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GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS
Standard 1  Purpose, Planning, and Evaluation

Theological schools are communities of faith and learning guided by a theological vision. Schools related to the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools conduct postbaccalaureate 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 including the use and support of educational technology, constituencies served, relationships with ecclesiastical bodies, global concerns, institutional flexibility, and other comparable matters.

1.2.2  Evaluation is a critical element in support of integrity to institutional planning and mission fulfillment. 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 institutional vitality and educational effectiveness.

1.2.2.1 Institutions shall develop and implement ongoing evaluation procedures for institutional vitality. The scope of institutional vitality evaluation includes (1) ability to fulfill the school's mission; (2) ability to provide the resources necessary to sustain and improve the school; and (3) ability of governance and administrative structures, personnel, and procedures to exercise leadership adequately on behalf of the school's purpose and to operate the school with integrity.

1.2.2.2 Institutions shall develop and implement ongoing evaluation procedures for educational effectiveness as required by the individual Degree Program Standard(s).

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. Information gained in evaluation processes should be utilized widely within the institution for ongoing administrative and educational planning.
Standard 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 Board of Commissioners (“Board”) shall carry out their educational programs and institutional activities according to the Standards of Accreditation and Policies and Procedures (“Standards and Procedures”) established by the Commission and its Board of Commissioners, communicate honestly and forthrightly with the Board, comply with requests for information, and cooperate with the Board 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, electronic and print, 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 In their institutional and educational practices, theological schools shall promote awareness of the diversity of race, ethnicity, and culture widely present in North America and shall seek to enhance participation and leadership of persons of color in theological education. Schools shall assist all students in gaining the particular knowledge, appreciation, and openness needed to live and practice ministry effectively in culturally and racially diverse settings.

2.6 In their institutional and educational practices, theological schools shall promote the participation and leadership of women in theological education within the framework of each school’s stated purposes and theological commitments. Schools shall assist all students in gaining the particular knowledge, appreciation, and openness needed to live and practice ministry effectively in diverse settings.
2.7 Institutions participating in US federal 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 the Commission Standards of Accreditation. Schools shall demonstrate that they have resolved effectively all areas of deficiency identified in audits, program reviews, and any other information provided by the US Department of Education to the Commission.

2.8 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.

2.9 Member schools shall make public a statement of their policy on transfer credits earned at other institutions of higher education, including the criteria used for their decisions.

2.10 Institutions shall establish and enforce policies for the appropriate and ethical use of instructional technology, digital media, and the Internet that are consistent with the institution's educational purposes and environment.
Standard 3  The Theological Curriculum: Learning, Teaching, and Research

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 the theological curriculum is central. It includes the interrelated activities of learning, teaching, and research. The theological curriculum is the means by which learning, teaching, and research are formally ordered to educational goals.

3.1  Goals of the theological curriculum

3.1.1  In a theological school, the overarching goal is the development of theological understanding, that is, aptitude for theological reflection and wisdom pertaining to a responsible life in faith. Comprehended in this overarching 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.

3.1.2  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, learning, and research 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 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.

3.2  Learning, teaching, and research

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.
3.2.1 Learning

3.2.1.1 Learning in a theological school should reflect the goals of the total curriculum and be appropriate to postbaccalaureate education.

3.2.1.2 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.

3.2.1.3 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.

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

3.2.2 Teaching

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

3.2.2.2 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, the importance of communities of learning, and the instructional goals. The integration of technology as a teaching tool and resource for learning shall include careful planning by faculty and administration to ensure adequate infrastructure, resources, training, and support.

3.2.2.3 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. Faculty should be appropriately involved in the consideration of ways in which technology might enhance or strengthen student learning. Course development and review best occur in the context of the goals of the entire curriculum.
3.2.2.4 An institution shall demonstrate its ongoing efforts to ensure the quality of teaching within the context of its purpose and as understood by the relevant scholarly and ecclesial communities.

3.2.3 Research

3.2.3.1 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.

3.2.3.2 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.

3.3 Characteristics of theological scholarship

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

3.3.1 Scholarly collaboration

3.3.1.1 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.

3.3.1.2 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.

3.3.1.3 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.
3.3.2 Freedom of inquiry

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.*

3.3.3 Involvement with diverse publics

3.3.3.1 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.

3.3.3.2 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.

3.3.3.3 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 its role in higher education.

3.3.3.4 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.

3.3.4 Global awareness and engagement

3.3.4.1 Theological teaching, learning, and research require patterns of institutional and educational practice that contribute to an awareness and appreciation of global interconnectedness and interdependence, particularly as they relate to the mission of

* See also the ATS policy guideline titled "Academic Freedom and Tenure."
the church. These patterns are intended to enhance the ways institutions participate in the ecumenical, dialogical, evangelistic, and justice efforts of the church.

3.3.4.2 Global awareness and engagement 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.

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

3.3.5 Ethics of scholarship

The institution shall define and demonstrate ongoing efforts to ensure the ethical character of learning, teaching, and scholarship on the part of all members of the academic community, including appropriate guidelines for research with human participants.
Standard 4  Library and Information Resources

The library is a central resource for theological scholarship and education. It is integral to the purpose of the school through its contribution to teaching, learning, and research, and it functions collaboratively in curriculum development and implementation. The library’s educational effectiveness depends on the quality of its information resources, staff, and administrative vision. To accomplish its mission, the library requires appropriate financial, technological, and physical resources, as well as a sufficient number of personnel. Its mission and complement of resources should align with the school’s mission and be congruent with the character and composition of the student body.

4.1  Library collections

4.1.1  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 for the current and future needs of faculty, students, and researchers.

4.1.2  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, and they shall 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 access to the variety of voices that speak to theological subjects.

4.1.3  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.

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

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

4.2  Contribution to learning, teaching, and research

4.2.1  The library accomplishes its teaching responsibilities by meeting the bibliographic needs of the library’s patrons; offering appropriate reference services; providing assistance and training in using information resources and communication technologies; and teaching information literacy, including research practices of effectively and ethically accessing, evaluating, and using information. The library should collaborate with faculty to develop reflective
research practices throughout the curriculum and help to serve the information needs of faculty, students, and researchers.

4.2.2 The library promotes theological learning by providing instructional programs and resources that encourage students and graduates to develop reflective and critical research and communication practices that prepare them to engage in lifelong learning.

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

4.2.4 The library should provide physical and online environments conducive to learning and scholarly interaction.

4.3 Partnership in curriculum development

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

4.3.2 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 anticipate future intellectual and technological developments that might affect the library.

4.4 Administration and leadership

4.4.1 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 educational 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.

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

4.4.3 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.

4.4.4 Schools shall provide structured opportunities to theological librarians for professional development and, as appropriate, contribute to the development of theological librarianship.
4.5 Resources

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

4.5.2 The professional and support staff shall be of such number and quality as are needed to provide the necessary services, 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.

4.5.3 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.

4.5.4 Adequate facilities include sufficient space for readers and staff, adequate shelving for the book collection, appropriate space for nonprint 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, theft, and other threats.

4.5.5 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.

4.5.6 In its collaborative relationships with other institutions, a school remains accountable for the quality of library resources available to its students and faculty.
Standard 5  Faculty

The members of the faculty of a theological school constitute a collaborative community of faith and learning, and they are crucial to the scholarly activities of teaching, learning, and research in the institution. 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, including training for educational technology.

5.1  Faculty qualifications, responsibilities, development, and employment

5.1.1  Schools should demonstrate that their faculty members have the necessary competencies for their responsibilities. Faculty members shall possess the appropriate credentials for graduate theological education, normally demonstrated by the attainment of a research doctorate or, in certain cases, another earned doctoral degree. In addition to academic preparation, ministerial and ecclesial experience is an important qualification in the composition of the faculty. Also, qualified teachers without a research doctorate may have special expertise in skill areas such as administration, music, or media as well as cross-cultural contextualization for teaching, learning, and research.

5.1.2  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.

5.1.3  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. At the same time, faculty selection will be guided by the needs and requirements of particular constituencies of the school.

5.1.4  The faculty who teach in a program on a continuing basis shall exercise responsibility for the planning, design, and oversight of its curriculum in the context of institutional purpose and resources and as directed by school administration requirements for recruitment, matriculation, graduation, and service to constituent faith communities.

5.1.5  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.

5.1.6 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.

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

5.1.8 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.

5.2 Faculty role in teaching

5.2.1 Teachers shall have freedom in the classroom to discuss the subjects in which they have competence by formal education and practical experience.

5.2.2 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.

5.2.3 Full- and part-time faculty should be afforded opportunities to enhance teaching skills, including the use of educational technology as well as training in instructional design and in modes of advisement appropriate to distance programs, as a regular component of faculty development.

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

5.2.5 Schools shall develop and implement mechanisms for evaluating faculty performance, including teaching competence and the use of educational technology. These mechanisms should involve faculty members and students as well as administrators.

5.3 Faculty role in student learning

5.3.1 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.
5.3.2 To ensure the quality of learning, faculty should be appropriately involved in development of the library collection, educational technology, and other resources necessary for student learning.

5.3.3 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.

5.3.4 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.

5.4 Faculty role in theological research

5.4.1 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.

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

5.4.3 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.

5.4.4 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.
Standard 6  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, student borrowing, and placement.

6.1  Recruitment

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

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

6.2  Admission

6.2.1  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.

6.2.2  Schools shall be able to demonstrate that they operate on a postbaccalaureate 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.

6.2.3  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.

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

6.2.5  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.

6.3  Student services

6.3.1  Policies regarding students’ rights and responsibilities, as well as the institution’s code of discipline, shall be clearly identified and published.
6.3.2 Schools shall regularly and systematically evaluate the appropriateness, adequacy, and use of student services for the purpose of strengthening the overall program.

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

6.3.4 Schools shall maintain adequate student records regarding admission materials, coursework 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.

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

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

6.3.7 Student financial aid, when provided, should be distributed according to “Student Financial Aid” in the ATS Policy Guidelines.

6.3.8 The institution shall have a process for responding to complaints raised by students in areas related to the Commission Standards of Accreditation, and schools shall maintain a record of such formal student complaints for review by the Board.

6.4 Student borrowing

6.4.1 Senior administrators and financial aid officers shall review student educational debt and develop institutional strategies regarding students’ borrowing for theological education.

6.4.2 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.

6.5 Placement

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

6.5.2 Theological schools should monitor the placement of graduates in appropriate positions and review admissions policies in light of trends in placement.
6.5.3 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, gender, and/or disability.
Standard 7  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 encouraging 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.

7.1  Authority

7.1.1  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 by 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.

7.1.2  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, universities, or clusters of theological schools, 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.

7.1.2.1 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 and fiscal resources and personnel. The board is the legally constituted body that is responsible for managing the assets of the institution in trust.
7.1.2.2 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.

7.1.2.3 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.

7.1.3 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.

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

7.2 Governance

7.2.1 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.

7.2.2 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.
7.2.3 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.

7.3 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.

7.3.1 Governing board

7.3.1.1 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, engaging outside legal counsel, ensuring professional and independent audits, using professional investment advisors as appropriate, and maintaining procedural fairness and freedom of inquiry.

7.3.1.2 The governing board shall be accountable for the institution's adherence to requirements duly established by public authorities and by the Commission Standards of Accreditation, and by any other accrediting or certifying agencies to which the institution is formally related.

7.3.1.3 Members of the governing board shall possess the qualifications appropriate to the task they will undertake. In accordance with the school's purpose and constituencies, the governing board's membership should reflect diversity of 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.

7.3.1.4 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.

7.3.1.5 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.

7.3.1.6 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.

7.3.1.7 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.

7.3.1.8 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.

7.3.1.9 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.

7.3.1.10 Governing boards should be structured to conduct their work effectively. Board membership should be large enough to reflect 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.

7.3.1.11 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.
7.3.1.12 The board shall be responsible for evaluating overall institutional governance by assessing and monitoring the effectiveness of institutional governance procedures and structures.

7.3.2 Administration

7.3.2.1 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.

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

7.3.2.3 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.

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

7.3.3 Faculty

7.3.3.1 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.

7.3.3.2 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.
7.3.4 Students

Where students take part in the formal structures of governance, their roles and responsibilities should be clearly delineated.
Standard 8  Institutional Resources

In order to achieve their purposes, institutions need not only sufficient personnel but also adequate financial, physical, and institutional data resources. Because of their theological character, Commission schools give particular attention to personnel and to the quality of the institutional environments 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.

8.1  Personnel

8.1.1  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.

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

8.1.3  The theological school shall (a) engage the numbers and the qualities of personnel 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 employees; and (f) provide appropriate grievance procedures.

8.2  Financial resources

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 their 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.

8.2.1  The financial condition of the school

8.2.1.1  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.

8.2.1.2 A theological school shall have stable and predictable sources of revenue such that the current and anticipated total revenues 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.†

8.2.1.3 A theological school should normally balance budgeted revenues and expenditures while employing a prudent endowment spending rate.‡ 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.

8.2.1.4 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, 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.

† A common and customary understanding of a “prudent” use of endowment return is to budget as revenue 5 percent of a three-year average of the market value of endowment and board-designated quasi-endowment. Member schools should seek legal counsel regarding law applicable to the use of endowments.

‡ The term endowment spending rate refers to a common budgeting rule adopted by governing boards. Such a rule limits or controls the consumption of school’s endowment and return, which for purposes of these Standards includes all of a schools’ endowment and board-designated quasi-endowment.
8.2.1.5 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. The larger institution should provide adequate financial resources to support the mission and programs of the theological school.

8.2.2 Accounting, audit, budget, and control

8.2.2.1 A theological school shall adopt internal accounting and reporting systems that are generally used in North American higher education. US 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.

8.2.2.2 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 US 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. The governing board of a theological school shall have direct access to the independent auditor and receive the audit.

8.2.2.3 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.

8.2.2.4 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. A theological school should maintain three- to five-year financial projections of anticipated revenues, expenditures, and capital projects.

8.2.2.5 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.
8.2.2.6 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.

8.2.3 Business management

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. Schools should ensure that personnel responsible for fiscal and budgetary processes are qualified by education and experience for their responsibilities.

8.2.4 Institutional development and advancement

8.2.4.1 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 roles played by the chief administrative leader in fundraising; the governing board in its leadership and participation; the graduates in their participation; and the faculty, staff, and volunteers in their involvement. Advancement efforts shall be evaluated on a regular basis.

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

8.2.4.3 When auxiliary organizations, such as foundations, have been established using the name and/or reputation of the institution, the school shall be able to demonstrate that the auxiliary organizations are regularly audited by an independent accountant and that the governing relationship between the school and auxiliary organization is clearly articulated.

8.3 Physical resources

8.3.1 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 maintaining, sustaining, and renewing capital assets are included in budget planning.
8.3.2 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.

8.3.3 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.

8.3.4 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.

8.3.5 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.

8.3.6 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.

8.4 Institutional information technology resources

8.4.1 To the extent that a theological school uses technology to deliver its educational programs, the school shall maintain adequate personnel and financial and technological resources to sustain its technology infrastructure.

8.4.2 For planning and evaluation, the school shall create and use various kinds of institutional data and information technology to determine the extent to which the institution is attaining its academic and institutional purposes and objectives. 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.

8.5 Institutional environment

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

8.5.2 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.

8.6 Cooperative use of resources

8.6.1 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.

8.6.2 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, joint and dual degree programs, 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, adequate public disclosure, and provisions for review, and with a clear rationale for involvement in such arrangements.

8.7 Clusters

8.7.1 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.

8.7.2 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.

8.7.3 Structural components

8.7.3.1 The core membership of a cluster comprises schools holding Accredited Member status within the Commission, but clusters may also include schools holding Candidate for Accredited Member status within the Commission and Associate Members of ATS, as well as other schools and agencies with compatible purposes.
8.7.3.2 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.

8.7.3.3 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.

8.7.3.4 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 it should engage in appropriate financial planning.

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

8.7.4 Effectiveness

8.7.4.1 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.

8.7.4.2 If a school meets the Commission Standards of Accreditation only by virtue of affiliation with a cluster, this fact shall be formally specified in its grant of accreditation by the Board.

8.8 Instructional technology resources

Institutions using instructional technology to enhance face-to-face courses and/or provide online-only courses shall be intentional in addressing matters of coherence between educational values and choice of media, recognizing that the learning goals of graduate education should guide the choice of digital resources, that teaching and learning maintains its focus on the formation and knowledge of religious leaders, and that the school is utilizing its resources in ways that most effectively accomplish its purpose. They should also establish policies regarding the appropriate training for and use of these resources.
8.8.1 Students should be adequately informed regarding the necessary skills and mastery of technology to participate fully in the programs to which they are admitted. Institutions are encouraged to provide opportunities for students to gain these skills as part of their program of study.

8.8.2 Sufficient technical support services should ensure that faculty are freed to focus upon their central tasks of teaching and facilitating learning. Support services should create systems for faculty development and assistance to ensure consistent, effective, and timely support.

8.8.2.1 Timely technological support services should include (1) staff with a sufficiently high level of technical skills to ensure student facility in handling software and the technological aspects of course offerings and (2) the systemic evaluation and upgrading of technological resources and services consistent with the learning goals of theological scholarship.

8.8.2.2 A technological and support services program should include technological training and should ensure adequate support services personnel for faculty and students.

8.8.3 Institutions shall develop and implement ongoing evaluation procedures for the use of instructional technology that involve appropriate groups of people in the evaluation process.
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ES  Educational Standard Applicable to All Degree Programs

The Educational Standard (ES 1 through 8) sets forth expectations relevant to all degree programs, including nomenclature; campus-based education; extension education; distance education; faculty-directed individual instruction; assessment of student learning outcomes; academic guidelines regarding admission, transfer of credits, shared credit in degree programs, and advanced standing; and nondegree instructional programs.
ES.1 Degree programs and nomenclature

ES.1.1 The postbaccalaureate degree programs approved by the Board of Commissioners (“Board”) 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 oriented primarily toward ministerial leadership and (2) some oriented 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.

ES.1.1.1 When Commission 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 the institutional purpose and the Commission Standards of Accreditation.

ES.1.1.2 The number of students enrolled in any degree program, along with those who have a shared investment in the educational goals of that degree program (i.e., those with regular and substantive interaction with the learners), shall be sufficient to ensure a viable community of learning.

ES.1.1.3 Schools shall follow the recommended nomenclature for all Board-approved degree programs. In cases where governmental licensing, charter requirements, or institutional federation agreements preclude use of recommended nomenclature, the Board will consider alternate degree nomenclature. In cases where the Standards provide alternate nomenclature for the same kind of degree program (e.g., MRE or MA in Religious Education, ThM or STM, PhD or ThD), the nomenclature employed should reflect the history or policies of the schools offering the degree programs.

ES.1.1.4 Degree programs shall be approved by the Board according to the Commission’s formally adopted procedures (cf. ATS Commission Policies and Procedures) and individual Degree Program Standards.

ES.1.2 Basic programs oriented toward ministerial leadership

ES.1.2.1 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 in gaining 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. In settings where students are preparing for ministry with cultural linguistic communities, a school should attend carefully to the characteristics of education for ministry in these contexts.

ES.1.2.2 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 [area of specialization] (e.g., Counseling), and Master of Sacred Music/Master of Church Music.

ES.1.3 Basic programs oriented toward general theological studies

ES.1.3.1 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 scholarly 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 and specific context of the degree, appropriate formational experiences may 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.
ES.1.3.2 Degrees of this kind are offered with the following nomenclature: Master of Arts, Master of Arts (Religion), and Master of Theological Studies.

ES.1.4 Advanced programs oriented toward ministerial leadership

ES.1.4.1 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.

ES.1.4.2 Degrees offered in this broad category have the following nomenclature: Doctor of Ministry, Doctor of Educational Ministry, Doctor of Education, Doctor of Missiology, and Doctor of Musical Arts.

ES.1.5 Advanced programs primarily oriented toward theological research and teaching

ES.1.5.1 These programs oriented toward theological research and teaching presuppose a basic postbaccalaureate 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 student growth 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.
ES.1.5.2 The nomenclature for advanced master’s degrees includes the Master of Theology and Master of Sacred Theology. The nomenclature for doctoral degrees oriented toward research and teaching includes the Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of Theology.

ES.1.6 Degree Program Standards

To provide for a common public recognition of theological degrees, to assure quality, and to enhance evaluative efforts, the Commission establishes standards for each degree program. Each degree program should reflect the characteristics of the theological curriculum (see ES.1.3.1–ES.1.3.2) and meet all relevant expectations of Standard ES and the pertinent Degree Program Standard. The Degree Program Standards articulate the following requirements for each degree program: purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment; program content; educational resources and learning strategies; and admissions and access.

ES.1.6.1 While approved degrees are required to conform to the expectations of this Standard and the individual Degree Program Standard, the Board may approve for experimental reasons modified requirements for programs that embody an educational design that ensures high standards of quality, congruence with the educational mission of the school, and coherence with the educational values and outcomes of theological education. In granting an exception, the Board of Commissioners will require the school to engage in an extended comprehensive evaluation of the experimental program and, on the basis of the comprehensive evaluation, determine the future approval of the experimental program.

ES.1.6.2 Schools offer programs of theological education using several different educational practices: courses offered on the main campus of the school granting the degree, at an approved branch campus or extension site, by approved programs of distance learning, and as needed, by faculty-guided individual instruction. In all cases, faculty shall have regular and substantive interaction with students throughout courses and regularly be available to students to mentor, advise, and counsel. Because correspondence education lacks regular and substantive interaction between faculty and students, no Commission-approved courses can be offered by correspondence education.
ES.2  Campus-based education

Campus-based education involves classroom-based learning and a range of opportunities for student-faculty interaction and interaction among students. While it may take different forms and reflect different educational qualities, campus-based education is a model of theological education that typically includes the presence of faculty, students, administrative support services, and library and information resources in a common location. It provides in-person classroom teaching and learning and opportunities for corporate worship, informal interaction, and other activities that support or enhance students’ educational experiences.

ES.2.1  Residency

ES.2.1.1  Residency is understood as in-person interaction of students with instructors or other educators, such as field education instructors or spiritual or formation directors, in locations approved for the offering of a full degree.

ES.2.1.2  Schools shall ensure educational opportunities that contribute to the intellectual, spiritual, personal, and professional formation necessary for religious leadership.
ES.3  Extension education

In order to meet the needs of their constituencies, theological schools may offer parts or all of degree programs in extension programs of study. This pattern of theological education gathers students and faculty for in-person classroom learning at locations away from the main campus of the institution. Programs of this nature shall be offered in ways that maintain the educational integrity of postbaccalaureate study, ensure that students receive academic support and essential services, provide formational components as stipulated by the relevant Degree Program Standard(s), and give appropriate attention to both the General Institutional Standards and the relevant Degree Program Standard(s).

ES.3.1  Definitions

ES.3.1.1  Domestic sites

ES.3.1.1.1  Branch campuses. A branch campus is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution as evidenced by permanence in nature, offering courses in educational programs leading to degrees, having its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization, and having its own budgetary and hiring authority.

ES.3.1.1.2  Complete degree sites. These sites provide all course work necessary for completion of a Board-approved degree and provide all the educational support 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 of the degree. All appropriate resources shall be available, including classroom facilities, library and information resources, faculty, administrative support, student services, and technological support appropriate for the administrative and educational needs of the program.

ES.3.1.1.3  Ongoing course-offering sites. This type of extension site offers, on an annual basis, a range of courses for credit, but a Board-approved degree cannot be earned without study at the institution’s campus(es), at other extension site(s), or via distance learning, provided these are approved to offer complete degree programs. For the portion of the degree program that can be completed at the extension site, the institution shall provide all appropriate resources, including classroom facilities, library and information resources, faculty, administrative support, student services, and technological support appropriate for the administrative and educational needs of the program.

ES.3.1.1.4  Occasional course-offering sites. These are sites where courses are offered less frequently than on an annual basis. Whenever such courses
are offered, the institution should ensure access to resources students need for successful attainment of the courses’ objectives, including classroom facilities, library and information resources, faculty, administrative support, student services, and technological support appropriate for the administrative and educational needs of the program.

**ES.3.1.2 International sites**

ES.3.1.2.1 **Outside Canada and the United States.** Programs offered at extension sites outside Canada and the United States shall meet all relevant Standards of the Commission. Such programs—as distinct from study-abroad programs—should be initiated by church bodies, religious agencies, or theological schools located in the host country; should be developed collaboratively with constituencies in the host country; and shall reflect the cultural context in which the programs are offered. The school shall demonstrate that it has legal authority to offer courses or grant degrees according to the laws of the country where the program is offered.

ES.3.1.2.2 **Across the Canadian/US border.** Institutions that offer degrees or courses of study across the Canadian/US border shall give appropriate attention to cultural differences; should be initiated by church bodies, religious bodies, or theological schools located in the host country; and should consult with Commission member schools near the location where the courses of study are being offered.

**ES.3.2 Educational design, resources, and institutional procedures**

ES.3.2.1 Programs of study offered in extension education shall be established, approved, and reviewed by the regular institutional policies and procedures.

ES.3.2.2 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.

ES.3.2.3 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 faculty support.

ES.3.2.4 Library and other information resources shall be available as needed to achieve the purposes of the educational course or program.

ES.3.2.5 Institutional faculty and library staff shall be involved in the development and maintenance of library resources and services at extension sites.
ES.3.2.6 Schools that rely on libraries of other institutions to support educational programs at extension sites shall have a written agreement with those institutions, shall be able to demonstrate the functional availability and adequacy of appropriate resources and facilities, and shall provide evidence that students are required to make appropriate use of these resources.

ES.3.2.7 Appropriate technology and technological support services will be made available to faculty and students at extension sites, as necessary.

ES.3.2.8 Faculty participating in extension programs should be selected according to the procedures that govern personnel for the institution and should possess credentials and demonstrated competence appropriate to the specific purposes of these instructional programs.

ES.3.2.9 The institution’s full-time faculty shall share significant responsibility for teaching and academic oversight of extension education sufficient to ensure 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. Adjunct and part-time faculty teaching in extension settings should have appropriate access to the administrative structures of the employing institution, be accountable to the institution’s academic administration, and be appropriately oriented to the purposes of the sponsoring institution and of the extension education being offered.

ES.3.2.10 When administrative responsibilities for extension education programs are shared with local advisory groups or other entities, the functions and powers of those groups shall be articulated in the institution’s 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. In all cases, the school granting credit for the work completed at an extension site shall have full academic control of the program.

ES.3.2.11 Institutions establishing extension education programs of study shall meet licensing or chartering regulations in the locations where the courses are offered.

ES.3.2.12 Institutions shall provide adequate financial resources to ensure the educational quality of extension education programs and maintain appropriate fiscal responsibility for the programs.
ES.4 Distance education

ES.4.1 Definition

Distance education is a mode of education in which a course is offered without students and instructors being in the same location. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous and employs the use of technology. Distance education courses may consist of exclusively online or other technologically assisted instruction or a blend of intensive classroom and online instruction. In all cases, distance education courses shall ensure regular and substantive interaction of faculty with students.

ES.4.2 Educational design, resources, and institutional procedures

ES.4.2.1 Distance education courses shall contribute to the goals of the degree programs to which the courses are credited. Schools shall demonstrate how programs offered through distance education implement both the institutional and the relevant Degree Program Standard(s).

ES.4.2.2 Distance education programs shall address matters of coherence, educational values, and patterns of interactions among all courses offered within a degree program. Institutions shall guard against allowing the accumulation of distance education courses that lack coherence and curricular design.

ES.4.2.3 According to the relevant Degree Program Standard(s), distance education programs shall seek to enhance personal and spiritual formation, be sensitive to individual learning styles, and recognize diversity within the community of learners. Courses shall require regular and substantive interaction between teachers and learners and among learners to ensure a community of learning.

ES.4.2.4 The development and review of courses shall be a collaborative effort among faculty, librarians, technical support staff, and students, showing sensitivity to ministry settings and the goals of the entire curriculum.

ES.4.2.5 Programs of study and courses for distance education programs shall be established, approved, and reviewed by the regular institutional policies and procedures regarding content, requirements, learning goals, and assessment of student learning.

ES.4.2.6 Degree programs that include distance education courses shall conform to the residency requirements required by the relevant Degree Program Standard.

ES.4.2.7 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. The school should have policies and procedures delineating the manner by which it exercises this responsibility and the faculty capacity for oversight of educational services.

ES.4.2.8 Library and other information resources shall be available in such number and quality as needed to achieve the purposes of the curriculum, and the institution shall demonstrate that students are required to make appropriate use of these resources. Programs shall provide access to librarians and instruction by library staff regarding the selection and use of library resources.

ES.4.2.9 When libraries of other institutions are used to meet the needs of distance education programs, the Commission member school shall have written agreements with those libraries to ensure that they offer the functional availability and adequacy of resources, facilities, and librarian support.

ES.4.2.10 Sufficient technical support services shall ensure that faculty and students are able to focus on their central tasks of teaching and learning. Schools offering distance education courses shall create systems for faculty development to ensure support for course development, training, implementation of the programs, and troubleshooting. Schools shall ensure that students have training and one-on-one technical support for their participation in a distance education program.

ES.4.2.11 Technological support services should include both (1) staff with a sufficiently high level of technical skills to ensure student facility in handling software and the technological aspects of course offerings and (2) the systemic evaluation and upgrading of technological resources and services consistent with the learning goals of theological scholarship.

ES.4.2.12 The program shall also ensure that the educational objectives are not hindered by time delays in support services or the lack of capable personnel to ensure the several bridging functions between technology and theological education, between theological curriculum and delivery systems, between teachers and learners, and between the distance education program and the goals of the overall curriculum for the courses and degree program being offered.

ES.4.2.13 Procedures that govern personnel for the total institution shall be used for selection of faculty in distance education. Faculty must possess requisite credentials, demonstrate competence appropriate to the specific purposes of these instructional programs, and benefit from institutional practices regarding scholarly development and support for faculty research. Institutions shall provide regular and formal procedures for evaluating faculty engaged in distance education.
ES.4.2.14 The institution’s full-time faculty shall have significant participation in and responsibility for academic development, teaching, and oversight of distance education. They shall ensure that the institution’s goals and ethos are evident, the program is rigorous, and the instruction is of a high quality.

ES.4.2.15 Adjunct and part-time faculty should have appropriate access to the administrative structures of the employing institution. They should receive a thorough orientation to the purposes of the institution and to its particular distance education programs.

ES.4.2.16 In recruitment efforts, services, and publications, institutions shall accurately represent their distance education programs, including but not limited to a description of the technology used and the technological ability, skill, and access needed to participate in the program satisfactorily.

ES.4.2.17 Admission requirements shall effectively inform students regarding the necessary skills and mastery of technology to participate fully in the distance education programs to which they are admitted.

ES.4.2.18 Students in distance education programs shall have access to appropriate services including advisory and administrative support, technological support, program and vocational counseling, financial aid, academic records, and placement. The policies and procedures governing financial assistance shall be published and administered equitably.

ES.4.2.19 The credits awarded for a hybrid or blended distance education course will count toward residency for those degrees that require residential instruction only if the majority of instructor-directed learning occurs in situations where both faculty and students are in person on the school’s main campus or at an extension approved for the school to offer the full degree.
ES.5  Faculty-directed individual instruction

Courses for any Commission-approved degree program may be offered through individualized instruction directed by a faculty member qualified in the academic discipline and content of the course. The work shall involve both one-on-one instruction with the faculty member and student work comparable to other campus, extension, or distance programs of study. Individualized instruction should be limited to meeting unique educational and student needs and, in all cases, ensure regular and substantive interaction between the student and the faculty member.
ES.6 Assessment of student learning outcomes

Assessment of student learning requires schools to be able to demonstrate the extent to which students have achieved the various goals of the degree programs they have completed as well as indicators of program effectiveness, such as the percentage of students who complete the program and the percentage of graduates who find placement appropriate to their vocational intention and theological education.

ES.6.1 The school shall maintain an ongoing process for assessing student learning outcomes and degree program goals. An effective plan of assessment should be as simple and sustainable as possible while adequate to answer fundamental questions about educational effectiveness. This plan should include (1) a process for evaluating components of the full degree program in an ongoing manner; (2) the identification of appropriate direct and indirect indicators of student learning; (3) the routine involvement of faculty in the review and evaluation of the results of the assessment; and (4) linking assessment results to curriculum and educational planning, institutional strategic planning, and resource allocation.

ES.6.2 Overall assessment strategy

ES.6.2.1 The process and goals of assessment shall be conducted in ways that are congruent with the educational mission of the school.

ES.6.2.2 The design for assessing student learning outcomes should attend carefully to the alignment of individual course learning outcomes and degree program goals.

