2012

ABHE Commission on Accreditation Manual

2012, Ed.1 <mark>EXCERPT</mark>

Copyright © 2012
Association for Biblical Higher Education
Commission on Accreditation
5850 T.G. Lee Blvd., Ste. 130
Orlando, FL 32822

Voice: 407.207.0808
Fax: 407.207.0840
E-Mail: ~~coa@abhe.org~~
Website: ~~www.abhe.org~~

Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 1
MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

The institution has a clearly defined mission that is appropriate to higher education as well as its own specific educational role. The mission statement serves as the foundation for institutional operations, programs, and activities. Statements of the goals and program objectives specify how the institution will fulfill its mission.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A clearly defined mission statement, appropriate to biblical higher education, developed and periodically reviewed by broad representation from all sectors of the institution and ratified by the governing board.
2. A mission statement that is published widely among both internal and external constituencies.
3. A mission statement that guides faculty, staff, administration, and governing boards in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, program development, and educational outcomes.
4. Clearly articulated and publicized institutional goals that are directly related to the mission statement.
5. Clearly articulated and publicized objectives for each educational program that support the mission statement and institutional goals.

Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 2
STUDENT LEARNING, INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS & PLANNING

The institution demonstrates that it is accomplishing and can continue to accomplish its mission, goals and program objectives and improve performance through a regular and comprehensive system of assessment and planning. Central to this plan is the systematic and specific assessment of student learning and development through a strategy that measures the student's knowledge, skills and competencies against institutional and programmatic goals.

2a. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING AND PLANNING

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. The identification of appropriate inter-related student outcomes in the context of institutional goals, program objectives and course objectives.
2. A shared commitment on the part of students, faculty, staff, and administration to achieve these stated outcomes
3. A written outcomes assessment plan that articulates multiple means to validate expected learning outcomes
4. Criteria appropriate to the higher education credential to be awarded for evaluating success with respect to student achievement.
5. Validation, as a result of using the outcomes assessment plan, that students are achieving the stated outcomes relative to institutional goals, program objectives and course objectives.
6. A process whereby these outcome measurements lead to the improvement of teaching and learning.
7. The ongoing provision of reliable information to the public regarding student achievement, including graduation and employment rates.

2b. ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND PLANNING

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A written assessment document that describes continuous, structured processes involving the total institution.
2. Meaningful analysis of assessment data and use of results by appropriate constituencies for the purpose of improvement.
3. Substantial evidence issuing from its assessment processes that the institution is effective in fulfilling its mission and achieving its goals and objectives.
4. A planning process that is systematic and ongoing and involves representatives of the various institutional constituencies.
5. A planning process for the improvement of the institution's goals and services.
6. A plan that reflects the institution's vision and is based on assessment results and realistic resource projections.
7. A system for monitoring institutional progress in achieving planning goals.

8.   The ongoing provision of reliable information to the public regarding its performance.

Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 3
INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

The institution is a model of Christian ethical behavior, both internally and externally. The institution demonstrates integrity in all of its practices and relationships, with strict adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS:

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. Institutional publications, statements and advertising that describe accurately and fairly the institution, its operations, its programs, its transfer credit policies including the criteria for transfer credit award decisions, it's articulation agreements, and its effectiveness claims.
2. Student, faculty, and staff handbooks that describe and govern various institutional relationships with those constituencies, including appropriate grievance procedures.
3. Policies and practices for the resolution of internal conflicts within the institution's constituency.
4. An institutional culture that fosters respect for the background and perspectives of the community.
5. Equitable and consistent treatment of constituencies in all areas including student discipline, student evaluation, grievances, faculty promotion, administrative review, compensation, and human resource management.
6. Honest and open communication regarding compliance with agencies such as accrediting, licensing, and governing bodies.
7. Fulfillment of all applicable standards, policies, and requirements of the ABHE Commission on Accreditation.
8. Integrity in all financial matters.

[Policies to Reference: Policy Concerning the Conferring of Honorary Doctoral Degrees; Policy on Ethical Practices; Policy on Falsification of Data; Principles of Good Practice in Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status]

Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 4
AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE

The institution is legally constituted as a nonprofit organization authorized by its state or province to operate as an educational institution and grant all degrees and/or offer credentials. The institution has a governing board with legal and fiduciary responsibility to exercise appropriate oversight over institutional integrity, policies, resource development, and ongoing operations.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS:

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by …

1. Evidence that the institution is operating legally in its state or province.
2. A constitution and bylaws that clearly and comprehensively provide a basis for institutional administration and governance.
3. A governing board that exercises legal power to establish and review policies of the institution.
4. Board membership that excludes all employees except the chief executive officer.
5. A governing board with elected officers that do not include the chief executive officer.
6. A governing board that assists in generating resources needed to sustain and improve the institution.
7. A conflict of interest policy for board members that addresses issues such as financial interests, contracts, employment, family, or other personal interests in the institution.
8. A governing board appropriate in size to operate efficiently and sufficiently diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender (where theologically appropriate), and professional competencies to represent the constituency.
9. A governing board that is sufficiently autonomous to protect the integrity of the institution.
10. A procedure in place for the assessment of the effectiveness of board members.
11. A process for orienting and developing new board members, and providing updates for current members on issues relative to mission, organization, finances, and programs.
12. A chief executive officer appointed and evaluated by the board, to provide administrative leadership for the institution.
13. Board policies and practices that restrain the board from individual and/or collective involvement in institutional administration.
14. A board rotation system that encourages new members.

Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 5
ADMINISTRATION

The institution has a core of administrators that brings together its various resources and allocates them to accomplish institutional goals by implementing policies and structures in collaboration with appropriate constituencies.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS:

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A chief executive officer (whether the president or another), whose primary employment/vocational responsibility is to the institution and who is responsible to the board in leading the institution toward the accomplishment of its mission.
2. A chief executive officer with the combination of academic background and professional training appropriate to the institution's mission.
3. An organizational structure appropriate to the size and scope of the institution.
4. Administrative leaders with appropriate education, skills, and resources necessary to discharge their duties.
5. Clear documentation in regard to organizational structure, encompassing all units and roles.
6. Complete, accurate, and securely maintained administrative records.
7. A process for review and enhancement of the performance of administrators.

Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 6
INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

The institution has the human, financial, physical, and technological resources needed to achieve its mission and has implemented policies and procedures to manage these resources effectively.

[Policies to Reference: Policy on Institutions Sponsored by Other Organization]

6a. HUMAN RESOURCES

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. An adequate number of qualified institutional personnel to provide basic services to students, faculty, and administration.
2. Written policies and procedures for hiring, promoting, and dismissal of institutional personnel based on principles of fairness and regard for individual rights.
3. Demonstrated commitment to provide adequate resources for employee welfare including professional growth and development.
4. Policies and practices that support employee diversity appropriate to the cultural context.
5. An organizational climate that encourages job satisfaction, collegiality, and respect among personnel.
6. An administrative handbook that describes organizational structures and job responsibilities.

6b. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A consistent record of financial stability as documented by external, opinioned audits available to the public.
2. A budgeting process that serves as an effective instrument of financial control.
3. The cultivation of multiple revenue streams sufficient to enable the realization of institutional goals.
4. Adequate resources to ensure achievement of educational goals.
5. Risk management policies and procedures sufficient to safeguard assets.
6. Appropriate board oversight of financial management to meet public accountability obligations.
7. Sufficient financial reserves to enable an effective response to unforeseen crises.
8. Adequate internal controls to safeguard assets and protect personnel from accusations of wrongdoing.
9. Evidence that institutional planning informs the budgeting process.

6c. PHYSICAL RESOURCES

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by. . .

1. Evidence that identified physical resource needs are addressed in the planning process.
2. Sufficient personnel and procedures in place to provide a well maintained and clean physical plant.
3. Facilities that are operated in compliance with applicable health, safety and disability access codes.
4. Appropriate provisions for the protection of facilities and personnel from threat of harm or loss.
5. Owned or leased facilities that assure continuity of educational offerings.
6. Evidence that facilities, equipment, and supplies are adequate to support the institutional mission and to achieve the educational goals.

6d. TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by. . .

1. Sufficient technology and use of that technology to enhance the institution's educational and operational effectiveness.
2. Systematic allocation of resources to maintain and expand technology.
3. Ongoing training for technical personnel and users of information systems.
4. Clearly stated policies and procedures regarding technological resources, services, and security.

Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 7
ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

The institution has developed and implemented an enrollment management plan that is consistent with its mission and addresses issues of recruitment, admissions, financial aid and retention.

7a. RECRUITMENT

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. Recruitment strategies that target students whose spiritual commitment, goals and interests are consistent with the institutional mission.
2. Accurate and sufficient recruitment information *to* enable prospective students to make informed decisions.
3. The allocation of resources and authority to support effective recruitment efforts.
4. Recruitment that reflects ethnic, cultural, and gender patterns and commitments relevant to the institution's constituency.

[Applicable Policies: Principles of Good Practice in Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status]

7b. ADMISSIONS

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. Admissions requirements and procedures that are clearly communicated to prospective students and applied consistently in the admissions process.
2. Evaluation procedures that reasonably ensure admitted students have attained the requisite educational level and possess the ability to successfully achieve their educational goals.
3. Published policies and procedures related to transfer credit and prior learning.
4. Systematic procedures for identifying students who are not adequately prepared for their desired level of study.

