

# 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.