

ARTS Handbook For Accreditation

ARTS (The Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries)

*“... that you excel still more ...”
1 Thessalonians 4.1*

Foreword

This Handbook for Accreditation[†] provides the rationale, guidelines, and procedures for membership in the Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries.

The Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries was created to help meet a growing need in theological education for an accrediting agency that understands and is dedicated to the mission of reformed theological education. Over the years, institutions for pastoral and theological training which have had their roots in the Christian community, even in the reformed tradition, have struggled to maintain the vision, mission, and distinctives with which their founders endowed them. While this is in part due to the general secular and liberal drift in America over the past two-and-a-half centuries, it is at least conceivable that the existence of an organization involving a group of like-minded institutions and committed to the reformed faith as expressed in historic creeds, might have been able to arrest that drift, or, at least, impede that drift, thus allowing the reformed faith to flourish more than is currently the case.

The Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries, taking its stand on the historic reformed creeds of the Church, is committed to the preservation and promotion of the reformed faith and the progress of the Kingdom of God on earth. We welcome institutions throughout the world who share this vision and invite them to unite with us in this important calling.

The Board of Directors

[†] This term is used throughout to mean the system of institutional accountability described in this Handbook

Contents

| | Page # |
|---|---------------|
| I. ARTS Institutional Mission and History _____ | 4 |
| II. Standards for Institutional Accreditation _____ | 5 |
| Standards for Theology and Philosophy of Ministry _____ | 5 |
| <i>Creeds, documentation of policies and procedures, internal and external review</i> | |
| Standards for Programs and Instruction _____ | 7 |
| <i>Criteria for awarding credit and defining programs, Course format and development, Faculty, Library resources</i> | |
| Standards for Institutional System _____ | 9 |
| <i>Finance, Records, Personnel, Reporting, Oversight, Planning</i> | |
| Standards for Institutional Development _____ | 11 |
| <i>Planning; Communications; Development of Board, Faculty and Staff; Resources</i> | |
| III. Accreditation Procedures _____ | 12 |
| <i>Candidacy, Provisional Accreditation, Membership, Fees, Assessments, Review, Visitation</i> | |
| IV. Working Procedures _____ | 16 |
| <i>Initial Accreditation, Ongoing Assessments, Sanctions, Governance</i> | |
| V. Guidelines for Self-study _____ | 19 |
| Introduction _____ | 19 |
| Personnel _____ | 20 |
| Programs _____ | 21 |
| <i>Program descriptions, requirements, current program enrollments</i> | |
| Systems and Operations _____ | 21 |
| <i>Planning, Budgets, Marketing & Promotions, Fund Development, Accounting, Data Processing, Files & Archives, Operations, Review</i> | |
| Support _____ | 22 |
| <i>Student, Library, Mentoring, Internship/Field Experience, Student Placement, Alumni</i> | |
| Exhibits _____ | 23 |
| <i>Brochures, manuals, handbooks, minutes, etc., to be submitted with self-study</i> | |
| VI. Additional Services Offered by ARTS _____ | 24 |

I. Institutional Mission and History

Mission

The mission of the Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries is to bring glory to God, to contribute to the building-up of His Body and the progress of His Kingdom, and to preserve and advance the reformed tradition by providing a context where member institutions can hold one another accountable for fulfilling their individual stated purposes.

History

The Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries was organized in the fall, 1999, through the cooperation of leaders from seven Reformed theological seminaries. United in their belief that existing accreditation models had not proven effective in helping to sustain a clear mission and high degree of excellence among institutions of higher learning in America, especially among institutions having their roots in the Christian community, and that a specific accreditation model was needed to help preserve and advance Reformed theological education, these leaders committed to study, discuss, and develop a new accrediting institution. Beginning in the summer, 1998 and working steadily through the next fifteen months, they met in plenary sessions and task forces to define the standards, develop the model, and begin the work of implementing the accreditation paradigm for theological seminary education herein described.

The first institutions were admitted to Candidacy status in the fall, 1999. As of 2008, the Association was composed of eight member institutions.

