

## STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

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# GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS

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## 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, para-church 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

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\* 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 by 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, course work 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.<sup>†</sup>

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

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<sup>†</sup> 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.

<sup>‡</sup> 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.

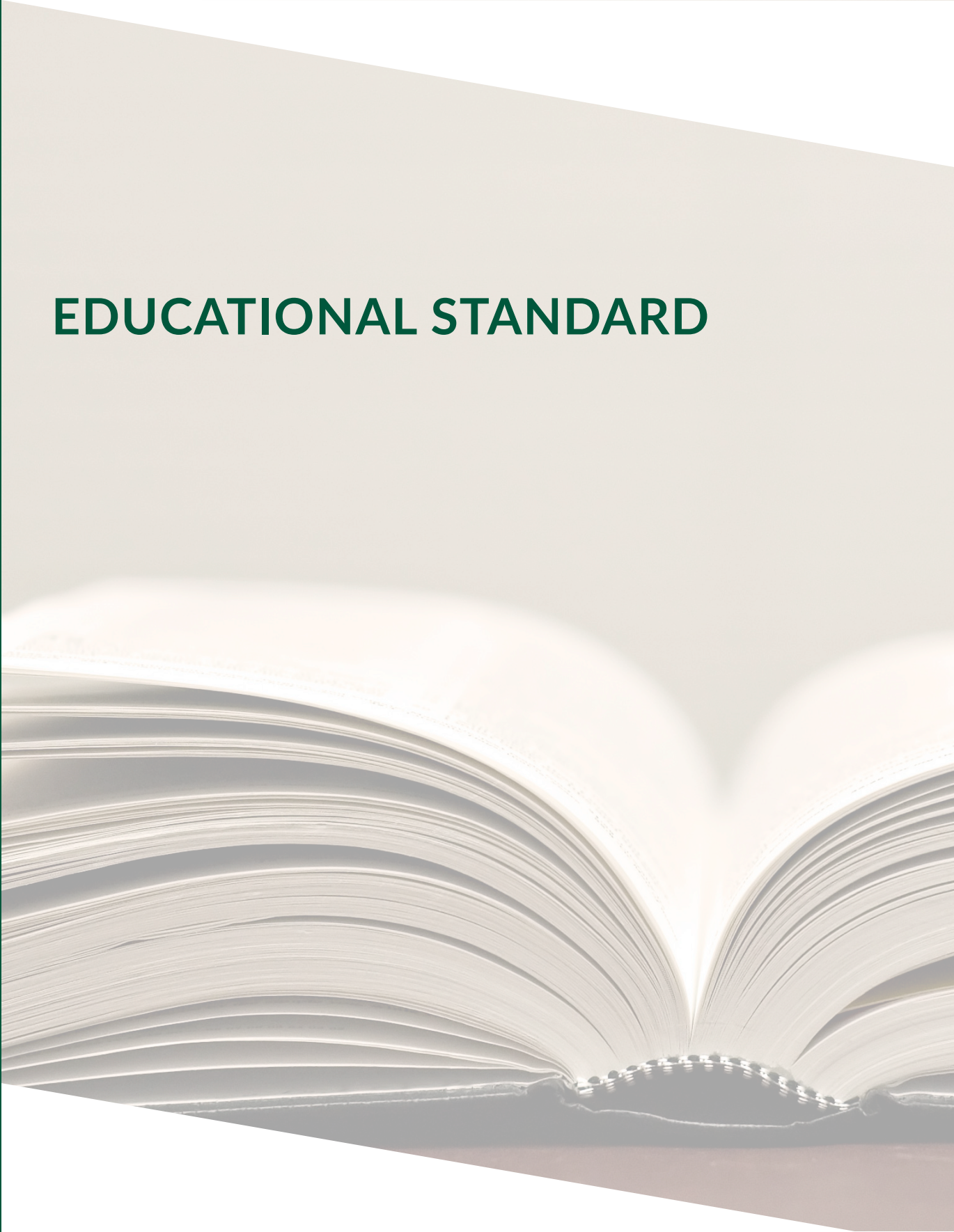
8.8.2.1 Timely technological support services should include (1) staff with a sufficiently high level of technical skills to ensure student facility in handling software and the technological aspects of course offerings and (2) the systemic evaluation and upgrading of technological resources and services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

