



The Association for
Biblical Higher Education
Formerly *The Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges*

PROGRAMMATIC STANDARDS

EDITED VERSION

July, 2004

Programmatic Accreditation

1. OBJECTIVES

The program has specific objectives that reflect the institutional mission and goals and lead to the development of church related ministries.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

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

- Clearly articulated and publicized program specific objectives that serve as the basis for designing each curricular offering.
- Program objectives that appropriately fit the mission of the institution and the goals of the related academic unit.

2. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING AND PLANNING

The program demonstrates that it is accomplishing and can continue to accomplish its objectives 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 goals and programmatic objectives.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

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

- The identification of appropriate inter-related student outcomes in the context of institutional goals, program objectives and course objectives.
- A shared commitment on the part of students, faculty, staff, and administration to achieve these stated outcomes.
- A written outcomes assessment plan that articulates multiple means to validate expected learning outcomes.
- Substantial evidence issuing from its assessment processes, that students are achieving the stated outcomes relative to institutional goals, program objectives and course objectives.
- A process whereby these outcome measurements lead to the improvement of teaching and learning.
- A planning process for the improvement of the program's objectives and services.
- A system for monitoring program progress in achieving its plans.

3. INTEGRITY

The program is a model of Christian ethical behavior, both internally and externally. The program 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 program is characterized by . . .

- Institutional publications, statements and advertising that describe accurately and fairly the institution, its operations, its programs, and its effectiveness claims.
- Fulfillment of all applicable standards and requirements of the ABHE Commission on Accreditation.
- Integrity in all financial matters.

4. ADMINISTRATION

The program has personnel to bring together its various resources and allocate them to accomplish objectives by implementing policies and structures in collaboration with appropriate constituencies.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS:

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

- An organizational structure and qualified staff that fit the size and scope of the institution.
- Administrative leaders with appropriate credentials, skills, and resources necessary to discharge their duties and who enjoy a status comparable to that of other sectors within the institution.
- Clear documentation in regard to organizational structure, encompassing all units and roles.
- Complete, accurate, and securely maintained administrative records.
- A process for review and enhancement of the performance of personnel.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

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

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS:

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

- An adequate number of qualified program personnel to provide basic services to students, faculty, and administration.
- An organizational climate that encourages job satisfaction, collegiality, and respect among personnel.
- Appropriate technology and the use of that technology to enhance the institution's educational and operational effectiveness.
- Systematic allocation of resources to maintain and expand technology
- Adequate financial and physical resources to ensure achievement of educational goals.

6. ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT AND STUDENT SERVICES

The program utilizes procedures designed to effectively recruit, admit, and retain qualified students. The program also provides services that contribute to the holistic development and care of students and are appropriate to the level of education and delivery system.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

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

- Recruitment strategies that are directed toward students whose spiritual commitment, goals and interests are consistent with program objectives.
- Accurate and comprehensive recruitment literature that enables prospective students to make informed decisions.
- Evaluation procedures that reasonably ensure admitted students have attained the requisite educational level and possess the ability to successfully achieve their educational goals.
- Published policies and procedures related to transfer credit applicable to the program.
- An assessment process that measures student retention, attrition, and completion rates.
- A commitment to the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development of students that is consistent with biblical higher education.
- Leadership development facilitated by curricular and/or co-curricular programs that are integrated with the educational objectives.
- Opportunities for students to provide input in programmatic decision-making.

7. FACULTY RESOURCES

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

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

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

- A spiritually mature faculty who engage in modeling and mentoring relationships with students.
- A core faculty of sufficient size and expertise, responsible for the fulfillment of the program objectives.
- Undergraduate faculty who have earned a minimum of a master's degree and who are teaching in their areas of expertise.
- Graduate faculty who have earned terminal degrees in their primary teaching fields.
- 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.)
- A faculty that is appropriately involved in decision-making processes especially related to admissions criteria, curriculum, student life, and graduation requirements.
- Systems for evaluating the teaching effectiveness of all faculty.
- Evidence of faculty contribution in the areas of student learning, scholarship, institutional development, ministry, and community service.
- Adequate support for the professional advancement and development of faculty including the pursuit of advanced studies.
- 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.
- A published statement of academic freedom and adherence to its principles within the context of the institutional mission.

8. LIBRARY AND OTHER LEARNING RESOURCES

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

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

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

- Faculty involvement with the library staff in the analysis of resource adequacy, the selection of resource materials, and the establishment of library policy.
- Library staff participation in curricular planning.
- The availability of reference services and other means of support to help users find needed information.
- Evaluation of learning resource utilization by the learning community.
- Sufficient funding, staff and practices to procure and maintain needed library resources and services.

9. ACADEMICS

The program is appropriate to the achievement of the institutional mission and to the level being offered, specifically for service in church-related ministry enabling students to achieve a biblical worldview.

9a. CURRICULUM

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

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

- 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.
- A written statement of expected student outcomes for each academic program and a coherent program of study to achieve these objectives.
- Evidence that the integration of curricular components enable students to achieve a biblical worldview.
- A program taught with sensitivity to the cultural context in which the students minister.
- A process of regular review by faculty to ensure that curricular objectives for each academic program are being realized.
- Evidence that course sequence progresses from foundational to advanced studies appropriate to the degree.
- A curriculum content and level of education appropriate to the degree and nomenclature being offered.
- Appropriate distinctions between levels of study in terms of students, faculty, and learning methods.

Relative to this standard, an accredited undergraduate program is characterized by...

- 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.
- 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.
- A core of professional studies equivalent to a minimum of 18 semester hours and selected to equip students for professional positions.
- Professional program requiring significant practicum experiences in the area of specialization.

Relative to this standard, an accredited graduate program is characterized by...

- Curricula and resources to support programs that foster progressively more advanced student educational achievement and more effective ministry/leadership than undergraduate education.

- Curricula providing for the development of research and independent thinking at an advanced level and/or appropriate high level professional practices and training experiences.
- 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.
- Appropriate pre-requisite and/or curricular requirements to ensure that students are capable of pursuing advanced studies in the discipline.
- A learning environment that cultivates critical thinking, theological reflection, spiritual formation, and effective leadership/ministry practice.
- Appropriate practicum or internship experiences in the area of specialization for all professional programs.

9b. MINISTRY FORMATION PROGRAM

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an accredited undergraduate program (and a graduate program that features field education) is characterized by . . .

- A culture and programs that promote development of effective witnesses and servants in the church and the world at large.
- An educational philosophy in which ministry formation is viewed as an integral part of the student's education.
- A program of supervision that provides an adequate basis for evaluating and guiding students in the pursuit of their professional goals.
- A system of regular program review and assessment of outcomes that results in program improvement.
- Evidence that academic credit given for ministry is warranted.

9c. ALTERNATIVE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Relative to this standard, an academic program utilizing off-campus locations, distance education or alternative academic patterns is characterized by . . .

- Objectives consistent with the institution's mission.
- An intention to extend the accessibility of the institution's learning opportunities.
- Clearly defined learning outcomes that are designed, approved, administered and evaluated under established institutional procedures.
- Standards for quality of instruction and academic rigor appropriate to higher education.
- Accessible and adequate learning resources.
- Adequate staffing, facilities and technology to support the program.

Note: Descriptions of common alternative academic programs (delivery systems, formats, or methods) are found in the self-study manual.