II. Standards for Institutional Accreditation

The standards described in this section relate to the theological, philosophical, and procedural aspects of institutional life and ministry.

1 Standards for Theology and Philosophy of Ministry

1.1 Each institution must profess adherence to one or more of the historic creeds of the reformed tradition, to wit, the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dordt, the First or Second Helvetic Confessions, or the 2nd London Confession of 1689.

1.1.1 This creedal identity shall be declared in the institutional catalog and in all documents communicating the mission and purpose of the institution to the public, prospective students, and faculty, and shall serve as the foundation upon which all programs of instruction are developed and offered.

1.1.2 In addition to this creedal identity, each institution shall articulate more specifically its views, purpose, mission, convictions, and other educational and institutional distinctives in the same manner as above. This should include:

1.1.2.1 A statement of institutional mission and purpose;

1.1.2.2 A fuller explanation of theological, philosophical, and educational distinctives, including clear statements of the institution's commitment to helping students develop in personal piety, intellectual understanding, and ministry skills, as well as its commitment to inculcating a reformed world-view.

1.1.2.3 Appropriate presentation of these statements in relevant documents.

1.2 Each institution shall provide documentation setting forth its policies and procedures, including:

1.2.1 Catalog;

1.2.2 Board Manual;

1.2.3 Student Handbook;

1.2.4 Faculty Handbook;

1.2.5 Policies and Procedures Manual;

1.2.6 By-laws (where applicable).

1.3 Each institution shall conduct regular and periodic internal reviews of all its work in order to determine the extent of institutional adherence to mission and distinctives as elaborated above.

This shall include:

1.3.1 Written reports to Board of Directors;

1.3.2 Staff meetings;

1.3.3 Reports from the field (graduates);

1.3.4 Course evaluations;

1.3.5 Review of course syllabi;

1.3.6 Financial reviews (audit, review or compilation);

1.3.7 Reports to constituents;

1.4 Each institution shall submit to regular and periodic review by outside agencies, such as, session or consistory, presbytery or classis, synod or general assembly, accrediting agencies, at such times and as required by such outside agencies.

2 Standards for Programs and Instruction

The standards described in this section identify the guidelines and procedures relating to the instructional process.

2.1 The award of one semester of academic credit shall be based on a minimum of 40 but not more than 50 hours of work in instruction, including time in class, reading, writing, projects, exams, or any elements of instruction, as planned by the instructor. One quarter of academic credit shall require a minimum of 27 but not more than 33 hours of work, as planned by the instructor.

2.2 Academic programs shall be defined according to the following criteria:

2.2.1 Title and academic credits to be awarded;

2.2.2 Summary of program content and relationship to institutional mission;

2.2.3 Statement of program outcomes.

2.3 Courses shall normally be conducted for 1-5 academic credits, according to the requirements of the various programs. Courses must conform to the following format:

2.3.1 Intellectual content as determined by the demands of the program and the area of instruction;

2.3.2 Specific instructional content, learning activities, and means of assessment to address the spiritual and affective needs of learners;

2.3.3 Behavioral or skill outcomes appropriate to course content and the student's instructional program.

2.4 Each institution shall maintain written guidelines for course development and/or revision. Procedures should include the following:

2.4.1 Discussion with the prospective instructor concerning the place of the course in the curriculum and the mission of the institution; review of previous courses on the proposed topic, including similar courses from other institutions; development of course content; preparation of course objectives; recommendation of texts; establishment of instructional methods and means of assessment;

2.4.2 Development of course syllabus, including:

2.4.2.1 Course description (course number and title, academic credit, instructor, term, purpose and overview);

2.4.2.2 Course goals (cognitive, affective, behavior/skill);

2.4.2.3 Textbooks and assignments, including use of library and other learning resources, with deadlines;

2.4.2.4 Explanation of the means of assessment and grading policy.

2.5 Instructors shall be employed according to the needs of the institution, and their status as faculty members, in relationship to the institution as well as to other faculty members, shall be defined according to such titles and criteria as the institution shall deem necessary. Those titles and criteria, together with the privileges and responsibilities that inhere in them, shall be explained in appropriate institutional documents, such as the faculty handbook.

