

# ACCREDITING COUNCIL FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA

## ACTEA STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES FOR ACCREDITATION AT POST-SECONDARY LEVEL

### Preface

The Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA), under the sponsorship of the Theological and Christian Education Commission of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM), operates with internal autonomy in the accreditation of programmes of theological education throughout Africa, in order to stimulate the improvement and standardisation of such programmes, and in order to provide a basis for academic recognition of such programmes.

The following document presents ACTEA standards and procedures for accreditation of programmes of theological education offered at the post-secondary level. Similar documents for accreditation of programmes at the post-graduate level and at the secondary level are also available.

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### PROCEDURES

#### 1. Becoming a Candidate for Accreditation

1a. Application. An institution wishing to gain accreditation under ACTEA at the post-secondary level must first become a registered candidate. The institution should first express its interest to ACTEA. If ACTEA's preliminary enquiries are satisfactory, the institution will be invited to make formal application. An application fee must accompany the application.

1b. Registration. When the application is received, it will be passed to an ACTEA Review Panel, which will first take any steps

needed to check on the information supplied. The Review Panel will then direct ACTEA administration to register the institution as a candidate for accreditation, if the Review Panel judges the institution to be at a point in its development which would permit it to meet the standards of ACTEA for post-secondary accreditation in a reasonable time. If the Review Panel does not think this to be the case, it will not accept the application, for stated reasons, and 50% of the application fee will be refunded. An institution whose initial application has not been accepted may, if it wishes, make a fresh application after one year.

1c. Annual fee. During the time that the institution is a registered candidate, it will pay the same annual participant fee which fully accredited institutions pay.

1d. Period of candidacy. An institution may remain a candidate for a period of four years. At the end of this time its candidate status will automatically terminate, unless an extension is granted by ACTEA. ACTEA may, on request, grant extensions for one year at a time for exceptional reasons. Normally extensions will not be granted unless the self-evaluation process is well in progress.

1e. Publication of registered status. Institutions which are registered candidates under ACTEA may say so in their publications.

## 2. Becoming Accredited

2a. Self-evaluation. After an institution has become a registered candidate, it then will begin a process of careful self-evaluation, using materials supplied by ACTEA, and begin to make whatever adjustments are necessary to meet the ACTEA standards. Throughout the period of candidacy the institution is required to maintain close and frequent contact with ACTEA for advice and direction in the self-evaluation process. The institution will produce a detailed, written report on its self-evaluation. It will submit this to ACTEA in first draft form, and will then make revisions and adjustments as advised. The institution will submit the final revised self-evaluation report to ACTEA when both the institution and ACTEA are agreed that it is ready.

2b. Recommendations. The Review Panel may, both during the process of self-evaluation and after the report has been submitted, recommend various improvements or adjustments in the institution's programme in order to enhance its chances of accreditation.

2c. Visitation. When both the institution and the Review Panel are agreed that the institution is ready, the Review Panel will appoint a team of external visitors to come to the institution to evaluate its programme in relation to its report and the standards of ACTEA.

2d. Visitation costs. The institution will pay ACTEA a visitation fee. ACTEA will then care for all travel expenses of the visitors; the institution will care for food, lodging, and related local expenses of the visitors; and the visitors will contribute their time and services

free.

2e. Visitation report. When the visitation is completed, a written report by the visiting team will be sent immediately to the Review Panel. The report will include a recommendation for action on the institution's application for accreditation. The Review Panel will supply a copy of the report to the institution, which may, if it wishes, within three months of receipt submit a written comment on the report to the Review Panel. The visiting team in turn may, if it wishes, take account of this comment by revision of its report or by an additional submission.

2f. Council action. The Review Panel, after consideration of all relevant submissions, will forward them to the members of the Accrediting Council, together with its own recommendation, either (i) to grant full accreditation; (ii) to grant provisional accreditation, with notation of specific deficiency and a stated time for its correction; (iii) to delay accreditation until certain specific deficiencies are corrected within a stated time; or (iv) not to grant accreditation, for stated reasons. The Council will either endorse the recommendation or, with reasons stated, return it to the Review Panel for reconsideration and for re-presentation to the Council. The final decision of the Council will be communicated to the institution by ACTEA administration.

2g. Withdrawal. An institution may at any time during the process of seeking accreditation under ACTEA voluntarily withdraw from that process, and from its candidate status. No refund of fees or charges will be made.

2h. Reapplication. Institutions whose candidacy has been either terminated or withdrawn may, if they wish, make a fresh application for candidate status after two years.

2i. Publication of accredited status. Institutions which have been granted accreditation under ACTEA may say so in their publications and credentials.

### 3. Maintaining Accreditation

3a. Annual report and fee. Accredited institutions will be required annually to submit a report updating information on the institution and its programme, together with the annual participant fee. Failure to submit the report and fee will result, after due reminder, in a 50% surcharge on the fee.

