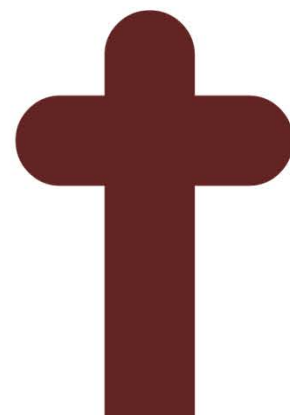


# Accreditation Manual





# Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools

## Accreditation Manual

December 2015



Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS) is recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE), the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) as a national accrediting agency for Christian postsecondary institutions that offer certificates, diplomas, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees, including distance learning.



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# INTRODUCTION

The Accreditation Manual is designed to convey all standards and evaluative criteria that have been established by the Accreditation Commission to guide institutions through candidate and accredited status.

The manual is intended for institutions requesting initial candidacy status and accredited status as well as for institutions seeking reaffirmation of accredited status. Questions regarding the accreditation process (policies, procedures, standards, or evaluative criteria) should be directed to the TRACS office.

The accreditation standards may be modified by the Accreditation Commission, but only after opportunities for comment on any proposed changes have been provided to all parties and institutions significantly affected.

## Purpose

The principal purpose of TRACS is to provide an accreditation program for postsecondary institutions, e.g., Christian liberal arts, colleges/universities, graduate schools/seminaries, Bible colleges/institutes, that offer a certificate, diploma, or degree (Associate, Baccalaureate, or graduate) at both accredited and candidate (pre-accredited) level to ensure their academic quality, financial stability, and student support services, which will allow the institution and their students the benefits of participating in federally-funded programs.

The Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS) is a voluntary, non-profit, self-governing organization of Christian postsecondary institutions. TRACS is recognized as a national institutional accrediting agency by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and is a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). TRACS was established by a group of educators in 1979, the purpose of which was to promote the welfare, interests, and development of quality Christian postsecondary institutions whose mission is characterized by a distinctively Christian orientation. While TRACS encourages each affiliated institution to develop its own distinctive, TRACS expects institutions to provide quality postsecondary education within the context of Christian values, with emphasis on high academic standards, integrity, practical application, and spiritual development. The governing boards of these institutions have voluntarily applied to TRACS and have been approved by the Accreditation Commission after having met the established requirements for affiliation at either accredited or candidacy level as described below.

The required criteria includes both FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS assuring the institution's constituents and the public of its biblical, purpose and objectives, philosophical, ethical and moral values, and OPERATIONAL STANDARDS providing assurance of educational and financial integrity.

The Accreditation Commission is solely responsible to carry out all accreditation activities and has final authority regarding all accreditation actions. It formulates and implements all policies, procedures, standards, and evaluative criteria used in the accreditation process. The Accreditation Commission consists of nine to eighteen (9-18) commissioners, including three (3) but not more than one-third public representatives.

## Aims

- To foster excellence and quality in Christian postsecondary education through the development of policies, procedures, and standards for assessing educational effectiveness leading to enhanced educational quality.
- To ensure the consistent application of accreditation standards.
- To develop an accreditation process that requires continuous institutional self-study and assessment.
- To serve as an accrediting agency that recognizes institutions demonstrating quality through compliance with the standards at a candidate or accredited level.
- To provide counsel and assistance to both established and developing institutions.
- To provide accredited and candidate (pre-accredited) institutions the opportunity to participate in federal programs authorized under Title IV and other government programs.
- To assure the educational community, the general public, and other agencies or organizations that an institution evaluated by TRACS 1) has clearly defined and appropriate educational objectives and outcomes, 2) has established conditions under which educational outcomes are being achieved at an acceptable level with reference to the TRACS standards, and 3) is so organized, staffed and supported that it can be expected to continue to offer quality education in the foreseeable future.
- To establish and encourage cooperative relationships among its institutions that promotes common interests both nationally and internationally.

## The Role and Value of Accreditation

Accreditation is a status granted to an educational institution that meets or exceeds the Standards and evaluative Criteria and the policies and procedures established by the Accreditation Commission and validated by the membership for educational quality. In the United States, accreditation is voluntarily sought by institutions and is conferred by independent, autonomous bodies. Voluntary, non-governmental, institutional accreditation, as practiced by TRACS and other recognized accrediting agencies, is uniquely characteristic of American education. In other countries, the development, maintenance, control, and supervision of educational standards is a governmental function.

Principal concerns of accreditation are the improvement of educational quality and the assurance to the public that affiliated institutions meet established standards. While no institution in the United States is required to seek accreditation, the benefits leading to both self-improvement and self-enhancement provide strong motivation for most institutions to do so. Other recognized advantages include reciprocity in the transfer of credit from one accredited institution to another. In addition, a contributing factor in accreditation for many institutions is the fact that governmental and other agencies rely on accredited or candidate status in a recognized accrediting agency as a qualification for financial support and grants to students.

For purposes of determining eligibility for federal government assistance under certain legislation, the United States Department of Education (USDE) is required to publish a list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies that it determines to be reliable authorities as to the quality of training offered by educational institutions after initial recognition. Criteria for



recognition and guidelines have been established by the U.S. Secretary of Education to be used in recognition of accrediting agencies. The Accrediting Agency Evaluation Branch (AAEB) staff of the Office of Postsecondary Education reviews the policies and performance of nationally recognized accrediting agencies approximately every four years to determine whether they should be included on the Secretary's list.

The accreditation process of all recognized accrediting agencies follows a common pattern. Standards and evaluative Criteria, as well as procedures to be followed in the accreditation process, are developed by those involved in the work of an accrediting agency and used in evaluating an institution to determine its educational effectiveness in fulfilling its stated mission. The established standards and evaluative criteria are designed to guide institutions through all stages of affiliation (accredited or candidacy) from initial application through reaffirmation as a result of an institutional self-study program. The process requires a self-study by the institution, followed by an on-site visit by a peer evaluation team, and a subsequent review and decision by the Accreditation Commission. The basic purpose of the accrediting agencies, including TRACS, is to attest to the fact that an institution is achieving its stated goals and objectives and is meeting the Standards.

One of the goals of the process is to foster on-going assessment and planning at the institution. What happens on a continuous basis after the Accreditation Commission has finished its immediate work is as important as the aspects of accountability and short-range improvement. Compliance with the requirements is expected to be continuous and is validated periodically, normally as part of every comprehensive evaluation following institutional self-study. While accreditation indicates an acceptable level of overall quality, even the best institution is capable of improvement, which comes from its own clear identification and understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The advice and counsel provided by an on-site peer evaluation team comprised of experienced educators drawn primarily from other accredited institutions encourages improvement. Finally, publications and staff visits by the accrediting agency enhance improvement.

TRACS has established a review schedule for standards, evaluative criteria, policies, and procedures under the guidance of a Standards Review Committee. After such review, appropriate changes are made in the light of ensuing recommendations, but only after opportunity for comments on any proposed change have been provided to all parties significantly affected. Recommendations for improvements in the standards, policies, and procedures are encouraged and welcomed by the Accreditation Commission.

As stated above, two fundamental purposes of the accreditation process are (1) to assure the quality of an institution and (2) to assist in the improvement of an institution. Accreditation by an accrediting agency indicates that the institution:

- Has appropriate purposes.
- Has in the organization all human and physical resources needed to accomplish its purposes.
- Can demonstrate that it is accomplishing its purposes.
- Gives reason to believe it will continue to accomplish its purposes.

Recognition by a recognized accrediting agency assures the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an institution has a clearly defined educational purpose appropriate to higher education and consistent with the accrediting

agency's standards, has established conditions under which achievement of these objectives can reasonably be expected, appears in fact to be accomplishing them substantially, and is so organized, staffed and financed that it can be expected to continue to provide a quality program. The accrediting process fosters both integrity and excellence in affiliated educational institutions that use the standards for assessing educational effectiveness. The requirement that the accredited institution conduct periodic self-evaluations results in its identifying what it does well, in determining the areas in which improvement is needed, and in developing plans for improvement. Periodic evaluation by qualified professionals who serve on evaluation teams assures the institution's self-study is realistic. The process confirms honesty and integrity in institutional relations with students and other consumers, thus supplementing state agency protection for the educational consumer. An institution has the obligation to offer its students a sound education leading to a recognized certificate or degree.

## Scope

**Institutional Categories:** TRACS serves Christian postsecondary institutions (e.g., liberal arts colleges/universities, graduate schools/seminaries, Bible colleges/institutes) that offer a certificate, diploma or degree (associate, bachelor, or graduate). TRACS accredits the total institution.

Institutions are classified according to the degrees offered. The following is the official classification for TRACS institutions:

- Category I Institutions offering Certificates, Diplomas, Associate degrees
- Category II Institutions offering Bachelor's degrees
- Category III Institutions offering Master's degrees
- Category IV Institutions offering Specialist's degrees and Doctorate degrees

Institutions will be listed by the category approved by the Accreditation Commission.

Institutions that are initially awarded candidate status by the Accreditation Commission at specific categories (I, II, III, and IV) may only move to another category by filing for a substantive change. The move (substantive change) must be approved by the Accreditation Commission at its next scheduled meeting.

**Geographical Territory:** The geographic territory of TRACS currently consists of the United States and its territories, plus other locations as determined by the Accreditation Commission. TRACS Accreditation Standards are applied consistently to all institutions, regardless of the geographical location of the institution.

## AFFILIATION AND MEMBERSHIP

Applicant institutions are affiliated with, but not members of TRACS. An approved applicant is an institution whose application has been approved by the Application Review Committee, hosted a successful staff visit, and responded to the staff report recommendations.

Candidate and accredited institutions are members of TRACS. A candidate institution is one that demonstrates *basic compliance*, which is defined as meeting all the Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs) by documenting compliance with the Standards underlying the IERs, and their development is on a level and at a pace that would indicate a strong probability of achieving accredited status within the five-year time limit. A candidate institution which demonstrates substantial compliance with all the Standards and Criteria may apply for accredited status. The *Benchmarks* may serve as an indicator of the performance level for each of the Standards. An accredited institution is one which has established substantial compliance with the Standards and Criteria, satisfactorily responded to all previous team recommendations, completed a self-study, has hosted an on-site evaluation team visit, has completed all steps for accredited status detailed in this manual, has appeared before the Accreditation Commission, and has been granted accredited status by vote of the Accrediting Commission.

## INSTITUTIONAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs) are the set of TRACS Standards with which an institution must be in compliance in order to be considered by the Accreditation Commission for candidate status. Compliance with the IERs is considered basic compliance. The TRACS Standards which support the IERs are noted parenthetically throughout the Accreditation Manual.



## ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

The accreditation standards by which an institution is measured have been developed for use in evaluating its educational effectiveness. These standards are organized under two headings, as follows: **FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS** and **OPERATIONAL STANDARDS**. The standards are designed to guide institutions from initial application through the periodic reassessment process required of accredited institutions.

The **Foundational Standards** section and the **Operational Standards** section provide the substantive issues that must be specifically and thoroughly addressed in the institution's Self-Study Report to certify compliance.

It should be noted that BOTH the opening descriptive statements AND the standards and evaluative criteria themselves are to serve as the basis of the institution's self-study process and are to be addressed in the self-study report.

### Definitions

These definitions apply to the both the TRACS Accreditation Standards and Policies and Procedures.

*Ability-to-Benefit Student:* A student who does not meet the regular admissions criteria for the institution or program, who is admitted on a provisional basis and is provided the opportunity and assistance to succeed.

*Accepted practice:* The common practices in American higher education.

*Accredited Institution:* An institution accredited by an accrediting agency approved by the U.S. Department of Education as an institutional accrediting agency or an equivalent foreign government agency.

*Arbitrary:* Depending on individual discretion rather than by fixed rules, procedures, or law.

*Academic:* Someone currently or recently directly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary teaching and/or research,

*Administrator:* Someone currently or recently directly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary program or institutional administration.

*Applicant Status:* An institution which has an Application approved by the Applicant Review Committee (ARC) after hosting a successful staff visit and responding positively to the staff report recommendations.

*Bias:* inclination or prejudice for one side over the other for reasons other than the facts and rules.

*Basic Compliance:* A conclusion by the Accreditation Commission that an institution is in full compliance with all Standards related to the Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs) and has the ability to be in compliance with all of the Standards within the period of candidacy for accreditation.

*Branch Campus:* An additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.

*Candidate Status:* A status which has been awarded by action of the Accreditation Commission indicating that the institution has been found to be in *basic compliance*.

*Certified External Audit:* An audit performed in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and federal guidelines by auditors who are not inappropriately involved with the institution (e.g., auditors are not members of the governing board, not employees of the institution, not under contract to the institution for services other than the audit, or not involved in the decision-making activity, etc.).

*Correspondence Education:* Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor; interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; correspondence courses are typically self-paced; and correspondence education is not distance education.

*Corresponding Institution:* An institution which has made initial contact with TRACS and is actively pursuing the process toward accreditation.

*Distance Education:* Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed above.

*Earned degree:* a degree earned at an accredited institution or demonstrated competencies which were determined by the institution to be equivalent to the required degree prior to issuing a contract to the faculty member. Faculty members deemed qualified by demonstrated competencies will not be considered to meet the requirements of Standard 15.1 or the required ratios of Standard 15.6.

*Educator:* Someone currently or recently directly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary education in an academic capacity (e.g., professor, instructor, academic dean).

*Factual Error:* An untrue conclusion regarding the facts.

*Familial Relationship with the Chair of the Board or the Chief Executive Officer of the Institution:* The spouse, parent, child, or sibling of the Chair of the Board or the Chief Executive Officer of the Institution.

*Financial Monitoring* – Weekly reporting of Institution’s cash on hand and monthly submission of internally produced interim Income Statement and Balance Sheet.

*Financial Stability:* Institutions are able evidence a history of finances adequate to support the existing programs and to assure the continuity of the essential operations beyond the date when

current students would complete their degree programs. Events which indicate a lack of financial stability include negative Change(s) in Total Net Assets, enrollment decline of 20% or more, notification from the DOE of composite score below 1.5, the use of pledges to achieve a positive change in Unrestricted Net Assets or the required 10% line of credit is substantially depleted.

*Focus Visit:* The visiting of an institution by either a small team or staff required for the review of a specific issue.

*Full-Time Employee:* An employee who has a full-time contract or other legal arrangement which indicates to the employee that the term of employment will only be terminated for cause or financial exigency; whose experience and education or training are related to the scope of employment; whose salary is fixed and not contingent; whose job responsibilities are specifically spelled out in a board approved job description; whose primary professional employment is with the institution; who devotes substantially all working time during the contracted period to the specified job responsibilities; and whose outside professional activities do not detract from the specified job responsibilities. The contract or other legal arrangement must include language that specifies the employee has read the institution's purpose, objectives, and philosophy and agrees with and supports them.

*Full-Time Faculty:* A faculty member who has a full-time contract with the institution; whose earned degrees from accredited institutions are directly related to courses to be taught; whose salary is fixed and not contingent; whose job responsibilities are specifically spelled out in a board approved job description; whose primary professional employment is with the institution; who devotes substantially all working time during the contracted period to the specified job responsibilities; and whose outside professional activities do not detract from the specified job responsibilities.

*Full-Time President or Full-Time Chief Academic Officer:* An individual who has a full-time contract with the institution; whose possesses the professional experience and competence for the assigned position, whose earned degrees from accredited institutions are appropriate to the assigned responsibilities; whose salary is fixed and not contingent; whose job responsibilities are specifically spelled out in a board approved job description; whose primary professional employment is with the institution; who devotes substantially all working time during the contracted period to the specified job responsibilities; and whose outside professional activities do not detract from the specified job responsibilities. The contract must include language that specifies the individual has read the institution's purpose, objectives, and philosophy and agrees with and supports them.

*Institutional Independence:* The Board of the institution has sufficient independence from any external entity (including financial independence), such that it is solely accountable for meeting the TRACS Standards.

*Institutional Eligibility Requirements:* The Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERs) are the set of TRACS Standards with which an institution must be in compliance in order to be considered by the Accreditation Commission for Candidate Status. Compliance with the IERs is considered *basic compliance*.

*Misinformation:* Information that is false or misleading.



*National norms:* a reference to practices, terms, or policies which are common in American higher education.

*Part-Time/Adjunct Faculty:* A faculty member who has a contract with the institution to teach one or more specifically identified courses for one or more specified academic terms; whose earned degrees from accredited institutions are directly related to courses to be taught; whose salary is fixed and not contingent; and whose job responsibilities are specifically spelled out in a board approved job description. The institution may designate these faculty members as part-time or adjunct; however, only those contracted to teach in the current or most recently completed academic year may be included in any published faculty listing. The contract must include language that specifies the faculty member has read the institution's purpose, objectives, and philosophy and agrees with and supports them.

*Practitioner:* Someone currently or recently directly engaged in a significant manner in the practice of a profession in the area being evaluated.

*Program Area:* A discipline area at either the undergraduate or graduate level in which an institution has a degree program. A *Program Area* may include one or more degree programs including degree programs which are totally contained within a higher degree program. (Examples: At the undergraduate level - an Associate Degree in Biblical Studies in which all courses are a totally contained subset of a Bachelor Degree in Biblical Studies. At the graduate level – A Master of Arts in Theology or Master of Arts in Biblical Studies in which all courses are a totally contained subset of a Master of Divinity.)

*Professionally Qualified Librarian:* An individual who has earned a master's degree in library science, or its equivalent, from an accredited institution and who is capable of leading library development and operations, including reference, collection development, information services, bibliographic control of materials, on-line resources, and administration.

*Staff Visit:* The visiting of an institution by TRACS staff related to routine issues such as institutional changes or visits made at the request of the institution.

*Teaching Site:* A location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers less than 50 percent of any educational program. No student can earn 50 percent or more of any educational program at any degree level at a teaching site.



## I. FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS

This section describes the foundational accreditation standards which address the nature and purpose of the institution, namely: (A) Biblical Foundations, (B) Purpose and Objectives, (C) Philosophy of Education, and (D) Ethical Values and Standards. Institutions should ensure that these statements are consistent and that together they clearly define their educational identity. Each begins with a general descriptive statement that will serve as a beginning point in assessment and is followed by the Standards and Evaluative Criteria Statement.



## A. Biblical Foundations

The Biblical Foundations Statement of an institution defines its Christian nature by affirming those doctrinal matters to be true which identify it as part of the evangelical tradition in education. It is to be written so as to conform to the historic creeds and statements of Christianity, and thus reflect a careful and precise theological statement, but also accurately state the current position of the institution as set down by the board and administration. In addition, it will be written lucidly in order to inform prospective students, faculty, administrators and board members, as well as external constituencies, regarding the religious identity of the institution.

This statement provides the context from which the other three foundational statements logically follow. It may be referred to by different titles, depending on the institution's tradition, such as Biblical Foundations Statement, Doctrinal Statement, Theological Position, or Statement of Faith. It may be supplied to the institution by its sponsoring or affiliated denomination or church, or it may be individually and originally composed by the institution.

Biblical Foundations Statements may also differ in length and comprehensiveness. It may be very brief, covering the most essential items and allowing for broad evangelical application, or it may be lengthy and very specific to a particular tradition. In either case, it is comprehensive enough to include all affirmations which are, expected, but also concise enough that it does not include matters, which are regarded as nonessential. The institution's Biblical foundations may be included in its mission/philosophy.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 1.1 Institution annually affirms to TRACS its commitment to the Christian biblical foundations, purposes and objectives, philosophy, and ethical and moral values specified in the TRACS Foundational Standards, and agrees to notify TRACS in a timely fashion if that commitment changes in any substantive way. **(IER #1a)**
- 1.2 Institution has a Biblical Foundations Statement which is readily available, and included in appropriate official publications. **(IER #1a)**
- 1.3 Students are required to read and respect the institution's Biblical Foundations Statement and be provided with the means to understand it.
- 1.4 Board annually reviews and approves the institution's Biblical Foundations Statement.

In the institution's Biblical Foundations Statement, the TRACS Biblical Foundations Statement is affirmed as a general model, but it is not expected to be used verbatim. TRACS offers the following tenets:

**The Bible:** The unique divine, plenary, verbal inspiration and absolute authority of all sixty-six canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as originally given. The Bible is the only infallible, authoritative Word of God and is free from error of any sort, in all matters with which it deals, scientific, historical, moral, and theological.