2.6 Requirements for instructors shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

2.6.1 Completed faculty application, including academic transcripts, account personal Christian experience, letters of reference, or faculty standing at another similar institution;

2.6.2 Ordinarily, academic credentials of at least one degree above that of the program in which the full-time faculty member is to be an instructor (with the exception of doctoral programs). A doctor's degree appropriate to the field of instruction is recommended. Institutions should encourage and assist faculty members to fulfill this recommendation;

2.6.3 Record of agreement with the institutional mission, doctrinal position, instructional philosophy, and faculty requirements (any exceptions, such as for visiting instructors, must be approved case by case by the institutional board);

2.6.4 Demonstrated skills in teaching and expertise in the assigned area of instruction;

2.6.5 Significant experience in local church ministry as a ruling or teaching elder or in a similar leadership capacity.

2.7 Each institution shall make available to students and faculty library resources adequate to the needs and demands of the academic programs.

2.7.1 Procedures for access to and use of those library resources shall be maintained in writing and provided for all students and faculty;

2.7.2 Institutions shall ensure that instructors incorporate use of the library in course work where relevant;

2.7.3 Each institution shall maintain a plan and program for ongoing library development.

3 Standards for Institutional System

The standards in this area explain the systems and procedures which are essential to overall institutional health and development.

3.1 Institutions shall maintain working and efficient systems — defined as understood and regularly adhered-to working arrangements — in the areas of finance, records, personnel, reporting and oversight, institutional planning, and any other such systems as individual institutions shall deem necessary.

3.2 Procedures for all institutional systems, including identification of individuals responsible for the oversight, use, and management of those systems, shall be maintained in writing in appropriate institutional documents, e.g., catalog, procedures manual, etc.

3.3 Procedures shall be maintained in writing and adhered to for each of the following areas of institutional finances:

3.3.1 Banking;

3.3.2 Payables;

3.3.3 Receivables;

3.3.4 Budgets;

3.3.5 Revenues;

3.3.6 Financial reporting;

3.3.7 Audits, financial reviews or compilations prepared by an outside accounting firm.

3.4 An orderly system of records shall be maintained for each of the following areas:

3.4.1 Students: To include application, transcripts, records of advisement, registrations, receipts, correspondence, and any other pertinent records. These records shall be kept in files locked away from general accessibility;

3.4.2 Faculty: To include application, transcripts of academic work, position descriptions, evaluations, correspondence, contracts, faculty development records, remuneration, and any other pertinent records. These records shall be kept in locked files away from general accessibility;

3.4.3 Fund development: To include records of giving through the current calendar year, samples of all fund-development vehicles (brochures, campaigns, letters,

proposals), donor lists, correspondence, and other records deemed relevant or necessary by the institution;

3.4.4 Payables: To include invoices, correspondence, catalogs, etc.;

3.4.5 Personnel or human resources records: To include job descriptions, remuneration, relevant memos or correspondence, evaluations, etc. These records are to be kept in locked files away from general accessibility;

3.4.6 Correspondence;

3.4.7 Other records as deemed relevant and necessary.

3.5 An orderly system for processing applications and admitting students to programs shall be observed, which shall include the following:

3.5.1 Written application, including, personal data, statement of Christian faith, academic records, letters of reference, test scores (as required by the institution);

3.5.2 Review of application by relevant parties, as the institution determines, coupled with student interview;

3.5.3 Notice of approval (whether full or provisional, with explanation of the latter) or disapproval (with explanation).

3.6 A regularly and orderly system of institutional reporting shall be observed, including:

3.6.1 Staff reporting;

3.6.2 Reports to institutional governing board;

3.6.3 Reports to constituents;

3.6.4 Reports to relevant governmental and other agencies of institutional oversight (session or consistory, presbytery or classis, synod or general assembly, accrediting agency, etc.).