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**

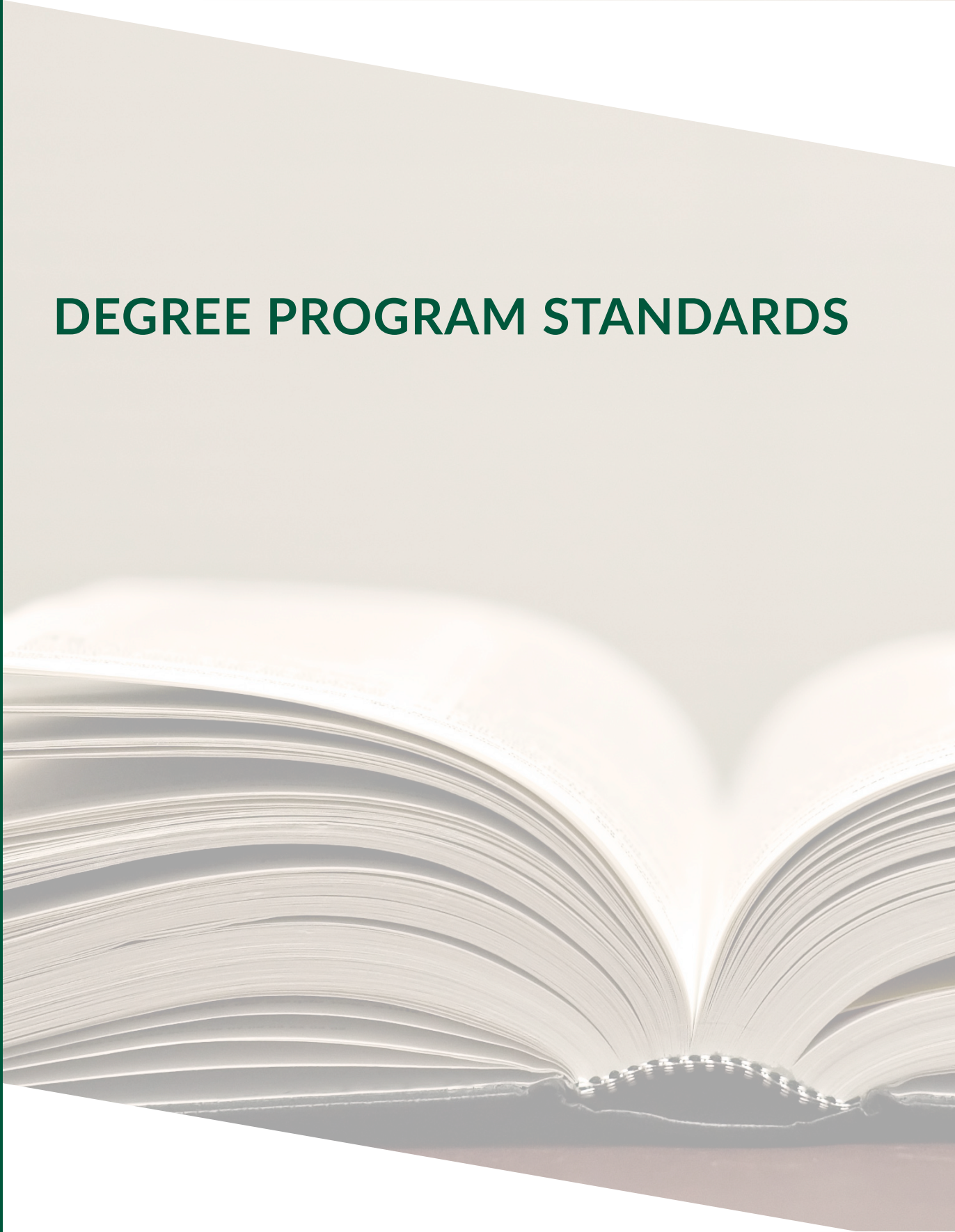
ES.8.2.1 Schools may offer programs of study consisting of either courses for which graduate academic credit is granted or educational events without such credit.

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.

Commission on Accrediting

# DEGREE PROGRAM STANDARDS



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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 multifaith 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 inter-related 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

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.

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 course work, 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.

## NOTATIONS



# 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.
- 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.