**The Trinity:** The triune, Godhead—one eternal, transcendent, omnipotent, personal God existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**The Father:** God the Father, the first person of the Divine Trinity, is infinite Spirit—sovereign, eternal, and unchangeable in all His attributes. He is worthy of honor, adoration, and obedience.

**The Son:** The Perfect, sinless humanity and the absolute, full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, indissolubly united in one divine-human person since His unique incarnation by miraculous conception and virgin birth.

**Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead who convicts, regenerates, indwells, seals all believers in Christ, and fills those who yield to Him. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to all believers; however, the manifestation of any particular gift is not required as evidence of salvation.

**Historicity:** The full historicity and perspicuity of the biblical record of primeval history, including the literal existence of Adam and Eve as the progenitors of all people, the literal fall and resultant divine curse on the creation, the worldwide cataclysmic deluge, and the origin of nations and languages at the tower of Babel.

**Redemption:** The substitutionary and redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sin of the world, through His literal physical death, burial, and resurrection, followed by His bodily ascension into heaven.

**Salvation:** Personal salvation from the eternal penalty of sin provided solely by the grace of God on the basis of the atoning death and resurrection of Christ, to be received only through personal faith in His person and work.

**Last Things:** The future, personal, bodily return of Jesus Christ to the earth to judge and purge sin, to establish His eternal Kingdom, and to consummate and fulfill His purposes in the works of creation and redemption with eternal rewards and punishments.

**Biblical Creation:** Special creation of the existing space-time universe and all its basic systems and kinds of organisms in the six literal days of the creation week.

**Satan:** The existence of a personal, malevolent being called Satan who acts as tempter and accuser, for whom the place of eternal punishment was prepared, where all who die outside of Christ shall be confined in conscious torment for eternity.

## B. Purpose and Objectives

The institution's mission is appropriate to Christian higher education, consistent with its charter or other operating authority, and implemented in a manner that complies with the TRACS Standards. The institution's mission gives direction to its activities and provides a basis for the assessment and enhancement of the institution's effectiveness.

The mission sets forth the specific educational role of the institution with regard to its intended audience. Educational goals and objectives are formulated which are consistent with the institution's Christian philosophy of education, its TRACS approved academic level (national norms), and its Biblical Foundations Statement.

Educational programs and all other operations are clearly related to the purpose of the institution. Specific objectives are adopted to enable the institution to carry out its stated mission. Name of the institution is accurate, descriptive, and appropriate for its stated purpose. The use of "institute," "college," "university," "seminary," "theological school," "graduate school," et al., is in keeping with the general and national use of such nomenclature (and appropriate to the programs approved by TRACS) in order to enable a consumer to correctly understand the scope and nature of the institution.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 2.1 Mission statement of the institution is: **(IER #1b)**
  - a. Current and comprehensive.
  - b. An accurate guide for the institution's operations.
  - c. Periodically reviewed and updated.
  - d. Approved by the governing board.
  - e. Communicated to the institution's constituencies.
  - f. Accurately reflective of its Biblical Foundations Statement.
  
- 2.2 Clearly defined written objectives have been adopted which are consistent with institution's mission. Objectives are: **(IER #1c)**
  - a. Stated in measurable terms.
  - b. Regularly reviewed and approved by the governing board.
  
- 2.3 Name of the institution is appropriate.
  - a. Name reflects the mission of the institution.
  - b. Name is consistent with national norms in naming an educational institution with reference to the programs offered.



## C. Philosophy of Education

The institution operates within a biblically-based Christian philosophy of education. Practices and methods emanate from that underlying philosophy of education.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 3.1 The Board adopted Christian philosophy of education is periodically assessed and reflected in the curriculum and operations of the institution. **(IER #1d)**





## D. Ethical Values and Standards

Christian institutions define themselves by a set of values which are central to their purpose, educational philosophy and mission. These values and standards result in an institutional lifestyle that exemplifies integrity.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 4.1 Statement of ethical values and standards has been adopted which is:
  - a. Biblically based.
  - b. Approved by the governing board.
  - c. Periodically assessed.
- 4.2 Institution is represented accurately and honestly to students, the public, and to TRACS.
- 4.3 Accreditation status (Applicant, Candidate, Accredited, Warning, Probation, or Show Cause) is accurately presented in all publications and communications including the web-site.
- 4.4 The institution is committed to:
  - a. Honest and open communication with the Accrediting Commission.
  - b. Undertaking the accreditation review process with seriousness and candor.
  - c. Abiding by Commission policies and procedures, including all substantive change policies.



## II. OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

This section describes accreditation standards related to the OPERATION and the educational outcomes of the institution.



## A. Operational Authority

Institution has the legal authority to operate an institution of Higher Education.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 5.1 Institution has legal authorization to operate from the government of the state in which it is located and has filed a copy of that authorization with TRACS. **(IER #2b)**
  - a. Complies with all federal regulations and state regulations of the state in which it is located. (If a Federal or State requirement conflicts with a TRACS Standard, the institution will be deemed to be in compliance with the TRACS Standard as long as it is in compliance with the government requirement.)
- 5.2 Institution has legal authorization to operate from the government of all states or territories where the institution enrolls or intends to enroll distance education students and has filed copies of the authorizations with TRACS, except if (1) the institution is exempt from the requirement to register in a state, the institution shall provide documentation of that exemption to TRACS or (2) any state in which it enrolls or intends to enroll distance education students does not require any institution to obtain such authorization, the institution shall provide this information to TRACS.
- 5.3 Institution, if not located in the United States or one of its territories, has legal authorization to operate and, if appropriate, grant degrees from the government of the country in which it is located.
  - a. Complies with all governmental regulations of the country in which it is located. (If a governmental requirement conflicts with a TRACS Standard, the institution will be deemed to be in compliance with the TRACS Standard as long as it is in compliance with the governmental requirement.)



## B. Organizational Structure

The institution has a system of governance that facilitates the accomplishment of its mission and purposes and supports institutional effectiveness and integrity. Through its organizational structure, the institution creates and sustains an environment that encourages teaching, learning, service, scholarship, and where appropriate research and creative activity. It assures provision of support adequate for the appropriate functioning of each organizational component. The institution has sufficient independence from any external entity, such that it is solely accountable for meeting the TRACS Standards.

### 1. THE BOARD

Board is a legally constituted body responsible for establishing broad policy, appointing and evaluating the chief executive officer, establishing and maintaining financial stability and overseeing the effective pursuit of the stated mission and objectives of the institution.

#### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 6.1 Board is the legally constituted body that holds the institution in trust and has final authority in matters of policy, operation and evaluation. **(IER #2a)**
  - a. Board functions within the parameters of the institution's constitution, articles of incorporation, or bylaws, and follows the governing board manual or handbook. **(IER #2c)**
  - b. Board has a minimum of five voting members with: **(IER #2a)**
    - i. No more than one member as a paid employee of the institution.
    - ii. No voting member having a familial relationship with the chair of the board or chief executive officer of the institution.
  - c. Chief executive officer does not serve as the chair of the governing board, or any of its committees.
  
- 6.2 Board formulates and maintains a long-range plan for the institution.
  - a. Long-range plan receives input from all internal constituent groups, alumni, and public interests.
  
- 6.3 Board approves the institutional mission, purpose, objectives, and philosophy, and reviews these regularly.
  
- 6.4 Board approves all institutional change requests prior to submittal to TRACS.
  - a. Approvals of all proposed institutional changes are reflected in board minutes.
  - b. Institution received approval of the institutional change prior to its advertisement and implementation.
  
- 6.5 Board approves the institution's annual operating budget and records this approval in the board minutes.

- 6.6 Board is responsible for the financial stability of the institution as reflected in the minutes of board actions.
- 6.7 Board is responsible for establishing and providing appropriate oversight over institutional policies, including those related to affiliated corporate entities and auxiliary services.
- 6.8 Board appoints and regularly evaluates a full-time chief executive officer as reflected in board minutes. **(IER #3a)**
- 6.9 Clear distinction exists between the policy-making functions of the board and the role of administration to carry out such policies.
- 6.10 Board regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its own function.
  - a. Process for evaluation of the board exists and the results of the evaluation are available in writing.
  - b. Process is contained in the board manual or handbook.
  - c. Regular board evaluation is evidenced in board minutes.
- 6.11 Board meets a minimum of two times annually and maintains minutes of these meetings which demonstrate that the board exercises its responsibilities.
- 6.12 Board provides a thorough orientation for new board members
- 6.13 Board executive committee acts on behalf of the board between the regular meetings and maintains minutes of these meetings.

## 2. THE ADMINISTRATION

The administration or leadership team of the institution has responsibility for identifying and bringing together the various resources of the institution and allocating them effectively in order to accomplish institutional goals.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 7.1 Organizational chart is maintained which clearly depicts lines of administrative responsibility. **(IER #3f)**
- 7.2 Constitution or Bylaws give the chief executive officer the authority to fulfill the tasks defined in the written job description as the person responsible for carrying out published board policies and procedures. **(IER #3b)**
- 7.3 Leadership positions have a written job description which is used as a basis for the annual evaluation. **(IER #3e)**



- 7.4 A full-time chief academic officer is in place who has the credentials, experience, and competence to lead the institution's educational programs toward quality outcomes. **(IER #3c)**
- 7.5 Other qualified administrative personnel and leadership team members are sufficient in number and competence to give direction to the major operational areas of the institution. **(IER #3d)**

### 3. THE SUPPORT STAFF

The support staff is an integral part of the institution. They provide important service functions for both the administrative and academic entities of the institution.

#### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 8.1 Support staff is sufficient in number and competence to adequately support the administrative, academic, and support functions of the institution.



## C. Publications and Policies

### 1. PUBLICATIONS

Among the official publications that are required of a postsecondary institution are the following: faculty handbook, student handbook, catalog(s), policies manual, governing board manual, and recruiting or promotional material.

Policies are developed and implemented to evaluate and revise all publications regularly in order to maintain current and accurate information. The institution will portray its programs, services, and activities in all publications, advertisements, and all other communications accurately and clearly. All statements made are supported by documented evidence, unambiguous, and not misleading. All publications, including those on any web sites, are to be consistent.