3.7 Other institutional systems, including general institutional policies and procedures; personnel policies; use of office equipment; files access, storage, archiving, redundancy, and disposal; etc.; shall be spelled out in writing, distributed to the relevant parties, and adhered to in a regular and orderly manner.

4 Standards for Institutional Development

The standards in this area identify the guidelines for general overall institutional development.

4.1 Each institution shall observe regular and formal procedures for overall institutional planning, including:

4.1.1 Long-range or strategic (3-5 years) planning;

4.1.2 Annual planning, including, budget;

4.1.3 Semi-annual, quarterly, monthly, or other short-term planning, as is appropriate.

4.2 Each institution shall maintain appropriate means of creating institutional awareness among the various constituencies it seeks to serve, such as:

4.2.1 Promotional materials (mottos and slogans, logo, stationery, brochures, pamphlets, website, correspondence and communications);

4.2.2 Consistency and accuracy in representing the mission, message, and achievements of the institution to all constituencies;

4.2.3 Use of local media;

4.2.4 Public appearances by institutional personnel;

4.2.5 A system for reviewing and revising the above as needed.

4.3 Each institution shall develop and maintain an ongoing system of board member development, to include:

4.3.1 Orientation, including a clear explanation of board member duties;

4.3.2 Training and materials relating to board member responsibilities;

4.3.3 Effective means of board member accountability.

4.4 Each institution shall maintain ongoing programs for staff and faculty development, together with appropriate records for each.

4.5 Each institution shall maintain ongoing programs for the development of such learning resources as facilities, equipment, library, and the Internet.

4.6 Each institution shall develop a scripturally based philosophy of fund development, appropriate to the institution, and shall include planning and review of fund development in all stages of its institutional planning.

III. Accreditation Procedures

5 The Accreditation Process

The accreditation process consists of three phases, as follows:

- Candidacy
- Provisional Accreditation
- Membership

5.1 Candidacy

During the candidacy phase an institution will complete a comprehensive self-study, based on the foregoing standards and using the guidelines that are provided in Section V that follows. Applications for candidacy may be received by contacting the Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries. The completed application, together with the application fee of \$100 or such other amount established by the Association, should be sent to the Secretary-Treasurer of the Board of Directors of the Association. Once the completed application has been received and reviewed by the Association, the institution may be invited to enter Candidacy status and begin the institutional self-study. An institution is allowed one year after notification of acceptance into Candidacy status in which to complete the self-study and submit it to the Association. Requests for extension must be made in writing within that period and be accompanied by an extension fee of \$100 or such other amount established by the Association.

5.2 Provisional Accreditation

When the self-study has been reviewed by the Association, the Board of Directors shall determine whether to grant the institution a status of provisional accreditation. Provisional accreditation means that the self-study has been approved, indicating preliminary agreement on the part of the institution with the accrediting standards of the Association, and a level of initial satisfaction of those standards sufficient to allow the process of accreditation to go forward. If the self-study is not approved upon initial review, it will be returned to the institution with notations. The institution then has another six months in which to satisfy the requirements of candidacy.

During the period of provisional accreditation, the Association will assign a visitation team comprised of representatives from member institutions to visit the candidate institution for further clarification of the self-study, inspection of operating procedures, observation of classroom activities, and interviews with staff, board, faculty, students, and other members of the institutional community. The visitation team will also meet with the Board of Directors of the institution in order better to familiarize itself with institutional leadership. Expenses for the visitation team are the responsibility of the candidate institution. The visitation team then reports its recommendations to the Association.

Those recommendations can be one of the following:

- Approval for Membership
- Extension of Provisional Accreditation
- Return to Candidacy
- Termination of Application

Approval for Membership involves moving the institution to a full membership status. Extension of Provisional Accreditation indicates that the visiting team found discrepancies or inconsistencies with what was indicated in the self-study and recommends certain steps be taken to correct these before membership status is granted. Follow-up of these recommendations will be conducted according to the preference of the Association. Return to Candidacy indicates that the visitation team believes the institution to be so far out of accord with its self-study that the self-study needs to be revised and resubmitted.