ES.6.2.3 Appropriate administrative and financial resources shall be allocated to ensure that the process for assessment of student learning is maintained in an effective and sustainable manner.

ES.6.2.4 Schools shall include in their assessment plans a comprehensive evaluation of the assessment plan itself and its various activities.

ES.6.3 Data

ES.6.3.1 Assessment of student learning outcomes and degree program goals should utilize both qualitative and quantitative kinds of information. Determination of which qualitative and quantitative instruments are most appropriate should be based on the institutional size, educational mission, and specific learning outcomes.

ES.6.3.2 Assessment requires both direct (performance based) and indirect (perception based) measures of student learning. Schools should identify sources of
information that best support the essential task of making decisions about educational effectiveness.

ES.6.3.3 Schools shall guard the confidentiality of student work used in the assessment of student learning and, as necessary, provide for the anonymity of student identity in certain artifacts of their work.

**ES.6.4 Faculty, students, and trustees**

ES.6.4.1 Evaluation of student learning is the responsibility of the faculty. Effective assessment of student learning requires that the faculty review and analyze the results of the assessment activities, discern appropriate changes to curriculum and educational practices, and document the results of both its interpretation of assessment data and decisions about educational changes.

ES.6.4.2 Schools shall communicate the learning goals of degree programs and expected student achievement through the school’s catalog, website, and course syllabi.

ES.6.4.3 The governing board of the school is responsible for ensuring that the school has a program of assessment of student learning and that the results of these activities inform and shape educational and institutional decisions.

ES.6.4.4 The institution shall, on a regular basis, make available to the public a summary evaluation of the educational effectiveness of its approved degree programs. The school shall determine the frequency and manner of this information.
ES.7 Academic guidelines: admission, transfer of credits, shared credit in degree programs, and advanced standing

ES.7.1 Admission

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

ES.7.1.1 Students must possess a baccalaureate degree from an institution of higher education accredited by a US agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, or approved by a Canadian provincial quality assurance agency, or the demonstrated educational equivalent of a North American baccalaureate degree.

ES.7.1.2 Educational equivalency for a baccalaureate degree shall be determined by the institution. The institution shall demonstrate that its means for determining equivalency requires formal postsecondary education consisting of general and specialized studies comparable to the baccalaureate degree.

ES.7.1.3 Exceptions to the baccalaureate degree requirement are noted in the Commission Standards for individual degrees.

ES.7.1.4 Persons admitted without possession of the baccalaureate degree or its educational equivalent shall possess the knowledge, academic skill, and ability necessary for postbaccalaureate studies. Admission of such applicants should be restricted to persons with life experience that has prepared them for theological study at the graduate level. An institution admitting persons without a baccalaureate degree or its educational equivalent shall demonstrate that its process and criteria for evaluating academic ability are educationally appropriate and rigorous.

ES.7.1.5 When an institution permits undergraduate students to enroll in its postbaccalaureate courses, the institution must differentiate course requirements and student learning outcomes for postbaccalaureate or undergraduate credit.

ES.7.2 Transfer of credits

ES.7.2.1 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.

ES.7.2.2 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.
ES.7.2.3 Two-thirds of the credits required in a Board-approved degree may be granted on the basis of transfer credits, subject to the limitation in ES.7.3.1 below.

ES.7.3 Shared credit in degree programs

ES.7.3.1 Institutions have the right to determine if credits that have been earned as part of the award of another graduate degree program can be transferred to the institution's 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 a Board-approved degree program.

ES.7.3.2 Students may be either simultaneously or sequentially enrolled in two master's 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 section ES.7.3.1.

ES.7.4 Advanced standing

ES.7.4.1 Institutions may admit students with advanced standing to master’s-degree programs 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 credits 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.

ES.7.4.2 If the institution chooses to grant advanced standing with credit on the basis of prior academic work, it shall determine by appropriate means of assessment 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. Advanced standing with credit cannot be granted on the basis of ministerial or life experience.

ES.7.4.3 If advanced standing is granted with credit on the basis of appropriate evaluation, not more than one-fourth of the total credits required for a degree approved by the Board of Commissioners may be granted in this way.
ES.8 Nondegree instructional programs

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.

ES.8.1 Characteristics

ES.8.1.1 Programs that do not lead to degrees should remain appropriate to institutional purpose and will differ according to their learning goals.

ES.8.1.2 Such programs should be conducted with the proper administrative and faculty oversight, including design, approval, staffing, financing, and evaluation.

ES.8.1.3 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.

ES.8.2 Types of programs

ES.8.2.1 Schools may offer programs of study consisting of either courses for which graduate academic credit is granted or educational events without such credit.

ES.8.2.2 Programs of study that grant graduate credit are appropriate for enrichment; personal growth; the development of lay leaders; or special, nondegree 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.

ES.8.2.3 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.
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Basic Programs Oriented Toward Ministerial Leadership

Standard A  Master of Divinity (MDiv)

A.1  Purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment

A.1.1  Purpose of the degree

A.1.1.1 The purpose of the Master of Divinity degree is to prepare persons for ordained ministry and for general pastoral and religious leadership responsibilities in congregations and other settings. Because of its breadth, it is the recommended degree for admission to the Doctor of Ministry degree program and a recommended degree for admission to advanced programs oriented to theological research and teaching.

A.1.2  Primary goals of the program

A.1.2.1 The goals an institution adopts for an MDiv degree should be related to the institution's mission and foster students' knowledge of religious heritage, understanding of the cultural context, growth in spiritual depth and moral integrity, and capacity for ministerial and public leadership.

A.1.3  Learning outcomes

A.1.3.1 The primary goals of the program shall be further delineated as demonstrable learning outcomes congruent with the institution's mission and purpose. Institutions shall demonstrate that students have achieved the goals or learning outcomes of the degree program by means of direct and indirect evidence of student learning.

A.1.3.2 These specific, learning outcomes should shape and inform the design of all courses, supervised ministry experiences, formation activities, and other instructional strategies to establish a coherent and integrated curriculum for the degree program.

A.1.4  Educational assessment

A.1.4.1 The institution offering the MDiv shall articulate the assessment strategy and criteria by which it regularly evaluates the educational effectiveness of the degree program. The institution shall determine the extent to which students have

NOTE: This Degree Program Standard assumes member schools also use and follow the Educational Standard (ES), which applies to all degree programs and which addresses such issues as nomenclature (ES.1), extension education (ES.3), distance education (ES.4), and assessment (ES.6).
achieved the stated goals of the degree program by the use of both direct and indirect evidence.

A.1.4.2 The institution shall also maintain ongoing assessment by which it determines the extent to which the degree program is meeting the needs of students and the institution's overall goals for the program, including measures such as the percentage of students who complete the program and the percentage of graduates who find placement appropriate to their vocational intentions.

A.2 Program content

A.2.1 The MDiv program should provide a breadth of exposure to the theological disciplines as well as a depth of 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. The learning outcomes for the MDiv shall encompass the instructional areas of religious heritage, cultural context, personal and spiritual formation, and capacity for ministerial and public leadership. Each of the degree requirements shall be further refined as specific, demonstrable learning outcomes that are congruent with the institution’s mission and purpose.

A.2.2 Religious heritage: The program shall provide structured opportunities to develop a comprehensive and discriminating understanding of the religious heritage.

A.2.2.1 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.

A.2.2.2 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.

A.2.2.3 Instruction in these areas shall be conducted so as to indicate their interdependence with each other and with other areas of the curriculum as well as their significance for the exercise of pastoral leadership.

A.2.3 Cultural context: The program shall provide opportunities to develop a critical understanding of and creative engagement with the cultural realities and structures within which the church lives and carries out its mission.

A.2.3.1 The program shall provide for instruction in contemporary cultural and social issues and their significance for diverse linguistic and cultural contexts of ministry.
Such instruction should draw on the insights of the arts and humanities, the natural sciences, and the social sciences.

A.2.3.2 MDiv education shall engage students with the global character of the church as well as ministry in the multi-faith and multicultural context of contemporary society. This should include attention to the wide diversity of religious traditions present in potential ministry settings, as well as expressions of social justice and respect congruent with the institution’s mission and purpose.

A.2.4 **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.

A.2.4.1 The program shall provide for spiritual, academic, and vocational counseling and careful reflection on ministerial roles such as leader, guide, and servant of the faith community.

A.2.4.2 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 institution’s MDiv program.

A.2.5 **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.

A.2.5.1 The program shall provide for courses in the areas of ministry practice and shall ensure a constructive relationship among courses dealing primarily with the practice of ministry and courses dealing primarily with other subjects.

A.2.5.2 The program shall specifically provide for training in professional and ministerial ethics.

A.2.5.3 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.

A.2.5.4 Qualified persons shall be selected as field supervisors and trained in supervisory methods and the educational expectations of the institution.
A.2.5.5 The institution shall have established procedures for selection, development, evaluation, and termination of supervised ministry settings.

A.3 Educational resources and learning strategies

A.3.1 Location

A.3.1.1 MDiv education has a complex goal: the personal, vocational, spiritual, and academic formation of the student. Because of the importance of a comprehensive community of learning, the MDiv cannot be viewed simply as an accumulation of courses or of individual independent work. The location, or learning environment, can occur in multiple patterns that include, but are not limited to, in-person faculty-student instructional contact on a campus or extension site, online/technologically mediated forms of instruction, supervised ministry practice, and formats that blend instructional modalities. Institutions shall clearly articulate the manner in which they provide the learning environment or supportive context for effective, comprehensive, theological education. An institution shall demonstrate that its students are engaged in a community of learning whereby faculty and students have significant opportunities for interaction, peer learning, development of pastoral skills, supervised experiences of ministry, and growth in personal, spiritual formation.

A.3.1.2 The institution shall provide instruction in a manner and at locations that facilitate the achievement of stated degree-program learning outcomes, shall state the rationale for the location(s) or learning environment(s) utilized, and shall devise a suitable means of assessment for evaluating the effectiveness of its location(s) or learning environment(s) to ensure that its students achieve the learning outcomes stipulated for the MDiv degree program.

A.3.1.3 Because MDiv education expects regular and substantive student-faculty interaction to achieve the stipulated learning outcomes, this interaction requires that 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 of the institution that has been approved for MDiv degree-granting status. An exception may be granted if a school can demonstrate how its educational design and delivery system accomplishes the learning outcomes associated with residential theological study.

A.3.1.4 If an institution has Board approval for MDiv degree-program requirements to be completed in approved extension sites or by means of distance learning, the institution must be able to demonstrate how students access the community of learning, education for skills particular to this degree, and formational elements of the program.
A.3.1.5 Courses should be provided on the institution's main campus, on an approved branch campus or approved extension site, or in an approved distance education program that provides access to appropriate resources of faculty, library, and a community of learners pursuing a similar program of study.

A.3.1.6 A limited number of courses may be taken as independent study or directed research.

A.3.1.7 The institution shall have established procedures and policies regarding supervised ministry practice, independent study, and directed research. These procedures and policies shall indicate the means the institution uses to assess the educational effectiveness of these forms of education.

A.3.2 Duration

A.3.2.1 In order to fulfill the broad educational and formational goals of the MDiv, an MDiv program shall require a minimum of three academic years of full-time work or its equivalent.

A.3.2.2 All course credits applied toward degree requirements should be earned within 10 years of the awarding of the degree.

A.3.3 Distinctive resources needed

A.3.3.1 The MDiv degree requires the resources identified in the General Institutional Standards. In addition, MDiv 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. MDiv education is enhanced by faculty and community resources that support the goals of general education for ministerial leadership.

A.3.3.2 Faculty

A.3.3.2.1 Faculty shall relate the insights of their disciplines to the practice of ministry and shall be attentive to students' spiritual development and professional growth.

A.3.3.2.2 Faculty resources should include some persons who are currently engaged in parish, congregational, or specialized ministerial leadership.

A.3.3.2.3 Faculty shall be of adequate number, shall demonstrate instructional skills, and shall possess sufficient diversity of perspective to achieve the degree-program goals.
A.3.3.3 Community resources

A.3.3.3.1 The theological institution 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.

A.3.3.3.2 The theological institution should maintain an open and mutually enhancing relationship with other theological institutions, universities, professional schools, and social agencies insofar as that relationship contributes to the accomplishment of the program’s goals.

A.4 Admission

A.4.1 The MDiv is a postbaccalaureate degree. Admission requirements shall include (1) a baccalaureate degree from an institution of higher education accredited by a US agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, or approved by a Canadian provincial quality assurance agency, or the demonstrated educational equivalent of an accredited or approved North American baccalaureate degree; (2) evidence of the commitment and qualities desired for pastoral leadership; and (3) the academic ability to engage in graduate education.

A.4.2 As many as 15 percent of the students in the MDiv degree program may be admitted without possession of the baccalaureate degree or its educational equivalent. An institution admitting persons without a baccalaureate degree or its educational equivalent shall demonstrate that its process and criteria for evaluating academic ability are educationally appropriate and rigorous.
Basic Programs Oriented Toward Ministerial Leadership

Standard B  Master of Arts in [specialized ministry] (MA in [specialized ministry]), or Master of [specialized ministry] (MRE, MCE, MPS, etc.)

B.1  Purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment

B.1.1  Purpose of the degree

B.1.1.1 The primary purpose of these graduate-level professional degrees is to equip persons for competent leadership in some form of specialized ministry in congregations and other settings. These degrees are organized in three groups or broad areas of specialization:

Classification I: Religious Educational Leadership (including the Master of Religious Education [MRE], the Master of Christian Education [MCE], the Master of Arts in Religious Education [MA in Religious Education], and the Master of Arts in Christian Education [MA in Christian Education])

Classification II: Master of Arts in [specialized ministry] (MA in [specialized ministry]), including areas such as youth or senior ministry, counseling, social or ethnic ministries, or missiology

Classification III: Master [of Arts] in Pastoral Studies (MAPS, MPS) for congregational/parish ministry or service with a general or specialized focus

B.1.2  Primary goals of the program

B.1.2.1 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.

B.1.2.2 Because these programs may vary considerably with the size of the institution and the specialized ministry practices of the denominations or religious communities

NOTE: This Degree Program Standard assumes member schools also use and follow the Educational Standard (ES), which applies to all degree programs and which addresses such issues as nomenclature (ES.1), extension education (ES.3), distance education (ES.4), and assessment (ES.6).
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.

B.1.3 Learning outcomes

B.1.3.1 The primary goals of the program shall be further delineated as demonstrable learning outcomes congruent with the institution's mission and purpose. Institutions shall demonstrate that students have achieved the goals or learning outcomes of the degree program by means of direct and indirect evidence of student learning.

B.1.3.2 These specific, learning outcomes should shape and inform the design of all courses, supervised ministry experiences, formation activities, and other instructional strategies to establish a coherent and integrated curriculum for the degree program.

B.1.4 Educational assessment

B.1.4.1 The institution offering one of these degrees shall articulate the assessment strategy and criteria by which it regularly evaluates the educational effectiveness of the degree program. The institution shall determine the extent to which students have achieved the stated goals of the degree program by the use of both direct and indirect evidence.

B.1.4.2 The institution shall also maintain ongoing assessment by which it determines the extent to which the degree program is meeting the needs of students and the institution's overall goals for the program, including measures such as the percentage of students who complete the program and the percentage of graduates who find placement appropriate to their vocational intentions.

B.2 Program content

B.2.1 Degree programs oriented toward 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. Learning outcomes shall encompass the instructional areas of religious heritage, cultural context, personal and spiritual formation, and capacity for ministerial and public leadership in the designated area of specialization. Each of the degree-program requirements shall be further refined into specific, demonstrable learning outcomes that are congruent with the institution's mission and purpose.

B.2.2 Religious heritage: The program shall provide instruction in the religious heritage, including Scripture, theology, and history of the tradition.

B.2.3 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 understandings of the broader social context in which the specialized ministry is performed, including diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic contexts of ministry.

B.2.4 Personal and spiritual formation: The program shall provide opportunities through which the student may grow in personal faith, emotional maturity, moral integrity (including personal, professional, and ethical standards), and public witness.

B.2.5 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.

B.2.5.1 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.

B.2.5.2 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.

B.2.5.3 In a program 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.

B.2.5.4 In a program of study for a Classification I degree, the theological school shall provide structured opportunities for students to gain skill in the understanding and practice of educational areas of study, including history and philosophy of education, teaching and learning, administration, and the behavioral and social sciences.

B.2.5.5 In a program of study for a Classification III degree, the school shall provide courses in pastoral formation that are oriented toward the practice of ministry.

B.3 Educational resources and learning strategies

B.3.1 Location

B.3.1.1 Because of the importance of a comprehensive community of learning, the professional MA cannot be viewed simply as an accumulation of courses or of individual independent work. The location, or learning environment, can occur in multiple patterns that include, but are not limited to, in-person faculty-student instructional
contact on an approved campus or approved extension site, online/technologically mediated forms of instruction, supervised ministry practice, and formats that blend instructional modalities. Institutions shall clearly articulate the manner in which they provide the learning environment or supportive context for effective, comprehensive, theological education. An institution shall demonstrate that its students are engaged in a community of learning whereby faculty and students have opportunities for regular and substantive interaction; peer learning; development of ministry skills; supervised experiences of ministry; and growth in personal, spiritual formation.

B.3.1.2 The institution shall provide instruction in a manner and at locations that facilitate the achievement of stated degree-program learning outcomes, shall state the rationale for the location(s) or learning environment(s) utilized, and shall devise a suitable means of assessment for evaluating the effectiveness of its location(s) or learning environment(s) to ensure that its students achieve the learning outcomes stipulated for the professional MA degree program.

B.3.1.3 Because professional MA education expects regular and substantive student-faculty interaction to achieve the stipulated learning outcomes, this interaction requires that at least one-third of the required credits for the degree shall be completed at the main campus of the school awarding the degree or at an extension site of the institution that has been approved for professional MA degree-granting status. An exception may be granted if a school can demonstrate how its educational design and delivery system accomplishes the learning outcomes associated with residential theological study.

B.3.1.4 If an institution has Board approval for professional MA degree-program requirements to be completed in extension centers or by means of distance learning, the institution must be able to demonstrate how students access the community of learning, education for skills particular to this degree, and formational elements of the program.

B.3.1.5 Courses should be provided on the institution’s main campus, on an approved branch campus or approved extension site, or in an approved distance education program that provides access to appropriate resources of faculty, library, and community of learners pursuing a similar program of study.

B.3.1.6 A limited number of courses may be taken as independent study or directed research.

B.3.1.7 The institution shall have established procedures and policies regarding supervised ministry practice, independent study, and directed research. These procedures
and policies shall indicate the means the institution uses to assess the educational effectiveness of these forms of education.

B.3.2 Duration

B.3.2.1 In order to fulfill the broad educational and formational goals of the professional MA, the program shall require a minimum of two academic years of full-time work or its equivalent.

B.3.2.2 All course credits applied toward degree requirements should be earned within 10 years of the awarding of the degree.

B.3.3 Distinctive resources needed

B.3.3.1 Adequate faculty, library resources, and support services shall be available to sustain students in these programs. Where specializations 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.

B.3.3.1.1 Faculty shall relate the insights of their disciplines to the practice of ministry and shall be attentive to students’ spiritual development and professional growth.

B.3.3.1.2 Faculty resources should include some persons who are currently engaged in parish, congregational, or specialized ministerial leadership.

B.3.3.1.3 Faculty shall be of adequate number, shall demonstrate instructional skills, and shall possess sufficient diversity of perspective to achieve the degree-program goals.

B.3.3.2 Students should be provided with guidance and support for the particular vocational decisions related to the purposes of their programs.

B.3.3.2.1 The theological institution 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.

B.3.3.2.2 The theological institution should maintain an open and mutually enhancing relationship with other theological institutions, universities, professional schools, and social agencies insofar as that relationship contributes to the accomplishment of the program’s goals.
B.4 Admission

B.4.1 The professional master’s program grants a postbaccalaureate degree. Admission requirements shall include (1) a baccalaureate degree from an institution of higher education accredited by an agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, or approved by a Canadian provincial quality assurance agency, or the demonstrated educational equivalent of an accredited or approved North American baccalaureate degree; (2) evidence of the commitment and qualities desired for ministerial leadership; and (3) the academic ability to engage in graduate education.

B.4.2 As many as 15 percent of the students in the professional master's degree program may be admitted without possession of the baccalaureate degree or its educational equivalent. Admission of such applicants should be restricted to persons with life experience that has prepared them for theological study at the graduate level. An institution admitting persons without a baccalaureate degree or its educational equivalent shall demonstrate that its process and criteria for evaluating academic ability are educationally appropriate and rigorous.
Basic Programs Oriented Toward Ministerial Leadership

Standard C  Master of Church Music (MCM)
Master of Sacred Music (MSM)
Master of Music in Church Music (MM in Church Music)
Master of Arts in Church Music (MA in Church Music)

C.1 Purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment

C.1.1 Purpose of the degree

The purpose of these master's-level degrees in church music is to equip persons for competent leadership in church or sacred music in congregational and other settings.

C.1.2 Primary goals of the program

Primary educational goals of the program 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.

C.1.3 Learning outcomes

C.1.3.1 The primary goals of the program shall be further delineated as demonstrable learning outcomes congruent with the institution's mission and purpose. Institutions shall demonstrate that students have achieved the goals or learning outcomes of the degree program by means of direct and indirect evidence of student learning.

C.1.3.2 These specific learning outcomes should shape and inform the design of all courses, supervised ministry experiences, formation activities, and other instructional strategies to establish a coherent and integrated curriculum for the degree program.

C.1.4 Educational assessment

C.1.4.1 The institution offering one of these degrees shall articulate the assessment strategy and criteria by which it regularly evaluates the educational effectiveness of the degree program. The institution shall determine the extent to which students have

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achieved the stated goals of the degree program by the use of both direct and indirect evidence.

C.1.4.2 The institution shall also maintain ongoing assessment by which it determines the extent to which the degree program is meeting the needs of students and the institution's overall goals for the program, including measures such as the percentage of students who complete the program and the percentage of graduates who find placement appropriate to their vocational intentions.

C.2  Program content

C.2.1  Degree programs oriented toward leadership in music ministry should provide instruction in the wide range of theological disciplines as well as those disciplines critical for the practice of the music ministry. Learning outcomes shall encompass the instructional areas of religious heritage, cultural context, personal and spiritual formation, musical arts, and music ministry leadership. Each of the degree requirements shall be further refined into specific, demonstrable learning outcomes that are congruent with the institution's mission and purpose.

C.2.1.1  Religious heritage: The program shall provide basic instruction in Scripture, theology, and history of the tradition, including worship, liturgy, and hymnology.

C.2.1.2  Cultural context: The program shall provide instructional settings and opportunities for students to gain understanding of the context of the music ministry in the broader range of ministerial practice, and to develop appropriate understanding of the broader social context in which a music ministry is exercised.

C.2.1.3  Personal and spiritual formation: The program shall provide opportunities through which the student may grow in personal faith, emotional maturity, and moral integrity, the latter including the appropriation of personal and professional standards of conduct.

C.2.1.4  Musical arts: The program shall provide graduate-level instruction in the various musical arts and training in performance skill areas. For US schools, the ATS Board of Commissioners recommends that the degree program follow the guidelines of the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) for the musical arts requirements in master's-level work. For Canadian schools, the ATS Board of Commissioners recommends that the degree program require the BMus (Bachelor of Music) degree from an institution of higher education that is approved by a provincial quality assurance agency.

C.2.1.5  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 as well as awareness of the intercultural and cross-cultural nature of ministry in North American society.

C.3  Educational resources and learning strategies

C.3.1  Location

C.3.1.1 As a degree preparing persons for ministerial leadership in church music, this program 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. The location, or learning environment, can occur in multiple patterns that include, but are not limited to, in-person faculty-student instructional contact on a campus or extension site, online or technologically mediated forms of instruction, supervised ministry practice, and formats that blend instructional modalities. Institutions shall clearly articulate the manner in which they provide the learning environment or supportive context for effective, comprehensive theological and musical education. An institution shall demonstrate that its students are engaged in a community of learning whereby faculty and students have opportunities for regular and substantive interaction; peer learning; development of music ministry skills; supervised experiences of music ministry; and growth in personal, spiritual formation.

C.3.1.2 The institution shall provide instruction in a manner and at locations that facilitate the achievement of stated degree-program learning outcomes, shall state the rationale for the location(s) or learning environment(s) utilized, and shall devise a suitable means of assessment for evaluating the effectiveness of its location(s) or learning environment(s) to ensure that its students achieve the learning outcomes stipulated for the music master’s degree program.

C.3.1.3 Because professional master’s-level education expects regular and substantive student-faculty interaction to achieve the stipulated learning outcomes, this interaction requires that at least two-thirds of the required credits for the degree shall be completed at the main campus of the school awarding the degree or at an extension site of the institution that has been approved for professional MA degree-granting status. An exception may be granted if a school can demonstrate how its educational design and delivery system accomplishes the learning outcomes associated with residential study.

C.3.1.4 If an institution has Board approval for degree-program requirements to be completed in extension centers or by means of distance learning, the institution must be able to demonstrate how students access the community of learning, education for skills particular to this degree, and formational elements of the program.
C.3.1.5 Instruction may be offered on an institution's main campus, branch campus, or extension site, or through a distance-education program subject to Commission Policies and Procedures and Board of Commissioners' approval.

C.3.1.6 The institution shall have established procedures and policies regarding supervised ministry practice, independent study, and directed research. These procedures and policies shall indicate the means the institution uses to assess the educational effectiveness of these forms of education.

C.3.2 Duration

C.3.2.1 This degree program requires the equivalent of two years of full-time academic study.

C.3.2.2 All course credits applied toward degree requirements should be earned within 10 years of the awarding of the degree.

C.3.3 Distinctive resources needed

C.3.3.1 In addition to general theological faculty resources, this program requires sufficient, qualified faculty who can provide instruction in the range of musical arts disciplines, performance areas, conducting, and ensemble leadership; and who can promote integration of music specialization within the broader context of ministry.

C.3.3.2 Schools offering this degree shall have adequate facilities for graduate instruction in the musical arts, such as appropriate studio and practice space.

C.3.3.3 These programs also require library collections that include musical scores, recordings, books, periodicals, and other media that support graduate instruction and faculty research in the various disciplines related to the musical arts.

C.4 Admission

C.4.1 Persons seeking admission to this program should (a) possess a baccalaureate degree from a program approved by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) or alternatively the BMus degree from an institution of higher education that is approved by a Canadian provincial quality assurance agency or (b) meet the standards of such a degree in either the United States or Canada or the educational equivalent of a North American baccalaureate music degree; or (c) take instruction without graduate credit until the competencies assumed by (a) or (b) are met.

C.4.2 Member institutions shall require qualifying or placement exams of all graduate applicants. If deficiencies are indicated, remedial work may be required without graduate credit.
Basic Programs Oriented Toward General Theological Studies

Standard D  Master of Arts (MA)
Master of Arts [academic discipline]
Master of Theological Studies (MTS)

D.1 Purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment

D.1.1 Purpose of the degree

D.1.1.1 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.

D.1.2 Primary goals of the program

D.1.2.1 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. Achievement of student learning outcomes for these degrees shall contribute to meeting these programmatic goals.

D.1.3 Learning outcomes

D.1.3.1 The institution shall identify demonstrable student learning outcomes for these degrees and shall state those outcomes in terms of how student knowledge and outlook will change as a result of having completed the degree.

D.1.4 Educational assessment

D.1.4.1 The institution offering the degree shall articulate the assessment strategy and criteria by which it regularly evaluates the educational effectiveness of the degree program. The institution shall determine the extent to which students have achieved the stated goals of the degree program by the use of both direct and indirect evidence.

NOTE: This Degree Program Standard assumes member schools also use and follow the Educational Standard (ES), which applies to all degree programs and which addresses such issues as nomenclature (ES.1), extension education (ES.3), distance education (ES.4), and assessment (ES.6).
D.1.4.2 The institution shall also maintain ongoing assessment by which it determines the extent to which the degree program is meeting the needs of students and the institution’s overall goals for the program, including measures such as the percentage of students who complete the program and the percentage of graduates who find placement appropriate to their vocational intentions.

D.2 Program content

D.2.1 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. A predominant number of courses should be academic rather than professional in focus, and the summative requirement shall reflect the academic goals of the degree.

D.2.2 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.

D.2.3 The study of languages shall be required if a level of competence in a language is integral to the specific degree program.

D.3 Educational resources and learning strategies

D.3.1 Location

D.3.1.1 Courses should be provided on the institution’s main campus; on an approved branch campus or approved extension site; or in an approved distance education program that provides access to appropriate resources of faculty, library, and community of learners pursuing similar programs of study. An institution shall demonstrate that its students are engaged in a community of learning whereby faculty and students have opportunities for regular and substantive interaction.

D.3.1.2 If requirements can be completed on branch campuses, at extension centers, or by means of distance learning, the institution must be able to demonstrate how the community of learning, education for skills particular to this degree, and formational elements of the program are made available to students.

D.3.1.3 A limited number of courses may be taken as independent study or directed research.

D.3.2 Duration

D.3.2.1 Normally these degrees require two academic years of full-time study or the equivalent in order to fulfill the broad educational goals of the program. In some cases,
and in exception to Standard ES, section ES.7.4; 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 in one year of course work, in addition to the thesis, comprehensive examination, and/or other summative process of evaluation.

D.3.3 Distinctive resources needed

D.3.3.1 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.

D.3.3.2 Students should be provided with guidance and support for the particular vocational decisions related to the purposes of their programs.

D.4 Admission

D.4.1 Admission to any of these degree programs requires a baccalaureate degree from an institution of higher education accredited by a US agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, or approved by a Canadian provincial quality assurance agency, or the demonstrated educational equivalent of an accredited or approved North American baccalaureate degree.

D.4.2 Educational equivalency for a baccalaureate degree shall be determined by the institution. The institution shall demonstrate that its means for determining equivalency require formal postsecondary education consisting of general and specialized studies comparable to the baccalaureate degree. Students should have the interests, aptitudes, and personal qualities necessary for the particular application of the degree they are seeking.

D.4.3 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.
Advanced Programs Oriented Toward Ministerial Leadership

Standard E  Doctor of Ministry (DMin)

E.1  Purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment

E.1.1  Purpose of the degree

E.1.1.1 The purpose of the Doctor of Ministry degree is to enhance the practice of ministry for persons who hold the MDiv or its educational equivalent and who have engaged in substantial ministerial leadership.

E.1.2  Primary goals of the program

E.1.2.1 The goals an institution adopts for the DMin 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, continued growth in spiritual maturity, and development and appropriation of a personal and professional ethic with focused study on ethical standards and mature conduct in the profession.

E.1.2.2 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, leadership, organizational administration, multicultural ministries).

E.1.2.3 The achievement of student learning outcomes for the DMin degree shall contribute to meeting these programmatic goals.

E.1.3  Learning outcomes

E.1.3.1 The institution shall specify demonstrable learning outcomes for the Doctor of Ministry degree that demonstrate an advanced competency in the practice of ministry, give evidence of being informed by analytic and ministerial research, and show the integration of enhanced knowledge with growth in one’s ministerial capacity and spiritual maturity.

NOTE: This Degree Program Standard assumes member schools also use and follow the Educational Standard (ES), which applies to all degree programs and which addresses such issues as nomenclature (ES.1), extension education (ES.3), distance education (ES.4), and assessment (ES.6).
E.1.4 Educational assessment

E.1.4.1 The institution offering the DMin shall articulate the assessment strategy and criteria by which it regularly evaluates the educational effectiveness of the degree program. Institutions offering the DMin degree shall be able to demonstrate the extent to which students have met the goals of the degree program through student performance in courses, ministry experience, and a final, summative project reflecting theological insight into the practice of ministry.

E.1.4.1.1 The institution shall establish a system of gathering quantitative and qualitative data related to both student learning outcomes and degree-program goals, analyze the data gathered, and make revisions as necessary based on that assessment. This assessment cycle shall be ongoing, regularized, and sustainable.

E.1.4.2 The institution shall also maintain an ongoing assessment by which it determines the extent to which the degree program is meeting the needs of students and the institution’s overall goals for the program, including measures such as the percentage of students who complete the program and report vocational enhancement of the practice of ministry.