The publications are reviewed by appropriate administrative personnel and approved by the governing board. (Also see the section entitled "Principles of Good Practice in Institutional Advertising, Student Recruiting, and Representation of Accredited Status" in the TRACS *Policies Manual*.)

#### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

##### GENERAL STANDARDS

All institutional publications:

- 9.1 Are consistent with the institutional mission and objectives and, as appropriate, are approved by the Board on a regular basis.
- 9.2 Are readily available to its constituents by print and electronic means, as appropriate.
- 9.3 Are current, clear, factually accurate, and consistent with each other, whether in print or electronic form.
- 9.4 Accurately reflect the accreditation status as required by TRACS.
  - a. *Catalog* and website include the appropriate statement of accreditation status with the full TRACS identification (Applicant, Candidate, Accredited, Warning, Probation, or Show Cause).
  - b. Publications, promotional materials, and communications where accreditation is addressed include the appropriate statement of accreditation status with the full TRACS identification (Applicant, Candidate, Accredited, Warning, Probation, or Show Cause).
  - c. Publications include no designation of accreditation or recognition by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or use their logos.
  - d. Publications include no designation of accreditation or recognition by any entity that has not formally awarded such.

- 9.5 Are given the widest dissemination and made available to all students via appropriate print or electronic means, regardless of mode of instruction or student location.
- 9.6 Contain appropriate, Board-approved policies.

The following are the minimum required publications and will include the appropriate policies:

## BOARD MANUAL

- 9.7 Official *Board Manual* or handbook which includes, at a minimum: **(IER #4a)**
  - a. Duties and responsibilities of members.
  - b. Number of members.
  - c. Qualifications, representation, and method of selection of members.
  - d. Organizational structure—such as officers and their selection.
  - e. Length of service of members and officers.
  - f. Frequency of meetings.
  - g. Procedures.
  - h. Board self-evaluation procedures.

## POLICIES MANUAL

- 9.8 *Policies Manual* is comprehensive in scope and will include, at a minimum (See Standards 9.1 – 9.11): **(IER #4b)**
  - a. General policies.
  - b. Institution-wide policies.
  - c. Academic policies.
  - d. Faculty policies.
  - e. Student Services policies.
  - f. Financial policies.
  - g. Facilities and Equipment policies.
  - h. Board policies.

## CATALOG(S)

- 9.9 *Catalog(s)* includes the following information: **(IER #4c)**
  - a. Institutional mission/purpose(s), objectives, philosophy of education, and statement of ethical values and standards
  - b. Doctrinal statement
  - c. Academic calendar
  - d. Institutional grading system, including the definition for good standing.
  - e. Entrance requirements and admissions procedures
  - f. Information on academic programs including purpose, objectives, measurable program learning outcomes, and courses, with required scope, sequence and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated. The scope shall include, where appropriate, a general education core

- g. Degree and program completion requirements, including length of time to obtain a degree or certificate, and number of credit hours required
- h. Faculty listing (full-time and part-time or adjunct listed separately) with degrees held; the name of conferring institutions, and the teaching discipline; only faculty under contract for the terms of the catalog are to be included
- i. Administrators with their positions, degrees and name of the conferring institution
- j. Members of the governing board
- k. Student complaint procedures, including the person or office responsible for maintaining all records on student complaints
- l. Student conduct and due process procedures
- m. Tuition, fees, and other costs
- n. Student financial aid information
- o. Procedures for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw from enrollment
- p. Clear statement of accreditation status with TRACS contact information.
- q. Statement on nondiscrimination
- r. Student credit transfer practices
- s. Instructions on filing a complaint with TRACS and any relevant government agencies
- t. Definition of a credit hour

### FACULTY HANDBOOK

9.10 *Faculty Handbook* lists and clearly describes the following: **(IER #4d)**

- a. Rights and responsibilities of the faculty
- b. The faculty organization
- c. Job descriptions
- d. Academic advising procedures
- e. Office hours
- f. Course syllabus template
- g. Textbook adoption and management
- h. Student attendance requirements
- i. Institutional grading system
- j. Faculty due process procedures
- k. Information on how to comply with applicable laws related to intellectual property with an emphasis on copyrights
- l. Promotion and tenure, if applicable
- m. Procedures for the procurement of equipment and supplies
- n. Provisions for faculty development
- o. Employee benefits
- p. Faculty workload requirements and restrictions
- q. Procedures for faculty evaluation

### STUDENT HANDBOOK

9.11 *Student Handbook* lists and clearly describes the following: **(IER #4e)**

- a. Procedures for dropping/adding courses
- b. Institutional grading system

- c. Information on enrolling and withdrawing from the institution
- d. Academic advising
- e. Library services and provisions for learning assistance
- f. Overview of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), including amendments
- g. Student life with:
  - i. A general purpose statement for student affairs.
  - ii. Regulations regarding student conduct (including the Code of Conduct).
  - iii. Campus safety and emergency procedures.
  - iv. Student due process procedures.
  - v. Student complaint procedures.
  - vi. Opportunities for ministry and social outreach/services by students.
  - vii. The purpose, organization and function of student government.
  - viii. A description of student clubs and organizations.
  - ix. Resident student life information (if applicable).
  - x. Use of automobiles on campus.
  - xi. Health services and student insurance.
  - xii. Key administrative services.
  - xiii. Listing of cultural, educational and religious opportunities.
- h. Instructions on filing a complaint with TRACS and any relevant government agencies.

## 2. POLICIES

Policies are to be developed, appropriately approved, codified and disseminated for administrative operations, financial practices, academic procedures, and student development. They are consistent with the institution's purpose and administratively feasible.

The specific procedures for the development of institutional policies are in appropriate publications such as: staff manual, faculty handbook, student handbook, catalog, and governing board handbook. The date each policy is approved by the board is provided in the policy manual and, as appropriate, other publications. These dates correspond with the appropriate minutes of the approving body.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

#### GENERAL POLICIES

- 10.1 Policies and procedures are comprehensive in scope and consistent with the institutional mission, Biblical Foundation Statement, institutional objectives, Christian philosophy of education, and consistent with national norms. (Consistent with Foundational Standards).
- 10.2 Policies and procedures are to be published in the appropriate publication(s) and on the website to ensure the widest dissemination to the intended users (Publishing of Policies).

- 10.3 Board approves the mission (purpose), philosophy of education, institutional objectives, biblical foundation statements, and all institutional policies (Board Approval).
  - a. The policy includes the annual assessment of the Biblical Foundations Statement and means by which it can be revised.
- 10.4 Board minutes include the date of approval of all policies (Minutes).
- 10.5 Institutions fully implement and follow all board approved policies (Implementation).

## GOVERNANCE POLICIES

- 10.6 Policy has been adopted addressing conflict of interest for board members.

## INSTITUTION-WIDE POLICIES

- 10.7 Policy on nondiscrimination has been adopted which is based on biblical standards, including (but not necessarily limited to) race, sex, and national origin, that govern the admission of students and the selection, retention, and advancement of personnel.
- 10.8 Appropriate policies are adopted for each branch campus.
- 10.9 Policies are adopted for the evaluation of all employees.
- 10.10 Policy is adopted which ensures cooperation with TRACS in any complaint proceedings.

## ACADEMIC POLICIES

- 10.11 Admissions policies for all programs are clearly specified, current, and in keeping with accepted practice.
  - a. Undergraduate admission policies require applicants to have earned a high school diploma, or GED, or have other relevant experiences that indicate and support the student's ability to complete their academic objective.
  - b. Admission policies include applicable residency requirements.
  - c. Admission policies include general and special admission requirements.
  - d. Admission policies require that all credit awarded by examination, on the basis of certificates, or by assessment of prior learning, are within the guidelines of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), and are documented in student files. Credit for prior learning is not awarded at the graduate level.
  - e. Graduate admission policies require applicants to have earned an appropriate bachelor's or master's degrees and demonstrate they have the ability to complete their educational objective.
  - f. Admission policies specify the exceptions to having earned the appropriate diploma or degree, including concurrent enrollment options for high school

- students in undergraduate programs and undergraduate students in graduate programs (ability-to-benefit).
- g. Admission policies specify the process for approving exceptions to the policies.
  - h. Admission policies specify how students admitted on probation or with any condition are designated and how their probation or condition is monitored.
  - i. Faculty are involved in approving and reviewing admission policies.
- 10.12 Graduation policies stipulate that the requirements for all programs are clearly specified, current, and in keeping with accepted practice.

## FACULTY POLICIES

- 10.13 Policies address the selection, hiring, remuneration, appointment, retention, advancement, and dismissal of faculty.
- 10.14 Policies delineate faculty responsibilities, including at a minimum, teaching loads, student advising (academic and spiritual), committee involvement and other required assignments.
- 10.15 Policy on academic freedom is within the framework of the institution's biblical foundations, purpose, objectives, and philosophy and includes a process for the review of any alleged breach of academic freedom.
- 10.16 Policies provide adequate opportunities for the spiritual and professional development of faculty.
- 10.17 Policy on faculty due process provides for fair and just grievance procedures and makes available to TRACS the documentation from all such proceedings since the last comprehensive visit.
- 10.18 Office is designated which securely maintains all information and records of grievance proceedings, and instructions for filing a complaint with TRACS and any other relevant government agencies.
- 10.19 Policy for part-time faculty includes their responsibilities, supervision, and rights.