3b. Re-examination. Periodically, accredited institutions will be expected to renew their accreditation by undergoing a fresh self-evaluation and a fresh visitation. This may take place whenever ACTEA judges it suitable; it must take place at least every eight years; and it will normally take place every six years. Expenses for the revisitation will be handled in the same manner as for the initial visitation. Decision to renew the institution's accreditation will be

by the Accrediting Council, on recommendation from the Review Panel.

3c. Notation. When the institution's programme, considered as a whole, does meet the ACTEA standards for accreditation, but is nevertheless still deficient in certain particular points, the accreditation of the institution will be accompanied by a notation of the deficiency, and a time limit will be set for its correction. Such notations may arise either in connection with initial accreditation, or from information such as that supplied in the annual report, or from the re-examination process. Normally the period for correction will be not less than a year and not more than two years. The notation will be removed when the ACTEA Review Panel has satisfied itself that the deficiency has been corrected. Expenses for determining this will be borne by the institution. When an institution does not meet a notation within the stated time, its accreditation will normally be suspended.

3d. Probation. When an institution's programme declines in quality, so that it no longer measures up to ACTEA standards when considered as a whole, the institution will be placed on probation, if in the judgment of ACTEA the institution has the ability and the willingness to correct the deficiency in a short time. ACTEA will set a time limit for correction, of not less than a year and not more than two years. The probation will be removed when ACTEA has satisfied itself that the deficiency has been corrected. Expenses for determining this will be borne by the institution.

3e. Public status. When an institution has a notation against its name, or is on probation, it is still accredited and may continue to say so in its publications and credentials.

3f. Suspension. The accreditation of an institution may be suspended by ACTEA on such grounds as failure after due reminder to comply with ACTEA procedures or directives, or failure to meet notations within the stated time, or major changes or interruptions of the institution's programme which ACTEA judges to be temporary. Reinstatement will follow compliance with requirements set by ACTEA according to the individual case. Expenses for determining compliance will be borne by the institution. Suspension is a temporary and provisional administrative action to be followed by regular formal procedures if necessary. Normally suspension will be for a six month period.

3g. Withdrawal. An institution may at any time voluntarily withdraw from ACTEA accreditation on due notice to ACTEA administration. No refund of fees or charges will be made.

3h. Removal of accreditation. When an institution's programme has declined so that it no longer measures up to the ACTEA standards when considered as a whole, and ACTEA does not find that there are both an ability and a willingness to correct the deficiency in a short time; or, when an institution has failed to correct such deficiency during the period of probation; or, when an institution has failed to comply with

standard ACTEA procedures or directives after due warning; ACTEA shall remove the accreditation of the institution.

3i. Appeals. An institution may, if it wishes, appeal to ACTEA to reconsider any decision made to place that institution on probation, or to suspend its accreditation, or to remove its accreditation. If the results of this appeal do not satisfy the institution, it may then appeal for reconsideration on the matter to the executive officer of the Council's sponsoring body, namely the executive secretary of the AEAM Theological and Christian Education Commission. Such an appeal may result in the action of the Council being upheld by the executive officer, or in a request by the executive officer to the Council to give further consideration to the matter, for stated reasons.

3j. Reapplication. An institution whose accreditation has terminated for any reason may, if it wishes, make application in the normal manner for registration as a candidate for accreditation after two years.

## STANDARDS

These standards apply to programmes of theological education in Africa in the following two post-secondary categories: (i) the Bachelor of Theology (BTh), and (ii) the Diploma of Theology (DipTh). Other names may, with approval, be used for the terminal credentials in these categories. Entrance level and length of course for these categories are stated in sections 4g and 4h below.

### 1. Administration

1a. Objectives. The institution must have in writing a set of clearly defined objectives, approved by the appropriate governing body, which are suitable to its perceived role and commitments, which relate to the institution's programmes as a whole, and which that programme is demonstrably designed to achieve. The institution must be able to show a reasonable approximation of these objectives in its achievements. There must be evidence that the staff is familiar with and accepts these objectives, and that steps are regularly taken to acquaint the students in a practical manner with these objectives and their significance.

1b. Organisation. The governing of the institution, including the operations of the proprietors, the board of control, and the administration, must be carried out in accordance with written regulations appropriate to the nature and size of the institution. These regulations should include defined lines of authority, and position descriptions for each administrative office and for teaching staff. The board of control shall manifest responsible familiarity with, and oversight of, the affairs of the institution. The institution

must evidence responsible efforts towards Africanization of the governing board and of the senior administrative positions, wherever an African majority is not already present. Record-keeping procedures for all levels of administration must be adequate in scope, legibility, and provision for preservation. The institution is also encouraged to make adequate administrative provision for publicity and public relations.