E.2 Program content

E.2.1 DMin programs shall provide advanced-level study of the comprehensive range of theological disciplines that provides for

E.2.1.1 an advanced understanding and integration of ministry in relation to various theological and other related disciplines;

E.2.1.2 the formulation of a comprehensive and critical understanding of ministry in which theory and practice interactively inform and enhance each other;

E.2.1.3 the development and acquisition of skills and competencies, including methods of research, that are required for ministerial leadership at its most mature and effective level;

E.2.1.4 a contribution to the understanding and practice of ministry through the completion of a doctoral-level project that contributes new knowledge and understanding of the practice of ministry;

E.2.1.5 the fostering of spiritual, professional, and vocational competencies that enable witness to a maturing commitment to appropriate religio-moral values for faith and life; and
E.2.1.6 engagement with the diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic contexts of ministry.

E.2.2 The DMin program shall provide for varied kinds of learning, including

E.2.2.1 peer learning and evaluation as well as self-directed learning experiences;

E.2.2.2 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;

E.2.2.3 various opportunities for learning and using the disciplines and skills necessary for the DMin project, including sustained opportunities for study and research on an approved campus or site of the institution offering the degree; and

E.2.2.4 opportunities for personal and spiritual growth.

E.2.3 The institution shall demonstrate how the program is attentive to global awareness and engagement as well as local settings in its educational design and delivery systems, including its efforts to form a community of learners.

E.2.4 The program shall include the design and completion of a written doctoral-level project that addresses both the nature and the practice of ministry. This final summative 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 or presentation in professional forums.

E.2.4.1 The 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. It should also reflect the candidate’s depth of theological insight in relation to ministry.

E.2.4.2 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.

E.3 Educational resources and learning strategies

E.3.1 Location

E.3.1.1 Because of the importance of a comprehensive community of learning, at least one-third of the course work for the degree shall be completed on an ATS Board of Commissioners-approved campus or full-degree extension site of the member institution. Upon petition by the school, the Board may grant an exception if a school can
demonstrate how the program’s educational design and delivery system accomplishes the learning outcomes and program goals of the Doctor of Ministry degree. The school should be able to demonstrate for the duration of the program (a) sufficient opportunity for disciplined reflection on one’s ministerial experience and needs for educational growth; (b) regular and substantive interaction of students with regular full-time faculty, appropriate adjunct faculty, and other instructional personnel; (c) extended involvement in peer learning; and (d) access to the resources of the institution, such as the library and academic and professional advising.

E.3.1.2 Where DMin course work occurs away from the main campus of the institution, the program should make effective educational use of the candidate’s ministerial context.

E.3.1.3 If the institution has Board approval for the requirements to be completed in branch campuses, at extension centers, or by means of distance learning, the institution must be able to demonstrate how the community of learning, education for skills particular to the DMin degree, formational elements of the program, and educational resources are made available to students.

E.3.2 Duration

E.3.2.1 The DMin program shall require the equivalent of one full year of academic study and the completion of the doctoral project. Normally, the degree shall require not fewer than three nor more than six years to complete, although the Commission on Accrediting may approve alternative degree designs.

E.3.3 Distinctive resources needed

E.3.3.1 In addition to a community of peer learners that is adequate in both number and quality for advanced study, resources such as particular faculty, library, and academic support services are required for the degree.

E.3.3.2 Institutions 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.

E.3.3.2.1 Program administrative procedures should include full-time faculty in determining the program goals; provide for the evaluation of all participating faculty (full-time and adjunct), mentors, and supervisors; and make available opportunities for faculty development in relation to the DMin program.
E.3.3.2.2 Teaching responsibility in the DMin program for full-time faculty should be assigned in a manner comparable to that for other degree programs in that institution.

E.3.3.2.3 Whenever adjunct faculty, qualified mentors, or other personnel are employed, they shall receive appropriate orientation to the purposes and expectations of the DMin program, and their roles shall be exercised and evaluated in full collaboration with full-time faculty.

E.3.3.2.4 It is expected that faculty in the DMin program shall be committed to structuring learning experiences that are oriented to the professional practice of ministry. Whenever needed, institutions shall have effective procedures of faculty development to achieve the particular competencies required for teaching in this program.

E.3.3.3 Library resources and services shall be of sufficient kind and substance to support the DMin program and its goals. This will include access to adequate existing collections, electronic resources, services, and staffing.

E.3.3.4 The regular academic support services and resources of the institution (e.g., recruitment, admissions, academic records, academic advisement, faculty consultation, and evaluation) shall be available for the DMin program and its students.

E.4 Admission

E.4.1 Students must possess an ATS Board of Commissioners-approved MDiv or its educational equivalent from an institution of higher education accredited by a US agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation or approved by a Canadian provincial quality assurance agency. Degrees from institutions outside of North America may be accepted provided schools can demonstrate that they meet the Standards of the Board-approved degrees for admission. MDiv equivalency is defined as 72 graduate semester hours or comparable graduate credits in other systems that represent broad-based work in theology, biblical studies, and the arts of ministry and that include a master's degree and significant ministerial leadership. Ministerial experience alone is not considered the equivalent of or a substitute for the master's degree.

E.4.2 Educational equivalency for these master's degrees shall be determined by the institution through appropriately documented assessment that demonstrates that students have the knowledge, competence, or skills that would normally be provided by specific MDiv-level courses. The process, procedures, and criteria for such determination shall be published in the institution's public documents.
E.4.3 Applicants to the DMin degree program should have at least three years of experience in ministry subsequent to the first graduate theological degree, and, as part of the program goal, show evidence of capacity for an advanced level of competence and reflection in the practice of ministry beyond that of the master’s level. However, as many as 20 percent of the students in the DMin degree program may be enrolled without the requisite three years of ministry experience at the time of admission, provided that the institution can demonstrate objective means for determining that these persons have been prepared by other ministry experience for the level of competence and reflection appropriate for advanced, professional ministerial studies.

E.4.4 If an institution offers specialized DMin programs, it should set appropriate standards for admission to such programs.
Advanced Programs Oriented Toward Ministerial Leadership

Standard F  Doctor of Education (EdD)

F.1  Purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment

F.1.1  Purpose of the degree

F.1.1.1 The purpose of the Doctor of Education degree is to equip persons for leadership positions in education and in teaching and research.

F.1.2  Primary goals of the program

F.1.2.1 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.

F.1.3  Learning outcomes

F.1.3.1 The primary goals of the program shall be further delineated as demonstrable learning outcomes congruent with the institution’s mission and purpose. The institution shall demonstrate that students have achieved the goals or learning outcomes of the degree program by means of direct and indirect evidence of student learning.

F.1.3.2 The institution shall specify learning outcomes that reflect the goals of the program and demonstrate advanced competency in the discipline of religious education and capacity to conduct original research and writing that advances understanding of the discipline.

F.1.3.3 These specific, learning outcomes should shape and inform the design of all courses and other instructional strategies to establish a coherent and integrated curriculum for the degree program.

F.1.4  Educational assessment

F.1.4.1 The institution offering this degree shall articulate the assessment strategy and criteria by which it regularly evaluates the educational effectiveness of the degree program. The institution shall determine the extent to which students have

NOTE: This Degree Program Standard assumes member schools also use and follow the Educational Standard (ES), which applies to all degree programs and which addresses such issues as nomenclature (ES.1), extension education (ES.3), distance education (ES.4), and assessment (ES.6).
achieved the stated goals of the degree program by the use of both direct and indirect evidence.

F.1.4.2 The institution shall also maintain ongoing assessment by which it determines the extent to which the degree program is meeting the needs of students and the institution's overall goals for the program, including measures such as the percentage of students who complete the program and the percentage of graduates who find placement appropriate to their vocational intentions.

F.2 Program content

F.2.1 The program shall provide for advanced study in several areas, including theological disciplines; behavioral sciences (e.g., human development, learning theory, counseling theory); the social sciences (e.g., regarding culture and context in which religious communities function, social change); philosophy of education; and measurement and evaluation. The program shall require a comprehensive examination in these areas before proceeding to the writing phase.

F.2.2 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.

F.2.3 The program shall require demonstrated competence in modern languages, statistics, or other research tools determined by the student’s research or professional needs.

F.3 Educational resources and learning strategies

F.3.1 Location

F.3.1.1 Courses, seminars, and colloquia for doctoral degrees shall normally be completed on the main campus of the institution offering the degree. Any petition for exception shall demonstrate how its educational design and delivery system accomplishes the learning outcomes associated with doctoral residential theological study. If course work completed at other institutions is to be accepted for credit in an ATS Board of Commissioners-approved doctoral program, that work shall have been eligible for credit in the doctoral program(s) offered by the institution at which it was completed or other advanced programs primarily oriented toward theological research and teaching.

F.3.2 Duration

F.3.2.1 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.
F.3.3 Distinctive resources needed

F.3.3.1 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 EdD 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.

F.3.3.2 The program should have a community of peer learners that is adequate in number and quality for advanced study, a faculty with specialties in educational and theological disciplines, library holdings that reflect a breadth of bibliographic resources, ready access to sufficient material in religious 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.

F.4 Admission

F.4.1 Students must possess an ATS Commission on Accrediting-approved MA/MRE degree or comparable degree from an institution of higher education accredited by a US agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, or approved by a Canadian provincial quality assurance agency, or the demonstrated educational equivalent of an accredited or approved North American MA/MRE degree.

F.4.2 Applicants must also demonstrate promise of contribution to the educational leadership in churches and denominations.
Advanced Programs Oriented Toward Ministerial Leadership

Standard G  Doctor of [area of specialization] including the DEdMin and DMiss

G.1  Purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment

G.1.1  Purpose of the degree

G.1.1.1 The purpose of the Doctor of [area of specialization] is to advance theologically competent leadership in a global context by equipping students with advanced knowledge and skill sets that integrate the study of theology with a variety of cognate disciplines that enhance advanced ministerial practice. These degrees are organized in two groups or broad areas of specialization:

Classification I: Religious Educational Leadership, including the DEdMin

Classification II: Ministry and the Human Sciences, including the DMiss

G.1.1.2 Classification I programs require two years of additional study beyond the appropriate ATS Board of Commissioners-approved master’s degree (e.g., Master of Arts or Master of Arts in Religious Education), or, as necessary, in the cognate discipline or field of study, plus the time needed to complete the doctoral project, thesis, or culminating dissertation research project.

G.1.1.3 Classification II programs require two years of additional study beyond the appropriate ATS Board of Commissioners-approved master’s degree (e.g., Master of Divinity, or its equivalent, or in an appropriate theological, missiological, or pastoral discipline), or, as necessary, in the cognate discipline or field of study plus the time needed to complete the doctoral project, thesis, or culminating dissertation research project.

G.1.2  Primary goals of the program

G.1.2.1 The primary goals an institution adopts for these degree programs shall include (1) competence in theological disciplines at the graduate level within culturally diverse contexts of ministry as relevant or pertinent to the area of specialization; (2) advanced capacity for critical and constructive theological reflection regarding

NOTE: This Degree Program Standard assumes member schools also use and follow the Educational Standard (ES), which applies to all degree programs and which addresses such issues as nomenclature (ES.1), extension education (ES.3), distance education (ES.4), and assessment (ES.6).
content and practices of the various disciplines that undergird the areas of specialization; (3) skill in the design, implementation, and assessment of ministry in the area of specialization, including ministerial effectiveness; (4) development and appropriation of a personal and professional ethic with focused study on ethical standards and mature conduct in the profession; (5) advanced understanding of the various disciplines that undergird the area of specialization; and (6) enhanced opportunities for growth in spiritual maturity. (See also G.2, Program content.)

G.1.2.2 Programs may be designed to advance expertise in a specialized area of ministerial practice (e.g., pastoral care, missiology, religious education, leadership, organizational administration, and intercultural ministries). Each degree shall clearly articulate the particular educational and professional goals appropriate to the degree specialization.

G.1.2.3 Classification I and II degrees require acquisition of skills and competencies for effective practice of ministry as well as capacity to engage in administration, teaching, and research, particularly in the area of specialization, and shall require critical appropriation and respectful engagement of diverse cultural contexts.

G.1.2.4 In addition to the above (G.1.2.3), Classification I and II degrees may require acquisition of necessary language skills.

G.1.2.5 The achievement of student learning outcomes for these degrees shall contribute to meeting the programmatic goals for the appropriate degree specialization.

G.1.3 Learning outcomes

G.1.3.1 The institution shall specify demonstrable learning outcomes for the Doctor of [area of specialization] degree that demonstrate an advanced competency in the practice of ministry; give evidence of being informed by analytic, ministerial, and disciplinary research; and show the integration of these areas of advanced knowledge with opportunities for growth in one’s ministerial capacity and spiritual maturity.

G.1.3.2 Institutions shall demonstrate that students have achieved the goals or learning outcomes of the degree program by means of direct and indirect evidence of student learning, including quantitative and qualitative assessments.

G.1.3.3 The institution shall demonstrate the doctoral candidate’s ability to identify a specific theological topic in ministry, organize an effective research model, use appropriate resources, and evaluate the results, reflecting depth of theological insight in relation to ministry and leadership in the context of the cognate disciplines.
G.1.3.4 These specific, learning outcomes should shape and inform the design of all courses, relevant competency-based experiences, and formative and other instructional strategies to establish a coherent and integrated curriculum for the degree program.

G.1.4 Educational assessment

G.1.4.1 The institution offering the Doctor of [area of specialization] degree shall articulate the assessment strategy and criteria by which it regularly evaluates the educational effectiveness of the degree program.

G.1.4.2 The institution shall provide evidence that demonstrates the extent to which students have met the goals of the degree program through the design and completion of a doctoral thesis, research project, or dissertation that demonstrates high levels of research skill applied to a ministerial context or a problem in the field of study and shall be of sufficient quality that, judged by professional standards, has the potential for application in other contexts of ministry or presentation in professional forums.

G.1.4.3 Upon completion of the doctoral thesis, research project, or dissertation, there shall be an oral presentation and evaluation. The completed written project, with any supplemental material, should be accessioned in the institution's library.

G.1.4.4 The institution shall also maintain an ongoing assessment by which it determines the extent to which the degree program is meeting the needs of students and the institution's overall goals for the program, including measures such as the percentage of students who complete the program and report vocational enhancement of the practice of ministry or leadership in the field.

G.2 Program content

G.2.1 The Doctor of [area of specialization] shall provide advanced level study of the comprehensive range of disciplines appropriate to the areas of specialization that provides for

G.2.1.1 an advanced understanding and integration of ministry in relation to various theological and other related disciplines;

G.2.1.2 respectful engagement with the diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic contexts of ministry;

G.2.1.3 the formulation of a comprehensive and critical understanding of ministry leadership in which theory and practice interactively inform and enhance each other;

G.2.1.4 the fostering of spiritual, professional, ethical, and vocational competencies that witness to personal and spiritual maturity;
G.2.1.5 the development and acquisition of skills and competencies, including methods of research, that are required for ministerial leadership at its most effective level; and

G.2.1.6 the completion of a doctoral-level project that contributes new knowledge and understanding to the practice of ministry.

G.2.2 The Doctor of [area of specialization] shall provide for varied kinds of learning, including

G.2.2.1 peer learning and supervised learning, as well as self-directed learning experiences;

G.2.2.2 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;

G.2.2.3 various opportunities for learning and using the disciplines and skills necessary for the doctoral project, thesis, or dissertation, including sustained opportunities for study, critical thinking, and research;

G.2.2.4 opportunities for personal and spiritual reflection, self-correction, and growth; and

G.2.2.5 opportunities for ministerial engagement in culturally and racially diverse contexts.

G.2.3 The Doctor of [area of specialization] shall provide content-specific kinds of learning.

G.2.3.1 Classification I programs shall provide advanced critical and analytical study of theology, educational theory, and administration for professional application in distinct contexts; competencies necessary for research, planning and evaluation of the practice of ministerial leadership in distinct contexts; and competence and appreciation for modern languages as a research tool and a ministerial asset.

G.2.3.2 Classification II programs shall provide advanced study in social scientific disciplines (anthropology, psychology, intercultural studies, contextual studies, gender studies), history and theology (including world religions); and competence in at least one modern language other than English, or other languages relevant to social research methods.
G.3 Educational resources and learning strategies

G.3.1 Location

G.3.1.1 Because of the importance of a comprehensive community of learning, at least one-third of the course work for the Doctor of [area of specialization] shall be completed on a Board-approved campus or full-degree extension site of the member institution. Upon petition by the school, the Board may grant an exception if a school can demonstrate how the program’s educational design and delivery system accomplishes the learning outcomes and program goals associated with the degree program. The school should be able to demonstrate

G.3.1.1.1 sufficient opportunity for disciplined reflection on one’s ministerial experience, appropriate areas of specialization, and needs for educational growth;

G.3.1.1.2 regular and substantive interaction of the students with regular full-time faculty, appropriate adjunct faculty, and other instructional personnel;

G.3.1.1.3 extended involvement in peer learning; and

G.3.1.1.4 access to the resources of the institution, such as the library, and to academic and professional advising.

G.3.1.2 Where specialized doctoral course work occurs away from the main campus of the institution, the program should make effective educational use of the candidate’s ministerial context.

G.3.1.3 If the institution has Board approval for requirements to be completed in branch campuses, at extension centers, or by means of distance learning, the institution must be able to demonstrate how the community of learning, education for skills particular to the doctoral degree, formational elements of the program, and educational resources are made available to students on location in the context of a demonstrable community of learning.

G.3.2 Duration

G.3.2.1 These degree programs shall require the equivalent of two full years of academic study plus the time needed to complete the doctoral project, thesis, or culminating dissertation research project. Normally, the degrees shall require not fewer than three nor more than six years to complete.
G.3.3 Distinctive resources needed

G.3.3.1 In addition to a community of peer learners that is adequate both in number and quality for advanced study, resources such as particular faculty, library, and academic support services are required for the degree.

G.3.3.2 Institutions 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.

G.3.3.2.1 Schools shall provide a core of qualified faculty with the appropriate terminal degrees in the specialized field of instruction as well as sufficient faculty governance in curriculum development and assessment of overall effectiveness of the Doctor of [area of specialization] degrees.

G.3.3.2.2 Program administrative procedures should include full-time faculty in determining the program goals; provide for the evaluation of all participating faculty (full time, adjunct, mentors, and supervisors); and make available opportunities for faculty development in relation to the Doctor of [area of specialization] degrees.

G.3.3.2.3 Whenever adjunct faculty, qualified mentors, or other personnel are employed, they shall receive written and oral orientation to the purposes and expectations of the Doctor of [area of specialization] degree, and their roles shall be exercised and evaluated in full collaboration with full-time faculty.

G.3.3.2.4 It is expected that faculty in the Doctor of [area of specialization] degree programs shall be committed to structuring learning experiences that are oriented to the professional practice of ministry. Whenever needed, institutions shall have effective procedures of faculty development to achieve the particular competencies required for teaching in this program.

G.3.3.2.5 Teaching responsibility for full-time faculty shall be assigned in a manner comparable to that for other degree programs in that institution.

G.3.3.3 Library resources and services shall be of sufficient kind and substance to support these respective Doctor of [area of specialization] degree programs and their goals. This shall include access to adequate existing collections, electronic resources, services, and staffing.

G.3.3.4 The regular academic support services and resources of the institution (e.g., recruitment, admissions, academic records, academic advisement, faculty consultation,
and evaluation) shall be available for Doctor of [area of specialization] degree programs and its students.

G.4 Admission

G.4.1 Admission to these degrees shall conform to the Standards and expectations of the ATS Commission on Accrediting for advanced programs oriented toward ministerial leadership. Admission requirements shall include a master's degree from an institution of higher education accredited by a US agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, or approved by a Canadian provincial quality assurance agency, or the demonstrated educational equivalent of an appropriate accredited or approved North American master's degree. Comparable degrees from institutions outside North America may be accepted provided schools can demonstrate that they meet the Standards of the Board-approved degrees for admission.

G.4.2 Institutions offering the Doctor of [area of specialization] shall set appropriate standards for admission.

G.4.2.1 Classification I programs (for example, the DEdMin) as well as other cognate disciplines require completion of a Board-approved master's program or other advanced master's-level degrees in the related cognate discipline. Other areas of specialization shall require the appropriate master's degrees.

G.4.2.2 Classification II programs (for example, the DMiss) require the completion of the MDiv degree or its educational equivalent, or other advanced master's-level degrees in the related cognate discipline. Other areas of specialization shall require the appropriate master's degrees.

G.4.3 Educational equivalency for these master's degrees shall be determined by the institution through appropriate and documented assessment that demonstrates that students have the knowledge, competence, or skills that would normally be provided by specific ATS Board of Commissioners-approved MDiv-level course work or the appropriate master's-level course work in the appropriate disciplines or areas of specialization. The process and procedures for such determination shall be published in the institution's public documents.

G.4.4 Ministerial experience alone is not considered the equivalent of or a substitute for the master's degree.

G.4.5 The achievement of a new level of competence in the practice of ministry requires that students have at least three years of experience in ministry and demonstrated capacity for an advanced level of competence prior to beginning the program.
G.4.6 As many as 15 percent of the students in the specialized doctoral degree program may be admitted in any given year without the requisite three years of ministry experience, provided that the institution has demonstrable, objective means for determining that these persons have the capacity for the level of competence and reflection appropriate for advanced, professional ministerial studies. The admission of such applicants should be restricted to persons with ministry experience that has prepared them for theological study at the advanced level.
Advanced Programs Oriented Toward Ministerial Leadership

**Standard H**

**Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA)**
**Doctor of Church Music (DCM)**
**Doctor of Sacred Music (SMD)**

**H.1 Purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment**

**H.1.1 Purpose of the degree**

H.1.1.1 The purpose of these degrees is to equip persons for teaching, research, and leadership in church and sacred music.

**H.1.2 Primary goals of the program**

H.1.2.1 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 and proficiency in a performance area or areas, and capacity to engage in research and teaching.

**H.1.3 Learning outcomes**

H.1.3.1 The institution shall specify appropriate demonstrable learning outcomes for these degrees that demonstrate an advanced competency in the areas of church and sacred music, give evidence of being informed by analytic, ministerial, and disciplinary research, and show the integration of these areas of advanced knowledge with opportunities for growth in one's teaching, research, and leadership.

H.1.3.2 Institutions shall demonstrate that students have achieved the goals or learning outcomes of the degree program by means of direct and indirect evidence of student learning, including quantitative and qualitative assessments.

H.1.3.3 These specific, learning outcomes should shape and inform the design of all courses, relevant competency-based experiences, and formative and other instructional strategies to establish a coherent and integrated curriculum for the degree program.

**NOTE:** This Degree Program Standard assumes member schools also use and follow the *Educational Standard* (ES), which applies to all degree programs and which addresses such issues as nomenclature (ES.1), extension education (ES.3), distance education (ES.4), and assessment (ES.6).
H.1.4 Educational assessment

H.1.4.1 The institution offering these degrees shall articulate the assessment strategy and criteria by which it regularly evaluates the educational effectiveness of the degree program. The institution shall determine the extent to which students have achieved the stated goals of the degree program by the use of both direct and indirect evidence.

H.1.4.2 The institution shall be able to demonstrate that students completing these degrees have a comprehensive and critical understanding of the music disciplines and exhibit appropriate advanced proficiency in performance skills, the competence to conduct original research that can contribute to their field, and the capacity to teach with skill.

H.2 Program content

H.2.1 The program shall provide for advanced study in several areas, including liturgy, hymnology, theory, musicology, composition, and conducting.

H.2.2 The program shall provide for the study of foreign languages as appropriate for advanced scholarly work in music.

H.2.3 The program shall contain a major emphasis on musical performance.

H.2.4 The program shall include a comprehensive assessment of doctoral-level knowledge of the course of studies and a culminating dissertation reflecting a high quality of research skill.

   H.2.4.1 The dissertation shall demonstrate the doctoral candidate’s ability to identify an appropriate disciplinary topic, organize an effective research model, use appropriate resources, and evaluate the results, reflecting depth of insight in relation to the music disciplines.

H.3 Educational resources and learning strategies

H.3.1 Location

   H.3.1.1 Courses, seminars, and colloquia for the degree shall be completed on a Board-approved campus or full-degree extension site of the member institution. If course work completed at other institutions is to be accepted for credit in a Board-approved doctoral program, that work shall have been eligible for credit in the doctoral programs offered by the institution at which it was completed.

   H.3.1.2 An institution offering distance education courses for these degrees shall demonstrate in the courses the collaborative, performative, and research dimensions
of scholarship in the various disciplines included in the study of music, including the liturgical and historical repertory of church music. Courses shall provide regular and substantive interaction between teachers and learners and among learners to ensure a viable community of learning.

H.3.1.3 Because of their performative character, no more than one-third of the course work for these degrees may be completed through distance education. An exception may be granted if a school can demonstrate how its educational design and delivery system accomplishes the learning outcomes required for these degrees.

H.3.2 Duration

H.3.2.1 The program requires the equivalent of three years of full-time study beyond the MCM/MSM.

H.3.3 Distinctive resources needed

H.3.3.1 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 or music performance. It is desirable that they should have published the results of their own scholarly work and be currently engaged in productive research.

H.3.3.2 The program shall provide ready access to resources for the development of performance skills and opportunities to lead ensembles.

H.3.3.3 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.

H.3.3.4 The Board of Commissioners strongly recommends that any institution offering the research/performance doctorate in music have programmatic accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Music or its institutional counterpart in Canada.

H.4 Admission

H.4.1. Admission requirements shall include (a) completion of an NASM/ATS Commission on Accrediting-approved master's degree program, or (b) demonstration that the candidate has the competencies provided by the MCM/MSM degree in church music as prescribed by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), or alternatively by the master's-level degree programs earned from an institution of higher education that is approved by a Canadian provincial quality assurance agency or the demonstrated educational equivalent of an accredited or approved North American music master's degree; 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.

H.4.2 Admission should be based on appropriate performance and academic ability as well as the potential to contribute to leadership in church music.
Advanced Programs Primarily Oriented Toward Theological Research and Teaching

Standard I  Master of Theology (ThM)
Master of Sacred Theology (STM)

I.1  Purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment

I.1.1  Purpose of the degree

I.1.1.1  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 MDiv level. The program may serve a variety of aims, including 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.

I.1.1.2  The nomenclature, Master of Theology (designated as MTh), is also used in some Canadian institutions for programs of continued study of theological disciplines or specialization in an area of ministry practice.

I.1.2  Primary goals of the program

I.1.2.1  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, the ability to formulate productive questions, and the capacity to use research methods and resources in the discipline.

I.1.3  Learning outcomes

I.1.3.1  The institution shall specify demonstrable learning outcomes that demonstrate an advanced competency in one area or discipline of theological study and capacity to conduct original research in that area.

I.1.3.2  The institution shall demonstrate, by direct and indirect evidence, that students have achieved the learning outcomes of the degree program, including mastery of a theological discipline and scholarly competence in research.

NOTE: This Degree Program Standard assumes member schools also use and follow the Educational Standard (ES), which applies to all degree programs and which addresses such issues as nomenclature (ES.1), extension education (ES.3), distance education (ES.4), and assessment (ES.6).
I.1.3.3 These specific, learning outcomes should shape and inform the design of all courses and other instructional strategies to establish a coherent and integrated curriculum for the degree program.

I.1.4 Educational assessment

I.1.4.1 The institution offering the ThM or STM degree shall articulate the assessment strategy and criteria by which it regularly evaluates the educational effectiveness of the degree program.

I.1.4.2 The institution shall also maintain an ongoing assessment by which it determines the extent to which the degree program is meeting the needs of students and the institution's overall goals for the program, including measures such as the percentage of students who complete the program.

I.1.4.3 Student learning outcomes shall be stated in terms of how students' skills and knowledge change as a result of having completed the degree. The institution shall gather quantitative and qualitative data related to each of those outcomes, analyze the data gathered, and make revisions as necessary based on that assessment. This assessment cycle shall be ongoing, regularized, and sustainable.

I.2 Program content

I.2.1 The program of study shall consist of regular course work and faculty-directed independent study and research.

I.2.2 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.

I.2.3 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.

I.2.4 Degree requirements should ordinarily include an examination that demonstrates mastery of a theological discipline and a thesis demonstrating scholarly research competence.

I.3 Educational resources and learning strategies

I.3.1 Location

I.3.1.1 The program shall be undertaken chiefly in courses offered on the institution's main campus with the appropriate research library resources and a sufficient number of students to provide a peer community for mutual criticism and stimulus. Any petition for exception shall demonstrate how its educational design and delivery system
accomplishes the learning outcomes associated with research-oriented residential theological study.

I.3.2  Duration

I.3.2.1  The program shall require one year of full-time study or its equivalent.

I.3.3  Distinctive resources needed

I.3.3.1  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.

I.3.3.2  The library shall have collections of sufficient quality to support research in the disciplines in which the ThM or STM is offered as well as appropriate databases and other scholarly resources.

I.4  Admission

I.4.1  Admission to the program shall require an ATS Board of Commissioners-approved MDiv, or first graduate theological degree providing equivalent theological background, or its educational equivalent, from an institution of higher education accredited by a US agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, or approved by a Canadian provincial quality assurance agency; and evidence of aptitude for advanced theological study. Comparable degrees from institutions outside North America may be accepted provided schools can demonstrate that they meet the Standards of the Board-approved degrees for admission.
Advanced Programs Primarily Oriented Toward Theological Research and Teaching

Standard J  Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Doctor of Theology (ThD)

J.1 Purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment

J.1.1 Purpose of the degree

J.1.1.1 These degree programs are intended primarily to equip persons for vocations of teaching and research in theological schools, colleges, and universities, or for the academic study of ministerial practice. The same overall aims and Standards apply to both the PhD and the ThD; the nomenclature differs according to the history of its use in a particular school.

J.1.2 Primary goals of the program

J.1.2.1 The goals an institution adopts for the research doctorate should include a comprehensive knowledge of the disciplines of study; a 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.

J.1.2.2 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.

J.1.3 Learning outcomes

J.1.3.1 The institution shall specify learning outcomes that are demonstrable, that reflect the goals of the program, and that demonstrate advanced competency in the disciplines of theological or religious studies and capacity to conduct original research and writing that advances theological understanding.

J.1.3.2 The institution shall demonstrate, by direct and indirect evidence, that students have achieved the learning outcomes of the degree program, including mastery of a theological discipline and scholarly competence in advanced research.

NOTE: This Degree Program Standard assumes member schools also use and follow the Educational Standard (ES), which applies to all degree programs and which addresses such issues as nomenclature (ES.1), extension education (ES.3), distance education (ES.4), and assessment (ES.6).
J.1.3.3 These specific, learning outcomes should shape and inform the design of all courses and other instructional strategies to establish a coherent and integrated curriculum for the degree program.

J.1.4 Educational assessment

J.1.4.1 The institution offering the PhD or ThD degrees shall articulate the assessment strategy and criteria by which it regularly evaluates the educational effectiveness of the degree programs.

J.1.4.2 The institution shall also maintain an ongoing assessment by which it determines the extent to which the degree program is meeting the needs of students and the institution's overall goals for the program, including measures such as the percentage of students who complete the program.

J.1.4.3 The institution shall gather quantitative and qualitative data related to learning outcomes, analyze the data gathered, and make revisions as necessary based on that assessment. This assessment cycle shall be ongoing, regularized, and sustainable.

J.2 Program content

J.2.1 The program of study shall either presuppose or provide grounding in the content and methods of theological studies in general, as a basis for the development of specialized competence.

J.2.2 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. 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.

J.2.3 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.

J.2.4 The program shall assist students to grow in those qualities essential for practice of scholarly ministry in theological environments.

J.2.5 Opportunities shall be provided for instruction in teaching methods and for the development of competence in teaching.

J.2.6 The program shall include coursework, comprehensive examinations, and the writing of a doctoral dissertation.
J.2.6.1 The course work shall include a majority of courses intended for doctoral students or students in other advanced programs oriented toward theological research and teaching.

J.2.6.2 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.

J.2.6.3 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.

J.3 Educational resources and learning strategies

J.3.1 Location

J.3.1.1 Courses, seminars, and colloquia for research doctoral degrees shall normally be completed on the main campus of the institution offering the degree. Any petition for exception shall demonstrate how its educational design and delivery system accomplishes the learning outcomes associated with research-oriented residential theological study. If course work completed at other institutions is to be accepted for credit in an ATS Board of Commissioners-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 or other advanced programs primarily oriented toward theological research and teaching.

J.3.2 Duration

J.3.2.1 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.

J.3.3 Distinctive resources needed

J.3.3.1 The institution shall demonstrate the availability of resources in addition to those necessary for master’s-level degree programs.

J.3.3.2 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.

J.3.3.2.1 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.

J.3.3.2.2 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.

J.3.3.2.3 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.

J.3.3.2.4 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.

J.3.3.3 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.

J.3.3.4 The institution shall allocate sufficient financial resources to support degree programs.

J.3.3.5 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 dedicated study space, technological support, information accessibility, and acquisitions and reference staff shall be ensured.
J.3.3.6 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.

