traditional courses and credits in the program. Demonstrate that the work required and the outcomes achieved are comparable to current generally accepted standards of graduate education, e.g., the normal

expectations and calculations used for credit hours. A CBTE program must demonstrate that it has appropriate rigor and quality consistent with the norms of graduate theological education and with the ATS Commission Standards of Accreditation (see Standard 3.2). *

Part B. Changing the content of an approved degree by at least 25 percent

B-1. Briefly describe the nature and extent of the change in content of at least 25 percent: *

When finished, please submit this petition to the ATS Accrediting Records Coordinator by hitting the "submit" button below. You can expect an automated confirmation email within a few minutes. There is no fee for this (or any) Commission petition. Please do not send any paper copies or any emailed attachments; submit only this completed, online form (including any links to additional information requested).

NOTE: Petitions for new degrees are typically decided by the Board of Commissioners within a few months (see submission deadlines on ATS Petitions, Notifications, and Guidelines webpage). Petitions for a doctoral degree in a new category may require six months or more for approval, since the Board may require a focused evaluation visit before making a final decision, especially for new PhD programs.

ATS Commission Staff Liaison Email *

Click to select from menu

A copy of your form will be sent to this address

CEO Email

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