## STUDENT SERVICES POLICIES

- 10.20 Student complaint policy includes, at a minimum, a method for receiving confidential student input, clear step-by-step procedures for due process, an appropriate office that securely maintains all information and records of complaints, appeals, proceedings, and instructions for filing a complaint with TRACS and any other relevant government agencies.
- 10.21 Comprehensive financial aid policy ensures proper oversight and compliance with all federal and state financial regulations. The policies address, at a minimum, the following areas:
- a. System of checks and balances when handling financial aid within the institution



- b. Procedures for the application, approval, disbursement and refunds of financial aid
  - c. Records accurately demonstrate timely compliance with federal and state financial aid regulations
- 10.22 Refund policy reflects appropriate pro-rations and pertinent time frames.
- 10.23 The institution's student conduct policy describes the institution's procedures for academic and disciplinary suspensions and dismissals, including procedures for readmission following a period of suspension or a dismissal, and step by step procedures for due process for all suspensions, dismissals, and grade appeals.
- 10.24 The institution's transfer of credit policy governs both the consideration and acceptance of transfer credit and:
- a. It is fair, equitable, and equally applied.
  - b. Considers the quality of the offering, timeliness of the work, student performance (grade requirements) and the comparability, equivalency, and appropriateness to the courses and programs offered.
  - c. Considers the accredited status of the institution as a major factor, but not the sole determinate of the transfer decision.
  - d. Informs students of any special situations they may face in transferring credits earned.
  - e. Includes reasons for refusal of acceptance of transfer credits, including the appeal process for transfer credit which was refused.
  - f. Includes information on student responsibilities.
  - g. Provides students with accurate and realistic information, plus guidance concerning the likelihood of transfer of the institution's credits.
  - h. References any articulation agreements with other institutions.
  - i. Includes counseling and print or electronic assistance for students considering transferring to another institution.
  - j. States the minimum grade required for transfer courses.
  - k. Requires official transcripts from all institutions attended and does not award transfer credits before receiving the relevant official transcript(s).
  - l. Identifies the office(s) responsible for evaluating transfer credit.
- 10.25 Ability-to-benefit policy includes, at a minimum:
- a. Admission policy related to ability-to-benefit students.
  - b. System to monitor ability-to-benefit admissions.
  - c. Services to assist ability-to-benefit students.
  - d. Records of all ability-to-benefit students.
  - e. Follow-up studies (e.g., grades or longitudinal studies).
  - f. Both qualitative and quantitative requirements aimed at admitting students who demonstrate reasonable ability for success.
  - g. Remedial support is provided for specially admitted students who are not prepared for college work.
- 10.26 Recruiting policies identify the person or office responsible for assuring compliance with institutional policies and apply to all employees and agents who do any recruiting activities for the institution.

## FINANCIAL POLICIES

- 10.27 Investment policies address conflicts of interest and the proper handling of funds, and are approved by the governing board.
- 10.28 Default policy takes into consideration:
- a. Admission and recruiting policies.
  - b. Ability to benefit policies.
  - c. Exit interviews of students who may leave the institution prior to graduation.
  - d. Follow-up processes for graduates including questionnaires, etc.
  - e. Retention policies and processes.
  - f. Graduation rates.
  - g. Career counseling, testing processes, and services.
- 10.29 Policies that govern fund-raising activities ensure ethical practices in soliciting funds and integrity in the use of the funds by both the institution and any adjunct agencies acting on behalf of the institution.

## FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT POLICIES

- 10.30 Policies provide student and faculty access to appropriate institutional equipment and materials.
- 10.31 Policies include appropriate provisions for access to and use of facilities and equipment for those with disabilities. The provisions are published, publicly available, and consistent with relevant laws.

## BOARD RELATED POLICIES

- 10.32 Policies provide that the Board arranges for the recording, preservation, and appropriate dissemination of accurate and complete minutes that reflect all proceedings of Board and Board committee meetings.

## D. Educational Programs

TRACS DOES NOT APPROVE ANY PROGRAM THAT FAILS TO MEET THE QUALITATIVE STANDARDS HELD TO BE THE NORM IN THE POSTSECONDARY ACADEMIC COMMUNITY AND AS PUBLISHED IN THE TRACS ACCREDITATION MANUAL.

Every TRACS member institution exhibits in its educational program(s) certain essential characteristics that define quality in Christian educational programs. These are summarized as follows:

- The principal focus of the institution's educational program is the education and academic preparation of students within a distinctly and clearly Christian context that is reflected in its admission policies and academic practice.
- The educational programs are derived from recognized fields of study normally found at the postsecondary level.
- Programs are composed of designated courses of study with clearly outlined procedures for completing the programs successfully.
- Course Offerings and admission practices are clearly set forth in a published, up-to-date *Catalog*. Possible ways to determine if students have the ability to benefit might include pre-admission testing or evaluations. Qualitative and quantitative admission requirements are stated specifically in the *Catalog*.
- A syllabus is prepared for each course and is distributed to students at the beginning of the course. Syllabi include course requirements, course content, course objectives, and the methods of student evaluation.
- An academic calendar is an essential element of any collegiate organization. TRACS does not recommend a specific calendar. A direct relation exists between in-class time and the teaching/learning process and the offering of courses in non-traditional formats recognize that the national norm for an academic calendar is a school year composed of thirty weeks of classes, composed of two semesters or an equivalency.

### 1. UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE PROGRAMS

#### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 11.1 Institution has at least one academic program at the diploma, certificate, associate, bachelor, masters, and/or doctoral level (based on at least 60 semester credit hours or equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the bachelor level, or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the graduate or professional level). **(IER #5a)**
- 11.2 Curriculum clearly relates to the mission, objectives, and philosophy of education of the institution. **(IER #5a)**
- a. Institution documents the relationship of the academic programs to the institutions mission, objectives, and philosophy of education.
  - b. The relationship between the curriculum and institutional mission, objectives, and philosophy of education is reviewed annually.

- 11.3 Process is established for curriculum development, approval, review, modification, and assessment of the educational program.
- Academically qualified faculty is actively involved in the process of curriculum development as evidenced in minutes of faculty meetings.
  - The administration of the institution is actively involved in the process of curriculum development as evidenced in minutes of administrative, planning, and budgeting meetings.
- 11.4 Curriculum (regardless of mode of delivery) has as its central focus the education of students.
- Course and program objectives are written in reference to measurable learning outcomes. . **(IER #5b)**
  - Course outcomes are assessed through student achievement and competency.
  - Grading system, is published, consistent with national norms, and is used consistently throughout the institution.
- 11.5 Curriculum has a logical and appropriate scope and sequence.
- Curriculum is consistent with commonly accepted standards. .
  - Program length and unit values are consistent with commonly accepted standards.
  - Courses are arranged numerically to order learning experiences and levels.
  - Curriculum progressively leads to student competency and learning.
- 11.6 Clearly defined student learning outcomes are established at the course, program and institutional level and reflected in all aspects of academic and support services.
- 11.7 Programs offered by the institution impart a common core of knowledge, which enhances students educationally and/or vocationally, are consistent with commonly accepted standards, and are appropriate for educational level.
- 11.8 Process is in place for the systematical and regular evaluation, of all academic programs.
- Process includes an analysis of the accomplishments of program outcomes, retention rates, completion/graduation rates, job placement rates, the results of licensing or certification examinations (when appropriate), or other measures of evidence.
  - Minutes of committees indicate the appropriate involvement of both faculty and administration.
- 11.9 Programs are defined according to minimum and maximum credit hour requirements (regardless of delivery mode) in all relevant publications such as catalogs and brochures.
- 11.10 Programs have adequate enrollment to facilitate student interaction appropriate to quality instruction and to financially sustain the program. **(IER #5d)**

- 11.11 Innovative modes of delivery of campus-based programs are processed through the regular curriculum procedures, and are congruent with the institutional mission, objectives, and philosophy.
- 11.12 Academic Progress reports are provided to students in a timely manner.
- 11.13 Institution's definition of a credit hour follows the TRACS definition (See Policies and Procedures Manual) unless it is able to document that its definition is equivalent (regardless of method or format of delivery).
- Manner in which credit hours are assigned to courses is determined by qualified faculty.
  - Definition includes all formats in which students earn credits, e.g., laboratory work, practical, studio work, distance education, or correspondence education.
  - Institution provides a justification for all degrees which include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent.
- 11.14 Institution demonstrates that students use information resources and technology as an integral part of their education, attaining levels of proficiency appropriate to their degree and program or professional field of study.
- 11.15 Institution ensures that throughout the program of study students acquire increasingly sophisticated skills in evaluating the quality of information sources appropriate to their field of study and the level of the degree program.

### UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

- 11.16 Undergraduate degree programs offered include an appropriate general education core. . **(IER #5c)**
- Bachelor degree programs in liberal arts colleges (institutions offering Bible related programs and at least one other non-Bible related program) include a minimum of 44 semester hours (or equivalent), with at least 3 semester hours (or equivalent), in each of the humanities/fine arts, behavioral/ social sciences, communications, and natural sciences/math.
  - Bachelor degree programs in Bible colleges (institutions offering only Bible related programs) include a minimum of 36 semester hours (or equivalent), with at least 3 semester hours (or equivalent), in each of the humanities/fine arts, behavioral/ social sciences, communications, and natural science/math.
  - Associate degree programs meet one-half of the minimum semester hours requirements (or equivalent), of the appropriate bachelor's degree programs.
- 11.17 Students earn at least 25% of the credit hours required for the degree at the institution awarding the degree.

## GRADUATE PROGRAMS

11. 18 Graduate programs are at a post-baccalaureate level that reflects and extends the intellectual maturity of the students and demonstrates a clear distinction between bachelor level, master level and doctoral level work.
  - a. Learning levels include knowledge, understanding, skills, application, syntheses, analysis, and evaluation. Attitudes and values in the affective area are geared to the graduate level.
  - b. Practical application of theory is evident.
11. 19 Graduate programs include a common core of courses appropriate to the discipline, such as foundations, theory, active involvement with subject matter literature, and research methods which leads to the internalization and application of information.
11. 20 Graduate programs include summative experience, such as capstone projects or theses, to measure student achievement, competency or cognitive.
11. 21 Students earn the majority of credits toward a graduate or professional degree at the institution awarding the degree.

## 2. ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY METHODS

Historically, alternative delivery methods have provided educational opportunities for individuals who are unable to participate in an on-campus program.

Special attention is given by TRACS to alternative delivery methods. The undertaking of these types of programs requires purpose, methods, and resources that significantly differ from on-campus offerings and should be undertaken only when the faculty, administration, and governing board have considered the unique requirements for successful programming and evaluation in these delivery methods.

Institutions that make use of Distance Education and/or Correspondence Education will present evidence that these are appropriate to higher education, consistent with institutional objectives, and effective for achieving the intent of the TRACS Standards. The institution will demonstrate that students completing these courses and/or programs have the opportunity to acquire the same levels of knowledge and competencies as those students completing an on-campus program. Therefore, it is essential that there be regular, systematic evaluation of all Distance Education and Correspondence Education to assess the appropriateness to the purpose of the institution. It is expected that these programs maintain the academic integrity of the institution.