Termination of Application is recommended only in those situations where the visitation team determines that there has been a deliberate attempt to mislead the visitation team and the Association or where a persistent lack of cooperation with the visitation team was in evidence. An institution whose application is terminated must wait one year before it re-applies.

5.3 Membership

An institution admitted to full membership can advertise that it has achieved accreditation with the Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries.

Membership involves the following ongoing responsibilities:

- Membership Fees
- Ongoing Annual Assessments
- Five-Year Reviews
- Ten-Year Visitation

5.3.1 Membership Fees

Institutional membership fees are established annually by the Board of Directors of the Association. These fees help to cover the operating expenses of the Association. They also entitle member institutions to free use of the library resources of the Association, as well as a copy of any reports, memoranda, circulars, or other Association publications.

5.3.2 Ongoing Annual Assessment

Member institutions submit to ongoing annual assessments in the following areas:

- Changes in Existing Programs, Courses or Faculty
- Student Course Evaluations
- Annual Report of the Board of Directors
- Annual Financial Report
- Annual Ecclesiastical Report
- Publications and Promotional Materials

All materials required for the Ongoing Annual Assessment must be received by the Association no less than sixty days prior to October 1, or the annual meeting of the

Association, whichever is earlier, in quantities sufficient for all members of the Association.

5.3.2.1 Changes in Existing Programs, Courses, or Faculty

Any changes in the above areas need to be reported to the Association annually. These can be submitted by simple memo, addenda to the institutional catalog, or copies of revised syllabi. Any such changes requiring institutional board approval must be accompanied by a copy of the board minutes indicating such. Changes in programs can include course requirements, course content, new or revised programs, or any matters relating to the conduct of the academic programs of the institution (grading policies, etc.).

5.3.2.2 Student Course Evaluations

Summaries of student evaluations from each course during the academic year must be submitted to the Association for review, including student comments. Institutions may develop their own forms for use in this process, or forms can be secured from the Association.

5.3.2.3 Annual Board Report

A report from the institutional board must be received for review at the annual meeting of the Association. This report can come in the form a letter from the board reporting its sense of the institution's overall health and providing a summary of institutional progress during the previous year.

5.3.2.4 Annual Financial Report

A copy of the executive letter accompanying the institutional audit, review or compilation or a copy of the audit, review or compilation itself must be submitted annually to the Association for review.

5.3.2.5 Annual Ecclesiastical Report

Theological seminaries are servants to the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is, in a very real sense, the primary accrediting body for seminary activities. Institutions will define their relationship to the Church in different ways. For some that will come by way of formal association with a local church or denominational governing body. Others may assemble a Board of Ministerial Advisors to assist in the oversight of the institution's ministry. Still others may relate to individual churches for feedback and response. An annual report from the affiliated church(es) is required and can be satisfied by a letter of review and recommendation from appropriate officials. Samples of such reports, or of any of the reports required in this section, may be secured from the Association.

5.3.2.6 Publications and Promotional Materials

Current copies of all institutional publications, brochures, and other promotional material must be on file with the Association and will be reviewed annually.

5.3.3 Five-Year Review

At five-year intervals from the date of its acceptance as a member of the Assessment Board, an institution may request an on-site visitation team for the purposes of a more comprehensive review. Costs for this visitation shall be shared between the institution and the Association.

5.3.4 Ten-Year Visitation

At ten-year intervals from the date of its acceptance as a member of the Association, institutions must submit to an on-site visitation of Association representatives for the purpose of more closely evaluating the overall health of the institution. This Ten-Year Visitation is financed by the member institution.

IV. Working Procedures

6 Working Procedures

The Board of Directors of the Association is the actual accrediting arm of the Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries. The work of the Association is divided into the following areas:

- Initial Accreditation
- Ongoing Assessments
- Sanctions
- Governance

6.1 Initial Accreditation

The work of Initial Accreditation is explained in a preceding section of this *Handbook*.