[Policies to Reference: Policy on Transfer and the Award of Academic Credit; Policy on Validating Credits Earned at Unaccredited Institutions]

7c. FINANCIAL AID

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. Accurate financial aid information and counseling in regard to scholarships, grants, loans and refunds.
2. Evidence that financial aid practices meet regulatory requirements.

3. Financial aid decision-making procedures that are timely and equitable.

[Applicable Policies: Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV]

7d. RETENTION

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by…

1. Resources and services sufficient to address the needs of at-risk students.
2. The development of services to improve student retention.
3. A functioning assessment process that measures student retention, attrition, and completion rates, and that stimulates improvement.

Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 8
STUDENT SERVICES

The institution provides services that contribute to the holistic development and care of students and that are appropriate to the level of education and delivery system.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A commitment to the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development of students that is consistent with biblical higher education.
2. The organization and delivery of student services that are appropriately aligned with the institution's mission and culture. Services that meet the needs of students, regardless of location or instructional delivery system.
3. Services that address diverse student needs, abilities, and cultures.
4. Qualified professionals empowered to supervise and provide student services and programs.
5. Leadership development facilitated by curricular and/or co-curricular programs that are integrated with the educational objectives.
6. A regular system of assessing needs, experiences, and levels of student satisfaction in order to improve services.
7. Opportunities for students to provide input in institutional decision-making.
8. Published procedures for and records of addressing student complaints and grievances.

Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 9
FACULTY

The institution maintains a faculty committed to its mission and qualified academically and spiritually to facilitate student learning within their disciplines and to contribute to the development of a biblical worldview. The institution fosters an academic climate that stimulates the exchange of ideas, encourages professional development, and promotes the well-being of faculty.

9a. FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS, DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A spiritually mature faculty who engage in modeling and mentoring relationships with students.
2. Faculty members who possess earned degrees from institutions accredited by agencies recognized by either the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or the U. S. Department of Education or by the appropriate provincial government. (Exceptions to faculty credential requirements should be limited and validated by personal vitae.)
3. Undergraduate faculty who have earned a minimum of a master's degree and who are teaching in their area of expertise.
4. Graduate faculty who have earned terminal degrees in their primary teaching fields.
5. Appropriate documentation of its faculty's academic preparation including official transcripts, official documentation of professional experience, performance and technical competencies, published documents, and other certifications and qualifications.
6. A faculty handbook that delineates appropriate policies and procedures, including published criteria for the recruitment, appointment, teaching load, promotion, grievance processes, and termination of faculty based on principles of fairness and regard for the rights of individuals.
7. Systems for evaluating the teaching effectiveness of all faculty.
8. Evidence of faculty contribution in the areas of student learning, scholarship, institutional development, ministry, and community service.
9. Adequate support for the professional advancement and development of its faculty including the pursuit of terminal degrees.
10. A published statement of academic freedom and adherence to its principles within the context of the institutional mission.
11. A faculty that is representative of the diversity of the constituency.

9b. FACULTY DECISION MAKING

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A core faculty of sufficient size and expertise, committed to the fulfillment of its mission and responsible for the quality of its academic functions.
2. An academic structure organized in departments, divisions, or alternate approaches appropriate to the size and complexity of the institution.
3. A process of faculty appointment that includes appropriate involvement of related academic and administrative personnel.
4. A clear and publicized statement of faculty-adopted requirements for graduation.
5. A process that involves faculty approval of candidates for graduation.
6. A faculty that is appropriately involved in academic-related decision-making processes especially related to admissions criteria, curriculum, student life, and graduation requirements.

Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 10
LIBRARY AND OTHER LEARNING RESOURCES

The institution ensures the availability of learning resources and services of appropriate form, range, depth, and currency to support the curricular offerings and meet student needs.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by . . .

1. A written learning resource purpose statement, consistent with the institutional mission.
2. Appropriate written policies and procedures relating to the management of library and other learning resources.
3. Sufficient funding, staff, and practices to procure and maintain needed learning resources and services.
4. The availability of reference services and other means of support to help users find needed information.
5. Promotion to enhance awareness of resources and services available.
6. Documentation for any cooperative arrangements involving the use of other institutions' resources.
7. Faculty involvement with the librarians in the analysis of resource adequacy, the selection of resource materials, and the development of library policy.
8. Policies, procedures, and facilities that ensure access to and security of learning resources.
9. Effective leadership by a credentialed director who has faculty status and who normally reports to the chief academic officer.
10. Librarians' participation in curricular planning.
11. Effective collaboration between the librarians and information technology personnel.
12. Evaluation of learning resource utilization by the learning community.
13. Curricular requirements, instruction, and reference services designed to teach information literacy skills to the learning community.
14. Participation in library networks and other cooperative arrangements.

Comprehensive Integrated Standards

STANDARD 11
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

The institution's academic programs are appropriate to the achievement of its mission and to the level of educational programs offered, with some programs oriented specifically to full-time vocational ministry but all programs enabling students to achieve a biblical worldview.