- a. Descriptions
  - i. Distance Education

**Definition:** Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable,

microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed above.

Courses using Distance Education delivery methods are considered residential in that control emanates from the home campus.

ii. Correspondence Education

**Definition:** Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor; interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; correspondence courses are typically self-paced; and correspondence education is not distance education.

Courses using this delivery method are considered residential in that control emanates from the home campus.

b. Initiating Alternative Delivery Methods

Institutions desiring to initiate an Alternative Delivery Methods programs are required to complete and submit for each program area the Application for a Proposed Institutional Change Form (found on the TRACS website).

- i. Address the applicable Prospectus Checklist items.
- ii. Follow the Standards below.

## Standards and Evaluative Criteria

### CURRICULUM

- 12.1 Programs and courses have the appropriate state and/or national approval(s).
- 12.2 Course content, credit value, course descriptions, course codes, course requirements and learning outcomes are consistent regardless of mode of delivery.
- 12.3 The quality, academic rigor, and learning outcomes of the course are consistent regardless of mode of delivery, although the actual format and assessment methods may vary.
- 12.4 Additional curriculum review procedures are adopted to maintain acceptable content in all courses offered.
- 12.5 Learning experiences required within each course are equal in scope and rigor to similar courses at that level in American higher education. This is especially the case with graduate courses, which require the appropriately rigorous academic and scholarly level of student learning.



## FACULTY

- 12.6 Sufficient number of qualified faculty are employed to support the programs.
- 12.7 Faculty receive appropriate training and are routinely evaluated to ensure effectiveness.
- 12.8 Faculty are actively involved in the evaluation and oversight to ensure both the rigor of the programs and the quality of instruction.

## PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- 12.9 Appropriate and competent administrative personnel are directly responsible for all such programs.
- 12.10 Programs are routinely and systematically evaluated.

## STUDENT SERVICES

- 12.11 Institution verifies the identity of students enrolled in any courses offered through alternative delivery methods.
  - a. Institution uses a method of verifying the identity of students which reasonably assures that the student is the same person who registered for the course. (Among the most common methods are a secure login and password for electronic access and proctored examinations.)
  - b. Institution provides students with a written rationale for the method or methods it employs.
  - c. Students are notified of any charge related to the method of verification, at the time of registration or enrollment.
- 12.12 Institution provides a written statement of how it will protect the privacy of students enrolled in alternative delivery method courses.
- 12.13 Academic policies, admission procedures, financial aid, graduation requirements, personal conduct, and special requirements unique to the institution are provided to all students enrolled in alternative delivery courses.
- 12.14 Institution provides access to and training to students for the use of all technology employed in such programs if required for student outcomes to be achieved.

## ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

- 12.15 Programs, regardless of location or type, are included in the institution's assessment plans and strategic plan, and are routinely evaluated.
- 12.16 The quality of alternative delivery method programs is ensured by the assessment of student learning outcomes for both courses and programs, the retention of students, and other criteria consistent with those in American higher education.



LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCES

- 12.17 Library and Learning Resources are available for all students adequate for the level of program offered.
- 12.18 Course requirements ensure that students make appropriate use of learning resources.
- 12.19 Access is provided to laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses or programs, regardless of location or mode of delivery if required for student outcomes to be achieved.

**3. BRANCH CAMPUSES**

A branch campus is an additional location geographically apart from an institution's main campus at which the institution offers at least 50% of an educational program.

Control of the branch campus, including its educational program policies, administrative and business policies, is vested in the home entity. The branch campus provides all the necessary academic support services and systems for its students.

**Standards and Evaluative Criteria**

- 13. 1 Branch campus is operated in compliance with all relevant laws.
  - a. Institution has legal authorization to operate the branch campus from the state or foreign nation in which the branch campus is located. **(IER #2b)**
  - b. If students can earn degrees at the branch campus, institution has authority to grant those degrees from the appropriate governmental entity.
  - c. Institution provided TRACS with copies of all governmental authorizations.
- 13. 2 Branch campus is authorized by and under the authority and control of the institution's governing board.
- 13. 3 Branch campus has its own catalog and the programs offered are reflected in the catalog for the institution's main campus.
- 13. 4 Branch campus administrative team consists of at least a director or administrative head, academic officer, and financial officer. These individuals can be full or part-time. The administrative team members have job descriptions and are part of the home campus organizational chart.
- 13. 5 Employees of the branch campus are employees of the institution.
- 13. 6 Employee and student records are maintained in the designated offices of the main campus with institutionally-certified copies maintained in the designated offices of the branch campus.
- 13. 7 Branch campus has its own board-approved budget, is financially stable, and is included in the institution's annual external financial audit.

- 13. 8 Branch campus is fully integrated into the administration of the institution.
- 13. 9 Policies of the institution apply, as appropriate, to a branch campus and any policies specific to a branch campus are approved by the institution's board and included in the institution's policy manual.
- 13. 10 Institution employs an appropriate number of faculty for the branch campus.
- 13. 11 Long-Range Planning for the Branch Campus is included in the institution's planning process.
- 13. 12 Student services are provided at a branch campus as appropriate.
- 13. 13 Assessments and evaluations identified in the institution's assessment plan are implemented at the branch campus, as appropriate.
- 13.14 Branch campus makes available, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, library and information resources necessary to fulfill the institution's mission and objectives which support the academic and research programs and the intellectual development of students, faculty, and staff at that branch campus.
- 13. 15 Institution employs an adequate number of professionally qualified staff who administer the branch campus's library, information resources/services, and instructional and information technology support functions.
- 13. 16 Branch campuses located outside of the U.S. or its territories comply with U.S. standards and norms, unless there is a legal requirement for a variation.
- 13. 17 Branch campuses which offer instruction in a language other than English demonstrate compliance with the TRACS Policy addressing such instruction (See the TRACS Policies and Procedures Manual).
- 13. 18 Branch campus has facilities which are sufficient to support all educational activities of that branch campus.

## 4. TEACHING SITES

A Teaching Site is an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers less than 50% of any educational program.

Appropriate student services are offered at the teaching site and all student records are kept at the main campus. The teaching site is geographically and physically located away from the home campus with facilities to support the courses offered and students served. The institution exercises control over the educational programs and faculty at the teaching site.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 14.1 Teaching site is operated in compliance with all relevant laws.

- a. The institution has legal authorization from the state or foreign nation in which the teaching site is located to operate the teaching site. **(IER #2b)**
  - b. The institution has provided TRACS with copies of all governmental authorizations.
- 14.2 Teaching site is under the authority of the institution's board.
  - 14.3 Institution's *Catalog* is provided to all students at the teaching site, if the teaching site does not have its own *Catalog*.
  - 14.4 Policies of the institution apply, as appropriate, to a teaching site.
  - 14.5 Institution employs an appropriate number of faculty at the teaching site.
  - 14.6 Long-Range Planning for Teaching Sites is included in the institution's planning process.
  - 14.7 Student services are provided at each teaching site as appropriate.
  - 14.8 Assessments and evaluations identified in the institution's assessment plan are implemented at any teaching site as appropriate.
  - 14.9 Learning resources that support the courses offered at the teaching site are accessible to students.
  - 14.10 Teaching sites located outside of the U.S. or its territories comply with U.S. standards and norms, unless there is a legal requirement for a variation.
  - 14.11 Teaching sites which offer instruction in a language other than English demonstrate compliance with the TRACS Policy addressing such instruction (See the TRACS Policy and Procedures Manual).
  - 14.12 Students earn less than 50% of any educational program at a teaching site.
  - 14.13 Facilities at teaching sites are sufficient to support the programs offered.
  - 14.14 Before a student is registered to take a course at the teaching site students are provided written notification of the maximum academic credit which can be earned at the teaching site and the options for earning the remaining credit needed to complete the educational program.
  - 14.15 Publications and marketing materials clearly state the maximum amount of academic credit which can be earned at the teaching site and how the credit needed for completing the educational program may be earned.

## 5. NON-DEGREE GRANTING PROGRAMS

While accreditation standards for non-degree granting programs may differ somewhat from those designed for degree granting, the program objectives and learning outcomes are to be equivalent. Courses and programs are to be transferable to accredited institutions.



## E. Faculty

Postsecondary institutions that become affiliated with TRACS will employ dedicated and qualified faculty who possess high academic and professional qualities, are spiritually mature, and serve as personal and professional Christian role models.

Specifically, the fundamental contribution of the faculty is to provide effective instruction and advice and to do so in a manner that makes the curriculum vital, with reference to the purpose, objectives and philosophy of the institution. The institution employs faculty with academic credentials appropriate to their teaching and research and who support the purpose of the institution in their activities. The institution has a written rationale for the number of faculty and academic support staff it employs. The rationale references the size and levels of its approved educational programs.

A major function of the faculty is to advise the administration and board in the formulation of educational and academic policies involving such matters as curriculum, admissions, academic standards, advising, graduation, student life, and faculty growth and welfare.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 15.1 Employs at least one full-time, contracted, academically and spiritually qualified faculty for each program area, including general education (for undergraduates only), to teach and provide related duties, such as advising and curricular oversight needed for the institution to fulfill its mission. **(IER #6a)**
- 15.2 Maintains a sufficient number of faculty members who support the mission of the institution, perform all required faculty responsibilities, including the development and review of curriculum, and ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs, and fulfill their role in governance. (Role in Development of Curriculum and Governance) **(IER #6b)**
  - a. Places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty.
- 15.3 Assures that faculty members know, understand, and respect the mission, objectives and philosophy of the institution.
- 15.4 Evidences that faculty members are qualified by training, earned degrees, scholarship, experience, and classroom performance and possess the appropriate academic credentials, requisite knowledge, skills, and experiences for teaching assignments. (Faculty Competence)
  - a. Faculty members teaching at the associate or bachelor's level have earned a master's degree or its equivalent from an accredited institution, including 18 graduate hours in the discipline of teaching assignment.
  - b. Faculty members teaching certificate or associate degree courses not designed for transfer to any bachelor's degree have earned a bachelor's degree in the teaching discipline or an associate degree and have demonstrated competencies in the teaching discipline.