6.2 Ongoing Annual Assessments

As materials for Ongoing Annual Assessments are received by the Association they are distributed to members for review in preparation for general discussions by the Association at its annual meeting. Those discussions will result in one of the following actions:

- Commendation and Continuance
- Notations and Follow-up
- Sanctions

6.2.1 Commendation and Continuance

If the Association determines that all reports are in order and the institution continues to meet the standards of the agency, a letter of Commendation and Continuance will be sent to the institution reporting this conclusion.

6.2.2 Notations and Follow-up

The Association may, in the light of its review, withhold sending a letter of Commendation and Continuance until it is completely satisfied that the institution conforms to the standards of the agency. In this case a Letter of Notations shall be sent, expressing the Association's concern with any particular areas of institutional health and well-being, together with recommendations for action. The institution receiving such a letter shall remain on full Membership status, but is expected to respond to the Letter of Notations, expressing its response and indicating actions to be taken to correct any deficiencies, together with deadlines by which those actions will be taken. All notations must be resolved within the year following the meeting at which they were issued, unless an extension is granted by the Association for good cause shown. The Association will assign one member of its body to follow-up. When all follow-up requirements have been met, at the discretion of that member, the letter of Commendation and Continuance will be issued and a report prepared for the subsequent annual meeting of the Association. All follow-up of Notations will be reviewed at the next annual meeting.

6.3 Sanctions

Sanctions against a member institution will only be issued when any Letters of Notation have failed to accomplish the desired result. Sanctions may include:

- Suspension of Privileges
- Suspension of Membership
- Termination of Membership

6.3.1 Suspension of Privileges. Suspension of Privileges means that the institution remains a member of the agency, but without participation at the Association annual meeting, until any Letters of Notation enduring beyond the year of their issuance have been resolved.

6.3.2 Suspension and Termination of Membership. Suspension of Membership means that the institution is temporarily deprived of Membership status and all benefits pertaining thereunto and may only report itself as a member of the agency whose status is described as “Suspended.” Suspension of Membership is taken when Suspension of Privileges has failed to resolve outstanding Letters of Notation for a period of one year, as outlined above. Suspension of Membership can be sustained for one additional year. Normally, unresolved Suspension of Membership will result in Termination of Membership after one year of Suspension (one year after Suspension of Privileges is taken, two years after the unresolved Notations were issued). Outstanding Notations which remain unresolved for a period of three years will thus normally result in Termination of Membership by the procedure outlined above. Member institutions which lose their membership status through Termination of Membership can only rejoin the agency through the process previously explained, beginning with Candidacy.

6.4 Governance

6.4.1 Board of Directors. The Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries is a nonprofit association. All of the activities and actions of the Association are governed by the Association’s Board of Directors. Each institution accredited by the Association is a member of the Association and is entitled to one seat on the Association’s Board of Directors. Each member institution shall choose its own Association Board representative, who shall serve at the pleasure of the member institution and without any remuneration from the Association. Each member of the Board of Directors is entitled to one vote and decisions of the Board of Directors shall be made by a simple majority vote, except where otherwise required by law. The Association’s fiscal year shall be the calendar year.

6.4.2 Meetings. The Board of Directors of the Association shall hold an annual meeting at 2:00 p.m. (EST) on the third Tuesday of October each year, unless a different date and time are set by the Association’s Executive Committee prior to

October 1. The Chairman of the Board of Directors may call a special meeting of the Association upon 10 days notice to the Directors and shall call a special meeting no later than 10 days after receiving a written request from two or more Directors. Board meetings may be held by telephone conference call or such other means whereby the participants are able to hear one another. The presence of a majority of the Directors shall constitute a quorum. In the absence of a quorum, the Board of Directors shall take no formal action except to adjourn the meeting to a subsequent date.