J.4 Admission

J.4.1 Admission to the program shall require an ATS Board of Commissioners-approved MDiv, or first graduate theological degree providing equivalent theological background, or its educational equivalent from an institution of higher education accredited by a US agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation or approved by a Canadian provincial quality assurance agency. Comparable degrees from institutions outside North America may be accepted provided schools can demonstrate that they meet the Standards of the Board-approved degrees for admission.

J.4.2 Admission should be selective and offered only to students who have demonstrated the intellectual ability, the preparation, and the motivation for a scholarly vocation.

J.4.3 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.

J.4.4 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.
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Related to Membership in the ATS Commission on Accrediting
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Introduction

This document contains policies and procedures adopted by the Commission membership, as described in the Commission Bylaws, Section 2.3. Like the Standards of Accreditation ("Standards"), they are considered incumbent upon all member schools, as noted in ATS Commission Standard 2, section 2.1, "Schools accredited by the Board of Commissioners shall carry out their educational programs and institutional activities according to the Standards and Procedures established by the Commission and its Board of Commissioners . . . ."

The shorten name, "Standards and Procedures," refers to the three documents of the Standards of Accreditation (General Institutional Standards, Education Standard, and Degree Program Standards) and the Commission Policies and Procedures.
I. Membership

I.A Membership in the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools ("Commission") is limited to schools that meet the membership eligibility criteria of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) and that are either Full Members of ATS or Associate Members of ATS on whom the Board of Commissioners has conferred Candidate for Accredited Member status. In addition, a school that has ceased to be a member of ATS solely as a result of a Termination for Cause may continue as a member of the Commission.

I.B Each school shall hold either Accredited Member status or Candidate for Accredited Member status by the Commission on Accrediting.
II Candidate for Accredited Member status

II.A Candidate for Accredited Member status is conferred on those members of ATS that, after review on the basis of the Commission’s Standards and Procedures, have been formally authorized by vote of the Board of Commissioners to begin the self-study process. Candidate for Accredited Member status is granted for a period of two years. By special action of the Board of Commissioners, candidacy may be extended for one year at a time, but in no case may candidacy extend beyond a total of five years.

II.B Criteria for Candidate for Accredited Member status

II.B.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 Commission’s General Institutional Standards, Educational Standard, and Degree Program Standards and that it has the institutional capacity to evaluate its institutional and educational effectiveness.

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

II.C Attaining Candidate for Accredited Member status by Associate Members of ATS

II.C.1 The chief administrative officer of an Associate Member school desiring candidacy should notify the Commission staff in writing that the school intends to petition the Board of Commissioners for Candidate for Accredited Member status.

II.C.2 The applicant school shall undertake an internal study of its readiness for Candidate for Accredited Member status. The Board of Commissioners will provide guidance for this internal study.

II.C.3 Upon the school’s completion of its internal study, a Commission staff member will review the study, conduct a staff visit to the school, and prepare a report regarding the school’s capacity to meet the General Institutional Standards, Educational Standard, and Degree Program Standards.

II.C.4 The Board of Commissioners 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 Commission’s Standards of Accreditation by the conclusion of the candidacy period. The Board of Commissioners may do one of the following:
II.C.4.a grant candidacy for a period of two years; or

II.C.4.b deny the candidacy petition.

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

II.D Maintaining Candidate for Accredited Member status

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

II.D.2 The institution shall continue to meet criteria for candidacy and conduct its degree programs in conformity with the Commission's Degree Program Standards.

II.D.3 The institution shall complete the Commission’s Annual Report Forms.

II.D.4 The institution shall pay annual dues as prescribed by ATS and the Commission.

II.E Withdrawal from candidacy

A school may, on its own initiative, withdraw as a member of the Commission as a Candidate for Accredited Member status at any time during its term of candidacy, by written notice to the Board of Commissioners.
III Accredited Member status

III.A Accredited Members are institutions in the United States and Canada that are Associate Members of ATS that, after review on the basis of the Commission Standards of Accreditation, are granted accreditation by the Board of Commissioners and become Full Members of ATS.

III.B Criteria for Accredited Member status

III.B.1 Accredited institutions shall demonstrate that they operate according to the Commission's General Institutional Standards.

III.B.2 All graduate degree programs offered by Accredited Members of the Commission shall meet the Educational Standard and Degree Program Standards and be approved by the Board of Commissioners.

III.B.3 All extension education offerings that provide graduate credit toward approved degrees shall be approved by the Board of Commissioners.

III.B.4 Accredited Members must have a defined accreditable entity that offers postbaccalaureate theological degree programs, not baccalaureate degree programs.

III.C Attaining Accredited Member status

III.C.1 Candidates for Accredited Member status shall engage in the self-study process, following the guidance provided in the Board of Commissioners' Self-Study Handbook. On-site staff consultation is available to schools in the self-study process. The General Institutional Standards, Educational Standard, and appropriate Degree Program Standard(s) must be addressed in the self-study report.

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

III.C.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 Commission Standards, following the procedures for evaluation
committees published in the Board of Commissioners’ Self-Study Handbook.

III.C.4 Based on the committee report and its recommendations, the Board of Commissioners may act in one of two ways:

III.C.4.a accredit the institution and approve its degree programs for a period of no longer than seven years; or

III.C.4.b deny accreditation to the institution. In this event, specific reasons will be stated in writing to the school. A school denied initial accreditation has these four options: (1) appeal the decision, following the guidelines in Section XI below; (2) petition for an extension of candidacy, if the time limit has not expired; (3) request continuation of Associate Member status, with the understanding that the school will seek Candidate for Accredited Member status again within two years; or (4) voluntarily withdraw from the Commission and the Association.

III.C.5 It is possible for schools that offer graduate, professional theological degrees and that are demonstrably engaged in educating professional leadership for communities of the Christian and Jewish faiths 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 the Commission and of the school, shall state explicitly that such an institution is “accredited by The Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools by virtue of affiliation with __________.”

III.D Maintaining Accredited Member status

III.D.1 The institution shall maintain the Standards defined by the Commission and abide by the Procedures of ATS and the Commission.

III.D.2 The institution shall complete the Commission’s Annual Report Forms.

III.D.3 The institution shall pay annual dues as prescribed by ATS and the Commission.
III.D.4  The institution shall, at intervals specified by the Board of Commissioners, complete a process of comprehensive institutional self-study and prepare for regular scheduled visits of evaluation committees.

III.E  Policy regarding teach-out plans

A member school must submit a teach-out plan to the Board of Commissioners for the Board’s approval upon the occurrence of any of the following events:

III.E.1  if the Board of Commissioners withdraws, terminates, or suspends the accreditation of the institution;

III.E.2  if the institution notifies the Board of Commissioners that it intends to cease operations entirely or close a location that provides 100 percent of at least one program;

III.E.3  if the US Department of Education notifies the Board of Commissioners of an action against the institution to limit, suspend, or terminate an institution’s participation in any Title IV program or initiates an emergency action against the institution; or

III.E.4  if a state licensing or authorizing agency notifies the Board of Commissioners that an institution’s license or legal authorization to provide an educational program has been or will be revoked.
IV. Withdrawal from Membership

A school may, on its own initiative and by written notice to the Board of Commissioners, withdraw from membership and Accredited Member status.
V  Procedures Related to Degree Program Approval

V.A  New degree programs shall not be announced without prior approval by the Board of Commissioners.

V.B  A school considering the introduction of a new degree program shall notify Commission staff and seek consultative guidance. It shall then submit a petition for consideration by the Board of Commissioners. The petition shall follow the guidelines established by the Board of Commissioners, 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, etc.); (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.

V.C  If the proposed degree program is at the master's level, approval by the Board of Commissioners may be granted on the basis of the written petition. If the proposed degree is at the doctoral level, approval will be considered only after a focused evaluation visit has been conducted. The Board may excuse a school from this requirement if the institution already offers an approved doctoral program in the same degree category.

V.D  When a member school determines to terminate an approved degree program, it shall notify in advance the Board of Commissioners and indicate how the school proposes to make adequate provision for current students pursuing the degree program to complete their studies and earn the degree or an equivalent degree. If the termination of the degree program also entails the closing of an entire site approved to offer that complete degree, then the school shall petition for permission to close that site and submit a teach-out plan.
VI  Procedures for Approval of Extension Education (Multiple Locations or Extension Sites) and Distance Education

VI.A Institutions shall seek appropriate Board of Commissioners’ action for all programs involving multiple locations (extension sites) and distance education. The procedures for review and approval of such programs vary with the type of program. The Board of Commissioners has developed guidelines that outline in detail the review and approval process for different types of extension sites and for distance education programs.

VI.B Domestic sites

VI.B.1 Branch campuses. A branch campus is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution as evidenced by permanence in nature, offering courses in educational programs leading to degrees, having its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization, and having its own budgetary and hiring authority. The establishment of a branch campus requires consultation and a written petition to the Board of Commissioners identifying the educational programs to be offered and the financial, operational, management, and physical resources necessary to meet Commission Standards. A site evaluation is required within six months of the beginning of the branch campus.

VI.B.2 Complete degree sites. The offering of a full degree program at a site away from the institution’s primary location requires consultation, a written petition to and approval by the Board of Commissioners, and a site evaluation within six months of the site beginning to offer as much as 50 percent of the course work necessary for a full degree.

VI.B.3 Ongoing course offering sites. The establishment of a program at a site away from the institution’s primary location where a school intends to offer a variety of courses over time requires the submission of a written petition to the Board of Commissioners and action on the petition prior to the first offering of courses. Sites where courses are offered on an ongoing basis may be visited and evaluated as part of the Board of Commissioners’ review cycle. If as much as half of the course work required for any approved degree may be completed at the site away from the school’s primary location, a site evaluation shall be conducted within six months of the site beginning to offer as much as 50 percent of the course work necessary for a degree. Pursuant to Board policy, a school may be excused from an initial site visit.
VI.B.4 Occasional course offering sites. The establishment of a program in which a school intends to offer courses at a site away from the institution’s primary location less frequently than on an annual basis does not require notification of or approval by the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners requests that institutions report such occasional offerings on the Commission’s Annual Report Forms.

VI.C International sites

VI.C.1 Outside Canada and the United States. Institutions seeking to implement programs outside Canada and the United States that involve either the ongoing offering of courses or a full degree program must have the prior approval of the Board of Commissioners. In its proposal, the school shall clearly give attention to the guidelines adopted by the Board of Commissioners. After its review of the written proposal, the Board of Commissioners will ordinarily require a site review before it considers granting approval for these types of programs. The offering of occasional courses does not require notification of or approval by the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners expects that institutions report such occasional offerings on the Commission’s Annual Report Forms.

VI.C.2 Across the Canadian/US Border. Institutions seeking to offer a program across the Canadian/United States border that involves either the ongoing offering of courses or a full degree program must have the prior approval of the Board of Commissioners. In its proposal, the school shall clearly demonstrate that it has given appropriate attention to the guidelines adopted by the Board of Commissioners and that it has consulted with Commission member schools near the location where the program is to be offered. The offering of occasional courses does not require notification of or approval by the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners requests that institutions report such occasional offerings on the Commission’s Annual Report Forms.

VI.D Distance education

VI.D.1 When as many as six of the courses offered in any approved degree may be taken through distance education, it will be considered comprehensive distance education, and the institution must petition the Board of Commissioners for approval, according to guidelines adopted by the Board of Commissioners.
VI.D.2 The school shall undertake a comprehensive evaluation of its distance education offerings, either as part of its institutional self-study or at another time by request of the Board of Commissioners.

VI.D.3 In its consideration of approval of distance learning, the Board of Commissioners may require a site evaluation.

VI.D.4 Schools conducting distance education must have a process by which the institution establishes by use of secure login and pass code, proctored examinations, or other means that are effective in verifying student identity and protecting student privacy, that the student who registers in a distance education course is the same student who participates in and completes the course and receives the academic credit. In addition, the school must notify students of any projected additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity at the time of registration or enrollment.
VII Enforcement of Standards for Accredited Members

VII.A Through comprehensive evaluation visits

VII.A.1 Comprehensive evaluations occur prior to the expiration of a grant of accreditation. Normally, a comprehensive evaluation committee visit will occur within six months of the expiration of a grant of accreditation. The grant of initial accreditation is limited to no more than seven years and reaffirmation to no more than 10 years. The Board of Commissioners 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 Board of Commissioners and the school, the Board of Commissioners may authorize a comprehensive evaluation at any time when regular monitoring activities indicate significant problems at multiple levels of a school or an institution initiates multiple substantive changes. The preparation of a self-study is not required when the Board of Commissioners authorizes such a special comprehensive evaluation visit, though the institution must still provide evidence that it is operating in conformity to the Standards of Accreditation.

VII.A.2 Institutions shall engage in an institutional self-study in preparation for each comprehensive evaluation. The self-study shall follow the guidance provided in the *Self-Study Handbook*.

VII.A.3 The self-study report shall be submitted, at least 60 days before the scheduled visit, to the Commission staff who, in consultation with the chairperson of the evaluation committee, will 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 Commission staff for more than one semester, the institution shall have the right of appeal at the next scheduled meeting of the Board of Commissioners.

VII.A.4 In preparation for an evaluation visit, a school shall advertise to its constituencies at least 60 days prior to the visit that it is receiving an evaluation committee and invite comment in writing to the school and/or to the Commission concerning the institution's qualifications for accreditation. These comments will be available to the evaluation committee. The evaluation committee may also include an open hearing scheduled during the course of the visit.
VII.A.5  The Board of Commissioners will publish the names of schools receiving a comprehensive evaluation visit in a given year and request comment from other Commission member institutions.

VII.B  Through focused evaluation visits

VII.B.1  Focused evaluation visits may be authorized by the Board of Commissioners as a response to any of the following:

VII.B.1.a  a school's invitation to the Board of Commissioners;

VII.B.1.b  a school's decision to offer a new degree program, as noted in Section V of these Policies and Procedures;

VII.B.1.c  a school's decision to offer 50 percent or more of the courses for an approved degree at a new location;

VII.B.1.d  a change in ownership or substantive change in the pattern of control of the institution;

VII.B.1.e  the receipt of other information that leads the Board of Commissioners to conclude that a focused evaluation visit is advisable;

VII.B.1.f  an indication that the quality of a school's programs may have been adversely affected by changes in circumstances; or

VII.B.1.g  in the context of investigating a formal complaint against the institution when deemed appropriate.

VII.B.2  The Board of Commissioners will require a focused visit whenever it deems that a report will not adequately address the Board's need for additional information of a substantive nature or not adequately address the school's ability to improve significantly in a particular area. When a focused visit is required, the Board of Commissioners may still require the school to submit a written report, identifying the key issue(s) to be addressed, and direct that the school's report be provided to the focused evaluation committee at least 30 days in advance of the visit. In addition, Commission staff will supply the school and the committee a prospectus, describing the key issue(s), the nature of the visit, and any other documents the committee might need.

VII.B.3  In preparation for focused evaluation visits, the Board of Commissioners may require reports from the school as are appropriate to the situation,
authorize staff or other evaluators as appropriate, and provide instruction for the school and the evaluators regarding the committee's report to the Board of Commissioners. The expectations for a focused evaluation will be described to the school in the context of a written prospectus prepared for the visit.

VII.C  Through approval of substantive changes

VII.C.1  Substantive changes that require petitioning for Board approval include the following:

VII.C.1.a  change in an institution's fundamental mission, legal status, ownership, name, location, or governing control;

VII.C.1.b  change in location(s) at which an institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program (see Section VI above);

VII.C.1.c  introduction of six or more distance learning courses (see Section VI above);

VII.C.1.d  the offering of a new degree program (see Section V above);

VII.C.1.e  a change in type of educational units (e.g., a change from clock hours to credit hours);

VII.C.1.f  a new contract or major changes in existing contracts for educational or administrative services that would affect the school's conformity to the Standards of Accreditation (including, for Title IV participants, any contract for educational offerings with an entity not eligible to participate in Title IV programs);

VII.C.1.g  the acquisition of any other institution or any program or location of another institution; and

VII.C.1.h  the addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.

VII.C.2  It is the responsibility of an accredited school to petition the Board of Commissioners for approval of these changes prior to implementing them.
VII.C.3 In addition to substantive changes that require petitioning the Board for approval, certain other significant, but nonsubstantive changes require either a petition or notification to Commission staff.

VII.C.3.a Changes requiring a petition to and approval by Commission staff include (1) change in degree nomenclature, and (2) opening of an extension site that offers less than 50 percent of a degree program (i.e., one not requiring a site visit).

VII.C.3.b Changes that require notification to and acknowledgement by Commission staff include (1) termination of a degree program at a location (main campus or extension site) that will continue in operation (i.e., one not requiring a teach-out plan or agreement), and (2) the closing of an extension site that offers less than 100 percent of a degree program (i.e., one not requiring a teach-out plan or agreement).

VII.C.3.c In addition, schools considering a major revision to an approved degree program that could affect its continued adherence to Commission Standards should consult with Commission staff to determine if the revision constitutes a change significant enough to require formal approval.

VII.C.4 Substantive changes do not include exceptions that an institution may choose to make for an individual student.

VII.D Through the use of reports

VII.D.1 The Board of Commissioners may require a report if it judges that an accredited institution should supply additional information or needs to improve in an area or areas. In its action to require such a report, the Board will identify the Standards where it needs information or judges that the institution requires improvement, and it will set the submission date or dates according to its judgment of the time reasonably necessary to provide the information or to make the improvement.

VII.D.2 The circumstances meriting reports are not instances of noncompliance, and insufficient improvement does not signal noncompliance.

VII.E Through the use of notations

VII.E.1 On the basis of reports received either from an evaluation committee or from a member institution, the Board of Commissioners shall impose
a notation or notations when it judges that an institution insufficiently meets one or more Standards of Accreditation or that principles contained in the Standards are not being adequately translated into practice. The Board views a notation as a notice or warning that a school partially meets a Commission Standard, but it does not fully meet the Standard until appropriate action is taken in a timely manner.

VII.E.2 A notation is a public characterization of membership status. The Membership List includes any notations imposed by the Board of Commissioners as part of the institution's formal Accredited Member status.

VII.E.3 Within two years following the imposition of a notation, the Board of Commissioners will consider evidence as to why the notation should be removed. The school must submit that evidence at least two months prior to the meeting in which the Board of Commissioners will act, as specified in the Board’s action letter that imposes the notation. If the institution does not provide the requisite evidence, the Board of Commissioners shall take an adverse action. In certain cases and for demonstrated good cause, the Board of Commissioners may extend by one year the period of imposition of a notation.

VII.F Through the use of probation

VII.F.1 Probation is designed to respond to the circumstance in which an institution does not meet one or more of the General Institutional Standards, Educational Standard, or Degree Program Standards.

VII.F.2 No institution will be placed on probation without an on-site visit. The evaluation committee will prepare a written report and submit it to the institution for its response. The evaluation committee's report and the institution's response will be considered by the Board of Commissioners and will serve as the basis for the decision of the Board of Commissioners.

VII.F.3 In any action imposing probation, the Board of Commissioners will identify the Standards that it judges that the institution is no longer meeting and describe its expectations regarding changes necessary to correct the situation.

VII.F.4 The time assigned to an institution for the remedial action required for the removal of probation will be not less than 12 nor more than 24 months. If an institution demonstrates that the conditions to remove probation have
been met prior to the deadline, the institution may petition the Board of Commissioners for an early decision on the request to remove probation.

**VII.F.5** Prior to the end of the period of probation, a visit by an evaluation committee will be conducted to bring a report to the Board of Commissioners with a recommendation as to whether the Board of Commissioners should remove probation or take an adverse action. In certain cases and for demonstrated good cause, the Board of Commissioners may extend by one year the period an institution has to demonstrate that the conditions to remove probation have been met.

**VII.F.6** When probation is imposed upon an institution, the action of the Board of Commissioners will be communicated in the *Membership List* and in the Board of Commissioners' reports provided by the Board's policies. The institution will continue to appear in the list of accredited institutions, but following its name will appear the note, "Probation (date) to (date)."

**VII.G Through withdrawal of accreditation**

**VII.G.1** Notations and probation are not sequential actions.

**VII.G.2** If, at the end of the term of a notation and any extension for good cause, an institution does not demonstrate that it has remedied the problem identified by the notation, the Board shall withdraw accreditation.

**VII.G.3** If, after a period of probation (including any extension for good cause), an on-site visit, examination of the evaluation committee's report, and receipt of an institution's response, the Board of Commissioners determines that an institution has failed to demonstrate that it can or will function according to the Standards of Accreditation, the Board of Commissioners shall withdraw institutional accreditation.

**VII.G.4** 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.

**VII.H Adverse accrediting actions**

Adverse accrediting actions by the Board of Commissioners are defined as denial of accreditation or withdrawal of accreditation.
VII.I  Letter of Concern and Show Cause Order

VII.I.1  The Board of Commissioners may issue a nonpublic Letter of Concern prior to imposing a public notation if it determines that an institution, though still meeting the Standards, has not responded appropriately to concerns it has raised or if it sees issues arising that need the institution's immediate and serious attention. The Letter of Concern will specify the exact nature of the concern(s) or issue(s), including instructions regarding any interactions expected with the Board (e.g., any report[s] to be submitted or any visit[s] to be scheduled, as well as a timetable for any such interactions).

VII.I.2  The Board of Commissioners may issue a Show Cause Order prior to imposing probation or prior to withdrawing accreditation, though it is under no obligation to do so. A Show Cause Order provides an opportunity for an institution to demonstrate to the Board beforehand why probation should not be imposed or why accreditation should not be withdrawn. A Show Cause Order is normally reserved for situations of a very serious nature that come unexpectedly to the Board's attention and indicate that the school may not be meeting one or more Standards of Accreditation. The Show Cause Order will specify the time frame in which the institution must respond (not to exceed six months), the reason(s) for the Board's action, and any required action(s), such as site visits or written reports. The Show Cause Order may be public or private, at the Board's discretion.
VIII The Board of Commissioners

VIII.A Composition and duties

VIII.A.1 The composition and duties of the Board of Commissioners are defined by the Bylaws of the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools.

VIII.A.2 The primary duties of the Board of Commissioners include (1) the oversight of the corporate work of the Commission, as authorized by the Bylaws; (2) the compilation and maintenance of the list of schools accredited in accordance with the Standards determined by the Commission, including the authority to add schools to or delete them from the list; (3) the undertaking, on an ongoing basis, of a review of accredited schools for continued inclusion on the list of Accredited Member schools, including all aspects of Commission accreditation pursuant to the Standards and Procedures of the Commission; and (4) the regular and continuous review of the Standards of Accreditation and bringing recommendations for changes to Commission member schools.

VIII.A.3 In the context of its duties to make decisions regarding accreditation, the Board of Commissioners is responsible for adopting and overseeing policies and procedures that ensure thorough and fair evaluation of schools and for consistently applying the Commission’s Policies and Procedures and Standards of Accreditation.

VIII.B Procedures

VIII.B.1 Members of the Board of Commissioners 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 that they have attended as students.

VIII.B.2 In making decisions following evaluation committee visits, the Board of Commissioners will consider the self-study of the school under consideration, the written report of the evaluation 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 Board of Commissioners takes will be based on these materials and will reflect both the Board of Commissioners’ experience of applying the Commission’s Standards and the decisions it has made regarding other institutions.
VIII.B.3 Subcommittees of the Board of Commissioners will give preliminary consideration to evaluation committee reports and recommendations. Members of the Board of Commissioners may not serve on a subcommittee considering a report from an evaluation committee on which they served, nor may they vote on decisions about schools they visited.

VIII.B.4 Any school about which the Board of Commissioners is considering an accreditation action has the right to request an appearance by its designated representative(s) before the Board of Commissioners or a subcommittee of the Board of Commissioners.

VIII.B.5 Letters reporting the actions of the Board of Commissioners will be sent to schools no later than 30 days from the date of the action.

VIII.B.6 When an institution plans to close, or if the Board of Commissioners 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 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.

VIII.B.7 Accreditation is a continuing relationship between an institution and the Commission, which is subject to review and consideration.
IX Evaluation Committees

IX.A Committees evaluating institutions for initial accreditation, for reaffirmation of accreditation, and for focused evaluations will be selected according to procedures adopted by the Board of Commissioners and published in the Self-Study Handbook.

IX.B The Board of Commissioners and its staff will receive nominations for potential visitors from the executive officers of any institution that is a member of the Commission.

IX.C The Board of Commissioners will provide the resources, training, and staff support to ensure informed and responsible work by members of evaluation committees.

IX.D Evaluation committee members will be selected by Commission staff, under the supervision of the Board of Commissioners and in consultation with the institution to be visited, and with due consideration of the purpose, programs, and context of the institution. At least one member of the committee will not be a member of the Board of Commissioners or ATS Board of Directors. 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 evaluation committees will vary according to the nature of the visit and will be determined in consultation with the institution.

IX.E If a school is given permission by Commission staff to host a joint evaluation visit with another accrediting agency (see Policies and Procedures, XIII.D), the composition of the committee will be negotiated by Commission staff with that agency to ensure that all committee members are mutually acceptable.

IX.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 evaluation visits normally spend the equivalent of one or two days on-site at the institution.

IX.G Members of evaluation committees serve without remuneration except for reimbursement of related out-of-pocket expenses, travel, meals, and other costs incurred.

IX.H Committees are responsible for conducting their work and preparing their reports according to the guidelines provided by the Board of Commissioners in its Self-Study Handbook.
X Policy on Disclosure and Confidentiality

X.A Accredited Member status

X.A.1 The Commission will publish a Membership List on the ATS website. The Membership List reports the formal accredited status of schools, including accreditation status, approved degree programs, approved degrees at locations other than the institution’s primary location, approved programs of distance learning, the date of the most recent comprehensive evaluation visit, the date of the next scheduled evaluation, and reports required of schools during the current grant of accreditation. If the institution is on probation or has notations, this status shall also be disclosed. An institution’s entry will not be published until the period for receiving appeals of actions by the Board of Commissioners, as specified in these Policies and Procedures (Section XI below) and in the Bylaws of the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools (Article II, section 2.14), has expired. No adverse accrediting action will be published while an appeal is in process. Adverse accrediting actions are defined in Section VII.H above.

X.A.2 Accredited Members shall disclose the following information in their printed and/or electronic bulletin, calendar, or catalog: the status of their accreditation with the following language "the school is accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools," and provide the Commission's mailing address and phone number. Schools shall also disclose the status of each degree program with the following language: "The following degree programs are approved by the Commission on Accrediting (name of degree programs)." When schools have been approved to offer full degree programs at more than one site, the school shall disclose this information as well.

X.A.3 Candidate members shall publish their formal status with the Commission as "Candidate for Accredited Member status."

X.B Self-study reports

X.B.1 An institution may release for internal or public distribution the contents of its self-study.

X.B.2 The Board of Commissioners 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 Board of Commissioners 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 Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the US Department of Education may be allowed access to self-study reports in conjunction with the process of recognition that the Board of Commissioners undergoes with these entities.

X.C Evaluation committee reports

X.C.1 As part of the accreditation process, reports prepared by evaluation committees of the Board of Commissioners shall be made available to governing boards and faculties by the chief executive officers of the schools.

X.C.2 An institution may make public the report of an evaluation committee, although this is not mandatory and is not advisable prior to formal action by the Board of Commissioners. If the institution makes a report public, it must make clear that the document is a report of the evaluation committee to the Board of Commissioners and is not an action of the Board of Commissioners.

X.C.3 The recommendations of the evaluation committee to the Board of Commissioners shall not be published by the institution as actions. Only the actions of the Board of Commissioners comprise the formal accreditation.

X.C.4 If, in the judgment of the Board of Commissioners, a school publishes selected portions of a report on an accreditation evaluation in such a way as to distort the overall import of that report, the Board of Commissioners has the authority to release the full text of the report in question.

X.C.5 The Board of Commissioners will not release evaluation committee reports to the public. With the approval of the institution, the Board of Commissioners may approve access to a report to those conducting research that contributes to the improvement of the accrediting process. Evaluation committee reports may be examined by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the US Department of Education only in the context of reviews of the Board of Commissioners 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.
X.D Other accrediting documents

X.D.1 Minutes of the Board of Commissioners are available to the members of the Board of Commissioners. A summary report of all actions of the Board of Commissioners is published biennially in the ATS Bulletin.

X.D.2 An institution that has officially appealed an adverse action of the Board of Commissioners may request those sections of official minutes that pertain to the adverse action.

X.D.3 Correspondence between the Board of Commissioners and a member or an applying institution shall be treated confidentially by both parties.

X.D.4 Institutional reports will not be released to the public by the Board of Commissioners. These reports, however, may be released by the institution after action has been taken by the Board of Commissioners.

X.D.5 The Board of Commissioners will share its correspondence to member schools with the appropriate regional accrediting agencies, with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the US Department of Education in conjunction with the recognition process, and, as required, with appropriate state or provincial authorities.

X.E Public statements by institutions

If an institution uses the public forum to take issue with an action by the Board of Commissioners relating to that institution, the chair of the Board of Commissioners 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 Board of Commissioners.

X.F Disclosure by the Board of Commissioners of information about member or applying institutions

X.F.1 Upon inquiry, the Board of Commissioners will release the following information about member or applying institutions:

X.F.1.a Membership and accreditation status.

X.F.1.b The dates when the Board of Commissioners conferred Candidate for Accredited Member status and, as relevant, granted initial accreditation.

X.F.1.c The dates of the last comprehensive evaluation and of the next scheduled comprehensive evaluation.
X.F.1.d  The date of the next scheduled focused evaluation visit and formal reasons for the visit.

X.F.1.e  The date a formal application for membership began and the estimated date a decision on the application will be made.

X.F.1.f  The date of denial of candidacy or removal from candidacy.

X.F.1.g  The submission date and action taken on the most recent written report required by the Board of Commissioners.

X.F.1.h  The Board of Commissioners' action subsequent to the last evaluation visit regarding accreditation.

X.F.1.i  Whether an institution has appealed an adverse accrediting action of the Board of Commissioners and the status and outcome of such appeal.

X.F.1.j  Actions of the appropriate appeal bodies with reasons for the actions.

X.F.2  The Membership List will identify institutions removed or withdrawing from Accredited Member status or Candidate for Accredited Member status, and institutions placed on probation.

X.F.3  The summary report of the Board of Commissioners, published biennially, identifies institutions removed or withdrawing from Accredited Member status or Candidate for Accredited Member status, or placed on probation during the period of the report.

X.F.4  In all cases of adverse accrediting actions, a public statement about the action will be prepared in consultation with the institution for response to inquiries. The Board of Commissioners reserves the right to make final determination of the nature and content of the public statement. The Board of Commissioners will identify the reasons for the adverse accrediting action in the public statement.
XI  Appeals of Actions by the Board of Commissioners

(cf. Bylaws of the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools, Article II, section 2.14, Appeal of Accreditation Decisions)

XI.A  Unless otherwise specified, the time for requesting an appeal shall be within 30 days from receipt of the letter reporting the action of the Board of Commissioners. The request for an appeal shall be in writing. Appeals are limited to decisions identified in Sections B and C below.

XI.B  Regarding actions of the Board of Commissioners related to the failure to approve new degrees, extension sites, or distance education programs, the imposition of a notation, or the imposition of probation:

XI.B.1  If the institution believes that the action of the Board of Commissioners is unjust or based on erroneous information, the institution shall, either on its own initiative or at the invitation of the Board of Commissioners, first meet with three Commissioners appointed by the chair of the Board of Commissioners to seek a mutually satisfactory resolution. The response of the Board of Commissioners to a written appeal, including relevant specifics, shall be communicated in writing.

XI.B.2  If, after such consultation, the institution believes the action of the Board of Commissioners 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 as elected biennially by member schools. 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 the findings of the Board of Commissioners and the position of such member. The recommendation of the Appeals Panel, including relevant specifics, shall be made to the Board of Commissioners, which shall act on the recommendation. The decision of the Board of Commissioners 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).

XI.C  Regarding adverse actions of the Board of Commissioners that are defined by the Procedures as failure to grant initial accreditation or withdrawal of accreditation:

XI.C.1  If the institution believes that the action of the Board of Commissioners is unjust or based on erroneous information, the institution shall, either on its own initiative or at the invitation of the Board of Commissioners, first
meet with three Commissioners appointed by the chair of the Board of Commissioners to seek a mutually satisfactory resolution. The response of the Board of Commissioners to a written appeal, including relevant specifics, shall be communicated in writing.