- c. Faculty members teaching graduate courses have earned a terminal degree from an accredited institution in their teaching discipline.
- d. Faculty members without the required degrees are employed only when they have demonstrated competencies which the institution has determined through a formally documented process to be equivalent to the required degree.
  - i. Institution makes a written determination of equivalence prior to issuing a contract to any of these faculty members.
  - ii. Faculty members deemed qualified by demonstrated competencies will not be considered when determining compliance with Standard 15.1 or the required ratios of Standard 15.6. (In Lieu of Educational Credentials)

NOTE: Primary consideration should be given to a terminal degree within each discipline. Additional considerations would include competence, eminence, and (as appropriate) undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experience in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented proficiency in teaching or research, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes.

## 15.5 Utilizes teaching assistants only on a limited basis. (Teaching Assistants)

- a. Undergraduate teaching assistants who are enrolled in a graduate degree program in the teaching discipline may teach undergraduate courses.
- b. Graduate teaching assistants who hold a master's degree in the teaching discipline and are enrolled in a doctoral program in the teaching discipline may teach graduate courses.
- c. All teaching assistants will be under the direct supervision of an academically qualified, full-time faculty member in the teaching discipline, receive regular in-service training, and be evaluated on a regular cycle.

## 15.6 Employs an appropriate percentage of full-time faculty. (Core Ratios)

- a. At least 50% of courses in each term are taught by full-time faculty.
- b. At least thirty percent (30%) of full-time undergraduate faculty have earned a terminal degree in their teaching field.
- c. At least twenty-five percent (25%) of all full-time undergraduate faculty for each major offered have earned a terminal degree in their teaching field.

## 15.7 Maintains appropriate faculty documentation. (Faculty Documentation)

- a. Includes official transcripts, contracts, evaluations, professional development data, and other pertinent materials in all faculty files.
- b. Archives files of all faculty who cease to be employed for at least five years from the last date of employment.
- c. Documents that faculty contracts are clearly written and clearly specify assignments, compensation, and period of assignment.

- 15.8 Provides its faculty with continuing opportunities for professional and spiritual development for the growth of faculty as teachers, scholars, and practitioners. (Faculty Development)
- 15.9 Evidences a functioning faculty organization, guided by a set of regulations, led by elected officers, meeting regularly, and involved in the formulation of curricular and academic matters, including faculty policies. (Faculty Organization)
- 15.10 Regularly evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with published criteria. (Faculty Evaluation)
- 15.11 Ensures academic freedom for faculty. (Academic Freedom)





## F. Student Services

### 1. STUDENT SERVICE PROGRAMS

Consistent with its mission, the institution provides an environment that fosters the spiritual, intellectual and personal development of its students. It recruits, admits, enrolls, and endeavors to ensure the success of its students; and offers the resources and services that provide them the opportunity to achieve the goals of their program as specified in institutional publications. The institution's interactions with students and prospective students are characterized by integrity.

#### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 16.1 An array of student services programs are offered which are appropriate to its mission and objectives and address the needs of its students regardless of location or the mode of delivery of educational programs.
- 16.2 A qualified individual oversees the Student Services programs.
- 16.3 Institution has a sufficient numbers of qualified staff with appropriate education or experience are provided in the student services area to accomplish the institution's mission.
- 16.4 Institution provides an orientation program for newly enrolled students that includes information on student services.
- 16.5 Opportunities are provided for the spiritual development of students through a foundation in Scripture.
- 16.6 Opportunities are provided for student leadership and participation in campus organizations and governance, as appropriate.
- 16.7 Student rights and responsibilities, including grievance and due process procedures, are clearly stated, well publicized, readily available, and fairly and consistently administered.
  - a. Complete records of all complaints are maintained for five years, including their resolution.
  - b. Records of complaints are made available for review by visiting teams or TRACS.
- 16.8 Institution maintains student records permanently, securely, and confidentially with provision for a secure backup of all files.
- 16.9 Institution offers student academic advising and career counseling appropriate to its approved programs.
- 16.10 Institution provides appropriate student financial aid services headed by a qualified individual.

## 2. INTERCOLLEGIATE SPORTS (If applicable)

The institution has ultimate responsibility for and exercises appropriate academic, administrative, fiscal, and health/safety controls over its intercollegiate athletics program.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 16.11 Educational programs and academic expectations are the same for student athletes as for other students.
- 16.12 Appropriate guidelines and arrangements for the health and academic welfare of the student athlete are in place and available.

## G. Financial Operations

### 1. GENERAL

Financial stability and integrity are major factors in determining the viability of any institution of higher education. Its financial resources will be adequate to carry out its mission and support its programs and activities for the foreseeable future.

Institutions are to give evidence of financial stability and integrity with enough monetary support to assure the continuity of the essential operations beyond the date when current students would complete their degree programs.

All member institutions obtain a certified external audit of the financial statements annually, in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and federal guidelines. Auditors will not be inappropriately involved with the institution (e.g., are not members of the governing board, not employees of the institution, not under contract to the institution for services other than the audit, or not involved in the decision-making activity, etc.).

#### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 17.1 Finances are adequate to support the staffing, facilities, equipment, materials, and support services for the approved programs and will continue to do so into the future. **(IER #7b)**
- 17.2 Institution exercises complete control over all its financial resources.
- 17.3 Accurate and timely financial reports are provided to the CEO, governing board, and other designated persons.
- 17.4 A certified external audit of the financial statements along with management letter is prepared each year, in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and federal guidelines. (See definition of *Certified External Audit*.) **(IER #7a)**
  - a. Audits demonstrate a recent history of financial stability. (See Definition of *Financial Stability*.)
  - b. Audit is prepared using the “net asset” model of accounting consistent with the policies and procedures provided by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) in its document, *Audit and Accounting Guide: Not-for-Profit Organizations: June 1, 1996*, or any later enacted version.
  - c. The audit demonstrates adequate finances to support the institutional mission and programs.
- 17.5 Institution evidences that the finances will continue to support the current programs.
  - a. Institution uses a Board approved budget which incorporates input from grassroots personnel, gives priority to learning experience needs, and is driven by the priorities of the long-range Strategic Plan.
  - b. Current and long-range financial plans reflect positive cash flows and positive budget outcomes, and are realistic.

- 17.6 Institution has sufficient professionally qualified finance staff, led by a chief financial officer.
- 17.7 Credit line is in place and maintained with a financial institution or institution has a segregated contingency reserve equal to at least 10% of the operational budget.  
**(IER #7b)**

## 2. FEDERAL TITLE IV COMPLIANCE

Candidacy (Pre-Accreditation) or Accreditation by TRACS entitles institutions to apply for Federal Title IV funds. The following Standards apply to all institutions participating in Federal Title IV programs.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 18.1 Institution evidences compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the most recent *Higher Education Act* as amended. In evaluating an institution's compliance with Title IV program responsibilities, the Accreditation Commission will rely on documentation forwarded to it by the U.S. Secretary of Education.
  - a. Letters of authorization are on file from relevant agencies indicating certification of eligibility.
  - b. Federal Aid audits are available.

## H. Institutional Assessment

One of the most crucial responsibilities of any institution is to determine how well it is accomplishing its mission. While there are many ways of assessing, one such way is the institution's comprehensive *Assessment Plan*, which would involve the identification of outcomes, assessment to determine the extent to which they are achieved, and evidence of institutional improvement based on an analysis of the results in each of the following areas:

- Administration
- Academics and Student Learning
- Student Services
- Finances
- Facilities and Equipment

### 1. ASSESSMENT PLAN

#### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 19.1 Institution has developed and implemented a comprehensive *Assessment Plan* which includes all aspects of the institution. **(IER #8a)**
- a. The *Assessment Plan* is in writing, shared widely, and posted on the institution's website.
  - b. Minutes of meetings indicate the institution is using the assessment data for revising its *Assessment Plan*.
  - c. The *Assessment Plan* is annually reviewed and approved by the board.
- 19.2 *Assessment Plan* contains a process for the evaluation of all policies on a regular basis.
- 19.3 *Assessment Plan* provides a procedure for evaluating, revising and approving all institutional publications.

### 2. ADMINISTRATIVE

Administrative personnel have job descriptions and performance criteria that are appropriate to the position.

#### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 19.4 Institution conducts regular evaluations of its employees against the responsibilities in the approved job description.

### 3. ACADEMIC AND STUDENT LEARNING

The assessment of educational quality and effectiveness involves a process for evaluating faculty, programs and student learning. Although there are many evaluation models, it is important that the institution regularly assess the fulfillment of its mission and objectives.

The curriculum is evaluated regularly. Normally, each course and major is assessed every three or five years to determine program currency and viability. The outcome of this assessment answers questions such as:

- Is the curriculum content sequenced to enable students to move from basic to complex levels of learning?
- Is the content appropriate for the degree level?
- Is the curriculum for professional programs designed to provide students the necessary tools for the profession?
- Are resources adequate to support the curriculum effectively?

Regular evaluations are completed for all faculty: including educational qualifications, experiences, and teaching skills. The goal of this assessment is to improve instruction. A process for measuring teaching proficiency is developed and may be accomplished through peer review, student survey, administrative evaluation, or a combination of these and other tools.

Measurable learning outcomes for each major/program set the stage for the assessment of student learning and measuring institutional effectiveness. The type of program used to assess learning outcomes will be determined by each institution based on the programs and goals of instruction. Possible approaches in assessing learning outcomes are:

- Course Embedded Assessment.
- Student Portfolios.
- Capstone Courses.
- Standardized Achievement Tests.
- Peer Evaluation.
- Observation.
- Pre-Post Testing.

The assessment of student learning outcomes, involves the collection and analysis of relevant data. Possible methods for generating and assessing this data include:

- Interviews with students and graduates.
- Involvement of professionals in curriculum development and maintenance.
- Surveys of recent graduates.
- Surveys of employers of graduates.
- Performance of graduates in graduate schools.
- Performance of graduates of professional programs on licensure examinations.

Academic assessment focuses on student learning outcomes and their implications for the programs and the institution.