6.4.3 Officers of the Association. Each year at its annual meeting the Association shall elect a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary-Treasurer, who shall each serve from January 1 through December 31 following the annual meeting. The duties of the Chairman are to make the arrangements for the annual meeting and facilitate all communications concerning the meeting with Association members. In addition, the Chairman presides over the annual meeting. The Vice-Chairman assists the Chairman in his duties and presides over the annual meeting in his absence. The Secretary-Treasurer maintains the bank account of the Association, keeps the minutes of its annual meeting, and assists the Chairman and Vice-Chairman with any necessary communications. Vacancies in office shall be filled by the Board of Directors at the annual meeting or a called meeting.

6.4.4 Executive Committee. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary together constitute the Executive Committee of the Association. The Executive Committee is authorized to take actions on behalf of the Association necessary for the ordinary operation of the Association, including supervising the activities of the Association's Administrative Assistant and expenditures from the Association's bank account. The Executive Committee shall not be authorized to grant or deny accreditation or make any other substantive decisions regarding an institution's accreditation status, application for accreditation, annual assessments, 5-year reviews or 10-year visitations. The Chairman shall make a report to the Board of Directors at the annual meeting and any called meetings.

6.4.5 Amendments. Amendments to this Section 6.4 shall require a 2/3 vote of the Directors present at any meeting, provided a quorum is present.

V. Guidelines for Self-study

Institutions seeking accreditation through the Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries must, as part of the Candidacy phase, complete an institutional self-study, using the guidelines that follow in this section. The study shall be typed and double-spaced and must be submitted within one year after the institution has been notified that it has been received into Candidacy status in sufficient copies for all participating members of the Association.

The self-study is a comprehensive report on the history, mission, distinctives, and operations of the institution. Narratives in each section should both describe the institution as it currently exists, in the light of the standards provided in this *Handbook*, together with any comments or observations regarding needed improvements. Complete guidelines and recommended deadlines for completing the self-study are sent once the application for Candidacy has been approved. The self-study overall should give an accurate picture of the institution as it exists at the time. It should be written according to the following outline:

Introduction

Information recorded in this section may well be redundant with information provided in the exhibits required for the self-study. It is important, however, that it all be recorded here as well.

A. Institutional history

- How and when did the institution come into being?
- What have been some of the high points of its growth and ministry?
- Who have been its “leading lights”?

B. Mission and vision

- What are the mission and vision of the institution?
- How are these presented to the public?
- How are they worked down into the operations and ministry of the institution?

C. Theological distinctives

- To which of the approved standards of the reformed tradition does the institution adhere?
- How is adherence enforced?
- How is it represented in the institutional mission and program?

D. Educational distinctives

- What distinctives mark the philosophy of teaching and learning that this institution embraces?

- Does the institution provide opportunities for mentoring, internships, mission trips or other cross-cultural experiences? (An opportunity is provided later in this outline to elaborate on these programs.)

E. Affiliations (denominational, professional, etc.)

- What kinds of affiliations does the institution maintain?
- For what purposes?
- How are these useful to the institution?

F. Principle constituencies served

- Denominations
- Churches
- Other agencies or populations

G. Reasons for seeking accreditation

- How does the institution hope to benefit from accreditation with the Association of
- Reformed Theological Seminaries?
- What does it hope to learn from the process?
- How does it hope to contribute to the mission of the Association (since accredited institutions have representation on the Association)?

H. Progress in mission to date

- What are the long-range and short-range goals of the institution?
- How were those determined?
- To what indicators does the institution look in order to determine progress toward those goals?
- How does the institution stand in relation to those goals at this time?

I. Personnel

This section should include names and job descriptions, an organizational chart, and a description (narrative) of how these various groups and individuals work together.

A. Board of Directors

- Who are the board members?
- How are they appointed?
- How do they serve?

B. Staff

- Who are the staff?
- What are their duties?
- Is there an organizational chart?
- Do job descriptions exist?

C. Faculty

- What kinds of faculty are there (full-time, associate, tutors, mentors, etc.)?
- How are they chosen?
- What are the requirements?
- Who are the faculty at this time?
- In what ways does the faculty participate in the program of the seminary?
- How are they compensated? Evaluated?
- Is there a program of faculty orientation and/or development?
- Are there faculty meetings?