XI.C.2 If, after such consultation, the institution believes the action of the Board of Commissioners 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 as elected biennially by member schools. 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 the findings of the Board of Commissioners and the position of such member. The Appeals Panel shall make a decision to affirm, amend, or reverse the adverse action, or remand to the Board of Commissioners with instruction regarding its conclusions. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final and binding on both the Board of Commissioners and the member school. The Board of Commissioners in all cases will be responsible for implementing the decision.

XI.D The Board of Commissioners and the moving party/parties shall have the right to representation in person and by counsel, if desired, at any level of appeal, and the school may provide new or additional information at any level of appeal that further demonstrates that the school is appropriately implementing the Standards of Accreditation.
XII Complaints

The Commission has an obligation to the various publics it serves to give responsible consideration to complaints that may be made against any accredited school. The Board of Commissioners 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 Board of Commissioners will determine if the complaint has standing with reference to any membership criterion or Standards of Accreditation of the Commission. If the complaint has standing, the Board of Commissioners will conduct an investigation. The Board of Commissioners will communicate its conclusions and actions to the institution and the party raising the complaint. The Board of Commissioners assumes no responsibility for or obligation to adjudicate individual grievances.
XIII  Dual Accreditation

XIII.A  Any institution seeking or holding accreditation by more than one accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation or the US 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 it must keep each accrediting body apprised of any change in its status with one or another accrediting body.

XIII.B  The Board of Commissioners will withhold actions granting reaffirmation of accreditation, granting Candidate for Accredited Member 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 US Department of Education or (2) an action by an appropriate governmental authority that may lead to suspension, revocation, or termination of the school's legal authority to provide degree-granting higher education. If, after review, the Board of Commissioners determines that the institution is in compliance with Commission Standards, it will proceed with the actions appropriate to Commission procedures, criteria, and standards.

XIII.C  The Board of Commissioners will withhold actions granting reaffirmation of accreditation, granting Candidate for Accredited Member 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 an adverse action by another accrediting agency recognized by the US Department of Education or 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, the Board of Commissioners determines to grant candidacy, initial accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation to schools related to colleges or universities, subject to the conditions noted above, the Board of Commissioners will provide an explanation for its action to the US Secretary of Education and to the recognized accrediting agency.

XIII.D  Member schools that are dually accredited and desire to host a joint or coordinated visit should consult with Commission staff at least a year prior to the visit.
BYLAWS
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NOTE: The shortened name, “Standards and Procedures,” refers to the three documents of the Standards of Accreditation (General Institutional Standards, Educational Standard, and Degree Program Standards) and the Commission Policies and Procedures.
Article I  

Introductory

Section 1.1 Name

The name of the corporation is Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools ("Commission").

Section 1.2 Statement of Purposes

As provided in its Articles of Incorporation, the Commission is organized for the purposes set forth in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law) ("Code") and in furtherance thereof to (i) contribute to the enhancement and improvement of theological education through the accreditation of schools that are members of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada ("ATS") and (ii) collect data from all members of ATS for use in accrediting and to provide the data resources supporting applied research undertaken by ATS.

Section 1.3 Offices

The principal and registered office of the Commission shall be located at 10 Summit Park Drive, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15275, or at such other place as the Board of Commissioners may designate from time to time.

Section 1.4 Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Commission shall end on June 30 of each year or on such other date as may be fixed from time to time by resolution of the Board of Commissioners.

Section 1.5 Seal

The corporate seal of the Commission shall be a circle with the name of the Commission and the state of incorporation around the border and the words "Corporate Seal" in the center.

Section 1.6 Governing Law

This Commission is governed by the Pennsylvania Nonprofit Commission Law of 1988, as it may be amended from time to time ("NPCL").
Article II

Members

Section 2.1  Eligibility

Membership in the Commission is limited to schools located in the United States and Canada that (i) offer graduate, professional theological degrees, (ii) are demonstrably engaged in educating professional leadership for communities of the Christian and Jewish faiths, (iii) are members of ATS (except as set forth in Section 2.13 below), and (iv) meet the Standards of Accreditation (for accredited schools) or criteria for Candidate for Accredited Member status (for candidate schools) (together “Eligible Schools”). A Member that ceases to be accredited by the Commission or to be a candidate for accreditation or that ceases to be an Eligible School, including without limitation by virtue of ceasing to be a member of ATS (except as otherwise provided in Section 2.13 of these Bylaws), is no longer eligible for membership in the Commission, and such Member’s membership in the Commission may be terminated as provided in Section 2.13 of these Bylaws.

Section 2.2  Election to Membership

The Members of the Commission shall comprise the Eligible Schools that are granted Accredited Member status by the Commission or are conferred Candidate for Accredited Member status by the Commission. Membership continues for so long as the school remains an Eligible School, timely pays all dues, and is accredited by the Commission or is a candidate for accreditation, provided that a Member may voluntarily relinquish membership and accreditation by so notifying the Commission in writing and, provided further, that membership may be terminated in accordance with Section 2.13 of these Bylaws.

Section 2.3  Powers of the Membership

In addition to any powers conferred on members of a nonprofit corporation under the relevant provisions of the NPCL, the Members of the Commission shall (i) adopt the dues structure for Members, (ii) elect the Commissioners, and (iii) adopt, maintain, modify, and revoke the Commission Standards of Accreditation and the Commission Policies
and Procedures. Modifications to any of these documents (hereafter "Standards and Procedures") shall require the approval of two-thirds (2/3) of the Members present at a duly organized meeting of the Members at which a quorum is present.

Section 2.4 Duties of Membership

Each Member must (i) maintain its accreditation or candidacy for accreditation by the Commission pursuant to the Standards and Procedures, (ii) deliver to the Commission annual dues in an amount determined from time to time by the Members, (iii) continue to be an Eligible School, and (iv) provide institutional data to the Commission annually and when requested by the Commission in connection with its accreditation activities.

Section 2.5 Meetings of the Members

Meetings of the Members may be held at such place within or without the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as the person calling the meeting shall so indicate in the meeting notice. The Members shall meet biennially in each even-numbered year (the “Biennial Meeting”) at such time and place as the Board may determine from time to time by resolution, each Biennial Meeting to be held in conjunction with the Biennial Meeting of the membership of ATS. Special meetings of the Members shall be called by the Secretary at the request of the Board of Commissioners or the written request of ten percent (10%) of the Members of record or at the instruction of the Chair.

If the Board of Commissioners has determined that an emergency exists requiring action by the Members, the Board may call a special meeting of the Members with thirty (30) days advance notice to the Members (“Emergency Meeting”). Members may participate in an Emergency Meeting via proxy. Members may not participate by proxy in any meeting of the Members that is not an Emergency Meeting.

If a meeting of the Members is held by means of the Internet or other electronic communications technology in a fashion pursuant to which the Members have the opportunity to read or hear the proceedings substantially concurrently with their occurrence, vote on matters submitted to the Members, pose questions to the Commissioners, make appropriate motions and comment on the business of the meeting, the meeting need not be held at a particular geographic location.
The senior officer of the Commission present shall preside at each meeting of the Members. If no officers are present, the Members present shall elect a presiding officer for the meeting then being held. The presiding officer shall determine the order of business and shall have the authority to establish equitable rules for the conduct of the meeting. The presiding officer shall announce at the meeting when the polls close for each matter voted upon. If no announcement is made, the polls shall be deemed to have closed upon the final adjournment of the meeting. After the polls close, no ballots, proxies (as applicable) or votes and no revocations or changes thereto may be accepted.

Section 2.6 Notice

Written notice of the day, hour, and geographic location (if any) of each Biennial meeting or special meeting of the Members shall be given to all Members of record entitled to vote at the meeting at least ninety (90) days prior to the date of the meeting, and the proposed agenda for the meeting shall be given to all Members no later than forty-five (45) days prior to the meeting. In the case of an Emergency Meeting, such notice shall be given to all Members of record entitled to vote at the meeting at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of the meeting and shall include, at a minimum, the general nature of the business to be transacted.

Notice shall be given by sending a copy thereof (a) by first-class or express mail, postage prepaid, or by courier service, charges prepaid, to the Member's postal address appearing on the books of the Commission; or (b) by facsimile transmission, email, or other electronic communication to the facsimile number or address for email or other electronic communications supplied by the Member to the Commission for the purposes of notice. If the notice is sent by mail or courier service, it shall be deemed to have been given to the person entitled thereto when deposited in the US mail or with a courier service or for delivery to the Member.

Section 2.7 Voting

Each Member of the Commission is entitled to one vote on each matter before the Members. The manner of voting on any matter may be by voice, ballot, mail, or any other reasonable means. Each Member may send as many representatives to any meeting of the Members as it chooses; however, each Member attending any meeting of the
membership shall designate to the Commission one individual to cast its ballot. In the event of a dispute regarding the individual who is authorized to exercise a Member’s voting rights, the judges of election are authorized to award such voting rights to one of the individuals representing the Member, and the decision of the judges of election shall be final.

Section 2.8 Record Date

The Board of Commissioners may fix a time not more than ninety (90) days prior to the date of any meeting of the Members as a record date for the purpose of determining the Members entitled to notice of or to vote at such meeting. In such case, only Members of record on the date so fixed shall be entitled to notice and/or to vote notwithstanding any increase or other change on the books of the Commission after the record date. If the Board of Commissioners does not fix a record date, then (a) the record date for determining Members entitled to notice of or to vote at the meeting shall be the close of business on the date before notice is given or if notice is waived, the date before the meeting is held, (b) the record date for determining Members entitled to express consent or dissent to corporate action in writing without a meeting, when no prior action of the Board of Commissioners is required, shall be the date on which the first written consent or dissent is expressed, and (c) for any other purpose the record date shall be the close of business on the day on which the Board of Commissioners adopts the resolution relating thereto.

Section 2.9 Judges of Election

In advance of any meeting of Members, the Board of Commissioners may appoint judges of election, who need not be Members, to act at such meeting or any adjournment thereof. If judges of election are not so appointed, the presiding officer may, and on the request of any Member shall, make such appointment at the meeting. The number of judges shall be one or three. No person who is a candidate for office shall act as a judge. If any person appointed as judge fails to appear or fails or refuses to act, the vacancy may be filled by appointment made by the Board of Commissioners in advance of the meeting or at the meeting by the presiding officer. The judges of election shall determine the number of Members of record and voting power of each; the Members present at the meeting; the existence of a quorum;
the authenticity, validity, and effect of proxies, if any; receive votes or ballots; hear and determine all challenges and questions in any way arising in connection with the right to vote; count and tabulate all votes; determine the result; and do such acts as may be proper to conduct the election or vote in an equitable manner. The judges of election shall perform their duties impartially, in good faith, to the best of their ability, and as expeditiously as is practical. If there are three judges of election, the decision, act, or certificate of a majority shall be effective in all respects as the decision, act, or certificate of all. On the request of the presiding officer of the meeting, or of any Member, the judges shall make a report in writing of any challenge or question or matter determined by them, and execute a certificate of any fact found by them. Any report or certificate made by them shall be prima facie evidence of the facts stated therein.

**Section 2.10  Liability of Members**

No Member shall be liable, solely by reason of being a Member, under an order of court or in any other manner, for a debt, obligation, or liability of the Commission of any kind or for the acts of any Member or representative of the Commission. A Member shall be liable to the Commission only to the extent of any unpaid portion of the capital contributions, membership dues, or assessments that the Commission may have lawfully imposed on the Member or for any other indebtedness owed by the Member to the Commission.

**Section 2.11  Waiver of Notice**

Whenever any written notice is required to be given, a waiver thereof that is filed with the Secretary of the Commission in paper or electronic form, signed by the Member entitled to notice, whether before or after the time stated therein, shall be deemed equivalent to the giving of notice. Attendance of a Member at a meeting shall constitute a waiver of notice of the meeting unless the Member attends for the express purpose of objecting, at the beginning of the meeting, to the transaction of any business because the meeting was not lawfully called or convened.

**Section 2.12  Quorum and Acts of the Members**

The presence in person (and in the case of an Emergency Meeting only, also by proxy) of voting representatives of at least seventy-five
(75) Members shall constitute a quorum. The Members present at a
duly organized meeting can continue to do business until adjourn-
ment, notwithstanding the withdrawal of enough Members to leave
less than a quorum. The affirmative vote of a majority of the Members
present at a duly organized meeting of the Members at which a
quorum is present shall be the act of the Members.

If permitted in the notice of the meeting, the presence or participation,
including voting and taking other action, at a meeting of the Members
by a Member by conference telephone or other electronic means,
including, without limitation, the Internet, shall constitute the pres-
ence of, or vote or action by, the Member for purposes of determining
a quorum and act of the Members.

Section 2.13 Termination

(a) Termination for Loss of Accreditation. Any Member’s member-
ship in the Commission shall terminate automatically upon the
Member’s loss of its accreditation in accordance with the proce-
dures set forth in the Standards and Procedures. The termination of
Membership shall be effective upon the effective date of the loss
of accreditation.

(b) Administrative Termination. Any Member’s membership may be
terminated by the Board of Commissioners (i) for failure to pay
dues, (ii) for failure to remain a Member of ATS, or (iii) for other
failure to remain an Eligible School (each an "Administrative
Termination"). The Administrative Termination of Membership shall
result in the simultaneous termination of the affected Member’s
accreditation, provided, however, that when a Member ceases to
be a Member of ATS solely as a result of a Termination for Cause
as defined in Section 2.13 of the ATS Bylaws, the loss of ATS mem-
bership shall not result in the loss of accreditation.

(c) Hearings Related to Administrative Termination. Administrative
Termination of membership is not an appealable action. However,
in the case of a termination of membership pursuant to clause (iii)
of Section 2.13(b) above for failure to remain an Eligible School,
the affected Member shall be afforded a hearing before the Board
of Commissioners. The Member shall be given at least thirty (30)
days’ advance written notice of the meeting at which such matter
is to be considered, which notice shall specify the reason the
Member is no longer an Eligible School. The affected Member shall be permitted to make a written response and to attend the meeting at which the Commission determines whether to terminate the membership and to make a brief oral response. The decision of the Board of Commissioners shall be final. The foregoing procedure for hearing shall not apply to termination for failure to pay dues or remain an ATS Member, set forth in Section 2.13(b), clauses (i) and (ii) above, respectively.

(d) **Withdrawal.** The membership year shall be the Commission’s fiscal year or such other time as the Board of Commissioners may specify from time to time. If at any time a Member is two years in arrears in payment of its annual dues, it shall be deemed to have voluntarily withdrawn as a Member of the Commission and its accreditation, and membership shall be terminated effective as of such time.

**Section 2.14 Appeal of Accreditation Decisions**

Members may appeal decisions of the Commission that affect the Member’s accredited status according to the *Policies and Procedures* for Accreditation, as adopted and amended from time to time by the Members.

**Section 2.15 Transfer of Membership**

Membership in this Commission is nontransferable and nonassignable.

**Section 2.16 Consent of Members in Lieu of Meeting**

Any action required or permitted to be taken at a meeting of the Members may be taken without a meeting upon the signed consent of a majority of all Members of record. Such consents must be filed with the minutes of the proceedings of the Members. Prompt notice that an action has been taken shall be given to each Member entitled to vote on the action that has not consented.
Article III

The Board of Commissioners

Section 3.1 Authority

Subject to the rights of the Members and any limitations set forth elsewhere in these Bylaws or the Articles of Incorporation of the Commission, the affairs of the Commission shall be under the general direction of the Board of Commissioners, which shall administer, manage, preserve, and protect the property of the Commission.

The authority of the Board of Commissioners shall include, without limitation: responsibility for all decisions related to the accredited status of Members; adoption and oversight of the Commission's budget; proposal to the Members of amendments to these Bylaws and the Articles of Incorporation of the Commission, subject to the approval of ATS as provided in Sections 9.1 and 11.1; oversight of the Commission's assets; approval of the auditors employed by the Commission; establishment of fees to be assessed in the conduct of accreditation activities; recommendation of changes to the dues structure; review and evaluation of the Standards and Procedures and recommendation of appropriate changes for consideration for adoption by the Members; appointment of task forces and accreditation committees as it deems necessary for fulfilling its responsibilities; evaluation of administrative and other services secured by contract with the Association; and establishment and evaluation of the employment policies of the Commission through its agreement for contracted services with the Association.

Section 3.2 Number and Term

There shall be a minimum of sixteen (16) and a maximum of twenty (20) Commissioners. No fewer than three (3) and no more than five (5) of the Commissioners shall be Public or Ministry Practitioner Commissioners. The remaining Commissioners shall be Institutional Commissioners. Institutional Commissioners are individuals who, at the time of their election as Commissioners, are employed by a Member of the Commission. Public Commissioners are individuals who, at the time of their election or reelection, are not (a) enrolled as a student in, or employed by, or a member of the governing board of,
or a consultant to an institution that holds either Accredited Member status or Candidate for Accredited Member status by the Commission or (b) a member of the governing board of, or employed by, ATS or (c) a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of any individual identified in (a) or (b). Ministry Practitioners are persons who, at the time of their election or reelection, are active in vocational ministry.

With the exception of the initial Commissioners, whose terms shall be specified in the resolution appointing them, each Commissioner shall serve for the following terms:

(a) Public or Ministry Practitioner Commissioners shall serve two-year terms and until such Commissioner's successor has been duly elected and qualified or until the Commissioner's earlier death, resignation, or removal; and

(b) Institutional Commissioners shall serve six-year, nonrenewable terms and until such Commissioner's successor has been duly elected and qualified or until the Commissioner's earlier death, resignation, or removal.

An Institutional Commissioner is not eligible to serve as a Commissioner for a period of one year after completing one full six-year term. A Public or Ministry Practitioner Commissioner is not eligible to serve as a Commissioner for a period of one year after completing two consecutive, full two-year terms.

Section 3.3 Nomination and Election

At least thirty (30) days prior to the Biennial Meeting (or special meeting held to elect Commissioners), the Nominating Committee shall nominate one or more persons for each Commissioner position the term of which is due to expire in such year. At the Biennial Meeting or any special meeting called for such purpose, the Members shall elect the Commissioners from among the persons nominated (a) by the Nominating Committee or (b) if any Member submits a petition signed by at least five (5) Members and the written consent(s) of the person(s) nominated, from the floor. Unless otherwise specified at the time of the election, new Commissioners shall take office at the conclusion of the meeting at which they are elected.
Section 3.4  Vacancies

Vacancies occurring on the Board of Commissioners by death, resignation, refusal to serve, increase in the number of Commissioners, or otherwise between Biennial Meetings shall be filled by majority vote of the Board of Commissioners, and each Commissioner so appointed shall serve until the next Biennial Meeting and until the Commissioner’s successor is elected and qualified or until such Commissioner’s earlier death, resignation, or removal.

Section 3.5  Compensation

No compensation shall be paid to any Commissioner for services as a Commissioner, but, at the discretion of the Board of Commissioners, a Commissioner may be reimbursed for travel and actual expenses necessarily incurred in attending meetings and performing other duties on behalf of the Commission. A Commissioner may not be a salaried officer of the Commission.

Section 3.6  Meetings

The Board of Commissioners shall meet at least twice each year at a date and time established by the Commission. The annual meeting of the Board of Commissioners shall be the first meeting following the Biennial Meeting of Members in odd-numbered years and the first meeting of the year in even-numbered years. Special meetings shall be called by the Secretary upon the order of the Chair or at the written request of a number of Commissioners constituting a quorum of the Board of Commissioners then in office and entitled to vote. All meetings of the Board of Commissioners shall be held at the registered office of the Commission unless otherwise designated in the notice.

Section 3.7  Quorum and Acts of the Board of Commissioners

At all meetings of the Board of Commissioners, the presence of a majority of the Commissioners in office and entitled to vote shall constitute a quorum. Except as the Board of Commissioners may otherwise determine, one or more persons may participate in a meeting, of the Board of Commissioners by means of conference telephone or other electronic technology by means of which all persons participating in the meeting can hear and be heard by one another at the same
time. The Commissioners present at a duly organized meeting shall continue to constitute a quorum notwithstanding the withdrawal of enough Commissioners to leave less than a majority. The act of a majority of the Commissioners entitled to vote at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the Board of Commissioners. A majority of the Commissioners present and entitled to vote, whether or not a quorum exists, may adjourn any meeting of the Board of Commissioners to another time and place. Notice of any such adjourned meeting shall be given to the Commissioners who are not present at the time of adjournment.

Section 3.8 Voting

Each Commissioner entitled to vote shall be entitled to one vote on each matter submitted to a vote of the Board of Commissioners.

Section 3.9 Notices

Written notice of each meeting of the Board of Commissioners shall be given to all Commissioners at least thirty (30) days in advance of the date thereof. Such notice shall set forth the date, time, and geographic location (if any) of the meeting. Whenever written notice is required to be given to a Commissioner under this Section 3.9, it may be given to the Commissioner personally or by sending a copy thereof by any of the following methods:

(a) By first-class or express mail, postage prepaid; or by courier service, charges prepaid to the Commissioner’s postal address supplied by the Commissioner to the Commission for the purpose of notice. If the notice is sent by mail or courier service, it shall be deemed to have been given to the Commissioner entitled thereto when deposited in the US mail or with a courier service for delivery to that Commissioner.

(b) By facsimile transmission, email, or other electronic communication to the Commissioner’s facsimile number or address for email or other electronic communications supplied by the Commissioner to the Commission for the purpose of notice. Notice pursuant to this paragraph shall be deemed to have been given to the Commissioner entitled thereto when sent.
Section 3.10  Waiver of Notice

Whenever any written notice whatsoever is required to be given to a Commissioner under the provisions of applicable law, the Articles of Incorporation of this Commission, or these Bylaws, a waiver of such notice that is filed with the Secretary of the Corporation in paper or electronic form, signed by the person or persons entitled to notice, whether before or after the time of the meeting stated in such notice, shall be deemed equivalent to the giving of such notice. In the case of a special meeting, such waiver of notice shall specify the general nature of the business to be transacted. Attendance of a Commissioner at a meeting shall constitute a waiver of notice of the meeting unless the Commissioner attends for the express purpose of objecting, at the beginning of the meeting, to the transaction of any business because the meeting was not lawfully called or convened.

Section 3.11  Standard of Care and Fiduciary Duty

Each Commissioner shall stand in a fiduciary relation to this Commission and shall perform his or her duties as a Commissioner, including his or her duties as a member of any committee of the Commission upon which the Commissioner may serve, in good faith, in a manner the Commissioner reasonably believes to be in the best interest of this Commission, and with such care, including reasonable inquiry, skill, and diligence, as a person of ordinary prudence would use under similar circumstances. In performing his or her duties, each Commissioner shall be entitled to rely in good faith on information, opinions, reports, or statements, including financial statements and other financial data, in each case prepared or presented by any of the following:

(a) one or more officers or employees of this Commission whom the Commissioner reasonably believes to be reliable and competent in the matters presented;

(b) counsel, public accountants, or other persons as to matters that the Commissioner reasonably believes to be within the professional or expert competence of such persons; and

(c) a committee of this Commission upon which the Commissioner does not serve, as to matters within its designated authority,
which committee the Commissioner reasonably believes to merit confidence.

A Commissioner shall not be considered to be acting in good faith if the Commissioner has knowledge concerning the matter in question that would cause his or her reliance to be unwarranted.

Section 3.12 Factors that May Be Considered by Commissioners

In discharging the duties of their respective positions, the Board of Commissioners, committees of the Board of Commissioners, and individual Commissioners may, in considering the best interest of this Commission, consider to the extent they deem appropriate the following:

(a) the effects of any action upon any or all groups affected by such action, including Members, employees, suppliers, customers, and creditors of the Commission and upon communities in which offices or other establishments of the Commission are located;

(b) the short-term and long-term interests of the Commission, including the benefits that may accrue to the Commission from its long-term plans and the possibility that these interests may be best served by the continued independence of the Commission;

(c) the resources, intent, and conduct (past, stated, and potential) of any person seeking to acquire control of the Commission; and

(d) all other pertinent factors.

The Board of Commissioners, committees, and Commissioners are not required, in considering the best interest of the Commission or the effects of any action, to regard any corporate interest or the interests of any particular group affected by such action as a dominant or controlling interest or factor. The consideration of interests and factors in the manner described in this section shall not constitute a violation of Section 3.11 hereof.

Section 3.13 Rules and Regulations

The Board of Commissioners may adopt rules and regulations not inconsistent with these Bylaws or the Standards and Procedures adopted from time to time by the Members for the administration
and conduct of the affairs of the Commission and may alter, amend, or repeal any such rules or regulations adopted by it. Such rules and regulations may be amended by majority vote of the Board of Commissioners present and entitled to vote at a meeting of the Commission where a quorum is present.

**Section 3.14  Removal of Commissioners**

(a) **By the Board of Commissioners.** The Board of Commissioners, by a majority vote of all of the Commissioners, may declare vacant the office of any Commissioner who is declared of unsound mind by an order of the court or is convicted of a felony or other cause. “Other cause” shall mean any action or inaction that, in the sole discretion of the Board of Commissioners, materially and adversely affects or may affect the Commission.

(b) **Institutional Commissioners; Loss of Affiliation with Member.** No Commissioner shall be removed from his or her position as an Institutional Commissioner solely because he or she ceases to be employed by the Member that employed the Commissioner at the time of his or her election as a Commissioner, and it is presumed that such a Commissioner shall continue to serve on the Board of Commissioners for the remainder of his or her term. However, if any conflict of interest (as that term is defined in Section 3.16, below) arises due to any new position held by the Commissioner, such conflict of interest may be considered to constitute “other cause” supporting the removal of the Commissioner by the Board of Commissioners as provided in subsection (a) of this Section 3.14.

**Section 3.15  Consents**

Any action that may be taken at a meeting of the Board of Commissioners may be taken without a meeting, if a consent or consents to the action in paper or electronic form are signed, before, on, or after the effective date of the action, by all of the Commissioners in office and entitled to vote on the date the last consent is signed. The consent or consents shall be filed with the Secretary of the Commission.
Section 3.16  Conflict of Interest: Corporate

An actual or potential conflict of interest exists when any of the following exists:

(a) An officer or Commissioner has an ownership or investment interest in or compensation relationship with an organization with which the Commission does or proposes to do business or an organization that competes with the Commission; or

(b) An officer or Commissioner receives remuneration for performing services for the Commission and the Commission is determining his or her remuneration; or

(c) An officer or Commissioner serves as an officer or director or key employee of an organization that competes with or does business with the Commission.

A conflict also exists when a similar circumstance exists with respect to a family member of a Commissioner or company thirty-five percent (35%) owned by a Commissioner and his or her family members. Annually, each Commissioner and officer shall complete a disclosure statement reflecting his or her interests.

Commissioners shall act in a manner intended to further the best interest of the Commission. If at any time a Commissioner (i) has or may have a conflict of interest or (ii) is unable to act in the best interest of the Commission on any issue because of a personal situation, employment, conflicting interest, or other reason, the Commissioner shall recuse himself or herself from voting on the subject and shall leave the room while the matter is discussed. Recusing himself or herself shall not prevent a Commissioner from participating in other activities or discussions where no conflict of interest exists.

The Board of Commissioners may approve a transaction that is the subject of a conflict of interest only if it has determined (i) that the transaction or arrangement is in the Commission’s best interest and for its own benefit, (ii) that it is fair and reasonable to the Commission, and (iii) that after exercising due diligence, the Commission would not obtain a more advantageous transaction with reasonable efforts under the circumstances. Where appropriate the Board shall obtain comparable information to assist it in reaching such conclusions. In
such cases, the transaction or arrangement must be authorized by the affirmative vote of a majority of the Commissioners that do not have a conflict in relation to the relevant transaction or arrangement.

The minutes of all meetings shall reflect (i) the names of the persons who disclosed any conflicts; (ii) the determination as to whether an actual or potential conflict of interest existed; (iii) the names of the persons who were present for discussions and votes relating to the transaction or arrangement; (iv) the content of the discussions, including any alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement and the basis for the determination of the Commission, including any comparability data; (v) the voting record, including any abstention from voting; and (vi) any action to be taken.

Section 3.17 Conflict of Interest: Accrediting Actions

The Board of Commissioners shall adopt and implement policies prohibiting conflicts of interest in decisions regarding the accredited status of schools that are or seek to become Members of the Commission.
Article IV

Officers

Section 4.1  Enumeration

The officers of the Commission shall consist of a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and such other officers and assistant officers as the Members may, from time to time, designate.

Section 4.2  Term of Office

Each officer shall serve for a term of two (2) years and until the officer’s successor is duly elected and takes office.

Section 4.3  Nomination and Election

At least thirty (30) days prior to the Biennial Meeting or any special meeting held to elect officers, the Nominating Committee shall nominate one or more persons for consideration for the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, and Commission Representative to ATS. The nominee for Chair must be a current member of the Board of Commissioners. At the Biennial Meeting or a special meeting called for that purpose, the Members shall elect these officers from among the persons nominated (a) by the Nominating Committee or (b) if any Member submits a petition signed by at least five (5) Members and the written consent(s) of the person(s) nominated, from the floor. Unless otherwise specified at the time of election, new officers shall take office at the conclusion of the meeting at which they are elected.

The Board of Commissioners shall elect the Secretary from among the director staff members who support the work of the Commission. The Vice Chair serves as Treasurer by virtue of the office (see Section 4.6).

Section 4.4  Vacancies

The Chair may fill vacancies in any office at which a quorum is present for the period ending upon the date of the next meeting of the Board of Commissioners, when the Commissioners shall fill such vacancy for the period ending at the next Biennial Meeting.
Section 4.5 Chair

The Chair is responsible for determining the agenda for meetings of the Board of Commissioners, convening the Board of Commissioners and chairing its sessions, and participating in the work of the Commission.

Section 4.6 Vice Chair

The Vice Chair of the Commission convenes and chairs the meetings of the Board of Commissioners at the request of the Chair and serves as the Treasurer of the Commission.

Section 4.7 Secretary

The Secretary shall make or cause to be made minutes of all meetings of the Board of Commissioners and the Members. The Secretary shall be responsible for the timely mailing or delivery of all notices of meetings of the Board of Commissioners and the Members, shall affix the corporate seal at the direction of the Chair, and, generally, will perform all duties incident to the office of secretary of a corporation and such other duties as may be required by law, by the Articles of Incorporation or by these Bylaws, or that may be assigned from time to time by the Board of Commissioners.

Section 4.8 Treasurer

The Treasurer shall supervise the financial activities of the Commission. Specifically, the Treasurer shall see that (a) full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept, (b) a system is in place such that all monies and other valuable effects are deposited in the name and to the credit of the Association in such depositories as shall be designated by the Board of Commissioners, (c) the Commissioners, at the regular meetings of the Board of Commissioners or whenever they may require it, receive an account of the financial condition of the Commission, and (d) an annual audit of the Commission's books and records is performed by an auditor selected by the Board of Commissioners. In performing these functions, the Treasurer may rely on employees of the Commission or any affiliated Commission who possess special financial training and skills and whose employment responsibilities include management of the Commission's financial affairs. In the absence or disability of the
Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer, if any, shall perform all the duties of the Treasurer and when so acting shall have all of the powers of and be subject to all of the restrictions upon the Treasurer.

**Section 4.9  Commission Representative to ATS and Other Officers**

The Commission Representative to ATS shall be a current member of the Board of Commissioners and serve with voice and vote on the ATS Board of Directors.

Each other officer shall have such responsibilities and perform such duties as may be prescribed by the Members or the Board of Commissioners from time to time. Each assistant officer shall carry out the responsibilities and duties of the officer that the assistant officer assists in the event such officer is unable to perform such responsibilities or duties, except that no assistant officer shall become a Commissioner solely by virtue of being an assistant officer.

**Section 4.10  Bonds**

The Board of Commissioners may, in its discretion, require the Treasurer and any other officer to give bond in such amount and with such surety or sureties as may be satisfactory to the Board of Commissioners for the faithful discharge of the duties of the office and for the restoration to the Commission, in case of the officer's death, resignation, retirement, or removal from office, of all books, papers, vouchers, money, and other property of whatever kind belonging to the Commission in the officer's possession or under the officer's control.

**Section 4.11  Removal of Officers**

Any officer elected or appointed to office may be removed by the persons authorized under these Bylaws or the Commission's Articles of Incorporation to elect or appoint such officers whenever in their judgment the best interest of the Commission will be served.

**Section 4.12  Administration**

The Commission will normally contract with the Association for all of its personnel, facilities, administrative, and other organizational needs. The Executive Director of the Association serves as an ex officio member of all Commission committees and task forces, with voice but not vote.
Article V  Committees

Section 5.1  Committees

The Commission shall have the following standing committees: Officers Committee, Nominating Committee, Coordinating Committee, Finance Committee, Audit Committee, and Appeals Panel. There shall be such other standing and ad hoc committees as the Board of Commissioners may deem advisable in the administration and conduct of the affairs of the Commission. Such committees shall meet as necessary to accomplish their goals. The Board of Commissioners is authorized in its discretion to approve reimbursement for travel and other actual expenses necessarily incurred by members of committees in attending committee meetings and in performing other official duties as such.

