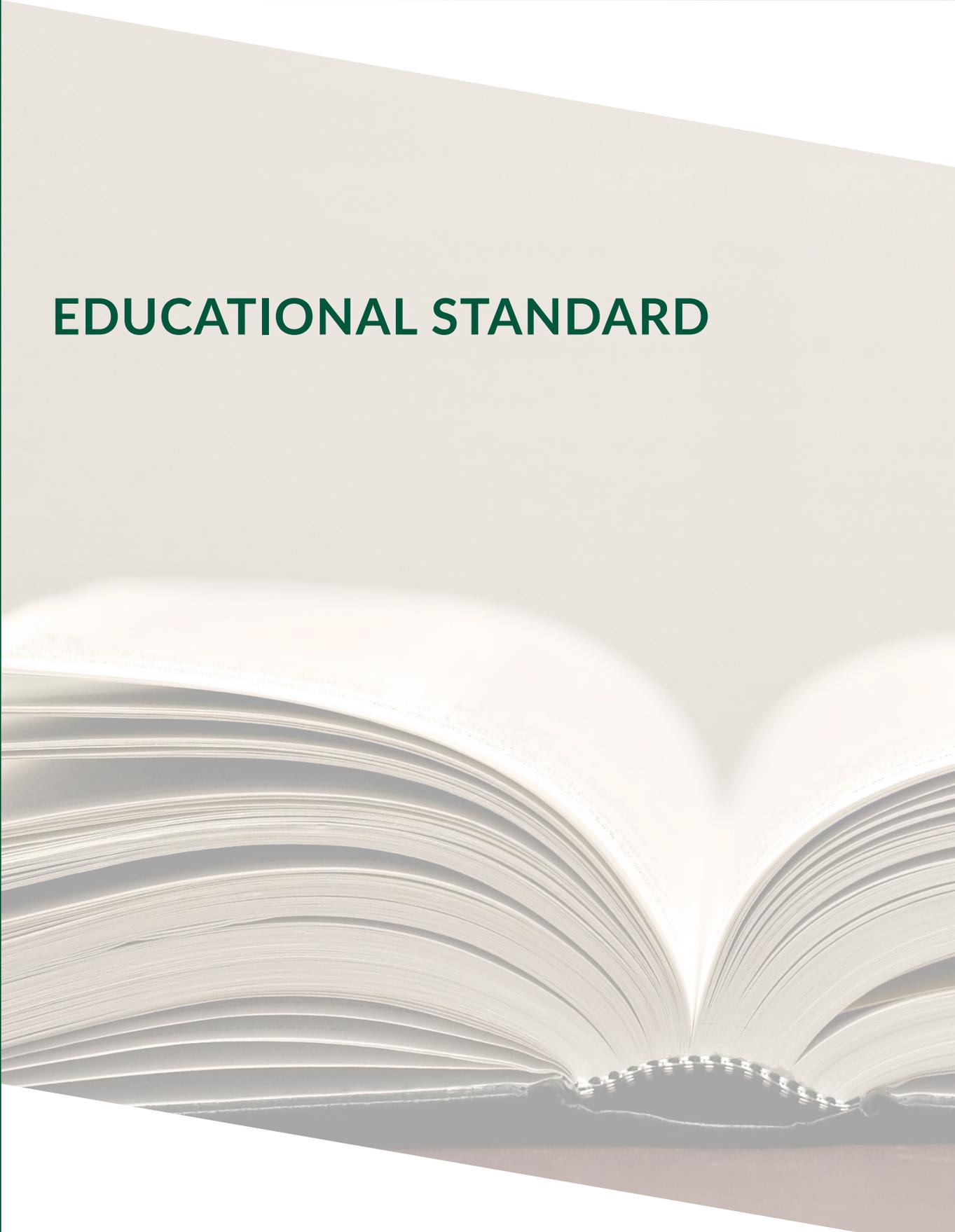


Commission on Accrediting

# EDUCATIONAL STANDARD



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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.

As noted in section V.G.3.c of the *Policy Manual*, 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.

**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 post-baccalaureate 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.