II. Programs

For this section it will be necessary to draw together materials from various of the exhibits required in the self-study. It is important that all be recorded here as well.

A. Program descriptions

- What academic programs are offered?
- What is the purpose of each?
- How do they serve the institutional mission and vision?

B. Program requirements

- What are the requirements for each program?

C. Current program enrollments

- How many full- and part-time students are there?
- What are the current enrollment figures for each program?
- Overall?

III. Systems and Operations

This section requires a narrative description and any available exhibits (work schedules, annual plans, etc.) to illustrate the systems by which the institution accomplishes its work.

A. Planning

- What planning processes are followed?
- On what kind of schedule?
- Who is involved in institutional planning?

B. Budgets

- How is the budget established?
- Does the budget clearly conform to the institutional plans?

C. Marketing and Promotions

- What programs, procedures, materials, etc., exist to put the institutional mission, vision, and programs before the public?

- Who is responsible for this?

D. Fund Development

- What is the institutional philosophy of fund development?
- What development vehicles and instruments are in place?
- Who is responsible?
- Is there a development plan?

E. Accounting

- What accounting procedures are followed?
- Who is responsible for accounting?

F. Data Processing

- What equipment, procedures, etc., are currently in use to manage the data processing needs of the institution?

G. Files and Archives

- How is information stored?
- What systems for filing are currently in use?

H. Operations

- What does a typical work week look like?
- How do staff communicate with one another?
- Are there means of determining institutional effectiveness and efficiency?
- Are they followed?

I. Review

- How is the work of the institution reviewed?
- By whom?
- On what kind of schedule?

IV. Support

In this section describe your students and the various support systems that exist to assist students in completing their programs.

A. Student

- From what denominational backgrounds do students come?
- Can you provide additional demographic information?
- How are they recruited?
- What services exist to facilitate their study?
- What is the process of admission?
- Is financial aid available? What kind?
- How many students are currently receiving aid, and of what kinds?

B. Library

- How many volumes are in the library?
- How is it managed, and how does it operate?
- What additional services does the library provide?
- Do you have any statistics on circulation of materials?
- What has been the numerical growth of the library's collection over the past several years?
- How has this been achieved?

C. Mentoring

- Is there a provision for students to be mentored?
- How does this work?
- Who is involved?

D. Internships/Field Experience

- How does the institution incorporate practical experience in ministry into its training program?

E. Student Placement

- What assistance is provided in placing students in ministry?
- What percentage of actual graduates who are seeking calls have found them?

F. Alumni

- Is there an alumni organization?
- What is its purpose?
- How does it operate?
- Is it effective according to its purpose?

G. Other

What other resources are made available to assist students through their programs?

Exhibits

The following items must accompany the self-study when it is submitted:

- a. Catalog(s)
- b. Manuals (Board, policy, personnel, etc.)
- c. Sample brochures
- d. Sample publications
- e. Student Handbook
- f. Faculty Handbook
- g. Board Minutes from previous two years
- h. Minutes from faculty meetings for the past year

i. Letters of recommendation from the following:

- 5 graduates
- 5 supporting pastors or churches
- Board of Directors
- Accountant

VI. Additional Services

The Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries offers the following additional services to its member institutions.

Accreditation Library

The Association maintains a small but growing library of materials related to excellence in higher education. These may be borrowed for use by designated individuals from member institutions simply by calling the Association. A catalog of available resources is provided to each member institution.

Consultation

Member institutions may request assistance from other institutions through the Association in a wide range of activities relating to the work of theological education, including any of the areas outlined in this *Handbook*. Inquiring institutions will be matched with individuals from member's institutions who can provide assistance on mutually-agreeable terms.

Reports

From time to time special reports, studies, and papers are submitted to the library of the Association from individuals associated with member institutions. Copies of these can be made available to individuals from member institutions at a nominal fee.