11a. CURRICULUM

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by …

1. Evidence that academic programs exhibit the content and rigor characteristic of higher education, and a level of analytical research and communication skills needed for life-long learning commensurate with the level of education.
2. A written statement of expected student outcomes for each academic program and a coherent program of study to achieve these objectives.
3. Evidence that the integration of curricular components enable students to achieve a biblical worldview.
4. A curriculum taught with sensitivity to the cultural context in which the students minister.
5. A process of regular review by faculty to ensure that curricular objectives for each academic program are being realized.
6. Evidence that course sequence progresses from foundational to advanced studies appropriate to the degree.
7. A curriculum content and level of education appropriate to the degree and nomenclature being offered.
8. Appropriate distinctions between levels of study within the context of student classifications, faculty qualifications, and learning methodologies.

Relative to this standard, the <u>undergraduate</u> programs of an accredited institution are characterized by…

9. A Bible/theology component equivalent to 30 semester hours, 9 of which may be in interdisciplinary Bible related courses for a non-church related baccalaureate, 18 semester hours of Bible/theology for a non-traditional degree completion program and 12 semester hours of Bible/theology for a one- or two-year program.
10. A core of general education studies representative of the breadth of general studies and equivalent to 36 semester hours for a baccalaureate degree or 18 semester hours for an associate degree.
11. A core of professional studies equivalent to a minimum of 18 semester hours (baccalaureate degrees only) and selected to equip students for professional positions
12. Professional programs requiring significant practicum experiences in the area of specialization.

[Policies to Reference: Policy Concerning Adult Degree Completion Programs; Concerning the Conferring of Honorary Doctoral Degrees; Policy on Biblical and Theological Studies; Policy on Canadian Institution Degree Programs; Policy on General Studies; Policy on International Education Programs; Policy on Two-Year Programs]

Relative to this standard, the <u>graduate</u> programs of an accredited institution are characterized by…

13. Curricula and resources to support programs that foster progressively more advanced student educational achievement and more effective ministry/leadership than undergraduate education.
14. Curricula providing for the development of research and independent thinking at an advanced level and/or appropriate high level professional practice.
15. Pre-requisite or curricular biblical/theological studies to ensure that students develop and demonstrate significant ability to think biblically in relation to their academic or professional disciplines.
16. Appropriate pre-requisite and/or curricular requirements to ensure that students are capable of pursuing advanced studies in the discipline.
17. A learning environment that cultivates critical thinking, theological reflection, spiritual formation, and effective leadership/ministry practice.
18. Appropriate practicum or internship experiences in the area of specialization for all professional programs.

11b. MINISTRY FORMATION PROGRAM

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution offering undergraduate curricula (and graduate curricula that feature field education) is characterized by . . .

1. A culture and programs that promote development of effective witnesses and servants in the church and the world at large.
2. An educational philosophy in which ministry formation is viewed as an integral part of the student's education.
3. A program of supervision that provides an adequate basis for evaluating and guiding students in the pursuit of their professional goals.
4. A ministry formation program coordinated by a director normally with faculty status and implemented under the supervision of faculty.
5. Evidence that the program is adequately staffed and financially supported.
6. A system of regular program review and assessment of outcomes that results in program improvement.
7. Evidence that academic credit given for ministry, if awarded, is warranted.

11c. ACADEMIC PATTERNS AND PROCEDURES

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is characterized by. . .

1. An academic advising system that guides the student from matriculation to selection of a program and graduation from that program.
2. An academic calendar that considers regional higher educational patterns, and meets state, provincial, or federal regulations.
3. The award of academic credit commensurate with normative academic and/or governmental definitions that may be based upon an intended learning outcome.
4. A system of accurate and secure record keeping consistent with state, provincial and/or federal regulations.
5. A system of grading and associated policies and procedures that reflects integrity, ensures fairness and consistency, conforms to higher education norms, and facilitates transportability of students' academic credits.

11d. ALTERNATIVE ACADEMIC PATTERNS

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution's academic programs utilizing off-campus locations, distance education, or alternative academic patterns are characterized by . . .

1. Objectives consistent with the institution's mission.
2. An intention to extend the accessibility of the institution's learning opportunities.
3. Clearly defined learning outcomes that are designed, approved, administered and evaluated under established institutional procedures.
4. Standards for quality of instruction and academic rigor appropriate to higher education.
5. Accessible and adequate learning resources.
6. Adequate staffing, facilities, and technology to support the programs.
7. Appropriate measures required of students participating in distance and/or correspondence education to ensure that the student receiving credit is in fact the person completing the work.

[Policies to Reference: Alternative Academic Programs and Online Distance Education Best Practices (WCET); Guidelines for Sharing Online Courses]

***