Except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws or in the resolution creating the applicable committee, the Board of Commissioners or the Members at the Biennial Meeting or any special meeting called for that purpose shall elect committee members. In the case of committee members elected by the Members, the committee members shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee or, if any Member submits a petition signed by at least five (5) Members and the written consent(s) of the person(s) nominated, from the floor. The Chair shall appoint all committee chairpersons, except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws or in the resolution creating the applicable committee.

Upon expiration of their initial terms, committee chairpersons and members may be reelected to a committee for one additional term only. With the exception of the Officers Committee, persons who are not Commissioners are eligible to serve as committee members. Any person authorized to appoint the chairperson and/or members of any committee by these Bylaws or the resolution creating the applicable committee may appoint himself or herself as chairperson and/or committee member. The chairperson of each committee shall determine the date and place of all committee meetings. Each committee may adopt its own rules of procedure not inconsistent with these Bylaws.
Section 5.2 Limitation on Power of Committees

No such committee shall have any power or authority as to the following:

(a) the submission to the Members of any action requiring approval of the Members;

(b) the creation or filling of vacancies in the Board of Commissioners;

(c) the adoption, amendment, or repeal of the Bylaws;

(d) the amendment or repeal of any resolution of the Board of Commissioners that by its terms is amendable or repealable only by the Board of Commissioners; or

(e) action on matters committed by the Bylaws or a resolution of the Board of Commissioners exclusively to another committee.

Section 5.3 Officers Committee

The Officers Committee shall consist of the Chair, Vice Chair, and the Commission Representative to ATS. The Chair shall serve as the chairperson of the Officers Committee. The Officers Committee may act for the Board of Commissioners between meetings, provided that it may not make decisions affecting accreditation status. The Officers Committee shall meet at such times as the Chair may call or on petition of two (2) Officers Committee members. At least twenty-four (24) hours’ oral or written notice shall be given for such meetings. A quorum for conducting business at a meeting of the Officers Committee shall be no fewer than two (2) members. The Chair shall present a full report of all Officers Committee decisions to the Board of Commissioners at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Commissioners.

Section 5.4 Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee shall consist of five (5) persons appointed by the Chair of the Board of Commissioners, including two (2) Commissioners and three (3) representatives of Members that are not represented on the Board of Commissioners. The Nominating Committee shall nominate the Chair, Vice Chair, and Commission Representative to ATS, and Commissioners as provided in Section 3.3 hereof and shall nominate other committee members, including
Appeals Panel Members, consistent with the policies of the Board of Commissioners.

Section 5.5 Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee shall consist of the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer of the Association, and of the Chair of the Commission, the Vice Chair of the Commission, the Commission representative to ATS, and the immediate past president of the Association, who will serve as a member of the committee and chair it. The Coordinating Committee has two primary functions: (1) It shall oversee the implementation of personnel policies of the Association, consult with the Executive Director regarding personnel issues, recommend compensation ranges, recommend changes to personnel policies to the ATS Board of Directors, and review and evaluate the performance of the Executive Director. (2) It will provide a venue for interpreting the work of the ATS Board of Directors and the work of the Board of Commissioners to one another and for coordinating that work on behalf of their respective member schools, respecting the independent missions and authority of the two boards.

Section 5.6 Finance Committee

The Finance Committee shall consist of the President and the Treasurer of the Association, the Vice Chair of the Commission, and such additional persons with expertise in financial matters as may be appointed by the Board of Directors of ATS. The Finance Committee shall oversee and provide advice to the Commission on financial matters. The Finance Committee shall regularly review and recommend to the Board of Commissioners policies to protect and enhance the assets of the Commission.

Section 5.7 Audit Committee

The Audit Committee shall consist of three (3) to five (5) persons elected by the Members. Audit Committee members shall be persons knowledgeable about financial matters, a majority of whom shall be independent. The Audit Committee shall make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners regarding the selection of the Commission’s auditors, shall oversee the auditor’s activities, shall set rules and processes for addressing complaints concerning accounting
and internal control problems, and shall assume such other responsibilities as may be appropriate for an Audit Committee.

Section 5.8 Appeals Panel

The Appeals Panel shall be composed of five (5) persons who are former Commissioners or former Directors of ATS, at least one of whom shall have been a Public Commissioner or Public Director. Appeals Panel members shall be elected by the Members and shall serve two-year terms. The Appeals Panel membership shall include at least one person in each of the following primary roles: a faculty member, an administrator, a ministry practitioner, and a public member. A person who has served for two consecutive two-year terms is not eligible for reelection until he or she has not served for two years. The Appeals Panel shall process appeals of Member schools regarding accrediting decisions in accordance with the Standards and Procedures of the Commission and policies of the Board of Commissioners.
Article VI  
Limitation of Personal Liability of Commissioners

Section 6.1  Limitation of Commissioners’ Personal Liability

A Commissioner shall not be personally liable for monetary damages for any action taken unless the Commissioner has breached or failed to perform the duties of his or her office under Chapter 57, Subchapter B, of the NPCL, as in effect at the time of the alleged action by such Commissioner, and the breach or failure to perform constitutes self-dealing, willful misconduct, or recklessness. Such limitation on liability does not apply to the responsibility or liability of a Commissioner pursuant to any criminal statute or for payment of taxes pursuant to any Federal, state, or local law.

Section 6.2  Preservation of Rights

Any repeal or modification of this Article by the Commission shall not adversely affect any right or protection existing at the time of such repeal or modification to which any Commissioner or former Commissioner may be entitled under this Article. The rights conferred by this Article shall continue as to any person who has ceased to be a Commissioner of the Commission and shall inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of such person.
Article VII  Indemnification

Section 7.1  Mandatory Indemnification of Commissioners and Officers

The Commission shall indemnify, to the fullest extent now or hereafter permitted by law (including but not limited to the indemnification provided by Chapter 57, Subchapter D, of the NPCL), each Commissioner and/or officer (including each former Commissioner or officer) of the Commission who was or is or is threatened to be made a party to or a witness in any threatened, pending, or completed action or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative, by reason of the fact that the Commissioner or officer is or was an authorized representative of the Commission or is or was serving at the request of the Commission as a representative of another domestic or foreign Commission for profit or not-for-profit, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise, against all expenses (including attorneys’ fees), judgments, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by the Commissioner or officer in connection with such action, suit, or proceeding if such Commissioner or officer acted in good faith and in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in, or not opposed to, the best interest of the Commission and, with respect to any criminal proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful. The termination of any action or proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, or conviction or upon a plea of nolo contendere or its equivalent shall not of itself create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith and in a manner that he or she reasonably believed to be in, or not opposed to, the best interest of the Commission and, with respect to any criminal proceeding, had reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.

Section 7.2  Mandatory Advancement of Expenses to Commissioners and Officers

The Commission shall pay expenses (including attorneys’ fees) incurred by a Commissioner or officer of the Commission referred to in Section 7.1 hereof in defending or appearing as a witness in
any civil or criminal action, suit, or proceeding described in Section 7.1 hereof in advance of the final disposition of such action, suit, or proceeding, only upon receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of such Commissioner or officer to repay all amounts advanced if it shall ultimately be determined that the Commissioner or officer is not entitled to be indemnified by the Commission as provided in Section 7.4 hereof.

**Section 7.3 Permissive Indemnification and Advancement of Expenses**

The Commission may, as determined by the Board from time to time, indemnify, in full or in part, to the fullest extent now or hereafter permitted by law, any person who was or is or is threatened to be made a party to or a witness in, or is otherwise involved in, any threatened, pending, or completed action or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative, by reason of the fact that such person is or was an authorized representative of the Commission or is or was serving at the request of the Commission as a representative of another domestic or foreign corporation for profit or not-for-profit, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise, both as to action in his or her official capacity and as to action in another capacity while holding such office or position, against all expenses (including attorneys’ fees), judgments, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by such person in conjunction with such action, suit, or proceeding if such person acted in good faith and in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in, or not opposed to, the best interest of the Commission and, with respect to any criminal proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful. The Commission may, as determined by the Board from time to time, pay expenses incurred by any such person by reason of such person’s participation in an action, suit, or proceeding referred to in this Section 7.3 in advance of the final disposition of such action, suit, or proceeding upon receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of such person to repay such amount if it shall ultimately be determined that such person is not entitled to be indemnified by the Commission as provided in Section 7.4 hereof.
Section 7.4  Scope of Indemnification

Indemnification under this Article shall not be made by the Commission in any case where a court determines that the alleged act or failure to act giving rise to the claim for indemnification is expressly prohibited by Chapter 57, Subchapter D, of the NPCL or any successor statute as in effect at the time of such alleged action or failure to take action.

Section 7.5  Miscellaneous

Each Commissioner and officer of the Commission shall be deemed to act in such capacity in reliance upon such rights of indemnification and advancement of expenses as are provided in this Article. The rights of indemnification and advancement of expenses provided by this Article shall not be deemed exclusive of any other rights to which any person seeking indemnification or advancement of expenses may be entitled under any agreement, vote of members, disinterested Commissioners, statute, or otherwise, both as to action in such person's official capacity and as to action in another capacity while holding such office or position, and shall continue as to a person who has ceased to be an authorized representative of the Commission and shall inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of such person. Any repeal or modification of this Article by the members or the Board of Commissioners of the Commission shall not adversely affect any right or protection existing at the time of such appeal or modification to which any person may be entitled under this Article.

Section 7.6  Definition of Authorized Representative

For the purposes of this Article, the term, “authorized representative” shall mean a director, officer, or employee of the Commission or of any corporation controlled by the Commission, or a trustee, custodian, administrator, committeeman, or fiduciary of any employee benefit plan established and maintained by the Commission or by any corporation controlled by the Commission, or person serving another corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise in any of the foregoing capacities at the request of the Commission. The term “authorized representative” shall not include money managers or investment advisors (or any employees thereof) hired by the Commission and shall not include agents of the Commission unless indemnification thereof is expressly approved by the Board of Commissioners.
Section 7.7  Procedure for Effecting Indemnification

Unless ordered by a court, any indemnification under this Article VII or the NPCL shall be made only following a determination that the indemnification is proper in the circumstances because the person seeking indemnification has met the applicable standard of conduct. Such determination shall be made:

(a) by the Board of Commissioners by a majority vote of a quorum consisting of Commissioners who were not party to the action or proceeding;

(b) if such a quorum is not obtainable or if obtainable and a majority vote of a quorum of disinterested Commissioners so directs, by independent legal counsel in a written opinion; or

(c) by the Members.
Article VIII

Restrictions Regarding the Operations of the Commission; Administration of Funds

Section 8.1 No Private or Political Beneficiaries

In keeping with the statement of purpose of the Commission as set forth in its Articles of Incorporation, no part of the earnings or assets of the Commission shall inure to the benefit of any private individual, and no substantial part of the activities of the Commission shall be used for lobbying, and the Commission shall not engage in any political campaign activities on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Section 8.2 No Violation of Purposes

In no event and under no circumstances shall the Commission make any distribution or expenditure, engage in any activity, hold any assets, or enter into any transaction whatsoever the effect of which under applicable federal laws then in force will cause the Commission to lose its status as an organization to which contributions are deductible in computing the taxable income of the contributor for purposes of federal income taxation.

Section 8.3 Tax Records

The Commission shall maintain at its principal office a copy of its application for exemption and all tax returns filed with the Internal Revenue Service. To the extent required by law, such documents shall be made available during regular business hours for inspection by any person requesting to see them.

Section 8.4 Annual Report

The Vice Chair shall submit annually to the Board of Commissioners a statement containing those details required to be included under the provisions of the NPCL, as it may be amended from time to time or any successor statute governing Pennsylvania nonprofit Commissions or these Bylaws.
Section 8.5   Books and Records

This Commission shall keep correct and complete books and records of account and shall also keep minutes of the proceedings of the Members, the Board of Commissioners, and committees exercising the authority of the Board of Commissioners. The Commission shall keep at its registered office the original or a copy of its Bylaws including amendments to date, certified by the Secretary of the Commission, and a membership register, giving the names and addresses of all Members and the class and other details of membership. Every Member shall, upon verified written demand stating the purpose thereof, have a right to examine, in person, or by agent or attorney during the usual hours for business for any proper purpose, the membership register, books and records of account, and records of the proceedings of the Members and the Board of Commissioners, and to make copies or extracts therefrom. A proper purpose shall mean a purpose reasonably related to the interest of such person as a Member. Where an attorney or other agent is the person who seeks the right of inspection, the demand under oath shall be accompanied by a verified power of attorney or another writing authorizing the attorney or other agent to act on behalf of the Member.

Section 8.6   Definition of Code

Unless the context requires otherwise, terms used in this Article VIII of these Bylaws shall have the meanings ascribed to them in the Code. References to the Code in this Article shall be deemed to extend to corresponding provisions of any subsequent United States tax laws. The provisions of this Article shall apply notwithstanding other provisions of these Bylaws, if any, that are inconsistent.
Article IX  

Bylaw Amendments

Section 9.1 Authority

These Bylaws may be altered, amended, and/or repealed from time to time by the affirmative vote of the Members entitled to vote and present at the Biennial Meeting or any special meeting called to consider such alteration, amendment, and/or repeal, provided, however, that no such alteration, amendment, and/or repeal shall be effective prior to the approval of ATS as provided in Section 11.1(a).

Section 9.2 Notice

The Members of the Commission shall be given at least thirty (30) days' prior written notice of any meeting of the Members at which proposed changes to the Bylaws of the Commission are to be considered or acted upon. Such written notice shall include a copy of the proposed amendment or a summary of the changes to be effected thereby.
Article X

Dissolution

Section 10.1 Distribution of Assets upon Dissolution

In the event of the dissolution of the Commission or in the winding up of its affairs or other liquidation of its assets, the Commission’s property shall not be conveyed to any organization created or operated for profit or to any individual for less than the fair market value of such property. All assets remaining after all debts and expenses of the Commission have been paid or provided for shall be conveyed or distributed by the Board of Commissioners, in descending order of priority (i) to ATS if it then is recognized as an organization described in Code Section 501(c)(3); or (ii) equally among the Members that then qualify for the exemption afforded by Section 501(c)(3) of the Code or, in the case of Members that are Canadian entities equivalent to Section 501(c)(3) organizations; or (iii) to one or more organizations qualifying for the exemption afforded by Section 501(c)(3) of the Code. Any such assets not so distributed shall be disposed of pursuant to an order by a court of competent jurisdiction, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said court shall determine.
Article XI  Limitation of Powers

Section 11.1  Limitation of Powers

The Commission shall in its operation be subject to the following exclusive rights of ATS:

(a) To approve all amendments to the Commission’s Bylaws and the Articles of Incorporation;

(b) To approve all fundamental changes with respect to the Commission, as that term is defined in the NPCL.
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Preface

The procedures adopted by the Commission on Accrediting ("Commission") state: "In the context of its duties to make decisions regarding accreditation, the Board of Commissioners ("Board") is responsible for adopting and overseeing policies and procedures that ensure thorough and fair evaluation of schools and for consistently applying Commission Policies and Procedures and Standards of Accreditation (ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, VIII.A.3). For brevity, the Commission Standards of Accreditation ("Standards") and the Commission Policies and Procedures ("Procedures") hereafter may be referred to as "Standards and Procedures."

The Policy Manual of the Board of Commissioners ("Policy Manual") contains all the policies adopted by the Board. The policies address matters of Board procedure and interpretation; they also reference the formally adopted guidelines the Board has prepared for schools to use in conducting self-studies and petitioning the Board for approval of a variety of institutional initiatives.

The Policy Manual is published by the Board and is available on the ATS website at www.ats.edu.
I General

I.A Authority and duties

I.A.1 The authority of the Board is derived from the Commission Bylaws (3.1), and its duties are prescribed in the Bylaws and in the Policies and Procedures adopted by the Commission (ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, VIII).

I.A.2 Duties

I.A.2.a Exercise responsibility for all decisions related to the accreditation status of members.

I.A.2.a(1) Maintain a list of accredited theological schools under the Standards and Procedures determined by the Commission.

I.A.2.a(2) Investigate, review, and grant candidacy for accredited member status to applicant members of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada ("ATS").

I.A.2.a(3) Investigate, review, and grant initial accreditation to candidate institutions.

I.A.2.a(4) Evaluate new degree programs, extension sites, and distance education programs for inclusion in institutional accreditation.

I.A.2.a(5) Provide for the periodic evaluation of institutions for reaffirmation of accreditation not less frequently than each 10 years.

I.A.2.a(6) Prepare self-study guides, report forms, and other documentation that will assist the schools in meeting their responsibilities in relation to accreditation.

I.A.2.a(7) Respond to complaints brought against members or the Commission.

I.A.2.a(8) Adopt and oversee policies and procedures that ensure thorough and fair evaluation of schools.

I.A.2.a(9) Make such information public about accreditation status as serves the public interest and meets the requirements of governmental and nongovernmental entities that recognize the Commission.
I.A.2.a(10) Monitor changes in accreditation and patterns of higher education quality improvement in the United States and Canada, including consultations with appropriate governmental and nongovernmental entities.

I.A.2.a(11) Assess each institution's continuing conformity to the Commission's Standards of Accreditation through a review by the ATS Commission staff of the information provided by member schools in the Annual Report Forms to monitor key indicators as outlined in Appendix 1, "List of Approved Administrative Practices." The Board will review at each summer meeting any significant results of this monitoring and take appropriate action.

I.A.2.a(12) Establish administrative procedures ("List of Approved Administrative Practices") that ensure that appropriate policies and practices are properly implemented and documented.

I.A.2.b Review and evaluate the accrediting Standards and Procedures in a regular and continuous manner and bring recommendations regarding appropriate changes for consideration for adoption by the members.

I.A.2.c Propose to the members amendments to the Bylaws and the articles of incorporation of the Commission, subject to the approval of ATS as provided in the Bylaws (9.1 and 11.1).

I.A.2.d Appoint task forces and accreditation committees deemed necessary for fulfilling its responsibilities.

I.A.2.e Adopt and oversee the Commission's budget.

I.A.2.e(1) Establish fees to be assessed in the conduct of accreditation activities.

I.A.2.e(2) Recommend changes to the dues structure.

I.A.2.f Evaluate the administrative and other services secured by contract with the Association and establish and evaluate the employment policies of the Commission through its agreement for contracted services with the Association.

I.A.2.g Oversee the Corporation's assets and approve the auditors employed by the Corporation.
I.B Composition and terms

I.B.1 The Board shall consist of not fewer than 12 nor more than 20 persons, of whom not fewer than three nor more than five shall be public representatives. At least two of the public members shall be ministry practitioners, and two from accredited institutions shall carry significant teaching responsibilities in their institutions. The Board shall include members knowledgeable in aspects of theological education (including distance education), who will receive training in the content and interpretation of the Bylaws, Standards of Accreditation, Policies and Procedures, including the review and evaluation of distance education.

I.B.2 Terms of service: Members from accredited institutions serve for six years and are ineligible for immediate reelection. Public members serve for two years and are eligible for reelection.

I.B.3 Eligibility: The members in each six-year class must be from accredited schools; a public member may not be a person who is (a) enrolled as a student in or who is an employee or member of the governing board of or a consultant to an institution that is either accredited or a candidate for accreditation by the Commission or has applied for accreditation or candidate status, or (b) a member of any association or membership organization affiliated with the Commission, or (c) a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in (a) or (b). No member may simultaneously serve on the Board of Commissioners and on the ATS Board of Directors (excepting the Commission representative to ATS).

I.B.4 The chair, vice chair, and Commission representative to ATS (normally the third member of the Officers Committee) are elected by the Commission membership. The secretary is elected by the Board from among the ATS Commission staff members who support the work of the Commission.

I.C Powers

I.C.1 Powers defined

I.C.1.a The Board may initiate and carry through all steps leading to a decision on accredited membership or candidate for accredited membership and to decisions regarding individual degree programs (ATS Commission Bylaws, 3.1).

I.C.1.b The Board may require reports or evaluations as necessary to implement the Standards or to determine the conformity of schools to the Standards, as prescribed by the Policies and Procedures of the Commission.
I.C.2 Powers limited

I.C.2.a No act of the Board shall be held to control the policy or line of action of any institution belonging to the Commission. Member schools have the right to be creative and diverse in determining how best to organize themselves and use their resources in conformity with Commission Standards and Procedures.

I.C.2.b The Board shall take no action initiating procedures to examine an institution for Candidate for Accredited Membership status or initial accreditation except at the specific request of the chief administrative officer of the institution.

I.C.2.c The Board shall act only on those matters assigned to it by the Commission and within the guidelines established by the Policies and Procedures of the Commission and the Policy Manual of the Board.

I.C.2.d Commissioners, Appeals Panel members, and ATS Commission staff shall annually complete a conflict of interest form. Evaluation committee members and consultants shall complete a conflict of interest form prior to any engagement in the evaluation of a school. A potential conflict of interest includes the following relationships with a school undergoing evaluation, whether the relationship involves that person or an immediate family member: employment (including past employment or prior/current application for employment); current employment at a school in a consortial relationship; enrollment as a student (past or present, including denial of admission); recipient of an award or honor; provision of goods or services; service as a trustee (past or present); regular recruitment of prospective students or staff; or any other relationship that could threaten a fair and objective evaluation. No Commissioner, Appeals Panel member, or ATS Commission staff member who has a potential conflict of interest shall be involved in an evaluation or accrediting decision, unless a majority of Commissioners who do not have a conflict in relation to the school determine that the potential conflict of interest has no bearing on the evaluation or decision. No evaluation committee member or consultant who has a potential conflict of interest shall be involved in an evaluation or accrediting decision.
II The Board of Commissioners

II.A General responsibilities for the Standards of Accreditation

II.A.1 The Board is responsible for the ongoing review of the Standards of Accreditation and the recommendation of changes of the Standards to the membership of the Commission.

II.A.2 The Board will maintain a formally adopted plan for the ongoing evaluation of the Standards, with reference to their validity in content and use and their reliability as a means of determining institutional viability and educational effectiveness. This plan ensures that, in addition to the general and comprehensive review of the Standards flowing from the survey that every school undergoing a comprehensive evaluation receives, each standard is formally and specifically evaluated not less frequently than every five years.

II.A.3 The Board should review the validity of the Standards by addressing questions such as the following: Are the Standards sufficiently comprehensive as to provide principles by which the institutional integrity and educational effectiveness can be assessed? Are the Standards sufficiently current that they reflect changing trends, needs, and practices in theological education? Do the Standards address reasonably and comprehensively those practices of theological education that most influence its effectiveness?

II.A.4 The Board should review the reliability of the Standards by addressing questions such as the following: Are the Standards appropriate across the range of Commission member schools? Do the Standards provide a basis for evaluating schools consistently over time so institutional improvement can be noted? Do the Standards provide a basis by which different evaluation committees could arrive at similar accrediting recommendations for the same school? Do the Standards support consistent interpretation and decision making by the Board over time?

II.A.5 If the Board determines, in the course of its systematic review of the Standards or in other ways, that it needs to make changes to the Standards or Procedures, it will initiate action to make the changes within 12 months, according to the requirements of the Bylaws (3.1).

II.B Meetings

II.B.1 The Board normally meets twice annually, in February and June.

II.B.2 The Board will normally meet during the working hours of two days or as may be required.
II.B.3 Normally, the Board meets at the offices of the ATS Commission.

II.B.4 If needed, special meetings shall be called by the secretary upon order of the chair or at the written request of a quorum of the Commissioners. The agenda items for a special meeting shall be stated at the time the meeting is called. The Officers Committee may authorize a vote by mail.

II.B.5 Commissioners are expected to attend all meetings.

II.B.6 The elected chair presides at all meetings; the elected vice chair presides if the chair is absent, or when the chair has other duties in the meeting, or when the chair has recused himself or herself.

II.B.7 Agendas for meetings of the Board are prepared by ATS Commission staff in consultation with the Board chair. Materials related to matters coming before the Board are made available to Commissioners three weeks in advance of the meeting. These materials include self-studies, evaluation committee reports and school responses thereto, required reports from member schools, and substantive change petitions. These materials shall be posted on the Board's secure website according to the "List of Approved Administrative Practices" (see Appendix 1).

II.B.8 Reports submitted to the Board by evaluation committees shall be reviewed by ATS Commission staff for clarification and by the chief administrative officer of the institution for factual corrections according to the "List of Approved Administrative Practices" (see Appendix 1).

II.B.9 Each meeting of the Board will include plenary sessions at which the full Board takes action, working sessions during which committees of the Board consider reports and recommend actions, and an executive session (see also Appendix 7). To effectively conduct its business, the Board of Commissioners may use a consent agenda. The consent agenda permits any Board committee to have an action item removed from deliberation in a plenary session. Recommended actions placed on the consent agenda by a Board committee are seen by the full Board before being ratified in plenary session in one vote. Any Commissioner for good reason may request any consent agenda item be discussed by the full Board before final action. Consent agendas will not be finalized until each Board committee has reviewed thoroughly the action items assigned to it. Any recommended action seen by the full Board and then changed by a Board committee may not be placed on the consent agenda, unless the change is minor in nature (e.g., change in report date or minor editorial change). Actions that may not be placed on a consent agenda include any involving membership status (e.g., candidacy, initial or continued accreditation, notations, probation,
withdrawals or denials of accreditation, and issuing a letter of concern or show cause order) or any involving an educational experiment or exception.

II.B.10 The Board may authorize subcommittees to meet at other times to consider and act upon reports and petitions from member schools that do not affect the school’s accredited status.

II.B.11 Representatives from institutions that have agenda items before the Board may address the Board or its subcommittees. Representatives from schools with pending decisions regarding the overall accredited status of the institution will typically address the full Board. Representatives from schools with pending decisions regarding degree programs, extension programs, or similar issues will typically address the appropriate Board subcommittee.

II.B.12 Minutes of meetings are prepared by staff in draft form, sent to the Commissioners for correction, and revised for consideration for adoption at the succeeding Board meeting.

II.B.13 A Commissioner may abstain from voting on any accreditation decision for any reason. A Commissioner must recuse himself or herself from any accreditation discussion or decision affecting a school with which he or she has been involved in any of these capacities: (1) service as a current or former employee or student of that school, (2) service as a current employee of a school in a consortium with that school, (3) service on an evaluation committee whose recommendations about that school are being considered, or (4) recent service on a committee or commission for another accrediting agency that evaluated that school (typically within the past three years). Recusals require the Commissioner to absent himself or herself from the room during the discussion and the decision. All abstentions and recusals will be noted in the minutes.

II.B.14 The Board will take time toward the end of each meeting to review its actions to assure the consistency and fairness of its accrediting decisions. These two concepts do not require uniformity in all decisions, but do assume conformity to all published standards, procedures, and policies. The Board determines consistency and fairness through these criteria:

II.B.14.a Decisions are based on the Commission's Standards and Procedures and follow the Board's Policy Manual.

II.B.14.b Decisions respect each institution's unique mission and help achieve its stated educational outcomes in its own context.
II.B.14.c Decisions are made in light of each institution's resources, capacity to plan and evaluate, and its ongoing relationship with the Commission, as well as the reliability, relevance, and completeness of the information it provides.

II.B.14.d Decisions are reviewed in light of relevant prior decisions of the Board, as well as relevant current decisions.

II.B.14.e Decisions are communicated promptly and clearly with a written rationale.

II.B.15 Once in each biennium, the Board will evaluate the quality of its work by devoting time to a comprehensive review of its policies, procedures, and practices. The opening plenary session of the February meeting will include a presentation of significant issues arising, relative to the Standards and Procedures, during the past year.

II.B.16 The chair and vice chair of the Commission, together with a third Commissioner (normally the Commission Representative to ATS), constitute the Officers Committee of the Board and are authorized to make necessary decisions, not affecting the accredited status of institutions, between Board meetings. All such actions must be reported to the Board at its next meeting.

II.C Operational policies

II.C.1 The Board is responsible for implementing the Commission Policies and Procedures as published, including all adverse actions of the Board.

II.C.2 In order to provide appropriate historical background to its work, the Board requires the retention and preservation of materials related to the last full accreditation review of each institution, including on-site evaluation committee reports, the institution’s responses to on-site reports, periodic review reports, any reports of special reviews conducted between regular reviews, a copy of the institution’s most recent self-study, and a copy of all accreditation decisions, including all adverse actions. In addition, the “List of Approved Administrative Practices” (Appendix 1) requires a record of all decisions made throughout an institution’s affiliation regarding the accreditation of the institution and any substantive changes, including all correspondence that is significantly related to those decisions.

II.C.3 The Board will evaluate any teach-out plan or agreement, using Board-adopted criteria (see Appendix 5), to ensure that it provides affected students the ability to complete their studies without moving or traveling a substantial distance and at reasonable cost. Students should be able to complete their studies in a program of acceptable quality and with reasonably similar content, structure, and scheduling. The teach-out plan or agreement should provide for timely notification to students of
the terms of the teach-out plan or agreement and information about any additional charges or costs. The Board may require a member institution to enter into a teach-out agreement with another institution accredited by an agency recognized by the US Secretary of Education for United States schools, or another appropriate authority for Canadian schools, as part of the institution’s teach-out plan. When a teach-out plan or agreement involves another institution accredited by an agency recognized by the US Secretary of Education for United States schools, or another appropriate authority for Canadian schools, the Board will evaluate the capacity of the other institution to provide the education required by the teach-out agreement. In order to determine if the other institution is qualified to provide the teach-out program necessary, the Board will (a) assess the resources, experience, and support services of the other institution; (b) evaluate its ability to provide a program of acceptable quality that is reasonably similar in content, structure, and scheduling to the discontinued program; (c) determine if the other institution is stable and able to carry out its mission and meet all obligations to existing students; and (d) determine if the institution is capable of providing a program to teach-out students that does not require substantial travel or additional charges. If the other institution is not accredited by the ATS Commission on Accrediting, the Board will notify the other accrediting agency within 30 days of its action to approve a teach-out agreement that involves a school accredited by that agency.

II.C.4 If a member institution required by federal regulations to submit a teach-out plan fails to submit an acceptable teach-out plan or agreement, the Board will impose probation. If a member institution closes without a teach-out plan or agreement, the Board will work with the US Department of Education and the appropriate provincial or state agencies, to the extent feasible, to assist students in finding reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional charge.

II.C.5 ATS Commission staff will monitor accredited schools to ensure continued conformity with Commission Standards of Accreditation. This monitoring will include items described in Appendix 1, section 6. The Board may request additional monitoring information or authorize a required report, a focused evaluation visit, or a special comprehensive evaluation review, if it determines a review of educational quality is warranted.

II.C.6 All actions of the Board must be communicated to the schools affected by the actions within 30 days of the date of the action. Schools have 30 days from receipt of the communication of Board action to appeal decisions regarding failure to approve new degrees, extension sites, or distance education programs; the imposition of a notation; the imposition of probation; or an adverse action. Such actions become final after the deadline for appeals. All other actions are final upon initial Board action.
II.C.7 Normally, the Board will impose a notation or probation or take an adverse action only after a member institution has an opportunity to provide additional information. Comprehensive and focused evaluation committee reports and recommendations, with an invitation to respond, shall be understood as providing such an opportunity.

II.C.8 The Board of Commissioners defines "good cause" as a circumstance in which the institution has shown significant progress on the issue of the notation or probation and there is reason to anticipate that a one-year extension of time will enable the institution to rectify the deficiency indicated by the notation or probation.

II.C.9 Before the Board takes a final adverse action decision or an Appeals Panel takes a final action to sustain an adverse decision on appeal, any new financial information available at the time the decision is made should be reviewed, if all of the following conditions are met:

II.C.9.a The financial information was unavailable to the institution until after the decision subject to appeal was made.

II.C.9.b The financial information is significant and bears materially on the financial deficiencies identified by the Board.

II.C.9.c The only remaining deficiency cited by the Board in support of a final adverse action decision is the institution's failure to meet the standard pertaining to financial resources.

II.C.10 The effective date of Board action approving a substantive change is the date of the Board's action, which shall be noted explicitly in the letter communicating the action. The Board is responsible for reviewing its actions at each meeting to ensure that substantive change actions were not taken retroactively and that the minutes of the meeting indicate the Board's attention to this policy.