Program outcomes are assessed as a means of determining the success of the institution in accomplishing the outcomes which have been adopted. These may include retention rates, completion rates, graduation rates, job placement rates, and licensure rates. (See Appendix A for the Accreditation Commission adopted *Benchmarks*). The analysis of this data leads the review of and possible modification of program goals or modification of instructional delivery to meet the established program goals.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 19.5 Institution provides a systematic evaluation of whether the student learning and program outcomes are appropriate to its educational mission. **(IER #5b)**
- 19.6 Institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the institutional, program and course levels and includes:
- a. The analysis of retention rates, completion rates, graduation rates, job placement rates, and student success rates on state and other licensing exams.
  - b. Assessment of student learning outcomes at the institution, program and course levels.
  - c. Utilization of multiple approaches (qualitative and quantitative methods and direct and indirect measures) for assessing student learning, including information both internal and external to the institution.
- 19.7 Results of the evaluation of student learning is provided to stakeholders and made available to the public in an easy to understand format.
- 19.8 Institution regularly reviews curriculum in order to ensure that the content is consistent with national norms.
- 19.9 Assessment results are reviewed, analyzed and possible new goals are discussed to implement changes.
- a. Revision of the curriculum is based on assessment results.
- 19.10 Institution provides an established process for the regular evaluation of all faculty.
- a. Process evaluates faculty performance with the goal of improving instructional delivery.
  - b. Process is developmental in nature and leads to faculty improvement.

## 4. STUDENT SERVICES

The institution establishes and publishes a set of goals and objectives for all Student Services areas. The objectives are written in measurable terms. The assessment data are directed toward changes made to improve the program.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 19.11 Institution regularly evaluates its effectiveness in admitting and retaining students and the appropriateness and effectiveness of its student services to meet the institutional mission.
- a. Information obtained through the evaluation is used to improve achievement of student services programs goals.

## 5. FINANCES

Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The institution plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency.

The institution utilizes an on-going process of financial analysis to assure the current and future financial condition of the institution.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

19.12 Institution systematically evaluates its fiscal condition and financial management of the financial operation including appropriate internal and external mechanisms which ensure financial stability.

19.13. Institution utilizes the results of these activities for financial planning.

## 6. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

The institution utilizes on-going assessment for the purpose of assuring that facilities and equipment (including technology) are adequate to support the educational programs and support services required.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

19.14 Institution regularly evaluates the adequacy of facilities and equipment (including technology).

19.15 Institution regularly evaluates the adequacy, of its library materials and learning resources.



## I. Institutional Research and Planning

The institution conducts sustained, evidence-based, and participatory discussions regarding how to effectively accomplish its mission and educational objectives. These activities form the foundation for both institutional planning and the systematic evaluation of institutional effectiveness. The results of this institutional inquiry, research, and data collection are used to establish priorities at all levels of the institution and to direct the short-term and long-term planning processes.

The institution's planning process is all-inclusive in nature and leads to the development of a comprehensive institutional *Strategic Plan*. Such a plan will normally address educational programs, student enrollment, staffing projections, finances, facilities, equipment, policies and procedures for operation.

The strategic planning process includes both short-range (1-2 years) and long-range (3-5 years) projections and goal setting. The process normally identifies priorities, sets goals and timelines, and identifies individuals responsible for implementation.

The institution utilizes the results of assessments in a broad-based continuous planning and evaluation process, and incorporates them into the strategic planning process.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 20.1 Institution has developed and implemented a comprehensive *Strategic Plan* based on both internal and external factors. **(IER #8b)**
  - a. *Strategic Plan* is in writing and includes timetables, persons responsible for implementation and the financial resources required for meeting the goals.
  - b. *Strategic Plan* is approved and reviewed annually by the board.
  - c. *Strategic Plan* includes a facilities plan for maintaining and upgrading facilities.
  - d. Goals are listed in priority order for each area of the institution (such as academic, student services, financial operations, administrative, etc.).
- 20.2 Planning process takes into account both income and expenditure categories for at least five years.
- 20.3 *Strategic Plan* has been developed on sound research, based on an analysis of assessment data, and involves all appropriate constituencies of the institution.
  - a. Minutes of any committee meetings related to strategic planning are maintained.
- 20.4 *Strategic Plan* is an integral part of the institution's on-going cycle of planning, budgeting, and assessment.
- 20.5 Assessment data and subsequent new goals are utilized to implement changes.



## J. Library and Learning Resources

Libraries and learning resources are central to the educational process in institutions of higher learning. Convenience to users is a primary concern. Facilities, equipment, supplies and services adequately support the mission of the institution, the academic programs, and encourage faculty members and students to develop spiritually, intellectually, and culturally.

TRACS member schools vary in the number of students, programs and degree levels and these variations are directly reflected in the needs of the library and learning resources for each member institution. Member institutions are to include appropriate technology as a part of their libraries and learning resources.

Adequate resources for accreditation purposes are those owned by the institution and supplemented by those available to faculty and students by contracts with third parties. Institutions document that the resources are utilized.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

The institution provides sufficient and appropriate library and information resources. The institution provides adequate access to these resources and demonstrates their effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. The institution provides instructional and information technology sufficient to support its teaching and learning environment.

- 21.1 Furnishes information resources and services and instructional and information technology appropriate to support the institution's mission, academic programs, and administrative functions, through strategic, operational, and financial planning. **(IER #9a)**
- 21.2 Provides sufficient and consistent financial support for the library/LRC and the effective maintenance and improvement of the institution's information resources and instructional and information technology. (Sufficient Physical Resources) **(IER #9a)**
- 21.3 Utilizes instructional technology appropriate to its academic mission and the modes of delivery of its academic programs.
- 21.4 Employs an adequate number of professionally qualified staff who administer the institution's library, information resources/services, and instructional and information technology support functions. **(IER #9b)**
- 21.5 Makes available, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, library and information resources necessary to fulfill the institution's mission and objectives which support the academic and research programs and the intellectual development of students, faculty, and staff. **(IER #9a)**
- 21.6 Provides appropriate training and support to allow faculty, staff, and students to make effective use of library and information resources, and instructional and information technology.

- 21.7 Ensures appropriate access and availability to library and information resources and services for all students, regardless of program location or mode of delivery to support and enrich student academic work.

## K. Facilities and Equipment

Physical facilities will be adequate to serve the institutional purpose and programs, meet all state and local requirements, and provide an atmosphere for safe and effective learning.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 22.1 Institution provides and maintains adequate facilities and equipment, (both on and off campus), that appropriately serve the needs of the educational programs, support services and other mission related activities. **(IER #10a)**
- 22.2 Use of the facilities is controlled by the institution.



## L. Health and Security

The institution is responsible for taking reasonable steps to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all members of the campus community.

### Standards and Evaluative Criteria

- 23.1 Institution has an *Emergency Plan* which is appropriately posted and published in relevant documents.
- 23.2 Appropriate security measures are in place for all campus facilities and activities.
- 23.3 Institution provides for the appropriate medical care (or referral) of students.
- 23.4 Procedures for handling hazardous materials or dangerous equipment conform to local, State and Federal laws.





# **APPENDIX A**

## **Benchmarks for Standard 19.6**



**Appendix A – Benchmarks for Review of TRACS Standard 19.6  
To be used by TRACS On-Site Visiting Team Members  
And for the Review of Annual Reports**

<b>CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS</b>		
<b>Completion Rate</b>	<b>60% or above</b>	<b>59% and below</b>
	In compliance. Verify at next scheduled review that the current plan addresses improvement.	Below the standard; not in compliance. Submit plan for coming into compliance.
<b>ASSOCIATE PROGRAMS</b>		
<b>Retention Rate (Fall to Fall)</b>	<b>70% or above</b>	<b>69% and below</b>
	In compliance. Verify at next scheduled review that the current plan addresses improvement.	Below the standard; not in compliance. Submit plan for coming into compliance.
<b>Completion Rate</b>	<b>50% or above</b>	<b>49% and below</b>
	In compliance. Verify at next scheduled review that the current plan addresses improvement.	Below the standard; not in compliance. Submit plan for coming into compliance.
<b>Job Placement Rate</b> (for vocational programs)	<b>70% or above</b>	<b>69% and below</b>
	In compliance. Verify at next scheduled review that the current plan addresses improvement.	Below the standard; not in compliance. Submit plan for coming into compliance.
<b>BACHELOR PROGRAMS</b>		
<b>Retention Rate (Fall to Fall)</b>	<b>70% or above</b>	<b>69% and below</b>
	In compliance. Verify at next scheduled review that the current plan addresses improvement.	Below the standard; not in compliance. Submit plan for coming into compliance.
<b>Graduation Rate</b>	<b>50% or above</b>	<b>49% and below</b>
	In compliance. Verify at next scheduled review that the current plan addresses improvement.	Below the standard; not in compliance. Submit plan for coming into compliance.
<b>Job Placement Rate</b> (for vocational programs)	<b>70% or above</b>	<b>69% and below</b>
	In compliance. Verify at next scheduled review that the current plan addresses improvement.	Below the standard; not in compliance. Submit plan for coming into compliance.
<b>GRADUATE PROGRAMS</b>		
<b>Completion Rate</b>	<b>50% or above</b>	<b>49% and below</b>
	In compliance. Verify at next scheduled review that the current plan addresses improvement.	Below the standard; not in compliance. Submit plan for coming into compliance.
<b>Job Placement Rate</b>	<b>70% or above</b>	<b>69% and below</b>
	In compliance. Verify at next scheduled review that the current plan addresses improvement.	Below the standard; not in compliance. Submit plan for coming into compliance.

**Appendix A – Benchmarks for Review of TRACS Standard 19.6**  
**To be used by TRACS On-Site Visiting Team Members**  
**And for the Review of Annual Reports**

**Standard 19.6:** The TRACS review of an institution's approach to understanding student learning outcomes focuses on the institutional, program and course levels; and includes as appropriate:

- The analysis of retention rates, completion rates, graduation rates, job placement rates, and student success rates on State or other licensing exams. (NOTE: Licensing Exam passage rates are reviewed at the program level relative to the passage rates information from each specific testing service or agency with compliance by an institution being at or above the mean for the passage rates for all institutions).
- Institutional assessment information of student learning outcomes at both the program and course levels.
- Utilization of multiple approaches (qualitative and quantitative methods, and direct and indirect measures) for assessing students learning, including both internal and external to the institution.