II.C.11 The Board of Commissioners shall give due attention to substantive change petitions submitted by member schools. The ATS Commission staff shall provide guidance to assist member schools in the preparation of substantive change petitions. The "List of Approved Administrative Practices" (Appendix 1) shall contain criteria for determining and terminology for characterizing substantive change thresholds (i.e., a guideline to determine when a school action is simply making a minor adjustment and when an adjustment becomes a substantive change).

II.C.12 The Board of Commissioners, when making a determination regarding a special comprehensive review, shall use the Board-adopted "Evaluative Guideline for Special Comprehensive Evaluations" in its deliberation. (See Appendix 4.)
II.C.13 When a focused evaluation visit or a special comprehensive evaluation review is required, the Board of Commissioners will provide the school with a prospectus for the focused evaluation visit or special comprehensive review. The prospectus will identify the reasons for the focused evaluation visit or special comprehensive review, provide the date for the site visit, and require the school to provide evidence of the school's conformity to the applicable Standards of Accreditation (in the case of a special comprehensive review, all of the Standards of Accreditation). The school is to use the prospectus as a guide to prepare for the review, and the evaluation committee will use the prospectus in conducting the onsite visit and making its recommendations to the Board of Commissioners.

II.C.14 In addition to the conditions listed in the ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, VII.B.1, a focused visit may be required whenever the Board believes any of these conditions are present:

- A series of on-site, face-to-face conversations with multiple parties at a school will provide information and context that a single report, often written by a single individual, may not;
- A series of on-site, face-to-face conversations will highlight the importance of, and/or help give a school guidance in, one or more areas of improvement in ways that a written report may not.
- A series of on-site, face-to-face conversations will underscore the timeliness and/or urgency of the need for the school to provide additional information and/or help a school improve significantly (e.g., when a serious and/or public controversy has arisen that could impact the school’s ability to meet one or more Standards).

II.D Operating budget

II.D.1 The Commission receives as dues 75 percent of the membership fee charged to all ATS associate, candidate, and accredited member schools.

II.D.2 The Board is responsible for establishing and adopting its budget, which is based on revenue derived from dues, assessment fees, reimbursement for evaluator travel, and as appropriate, grants from foundations. The expenditures budget shall provide for all direct and indirect expenses for the Commission’s work of accreditation as conducted by the Board.

II.D.3 The Board establishes the amount of the assessment fee charged to schools receiving an accreditation evaluation. The fee shall be set annually by the Board to support the costs of hosting evaluation committees, office costs related to
preparation of committee reports and Board agenda books, and other such direct
costs as necessary to support the on-site evaluation of member schools.

II.D.4 The Board determines travel reimbursement costs to be charged to
schools receiving a Commission evaluation committee according to the following
policy: the Board averages the travel expenses of all Board-appointed evaluators and
ATS Commission staff for a given semester and invoices that average travel cost for
each of these who was part of the evaluation committee.

II.D.5 Board-appointed committee members serve without honoraria or
remuneration.

II.E Reimbursement for expenses

II.E.1 Out-of-pocket expenses for meetings of the Board, subcommittees, task
forces, or accreditation evaluation visits are paid by the Commission. No honoraria are
paid for service in such groups.

II.E.2 Travel is paid at air coach rate, unless it is impossible to secure other than
first class.

II.E.3 If an automobile is used for travel, reimbursement will be on the basis of
coach air fare or the current mileage rate of the Board, whichever is lower.

II.E.4 Hotel expenses will be reimbursed for accommodations in the area of the
meeting.

II.E.5 All reasonable meal expenses will be reimbursed; alcoholic beverages
should not be charged to the Board.

II.E.6 Child care expenses are reimbursable.

II.F Work product

The Board shall review the work product provided by its memorandum of agreement
with the Association on an annual basis with the findings of the review to be avail-
able by the time that the Board considers extending the agreement in the first Board
meeting of each year.
III Accredited Members

III.A Accreditation evaluations

The Board, through its ATS Commission staff, oversees the conduct of all accreditation evaluations to Commission-related schools.

III.A.1 Schedule

III.A.1.a ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, VII.A.1, authorize accreditation evaluation committees for a comprehensive evaluation at the end of an approved period of accreditation. In cases of special institutional need, the Board or the Commission's Officers Committee may authorize a focused or comprehensive evaluation.

III.A.1.b While the Board may call for a focused evaluation in response to any notification of substantive change, it must require a focused evaluation within six months of the change in the case of a change in ownership that results in a change of control. The Board will review the ownership change to determine the identity of the new ownership or control and assure itself that the school's educational quality will be sustained.

III.A.1.c The Board may authorize a comprehensive review of a member institution when changes in institutional purpose, educational programs, or financial capacity are associated with a change of ownership.

III.A.1.d The Board, for purposes of granting approval of substantive changes related to extension sites and branch campuses, will require a focused evaluation of any site within six months of the site beginning to offer as much as 50 percent of the course work necessary for a degree. An evaluation is not required, but may be authorized, when a member school seeks approval to offer 50 percent or more of an additional approved degree at a site already approved to offer 50 percent or more of an approved degree at the same level as the additional degree. The Board does not grant preapproval for extension sites or branch campuses, so a member school must petition well in advance of the initiation of any such sites. Upon consideration of a petition to establish an extension site or branch campus to offer as much as 50 percent of a Board-approved degree, the Board may approve the petition and authorize a required site evaluation to corroborate the claims made in the petition. If the required site evaluation does not corroborate the claims made in the petition, approval for that site may be withdrawn.
III.A.1.e  The Board, for purposes of reaffirming institutional accreditation, as well as granting initial approval for a new extension site, will require an evaluation of all extension sites or branch campuses offering at least 50 percent of the course work of a Board-approved degree. The Board may authorize an exemption to this requirement if the institution meets the following criteria:

III.A.1.e(1)  Has requested an exemption with its petition or self-study report

III.A.1.e(2)  Has been accredited for at least 10 years

III.A.1.e(3)  Has operated in adherence to the Standards at least three approved extensions sites or branch campuses offering as much as 50 percent of an approved degree

III.A.1.e(4)  Has operated the prior five years without the imposition of a notation or probation

If an exemption is authorized, a representative sample of extension sites or branch campuses will be evaluated during any reaffirmation process. ATS Commission staff will select the representative sample in consultation with the institution. The representative sample will include at least 25 percent and not fewer than two of the approved extension sites or branch campuses. Exemptions granted for initial approval for a new extension site do not require any evaluation of a representative sample of sites.

III.A.1.f  The closing or relocation of an approved extension site (or main campus) requires one of the following actions, depending on the level of approval granted that site and on whether the closing site will be relocated:

III.A.1.f(1)  If the extension site being closed is approved to offer less than a complete degree program, then the school must simply notify ATS Commission staff before closing that site, indicating how the educational needs of affected students will be appropriately met.

III.A.1.f(2)  If the extension site being closed is approved to offer a complete degree program, then prior to its closing, the school must submit a Petition for Closing a Complete Degree Site to the Board of Commissioners. The petition includes information regarding a formal teach-out plan for all affected students (see guidelines in Appendix 5).

III.A.1.f(3)  If the extension site (or main campus) being closed is being relocated to another site, then prior to the relocation, the
school must submit a Petition for Relocating an Approved Extension Site (or campus). If the new extension site will offer less than half a degree, the petition may be approved by ATS Commission staff (per ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, VII.C.3). If the new extension site will offer at least half a degree or a complete degree, the petition must be approved by the Board of Commissioners (per ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, VII.C.2). The Board will also authorize a site visit to be conducted within six months of the new site's establishment, unless an exemption based on the four criteria in III.A.1.e above is requested and granted. A school relocating a main campus is not exempt from a site visit, but the Board may grant an exemption for an embedded school located on the campus of a larger institution that is simply moving to a different part of the larger campus or within the same community.

III.A.1.f(4) If the relocation discussed in the preceding paragraph occurs quickly due to unforeseen circumstances beyond the school's control (e.g., natural disaster or sudden loss of rented facilities), then the school should contact ATS Commission staff as soon as possible. The same Petition for Relocating an Approved Extension Site (or campus) is required, but staff may temporarily authorize courses to begin at the new location until the Board of Commissioners can meet and act officially on the relocation.

III.A.1.g When a member school petitions for another type of substantive change or a degree program approval that requires a site evaluation, the Board requires that the evaluation be conducted within one calendar year of its authorization. Every effort will be made to schedule the evaluation within six months of the Board's authorization, if possible.

III.A.2 Evaluation Committees

III.A.2.a Commissioners will normally be invited to participate in or chair at least one accreditation evaluation each year of their term of service. The training that Commissioners receive, as outlined (I.B.1), prepares them for this service on accreditation evaluation committees. In addition, they will receive specialized training when serving as a chair and the regular training that occurs for evaluators.

III.A.2.b Members of Commission accreditation evaluation committees will be appointed according to the following guidelines:
III.A.2.b(1) ATS Commission staff will be responsible for the enlistment and independent appointment of qualified evaluators for committees, the maintenance of a roster of active evaluators, overseeing an evaluation process of personnel to ensure that persons who remain on the active evaluator roster function effectively, and reporting regularly to the Board on the roster of active evaluators.

III.A.2.b(2) The Board expects individuals who serve on evaluation committees to reflect the following characteristics: expertise in aspects of theological education or higher education (including distance education for evaluations of those institutions that offer distance education), capacity to evaluate an institution on the basis of the Commission Standards of Accreditation, openness to the range of confessional and religious traditions represented by the schools in the Commission, and capacity to work effectively as a member of an evaluation committee. Evaluation committees should reflect the diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, and ecclesial communities present in member schools.

III.A.2.b(2)(a) Evaluators will generally be appointed from member schools and/or persons actively engaged in the practice of ministry. Persons not employed by member schools or actively engaged in the practice of ministry who, having particular expertise and experience, could provide valuable expertise, may serve on evaluation committees. In preparation for service on evaluation committees, first-time committee members will receive training in the content and interpretation of the Commission Standards of Accreditation and Policies and Procedures, including the review and evaluation of distance education, in advance of their service on an evaluation committee. Other evaluation committee members will periodically receive refresher training on the content and interpretation of the Standards of Accreditation and Policies and Procedures, including the review and evaluation of distance education.

III.A.2.b(2)(b) A comprehensive evaluation committee shall include theological school administrators, educators or faculty members, and ministry practitioners. If the school receiving a comprehensive evaluation committee conducts distance education, the committee shall have a member with experience and expertise in distance education. Focused evaluation committees will consist of members with expertise related to the focused evaluation.
III.A.2.b(3) Institutions receiving evaluation committees have the right to object to individuals nominated to serve on committees for the following reasons: (a) the individual has attended the institution as a student; (b) the individual has previously been employed by the institution; or (c) some clear evidence exists that a conflict of interest may threaten balanced and objective judgments. A more detailed statement of possible conflicts may be found above in I.C.2.d.

III.A.2.b(4) Whenever possible, ATS Commission staff should be present during at least part of accreditation evaluations to interpret the Standards of Accreditation and Policies and Procedures on behalf of the Board, to provide guidance and counsel to committees, and to provide background information about the evaluation to the Board as requested.

III.A.2.b(5) As part of preparation for a Board evaluation committee, a school must advertise to its constituencies that it is receiving a Commission committee and invite comment in writing concerning the institution's qualifications for accreditation. These comments will be available to the evaluation committee. A Commission evaluation may also include an open hearing scheduled during the course of the evaluation. In addition, the Commission on Accrediting will publish on the Accrediting section of the ATS website all schools scheduled to receive a comprehensive evaluation committee in each semester. The list will be posted no later than two months prior to the beginning of the semester. The web page will include an invitation for respondents to reply with comments about any school directly to the Board. The Board will forward all comments received to the comprehensive evaluation committee evaluating the school.

III.A.3 Reports

III.A.3.a The written report should include the following sections: (1) a brief introduction/history of the school, (2) a section on each of the General Institutional Standards, (3) a section on the Educational Standard, (4) a section on each of the degree programs offered by the institution, and (5) the committee’s formal recommendations to the Board. Reports shall be written in gender-neutral language.

III.A.3.b All comprehensive evaluation committee reports shall include an assessment of the school’s performance with respect to the educational effectiveness of the institution’s degree programs and the criteria used by the
school to determine educational effectiveness. This assessment shall include
the committee’s judgment with respect to indicators such as the percentage of
students who complete degree programs and the placement rate of graduates.

III.A.3.c The Board requests evaluation committees to assess the self-study
report in terms of its thoroughness, as well as its reflection of the institution's
capacity to evaluate itself critically, to make prudent recommendations based
on its self-evaluation, and to address the Standards by which the Board makes
its accreditation decisions. This evaluation of the self-study report should be
included in the introduction of each evaluation committee's report.

III.B Guidelines for institutional petitions and other matters

The following guidelines are formally adopted policies of the Board, which are
published separately for ease of distribution to schools preparing petitions and
other matters. All original documents submitted to the Board must be in English or
accompanied by English translations. Please note that most petitions have formal
templates (available on the Accrediting section of the ATS website) that must be used.
The Board will review all petitions for substantive changes that are described in the
ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, VII.C.1. ATS Commission staff will review
petitions that are described in the ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, VII.C.3.

III.B.1 Conducting an Institutional Self-Study (Self-Study Handbook, Chapter Two)

III.B.2 Evaluation of Proposals for Programs of International Theological
Education (Self-Study Handbook, Chapter Six)

III.B.3 Members of Accreditation Evaluation Committees (Self-Study Handbook,
Chapter Four)

III.B.4 Petitioning the Board of Commissioners for Approval of New or Revised
Degree Programs (Policies and Procedures, V; Policy Manual, Appendix 3)

III.B.5 Petitioning the Board of Commissioners for Candidacy for Accredited
Membership (Policies and Procedures, II)

III.B.6 Petitioning the Board of Commissioners for Educational Experiments and
Exceptions

III.B.7 Petitioning the Board of Commissioners regarding Multiple Locations
(Extension Sites) and Distance Education (Policies and Procedures, VI Policy Manual,
II.A.1, Appendix 3, Appendix 6)
III.B.8 Regarding Comprehensive Evaluation Logistics (Self-Study Handbook, Chapter Three)

III.B.9 Regarding the Submission of Teach-out Plans and Agreements (Policies and Procedures, III.E; Policy Manual, Appendix 5)

IV Appeals Panel

IV.A The Board requires the Nominating Committee to nominate to the Appeals Panel at least one person in each of the following primary roles: a faculty member, an administrator, a ministry practitioner, and a public member.

IV.B Appeals Panel members are subject to the same conflict of interest procedures and policies as apply to members of the Board of Commissioners and, upon election, will sign the statement on conflict of interest. Appeals Panel members shall receive training in the content and interpretation of the Standards of Accreditation, Policies and Procedures (including the review and evaluation of distance education), and any concerns related to the specific issues of an appeal.

IV.C The Appeals Panel shall elect from among its members a chair, vice chair, and secretary. The chair shall call meetings by providing notice of the date, time, and place. The chair is responsible for determining the agenda for meetings of the Appeals Panel, convening the Appeals Panel, and chairing its meetings. The vice chair convenes and chairs meetings of the Appeals Panel at the request of the chair. The secretary records the actions of the Appeals Panel and communicates the actions to the Board of Commissioners.

IV.D The Board of Commissioners is to report Appeals Panel actions to schools no later than 30 days after it is notified of the date of the action.

IV.E Vacancies occurring on the Appeals Panel by death, resignation, refusal or inability to serve, or otherwise between Biennial Meetings shall be filled by majority vote of the Board of Commissioners. Each Appeals Panel member so appointed shall serve until the next Biennial Meeting and until the member's successor is elected and qualified or until such member's death, resignation, or removal. The removal of any Appeals Panel member shall be by the Board of Commissioners upon the recommendation of a majority of the Appeals Panel members subject to the same causes as articulated in the Commission Bylaws (3.14).

IV.F In the event that a matter enters into any level of appeal, the Board and moving party/parties shall have the right to representation in person and by counsel, if desired and at cost to the party/parties represented by counsel.
V  Disclosure and Confidentiality

V.A  Accredited members

V.A.1  Institutions shall disclose their complete accredited status as required by the Policies and Procedures, X.A.2. If an inadequate or inaccurate description is published, the Board authorizes staff to contact the school and require a correction of the published statement. If the school fails to correct the issue, staff will refer the issue to the Board for action.

V.A.2  The Membership List reports the formal accredited status of schools and will not be published until the stated period for receiving appeals of Board actions has expired (cf. Policies and Procedures, XI.A). No adverse accrediting action will be published while it is undergoing review.

V.A.3  If a school has not corrected inaccurate public disclosure of its accredited status with the Commission on Accrediting, after requested by ATS Commission staff, the Board will impose Notation 2.d until the appropriate correction is made and, if the correction is not made within the required time period, impose an adverse accrediting action.

V.B  Candidate members

V.B.1  The institution shall publish its formal status with the Commission.

V.B.2  The Board will publish a list of schools that have been granted Candidate for Accredited Membership status in the Membership List.

V.C  Self-study reports

V.C.1  An institution may release for internal or public distribution the contents of its self-study.

V.C.2  The Board 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 Board 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 entities that formally recognize the Commission on Accrediting may be allowed access to self-study reports in conjunction with the process of petitioning for continued recognition.
V.D  Evaluation committee reports and recommendations

V.D.1  As part of the accreditation process, reports and recommendations prepared by Commission evaluation committees shall be made available to governing boards and faculties by the chief administrative officers of schools.

V.D.2  The recommendations of the evaluation committee to the Board may not be published by the institution. Only the actions of the Board comprise the formal accreditation.

V.D.3  An institution may make public the report of an evaluation committee, although this is not mandatory, but it is not advisable prior to formal Board action. If the institution makes a report public, it must make clear that the document is a report of the evaluation committee to the Board and is not an action of the Board.

V.D.4  If, in the judgment of the Board, a school publishes selected portions of an accrediting committee report in such a way as to distort the overall import of that report, the Board has the authority to release the full text of the report in question.

V.D.5  The Board will not release evaluation committee reports to the public. With the approval of the institution, the Board may approve access to a report to those conducting research that contributes to the improvement of the accrediting process. Evaluating committee reports may be examined by the entities that recognize the Commission on Accrediting only in the context of reviews of the Commission on Accrediting by those agencies for the purpose of recognition.

V.D.6  If a school publishes, or makes public, inaccurate information related to its accredited status or relationship with the Commission, the Board shall require the school to publicly correct the inaccurate information, or the Board will issue correct information.

V.E  Other accrediting documents

V.E.1  Minutes of the Board are available to the members of the Board. A summary report of all actions of the Board is published biennially in the Bulletin.

V.E.2  An institution that has officially appealed an adverse action of the Board may request those sections of official minutes pertaining to the adverse action.

V.E.3  Correspondence between the Board and a member or applying institution must be treated confidentially by both parties, though official actions from a visit will be shared with the chair of that visit.
V.E.4 Institutional progress and follow-up reports will not be released to the public by the Board. These reports, however, may be released by the institution after action has been taken by the Board.

V.E.5 In conjunction with the recognition process, the Board will share its correspondence to member schools with the appropriate regional accrediting agencies; with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the US Department of Education; and, as required, with appropriate state or provincial authorities.

V.F Public statements by institutions

V.F.1 If an institution uses the public forum to take issue with an action of the Board relating to that institution, the chair of the Board may make available to the public any information pertinent to the action. Taking issue in a public forum does not include an announcement by an institution that it intends to appeal an action of the Board.

V.F.2 Press releases and news items that may become necessary as the result of the Board's actions shall be made only by the executive director after consultation with the Board chair.

V.G Commission disclosure of information about member or applying institutions

The Commission discloses required information promptly and is prepared to disclose certain information upon request according to the following policies:

V.G.1 Required by governmental authorities and other accrediting agencies

V.G.1.a The Board maintains several policies regarding the disclosure of accrediting-related information and actions to regional accrediting agencies, governmental authorities, the membership of the Commission, and the public.

V.G.1.b The Board will notify the US Department of Education of any proposed change to the Board Policy Manual, Commission Policies and Procedures, or Commission Standards of Accreditation that might alter its scope of recognition or compliance with the criteria for recognition.

V.G.1.c Board policy on the communication of Board accrediting decisions requires that all actions must be communicated to the schools affected by the actions within 30 days of the date of the action. Schools have 30 days from receipt of the communication of Board action to appeal decisions regarding failure to approve new degrees, extension sites, or distance education programs; the imposition of a notation; the imposition of probation; or an adverse action. Such actions become final after the deadline for appeals (the “appeal
date”). All other actions are final upon the initial Board action (the “decision date”).

V.G.1.d Within 30 days of the deadline for appeals of Board actions, the Board will notify the US Secretary of Education, appropriate state licensing or authorizing agencies, and regional accrediting bodies of all actions related to the formal accredited status of Commission member schools. In the case of a final Board action to deny, withdraw, or suspend accreditation of a US institution, the Board will notify the Secretary at the same time it notifies the institution of this action (the appeal date), and it will report this decision on the web page for that member school in the Member Schools section of the ATS website within 24 hours. The Board will provide within 60 days a brief statement on the web page for the member school in the Member Schools section of the ATS website summarizing the reasons for the action to deny, withdraw, or terminate the accreditation of the institution, and it will include the comments of the affected institution with regard to the decision.

V.G.1.e The Board will notify in writing the Office of Federal Student Aid concerning actions on substantive changes, as appropriate, within 30 days of final action (the decision date).

V.G.1.f The Board will notify the US Secretary of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public if an Accredited Member or Candidate for Accredited Membership institution (a) decides to withdraw voluntarily from accredited or candidate status, within 30 days of receiving notification from the institution or program that it is withdrawing voluntarily from accredited or candidate status or (b) lets its accreditation or candidate status lapse, within 30 days of the date on which accredited or candidate status lapses.

V.G.1.g ATS Commission staff will notify the US Secretary of Education when reasonable evidence suggests that an institution may be failing to meet its Title IV program responsibilities or is engaged in fraudulent activities with regard to Title IV program responsibilities. The Board will also provide information, upon request by the US Secretary of Education, regarding compliance of an accredited institution with Title IV responsibilities. The Board will not notify the institution of any notification to the US Secretary of Education pursuant to this policy.

V.G.1.h The Membership List will identify all institutions whose status is listed as Accredited Members and Candidate for Accredited Membership as well as institutions whose membership has been removed from Accredited
Member or Candidate for Accredited Membership status, placed on proba-

tion, or withdrawing from candidacy or accredited membership during the year
 preceding the publication of the Membership List. A copy of the Membership

List will be submitted annually to the US Secretary of Education.

V.G.1.i If an accredited or candidate for accredited member receives an

adverse accrediting action, or is placed on probation or equivalent status by

another recognized institutional accrediting agency, or if the larger institu-

tion of which the member is a part receives an adverse accrediting action or is

placed on probation by its accrediting agency, the Board will authorize a

focused evaluation committee to visit the institution to determine if the Board

should consider an adverse action on the member institution.

V.G.1.j If the Board determines that an institution is in compliance with

Commission Standards and proceeds with appropriate action (i.e., granting

initial or renewed accreditation or candidacy) even though it knows, or has

reasonable cause to know, that the institution is the subject of (1) a decision

by another US Department of Education-recognized accrediting body to deny

accreditation or preaccreditation, impose probation, or equivalent status; or

(2) an adverse accrediting action by another US Department of Education-

recognized accrediting body; or (3) a pending or final action brought by a state

agency leading to suspension, revocation, withdrawal, or termination of its

legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the state, the Board will

provide to the US Secretary of Education, within 30 days, a thorough written

explanation as to why the action of the other body does not preclude the

Board’s action.

V.G.1.k If the Board reaffirms accreditation or grants initial accredita-

tion to a US institution that is the subject of an adverse action (i.e., denial,

withdrawal, suspension, or revocation of accreditation) or is placed on proba-

tion by another recognized accrediting body or a state agency, the Board will

formally notify the US Secretary of Education, as well as appropriate state and

recognized accrediting agencies, as to the reason for its actions.

V.G.1.l The Board of Commissioners will communicate the following pos-

tive accrediting decisions to the US Department of Education, relevant state

agencies, and any accrediting agencies that accredit the institutions within

30 days of the decision (the decision date; see V.G.1.c–d): grant of candidacy,

grant or reaffirmation of accreditation, new extension sites that offer at least

half of a complete degree program, and change of name or ownership. It

will also post this information on the web page of the member school in the
Member Schools section of the ATS website for the public within 30 days of the decision date.

**V.G.1.m** The Board of Commissioners will communicate the following negative accrediting decisions to the US Department of Education, relevant state agencies, and any recognized accrediting agencies that accredit the institution within 30 days of the final appeal date (appeal date; see V.G.1.c–d): impose a notation, place an institution on probation, deny initial accreditation, or withdraw accreditation, including any voluntary withdrawal or lapsing of accreditation. The Board will notify the public within 24 hours of notifying the institution of any final decision (after the appeal process) to deny, withdraw, or suspend accreditation (per V.G.1.c–d). It will do so by posting this information on the web page of the member school in the Member Schools section of the ATS website.

**V.G.2** Responsive disclosures

**V.G.2.a** The Board routinely releases the following information on the Member Schools section of the ATS website (and upon inquiry will release information on those items so noted below):

- **V.G.2.a(1)** Membership and accredited status
- **V.G.2.a(2)** The dates when associate membership, candidacy, and initial accreditation were obtained
- **V.G.2.a(3)** The dates of the last comprehensive evaluation and of the next scheduled comprehensive evaluation
- **V.G.2.a(4)** The date of the next scheduled focused evaluation, if any, and the formal reasons for it
- **V.G.2.a(5)** Upon inquiry, the date a formal application for candidacy began and the estimated date a decision on the application will be made
- **V.G.2.a(6)** The date of denial of candidacy or removal from candidacy
- **V.G.2.a(7)** Upon inquiry, the due date of and action taken on the most recent written report required by the Board during the current grant of accreditation
V.G.2.a(8) The Board’s action subsequent to the last evaluation regarding accreditation

V.G.2.a(9) Upon inquiry, whether an institution has appealed an adverse accrediting action of the Board and the status and outcome of such appeal

V.G.2.a(10) Actions of the appropriate appeal bodies with reasons for the actions

V.G.2.b In all cases of adverse accrediting actions, a public statement about the action will be posted on the web page for the member school in the Member Schools section of the ATS website, including any response the institution may choose to make. The Board reserves the right to make final determination of the nature and content of the public statement. The Board will identify the reasons for the adverse accrediting action in the public statement. This statement may be the same one identified in V.G.1.d.

V.G.2.c The Board of Commissioners will share information regarding any accrediting action, including adverse actions, at the request of an appropriately recognized accrediting agency for that information.

V.G.3 Other disclosures

V.G.3.a The Board shall make a report on its work to each Biennial Meeting.

V.G.3.b The Board’s summary report, published biennially, will identify institutions denied membership, or removed from candidacy or accredited membership, or placed on probation, or withdrawing from candidate or accredited membership during the period of that report.

V.G.3.c The Board of Commissioners understands section ES.6.4.4 of the Educational Standard to require schools to make public a statement of educational effectiveness in order to address concerns about public accountability regarding student achievement. A school’s public statement of educational effectiveness should provide data on how well it is meeting the goals or outcomes for each of its degree programs, as well as data from more institution-wide measures of educational effectiveness. The statement may begin with a school’s program goals or outcomes, but it must also provide evidence of how well those are being achieved. That evidence should include assessment data that is direct and indirect, quantitative and qualitative.
For example, a school’s public statement of educational effectiveness might include the following information for each degree program: graduation rates, placement rates, time to completion rates, numbers of completers, ratings from student satisfaction surveys and/or exit interviews, alumni/ae ratings, summary data from course evaluation forms, assessment data from capstone projects and portfolios, and other relevant assessment data. While voluntary, information from the ATS Graduating Student Questionnaire and Alumni/ae Questionnaire could also be helpful, as well as student and alumni/ae testimonies. The public statement of educational effectiveness should be reviewed and updated regularly, preferably annually. Member schools must provide the web address for its public statement each fall on the ATS Annual Report Form.
VI Complaints

VI.A General Statement

The Commission requires the Board, which may act as a whole or through a designated committee, to evaluate complaints regarding member institutions, the Board itself, or its ATS Commission staff.

VI.B Scope

VI.B.1 The Commission’s complaint policy addresses only those situations where a complainant clearly describes and sufficiently documents perceived non-conformity with the Commission’s Standards of Accreditation and/or membership criterion by a member school. Complaints that meet these criteria are understood to have standing in the complaint process.

VI.B.2 The Commission’s Standards of Accreditation require that institutions have clearly defined processes for addressing faculty, employee, and student grievances. Potential complainants are, therefore, expected to exhaust a member school’s own complaint or grievance policies before submitting a complaint to the ATS Commission on Accrediting. Complaints must be filed within a year after any applicable complaint or grievance procedure at the member school has been completed. Decisions of the Board related to complaints are not subject to appeal.

VI.B.3 The Board of Commissioners does not consider complaints that deal with individual grievances not related to the Commission’s Standards of Accreditation, does not arbitrate with a school on behalf of a complainant, nor is it authorized to seek compensation, damages, readmission, or other forms of redress on behalf of a complainant. The Board is limited to decisions regarding an institution’s accredited status.

VI.B.4 The Board does not consider anonymous complaints, but may, in exceptional circumstances, maintain the identity of the complainant in confidence as provided for by the process.

VI.C Complaints regarding member schools

VI.C.1 Upon receipt of a complaint submitted on the ATS Commission formal complaint form, the complaint will be reviewed to determine if sufficient documentation exists for the complaint process to proceed and a determination regarding standing to be made. The complainant will receive confirmation of receipt of the complaint within 15 working days and, at that time, any additional information required to process the complaint will be identified and communicated to the complainant.
VI.C.2 After the receipt of all necessary information, one of two determinations will be made: (1) the complaint does not fall under the purview of the Commission's complaint policy and will not be pursued further; or (2) the complaint may or does fall within the purview of the Commission complaint policy and will be referred for further review to the Board of Commissioners. The complainant will be notified which determination was made within 15 working days.

VI.C.3 If a complaint is referred to the Board, one of the following actions will be taken within 30 working days:

VI.C.3.a Determine that the complaint does not have standing and take no further action, thereby closing the matter for further review. The complainant will be notified of the decision with an appropriate explanation within 15 working days of the action.

VI.C.3.b Determine that the complaint has standing with reference to standards of accreditation, notify the member school of the complaint with appropriate description, and require the school to respond within thirty working days.

VI.C.4 If the school has been asked to respond, a copy of the school's response will be provided to the complainant and to the Board. One of the following actions will typically be taken by the Board within 30 working days:

VI.C.4.a Determine that additional information from either the complainant and/or the school is needed before a decision can be made. In such instances, any additional information required to process the complaint will be identified and communicated to the complainant and/or the school. The complainant and/or the school will have 30 working days to respond prior to the Board taking action as noted in VI.C.4b.

VI.C.4.b Determine that the school's response is sufficient and take one of the following three actions:

VI.C.4.b(1) Determine that the school's response satisfactorily addresses the issue(s) raised in the complaint and take no further action, thus closing the matter;

VI.C.4.b(2) Determine that sufficient reason exists to warrant further review, and to require an additional written report from the school and/or to authorize a staff or focused visit to the school, in which case the visiting committee will prepare a report for consideration by the Board of Commissioners at the meeting immediately following the visit; or
VI.C.4.b(3) Determine that other action(s) should be taken as described in Commission Policies and Procedures, section VII.

VI.C.5 The complainant and the school will typically be notified of the Board’s decision within 15 working days of the action.

VI.C.6 The Board will process complaints in a timely manner, and in no case will its response (see VI.C.4.b) occur later than the second Board meeting following receipt of a complaint determined to have standing (see VI.C.3).

VI.C.7 The Commission standards require schools to treat individuals in fair and ethical ways, and this includes the treatment of complainants.

VI.D Complaints regarding the Board or its personnel

VI.D.1 The Board will review, at its first meeting following receipt, confirmed formal complaints regarding its own conduct in the context of the ATS Commission Policies and Procedures and the policies the Board has established in the Policy Manual of the Board of Commissioners to determine if it has failed to function within the parameters established by the procedures or policies. If the Board determines that its action does not conform to these procedures and policies, it will correct its practice and review any decision related to the complaint. Confirmed formal complaints regarding ATS Commission staff will be reviewed by the executive director within thirty days following receipt and, at the request of the executive director, by the Board. The review will occur in the context of the Commission Policies and Procedures and the Board Policy Manual.
Appendix 1

List of Approved Administrative Practices

1. Archived Accrediting Records
   ATS Commission staff members are responsible for maintaining accrediting records according to the Board of Commissioners’ (“Board”) policy (Policy Manual, II.C.2) and for maintaining an inventory of these records.

2. Visit Cycle Checklist
   ATS Commission staff members are responsible for maintaining a log of activity for each school receiving a comprehensive evaluation visit. This log should note both the activity and, in those cases where Board policy requires a mandatory time interval, a note should be made that these intervals have been maintained (see Policy Manual, II.B.8) See also Appendix 2, “Time Frame for Institutions Responding to Committee Reports.”

3. Posting of Self-Studies, Institutional Accreditation Histories, and Evaluation Committee Reports
   ATS Commission staff members are responsible for posting self-studies, institutional accreditation histories, and evaluation committee reports to the secure website of the Board of Commissioners. Staff members are responsible for notifying first and second readers as these materials are posted for the schools they will present (see Policy Manual, II.B.7).

   Comprehensive evaluation committees are responsible for completing the Targeted Issue Checklist (TIC) to ensure that specific issues related to the Standards of Accreditation and the Policies and Procedures have been assessed during the visit. The TIC shall be submitted with the committee’s final report. ATS Commission staff members will include the TIC in the material sent to schools and as part of the material provided on the secure website of the Board of Commissioners (see Policy Manual, III.A.3.b).

5. Substantive Change Guideline
   ATS Commission staff shall provide guidance to assist member schools in the preparation of substantive change petitions. Please see Appendix 3, “Guidelines Regarding Petitions for Change” to determine when a school action is simply making a minor adjustment and when an adjustment becomes a substantive change. The guideline shall contain criteria for determining and terminology for characterizing substantive change thresholds (see Policy Manual, II.C.11).
6. Monitoring Continuing Implementation

The Board of Commissioners authorizes ATS Commission staff members to monitor year-to-year changes in enrollment, placement, graduation rates and financial strength, as reported on the Annual Report Forms.

For the purpose of this monitoring the following thresholds will be used to determine if a change is significant (with allowance made for percent changes that reflect small actual numbers):

- a. Headcount enrollment of \( \pm 50\% \) percent (including total institutional and distance education enrollment as separate categories)
- b. Overall placement rates (in appropriate positions within one year of graduation) that are below 50 percent or for which at least 50 percent are reported as unknown
- c. Overall graduation rates (for all degrees combined) that are below 25 percent
- d. Unrestricted fund balance reduction by 25 percent or more in one year
- e. Cumulative losses in operations over the last three years

When a significant change is noted, the ATS Commission staff will ask the school to explain the factors that led to variation and indicate its understanding of the effect of the change on the school’s conformity to the Commission’s Standards of Accreditation and on its educational effectiveness. If a school’s response suggests further followup is necessary, the ATS Commission staff will refer the matter to the Board of Commissioners for action. The Board of Commissioners may require a report, a focused evaluation, or a special comprehensive evaluation review (see Policy Manual, II.C.5).

7. Regular Review of Commission Member Schools

ATS Commission staff will undertake and document a regular review of the ATS website of each member school to document each school’s disclosure of its complete accredited status and the provision of the Commission’s mailing address and telephone number. References shall comply with the designations in the Membership List as to accredited status, approved degree programs, and approved locations for offering degrees if other than the institution’s primary location. If the school is on probation, this status shall also be disclosed (see ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, X.A.2 and X.A.3).

8. Teach-Out Plans

ATS Commission staff members will maintain a cumulative record of teach-out plans that involve closing an extension site, or branch campus, or when the institution itself closes and will assess whether each teach-out plan, as proposed and approved, has been implemented effectively (see Policy Manual, II.C.3 and II.C.4). The Board of Commissioners will evaluate any teach-out plan or agreement, using Appendix 5, “Criteria for Evaluating Teach-Out Plans and Agreements.”
9. Complaint Policy

ATS Commission staff will maintain a cumulative record of complaints, ensuring that complaints received are managed according to the Board’s revised complaint policies. The cumulative record will include a complaint procedures checklist for each complaint received (see Policy Manual, VI.B).

Appendix 2

Time Frame for Responding to Committee Reports

- An evaluation committee is to provide the school reviewed with its recommendations during an exit session at the conclusion of the visit.

- An evaluation committee is to provide the school reviewed with a complete draft of its report for a check of factual errors. The school has two weeks to conduct this check for factual errors. Any factual errors discovered are reported to the evaluation committee for correcting the committee report.

- Upon the submission of the final committee report, the Commission office provides the school with the final report. After the receipt of the final committee report, the school then has an additional two weeks (beyond the two weeks noted above when it first received the committee report) to submit additional materials and/or challenge the committee’s findings. Materials submitted by the school are provided to the Board of Commissioners along with the self-study report and the evaluation committee report. A school may elect to reduce this total four-week period by formally notifying the Commission office earlier that it is satisfied with the committee report.

This time line does not limit the right for school representatives to address the Board of Commissioners or appropriate Board subcommittees in person. That face-to-face opportunity provides the school with at least another four weeks—beyond the original four weeks described above—to present additional materials and/or challenge the committee’s findings.
Appendix 3

Guidelines Regarding Petitions for Change

The Board of Commissioners has adopted the following policy regarding petitions for change (see also ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, VII.C).

1. Substantive changes that require petitioning for Board approval include the following: change in an institution’s fundamental mission, legal status, ownership, name, location, or governing control; change in location(s) at which an institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program (see ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, VI); introduction of six or more distance learning courses (see ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, VI); the offering of a new degree program (see ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, V); a change in type of educational units; a new contract or major changes in existing contracts for educational or administrative services that would affect the school’s conformity to the Standards of Accreditation (including any contract for educational offerings with an entity not eligible to participate in Title IV programs); the acquisition of any other institution or any program or location of another institution; and the addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.

2. In addition to substantive changes that require petitioning the Board for approval, certain other significant but nonsubstantive changes require either a petition or notification to ATS Commission staff.

   Changes requiring a petition to and approval by ATS Commission staff include
   (1) change in degree nomenclature and (2) opening of an extension site that offers less than 50 percent of a degree program (i.e., one not requiring a site visit).

   Changes that require notification to and acknowledgement by ATS Commission staff include (1) the termination of a degree program at a location (main campus or extension site) that will continue in operation (i.e., one not requiring a teach-out plan or agreement) and (2) the closing of an extension site that offers less than 100 percent of a degree program (i.e., one not requiring a teach-out plan or agreement).

   In addition, schools considering a major revision to an approved degree program that could affect its continued adherence to Commission Standards should consult with ATS Commission staff to determine if the revision constitutes a change significant enough to require formal approval (see 3.e–g below for further guidance).

3. To assist member schools, the following interpretive statements further clarify when a substantive change requires a petition and formal approval by the Board of Commissioners.
a. The expansion of institutional mission or objective beyond preparing persons for ministry or providing graduate study in the various theological disciplines requires formal action by the Board of Commissioners. Revisions or restatements of institution mission or objective, which retain a primary focus on preparing persons for ministry or providing graduate study in the various theological disciplines are changes that do not require a substantive change petition.

b. The change of legal status requires a petition and approval by the Board of Commissioners. These include changes from a non-profit corporation to a for-profit corporation or the reverse action, or reincorporating an institution in a different jurisdiction. Institutional name changes (including any new “doing business as” designations) require official notification to the Board of Commissioners and may be addressed by the Officers Committee on behalf of the Board.

c. All changes in ownership or governing control of an institution, including mergers, require substantive change petition and board approval. A restructuring of governance, including revising of institutional bylaws, without a change of ownership or governing control, does not require a substantive change petition.

d. A change of physical location for the main campus or extension site requires a petition to the Board of Commissioners if the new location offers at least half a degree and a petition to ATS Commission staff if it offers less than half a degree. A change of postal address, without a change of physical location, requires notification to the Board of Commissioners but does not require a substantive change petition.

e. As noted in 2 above, schools considering a major revision to an approved degree program that could affect its continued adherence to Commission Standards should consult with ATS Commission staff to determine if the revision constitutes a change significant enough to require formal approval by the Board of Commissioners (or by one of its reader panels; see Appendix 7, section 1), for example, changing the curriculum of a Standard D degree in such a way that it more closely aligns with a Standard B degree or adding specializations in an approved degree without adequate educational resources. A reduction in total degree program hours does not necessarily constitute a substantive change, unless the reduction means the program no longer meets the duration requirements in the applicable degree program standard (typically interpreted as at least 72 semester hours for an MDiv and at least 36 semester hours for an MA). In such cases, a petition for an exception is required.

f. A change in degree program nomenclature is a significant but not substantive change that requires a petition to and approval from ATS Commission staff and can be submitted at any time.

g. Terminating a degree program, including the suspension of admissions to a degree program or a hiatus in offering a degree program for more than one year (at any location), does not require a petition or teach-out plan to the Board of Commissioners, but it does require
notification, including how the educational needs of current students in that program will be met, and subsequent notice when the last student graduates from the program. If a program is suspended for more than a year at any location, the school must notify ATS Commission staff of that fact, which will be treated as a closure.

h. Approval of any petition for change is effective with the date specified in the official action. Such approval expects the change will be implemented within a year of that approval date. If the change cannot be implemented within that time frame, the school must submit a satisfactory explanation for the delay and a modified time line for implementation. Absent implementation of the change or granting a request for additional time, the approval will expire one year after the initial grant date. In such cases, the school would need to submit a new petition seeking permission to implement the change after that one-year period. In addition, any contingency attached to an approved petition must be satisfied before the change can be implemented, typically within a year, unless the school provides a satisfactory explanation for the delay and additional time is granted.
Appendix 4

Evaluative Guideline for Special Comprehensive Evaluations

When considering the possibility of requiring a special comprehensive evaluation, the Board of Commissioners shall use this guideline to determine if such an evaluation may be warranted. The Board of Commissioners in its determination should give particular attention to any dynamic educational changes calling into serious question the institution’s ability to maintain conformity to the Standards of Accreditation. When a special comprehensive evaluation is required within 12 months of a regularly scheduled comprehensive evaluation visit, the Board of Commissioners may consolidate the comprehensive reviews.

When a special comprehensive evaluation is required, a prospectus for the evaluation will be issued to the institution stating the reasons for the special comprehensive evaluation and the date for an evaluation committee site visit, and requiring the institution to provide evidence the institution is operating in conformity to the Standards of Accreditation prior to the site visit.

Criteria for authorizing a special comprehensive evaluation:

1. **Change of governing control or ownership** (in combination with any two of the following): change of legal status, change of fundamental mission/purpose, change of location, change of educational unit, establishment of two or more extension sites, establishment of a comprehensive distance education program, acquisition of another institution or any program or location of another institution, or declaration of financial exigency.

2. **Multiple concurrent substantive changes** (when any three of the following substantive changes occur within 12 months): change of legal status, change of fundamental mission/purpose, change of location, acquisition of any other institution or of any program or location of another institution, or new contract or major changes in existing contracts for educational or administrative services that would affect the school’s conformity to the Standards of Accreditation.

3. **Dynamic concurrent changes in the indicators of educational conditions or effectiveness in association with substantive changes** (when any two of the following unanticipated significant changes and one substantive change noted in item 2 above occur within 12 months): unanticipated significant enrollment increases or decreases (more than ±25 percent), unanticipated significant changes in unrestricted fund balances (≥-25 percent or more), unanticipated significant changes in distance education enrollment (more than ±25 percent), unanticipated significant changes in the placement of graduates (≥-25 percent or more), unanticipated significant reductions in the number of the full-time faculty (50 percent or more), or declaration of financial exigency.
Appendix 5

Criteria for Evaluating Teach-Out Plans and Agreements

Whenever a member school decides to close a campus (cease operations entirely at a main or branch campus) or close a location that offers 100 percent of a degree program, it is required to submit a teach-out plan for approval in order to ensure the welfare of enrolled students affected by that decision (see Policy Manual, II.C.3; see also Note below). The teach-out plan by the institution may also include a teach-out agreement with another institution. The teach-out plan must provide at least three essential elements: (1) equitable treatment for all affected students, (2) reasonable opportunity for those students to finish, and (3) notification to those students of any additional charges that may result from the teach-out arrangements. The teach-out plan must be submitted to and approved by the Board of Commissioners ("Board") prior to its implementation. If the campus or location being closed is also accredited by another agency, the Board will notify that agency of its approval of the member school's teach-out plan. Teach-out plans must address the following items:

1. **Counsel and Communication:** The plan must describe how students are informed of the planned closure, their options for completing the closed program(s), and the length of time such options might take. The plan must include evidence (i.e., examples) of how the closure decision is communicated to all affected parties, especially students, but also faculty, staff, and other key constituents.

2. **Completion Options:** The plan must further delineate the various options available for students to complete their program with a minimum of disruption and how those options will be implemented, including such options as continuing to offer all the necessary courses at the location to be closed until students finish (provide projected course schedules), offering courses at an approved nearby location, offering online courses if appropriate and if approved to do so, helping students transfer to equitable programs, and/or establishing a teach-out agreement with an institution with comparable offerings accredited by an agency recognized by the US Secretary of Education for US schools, or another appropriate authority for Canadian schools.

3. **Student Plans:** The plan should append a list of all affected students with a brief note as to how the educational needs of each student will be met, (i.e., which option[s] described above will be used by which students [e.g., Jones will graduate before closure, Smith will finish all required courses at that location before closure, Ortiz has chosen to transfer, etc.]). If the list of students is excessively long, it can be summarized by category (e.g., 20 students will graduate before closure, 30 students will finish courses before closure, and the remaining 50 will participate in a teach-out agreement).
4. **Notification of Charges:** The plan must document any additional charges that students may incur as a result of the closure; including how and when students are notified of those charges.

5. **Anticipated Time Line:** The plan must specify the dates for how the closure will unfold, including these dates: the last students admitted, the first students will finish, the last students will finish, and the effective date of closure. If applicable, the time line should also include when the institution or location will lose degree granting authority and/or access to Title IV funds.

6. **List of Other Agencies:** If the program or location being closed is also accredited by one or more other agencies, the plan must list all of them, along with contact information, since the Board must notify them of any teach-out plan it approves. The plan must provide contact information for any state agency to which the institution is accountable.

The Board will also consider any additional information provided by the school in its petition. If the site closure means the school ceases to operate completely and permanently, the plan must indicate where all existing student records will be stored, being sensitive to any state-required regulations.

NOTE: In addition to a school's decision to close a campus or location that offers a complete degree program, a teach-out plan is also required under three other conditions: (1) whenever the Board acts to withdraw, terminate, or suspend a member school's accreditation; (2) if a state licensing or authorizing agency notifies the Board of Commissioners that a school's license or legal authorization to provide an educational program has been or will be revoked; or (3) if the US Secretary of Education notifies the Board that the Secretary has initiated an emergency action against an institution, in accordance with section 487(c)(1)(G) of the HEA, or an action to limit, suspend, or terminate an institution participating in any Title IV, HEA program, in accordance with section 487(c)(1)(F) of the HEA, and that a teach-out plan is required (see ATS Commission Policies and Procedures, III.E).

A teach-out plan may also include a teach-out agreement with another accredited institution. A teach-out agreement can be part of any teach-out plan if the school so chooses, but it is required under any of these four circumstances: (1) if the member school cannot provide through its own resources a reasonable opportunity for affected students to finish prior to closure, (2) if the loss of Title IV funds (for participating institutions) will not allow some students to complete their program even if the institution itself remains open, (3) if the Board, upon review of the teach-out plan, decides a teach-out agreement is also needed, or (4) if any of the three conditions described in the previous paragraph will result in the school or location closing before all affected students have completed their program.

A teach-out plan is not required if a school is closing an extension site that offers less than a complete degree program, and no other condition listed below obtains. However, the school must still notify ATS Commission staff about the exact closing date and provide a brief summary of how it will meet the educational needs of affected students. If a school is relocating a campus or an extension site that offers a complete degree program, it must submit a Petition for Relocating an Approved Extension
Site (or Campus), which includes a teach-out plan since the former campus or location is still closing. A teach-out plan is not required if a school is simply terminating an existing degree program on its main campus or on a branch campus, provided all students in the program being terminated will be allowed to finish at that campus. Schools terminating a degree program on campus must still notify ATS Commission staff of that decision, since the Commission maintains a record of all approved degree programs for each approved location. The notification must indicate the name of the degree program being terminated, the date the last student enrolled, the number of students still enrolled, an indication of how those students will finish, and the projected date at which the last student will finish. The school must later notify ATS Commission staff when the last student has finished. Until then, the Commission will continue to list that program as approved, but with the designation of “discontinued,” until notified of the last student to finish and under the condition that no new students may be admitted. A school may suspend a program for up to a year without notification, but anything longer than one year will be considered a termination with notification required.
Appendix 6

Policy on Approving New Extension Sites

The Board of Commissioners has adopted the following policy on approving new extension sites, including which approved degree programs can be offered at those sites.

1. Petitions for new extension sites offering less than half a degree can be approved by ATS Commission staff, if the petition documents that all applicable standards are met. No site visit is required. Approval of such sites permits the school to offer less than half of any approved degree within the same category of degrees as in the original petition—without any further approval of the site. For example, if staff approves a school’s petition to offer less than half of a degree within the category of “basic programs oriented toward ministerial leadership,” it may offer less than half of any degree program in that category without any further petitions or approvals. Categories of degrees are described in Educational Standard, sections ES.1.2–5.

2. Petitions for new extension sites offering half or more of a degree, including a complete degree, can be approved only by the ATS Board of Commissioners. A site visit is required within six months of the first course(s) offered, unless the school includes in its petition a request for an exemption to the site visit, based on meeting the four exemption criteria described in section III.A.1(e) of the Policy Manual. If the school is petitioning to offer a complete degree, then the approval is limited to that particular degree. If the school is petitioning to offer less than a complete degree, then the approval will include any degree within that category (as described in the previous paragraph).
Appendix 7

Policy on Board Reader Panels and Reports to Staff

The Board of Commissioners has adopted the following policy on how it does its work.

1. The Board of Commissioners meets twice per year in person in plenary sessions and other times per year via conference call in committees called “reader panels.” Reader panels may act on certain kinds of reports and certain kinds of petitions, though actions on petitions that constitute substantive changes must be ratified by the full Board. The reports on which reader panels may act include any whose final action does not impact membership status (e.g., reader panels cannot remove or impose a notation, place a school on probation, withdraw or deny accreditation, or issue a show cause order). The petitions on which reader panels may act include (1) new extension sites, (2) new master’s programs in a degree category already approved for that school (e.g., another professional master’s), (3) revisions to an approved degree program that require a petition (see Appendix 3, section 3.e), and (4) any teach-out plans or agreements for a closed location (other than closing a main campus).

2. The Board of Commissioners delegates to ATS Commission staff action on any nonsubstantive change petitions (see Appendix 3, section 2, above) and any reports that fall into one of these three categories deemed routine:

   a. Reports that do not affect membership status (e.g., staff cannot impose notations)

   b. Reports that do not deal with substantive or controversial issues (e.g., serious financial concerns, difficult governance issues, or contentious issues in the media)

   c. Reports that do not require further Board action (e.g., staff cannot require follow-up reports or visits)
Appendix 8

Guidelines for Candidacy Petitions

The process for petitioning for candidacy status with the ATS Commission on Accrediting is described in *Guidelines for Petitioning for Candidate Accredited Member Status*. The criteria and policies related to “Candidate for Accredited Status” are described in the ATS Commission *Policies and Procedures*, II. The guidelines the ATS Board of Commissioners normally follow in granting petitions for candidacy are these:

**Grant candidacy on “fast track” (within 2 years of receiving Associate Member status) if a school** . . .

- is established for more than five years and/or accredited by another recognized agency;
- demonstrates institutional vitality and educational quality with ample resources and established assessment efforts; and
- seems to meet or be close to meeting all Commission Standards of Accreditation.

**Grant candidacy on “normal track” (within 2–5 years of receiving Associate Member status) if a school** . . .

- is established for five or fewer years and/or not accredited by another recognized agency;
- demonstrates institutional and educational capacity with sufficient resources and promising assessment efforts; and
- meets most Commission Standards of Accreditation and can meet all within two years.

**Not grant candidacy, but extend Associate Member status “beyond usual track” (another 5 years) if** . . .

- few of the factors above are present, but school making good progress; and
- if the school formally applies for renewal of Associate Member status (see guidelines).

The normal period of candidacy is two years, from either February through February or June through June, the two months in which the Board typically meets. That two-year period actually extends until the next meeting of the Board that follows the last month listed (i.e., through the following June for a February to February candidacy and through the following February for a June to June candidacy). Candidate schools who cannot meet that two-year time line may petition for an extension, per ATS Commission *Policies and Procedures*, II.A.

If a school does not petition for and achieve Candidate for Accredited Membership status within five years of being granted Associate Membership status, the policies described in the ATS *Procedures*, II.C.4 and II.E apply.
Appendix 9

Policy on Use and Release of Data from the Institutional Database

I. Preamble on Data Sharing Principles and Practices

A. The Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools ("Commission") maintains a comprehensive institutional database on theological schools in North America. These data are provided by the member schools on Annual Report Forms in the fall of each year as a condition of membership. The database contains information related to a range of educational and accrediting issues, and it supports the mission of the Commission “to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools.” In addition, it provides data central to the administrative and programmatic work of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (“Association”). As appropriate, it also serves as a valuable resource for researchers and organizations that share an interest in theological education, church and denominational bodies, representatives of the media, and the general public. The Commission shares all data in the institutional database with the Association for its use.

B. The information in the database that is considered public information is published in individually or institutionally identifiable forms in the Commission’s Annual Data Tables and in the Membership List, as published on the ATS website. The only individual school data published by the Commission or Association includes Annual Data Table 1.2 “Significant Institutional Characteristics of Each Member School,” Table 2.15 “Head Count and Full-Time Equivalent Enrollments by Degree Category in All Member Schools,” and individual contact information, selected statistics, and the accreditation status of each member institution in the Membership List.

C. The Commission collects, protects, and shares data based on key principles and practices, as described below. This policy applies to all data collected as described in "I.A" above.

II. Principles of Data Sharing

A. The Commission provides data to member schools and others for the following purposes:
1. improving theological education;
2. promoting appropriate openness and transparency, as well as cultivating more substantive and diverse conversations, among member schools, their constituencies, researchers, and the broader public; and
3. addressing key issues in theological education.

B. Recognizing data can be used for multiple purposes, the Commission, the Association, and others shall use the data only for purposes stated in "II.A.1-3".

C. The Commission protects the confidentiality of sensitive data (e.g., individual salaries, school and individual names, data that are not already public).
III. Practices of Data Sharing

A. Honoring of requests for data is contingent upon adequate resources of ATS, including financial and human resources. Charges for data may apply: see ATS website's Research page for current list of fees. The Commission shares the following data with the following constituencies under the following conditions (see Addendum to Appendix 9 for approval requirements):

1. Individual constituents at ATS member schools
   - Raw data from own school—per approval each year from chief administrative officer(s) of school
   - Raw data from peer schools, up to 15—per approval from each requested school’s chief administrative officer(s)
   - Digested data from peer schools, minimum 5, maximum 15

2. ATS-affiliated groups (e.g., ADME, ATLA, etc.) & Lilly ecology partners (e.g., FTE, HTI, Wabash, InTrust, etc.)
   - Email/contact information only; no charge

3. Individual researchers (e.g., doctoral students)
   - Select datasets—de-identified raw data from a set of schools, per request and approval

4. Research organizations (e.g., Auburn Center, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, etc.)
   - Select datasets—de-identified raw data from a set of schools, per request and approval

5. Religious groups (e.g., PCUSA, ELCA, SBC, etc.)
   - Digested data about particular schools, per request and approval
   - Select datasets—de-identified raw data from a set of schools, per request and approval

6. News media (e.g., Christian Century, Christianity Today, journalists, etc.)
   - Digested data about particular schools or the association of schools, per request and approval

7. Broader public
   - Digested data about particular schools or the association of schools, per request and approval

B. Data Use

Data that are provided according to “II.A” above must be used in the following ways:

1. Data are for one-time use (e.g., one news article, one research project);
2. Data must be used solely for the purpose(s) named in the request and consistent with the principles outlined in “II” above;
3. Data in the original form as provided by ATS may not be shared with any other organization(s) or individual(s);
4. When data are reported, the Commission is to be identified in the following manner as the source of any published data: “Source: The Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools, Pittsburgh, PA”. Also, the following disclaimer notice is to be included whenever data are reported: “Analyses and interpretations of the Commission's data are the researcher's and may not reflect those of the Commission on Accrediting or the Association of Theological Schools”. The Commission reserves the right to clarify
analyses or interpretations when it perceives that data have been used incorrectly or have led to misleading inferences, and such data misuse will be taken into account for all future requests from this individual, researcher, or research organization.

5. All reasonable steps must be taken to protect the confidentiality of the database as a whole and the data that are provided. In the event of a breach of confidentiality, the requesting individual or organization must notify ATS in writing within 15 calendar days of knowledge of the likely breach, with a description of the extent, and potential effects, of the breach;

6. Access to the data must be limited to staff who are qualified to carry out the sole purpose stated in the request;

7. Additional data-use requirements stated in the request protocol must be followed.

C. Appeals

Any appeals of denials for access to the Commission’s data should be directed to the Appeals Panel of the Commission on Accrediting.

IV. Glossary

The following are definitions of terms used in this document:

**Dataset**
Collection of raw data pulled from a database, with multiple cases (e.g., individuals, schools) and multiple variables (e.g., administrative role, student headcount, individual's denomination, school's structure); defining of datasets involves identifying the type of cases and specifying the variables being requested.

**De-identified**
At the most basic level, removal of names and titles (of individuals or organizations) for purposes of confidentiality; other forms of de-identification may include removal of variables beyond names and titles.

**Digested data**
Database information that has been collated to identify counts, frequencies, percentages, and averages (mean, median, or mode) or interpretations about the population inferred from the sample dataset (e.g., predictions, statistically significant differences) and reported most commonly in table or graph form.

**Raw data**
Non-digested information that is pulled straight from a database and most commonly provided in an Excel sheet, SPSS file, or other comma-separated value (csv) file.

**Variables**
Factors, quantities, conditions, and other characteristics that are liable to vary and that are identified for purposes of study or research.
Addendum to Appendix 9: Approval Requirements by Type of Data and Category of Data Users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Data User</th>
<th>Publically available raw data(^1) (collations from ATS' or schools' websites)</th>
<th>Data from Selected Schools</th>
<th>Data from All or Sets of ATS Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None (Level 1)</td>
<td>None/Contract Level 3</td>
<td>None/Contract Level 2</td>
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<td>Level 1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Approval Levels and Requirements:**

- **Level 1**  Written or email request and approval by any ATS research staff
- **Level 2**  Submission of request protocol and approval by ATS director of research, in conjunction with one other ATS research staff
- **Level 3**  Written or email request and approval by ATS executive director and requested school's chief administrative officers

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1 Data per school that are already publicly available on the Association's website include variables found in Annual Data Tables 1.2 and 2.15: school's accreditation status, embeddedness, predominant racial composition, state, denominational affiliation, total expenditures, long-term investments, faculty full-time and FTE, library holdings, student enrollment by headcount and FTE, and MDiv tuition and fees. Additional data per school are available publicly through organizations such as the National Center for Education Statistics (through the IPEDS process, which is required of all institutions of higher education receiving Title IV funding), regional accrediting agencies, and the American Association of University Professors (average faculty salaries per school).
Introduction

At its February 2014 meeting, the Board of Commissioners (“Board”) approved a revised set of notations that are aligned with the General Institutional Standards, Educational Standard, and Degree Program Standards. The new notations went into effect June 1, 2014. Notations imposed by the Board through February 2014 will remain in effect through June 1, 2017, or until they are removed as provided by the ATS Commission Policies and Procedures.

The Board of Commissioners shall impose one or more of the following notations when it judges that an institution insufficiently meets a Standard of Accreditation or judges that principles contained in an accrediting standard are not being adequately translated into practice (see Commission Policies and Procedures, VII.E). The Board views a notation as a notice or warning that a school partially meets a Standard of Accreditation, but it does not fully meet the Standard until appropriate action is taken in a timely manner, normally not to exceed two years (see Commission Policies and Procedures, VII.E.3). An institution may submit evidence sooner than two years, or it may request for good cause an extension of up to one year beyond the original two years, subject to Board approval. If evidence is not provided within the time frame specified by the Board that the concern has been adequately addressed, the Board shall take an adverse action by withdrawing accreditation, an action which is appealable (see Commission Policies and Procedures, XI).

Notations

Notation 1 on Standard 1: Purpose, Planning, and Evaluation

N1.a The institutional statement of purpose is inadequately articulated or implemented.

N1.b The institution’s planning processes are insufficient or ineffective.

N1.c The institution does not demonstrate appropriate or adequate institutional evaluation and improvement.

Notation 2 on Standard 2: Institutional Integrity

N2.a The institution’s policies or practices do not adequately ensure that personnel are treated ethically.

N2.b The institution does not adequately demonstrate, in light of its own purpose statement, that it seeks to enhance the participation of women and/or minorities in its institutional life or its educational programs, and there is no evidence of a credible plan or its implementation to address this issue in a timely and effective manner.
N2.c The institution has not provided data or information to the board as required by the Standards. (NOTE: Failure to submit the ATS Annual Report Forms [ARF] by the deadline is one cause for imposing this notation. In such cases, the notation is removed when Commission staff are notified that the ARF has been submitted.)

N2.d The institution has not met one or more of the mandatory requirements regarding integrity listed in the Standards of Accreditation or Commission Policy and Procedures.

**Notation 3 on Standard 3: The Theological Curriculum**

N3.a The institution does not have or adequately implement policies regarding the freedom of inquiry necessary for learning, teaching, and research.

N3.b The institution's practices inadequately or ineffectively encourage the quality of learning, teaching, and research, including the importance of global engagement in theological education, and there is no evidence of a credible plan or its implementation to address this issue in a timely and effective manner.

**Notation 4 on Standard 4: Library and Information Resources**

N4.a The library's assessment efforts do not adequately demonstrate that its physical or electronic resources (collections, facilities, or technology) or its services to patrons adequately support the institution's educational offerings, and there is no evidence of a credible plan or its implementation to address this issue in a timely and effective manner.

N4.b The institution has not adequately demonstrated that the library's personnel or financial resources provide appropriate support to the institution's educational offerings, and there is no evidence of a credible plan or its implementation to address this issue in a timely and effective manner.

**Notation 5 on Standard 5: Faculty**

N5.a The faculty does not possess appropriate credentials for graduate theological education and there is no evidence of a credible plan or its implementation to address this issue in a timely and effective manner.

N5.b The institution does not appropriately resource, support, retain, or evaluate faculty, including provision of sufficient time to teach and research, or engage them adequately in the institution's planning and shared governance, and there is no evidence of a credible plan or its implementation to address this issue in a timely and effective manner.

N5.c The faculty is not adequately engaged in the assessment of student learning or does not make meaningful use of assessment results to improve academic programs and student learning, and there is no evidence of a credible plan or its implementation to address this issue in a timely and effective manner.
Notation 6 on Standard 6: Students

N6.a  The institution has not adequately demonstrated that its recruitment and admissions policies, practices, or publications meet this Standard.

N6.b  The institution has not met one or more of the mandatory requirements regarding students listed in the Standards of Accreditation or Policies and Procedures.

Notation 7 on Standard 7: Authority and Governance

N7.a  The institution does not adequately or appropriately define, exercise, or implement the roles, responsibilities, and structures of authority and governance.

N7.b  The governing board does not require ongoing institutional evaluation and planning or evaluation of its own performance as a board.

Notation 8 on Standard 8: Institutional Resources

N8.a  The institution has not demonstrated that its human, physical, or technological resources are adequate or adequately evaluated, and there is no evidence of a credible plan or its implementation to address this issue in a timely and effective manner.

N8.b  The institution's financial resources are not adequate for long-term institutional vitality and there is no credible plan to address this issue in a timely and effective manner.

N8.c  Significant deficiencies have been noted in the institution's internal financial and reporting systems and/or internal controls, and the institution's response to these deficiencies does not appear to be sufficiently effective or appropriately timely.

Notation 9 on Educational Standard and Degree Program Standards

N9.a  The institution offers one or more degree programs that do not conform to the expectations of these Standards or the Commission's Policies and Procedures.

N9.b  The institution's extension education or distance education offerings do not meet the expectation set forth in these Standards.

N9.c  The institution has not demonstrated the extent to which its students have met the learning outcomes appropriate for each degree program it offers or that its assessment efforts have led to improvement and there is no evidence of a credible plan or its implementation to address this issue in a timely and effective manner.

N9.d  The institution does not make available to the public on a regular basis a summary of the evaluation of the educational effectiveness of its approved degree programs.