1c. Finances. The financial policies, procedures, and conditions of the institution must be demonstrably sound. There should be an annual external auditing of the financial records. The institution must also be able to demonstrate reliable sources of regular financial support. More than half of the annual expenditure on operation of the institution should be derived from within the continent. Where this is not yet the case, there must be in operation a realistic plan to increase locally-derived support to that level.

1d. Stability. The institution must show a satisfactory degree of stability, manifest in such factors as continuity of board membership and administrative leadership, low rate of staff turnover, steady enrolment figures, and sound financial history. Institutions will not normally be accredited which have not been in regular operation for at least two years.

1e. Review. The institution must have arrangements in operation for regular critical review and adjustment of its objectives, its programme, and its achievements, in their intended interrelationships. Review of the programme should include both the curricular programme as a whole and the content of the individual subject courses. The institution should also develop procedures for measuring educational outcomes in terms of the actual achievements of its graduates, in order to obtain sound data against which to evaluate the appropriateness of its objectives and the effectiveness of its programme. The institution must demonstrate a pattern of steady planned adjustments and improvements in relation to such critical review.

## 2. Teaching Staff

2a. Number. The teaching staff must be of sufficient number to support the educational programme effectively. Normally this means that there should be at least one teacher for every fifteen students, and at least three teaching staff who are primarily occupied with the work of the institution.

2b. Qualifications. The members of the teaching staff must have qualifications adequate to their responsibilities. Normally this means possession of a recognised academic qualification in a relevant field at least one academic level above the qualification for which the students are being prepared. At the post-secondary level this would normally mean a post-graduate degree. Otherwise, for the DipTh programme the average number of years of study in relevant fields beyond the level

being taught of all teachers combined should be not less than three years; and those teaching staff falling below the average in such training should be distinguished by above-average experience and proven competence. For expatriate staff there must be evidence of adequate orientation in the African setting.

2c. Commitment. Staff members shall evidence mature Christian character, willing acceptance of the doctrinal frame of reference of the institution, conformity to its behavioural expectations, and accord with its objectives and standards, as well as a concern to improve in personal professional skills and to keep up-to-date in, and improve intellectual acquaintance with, their individual fields of specialisation and instruction, an active participation in the life and worship of the institution, and a visible personal interest in the students and their welfare. Expectations in this regard by the institution should be clearly communicated to and consistently held before the staff.

2d. Responsibilities. The total responsibilities of each staff member shall be in quantity not incompatible with efficiency. A written schedule of assignments, regularly updated, should be provided each staff member. Teaching staff should not be assigned to teach more than 12.5 hours in 16 periods a week.

2e. Nationality. African staff should constitute more than half of the total teaching staff. Where this is not yet the case, the institution must have in operation a realistic plan for achieving this by a reasonably early date.

2f. Compensation and welfare. Staff salaries and other amenities should reasonably compare to prevailing scales for similar work in the local country, and should be subject to regular review in light of economic changes.

2g. Development. A programme should be in operation which is directed towards upgrading the academic qualifications and improving the teaching skills of the existing staff, by such means, for example, as study leaves for advanced work and provision of, or provision for attendance at, seminars, workshops, and consultations.

### 3. Facilities

3a. Buildings and grounds. The site, layout, structures, and furnishings of the institution should be suitable for its programme and appropriate to the climate. Arrangements for maintenance should be sufficient to ensure smooth operation of the facilities, and provisions for security should be suitable to the setting.

3b. Library holdings. The library holdings should be of a size and quality suitable to the academic programme of the institution, in relation to the literature available in the language of instruction. At the post-secondary level a library in an anglophone institution should

normally contain at least 8,000-10,000 volumes in the regular library collection, and in a francophone institution at least 5,000-6,000. Quantity should not be attained at the expense of consistent quality; superficial and superfluous titles should be avoided in acquisitions and eliminated from holdings. The holdings should represent both breadth and concentration; breadth with reference, for example, to academic levels, theological orientations, and subjects covered; concentration with reference, for example, to the theological orientation of the institution, the geographical and cultural context of the institution, and the subjects of instruction at the institution. The reference collection and periodicals received should manifest a similar blend of general breadth and specific concentration. Anglophone institutions offering a BTh programme should normally maintain library subscriptions for at least 40-50 journals, and francophone institutions for at least 20-30 journals.

3c. Library funding. Funding of the library should be adequate for efficient operation and steady growth of the holdings. Normally this should mean that an institution spends each year on accessions an amount equal to three times its current annual ACTEA participant fee, plus an amount equal to three times the current ACTEA application fee. Institutions whose holdings are in the lower ranges should expect to budget more.

3d. Library administration. The library should be administered according to standard library procedures; the staff should be sufficient in number and training; the facilities and procedures should be adequate for preserving the holdings against special hazards arising from climate and insects; and the hours of operation should reflect a concern to make the holdings as accessible as reasonably possible.

#### 4. Educational Programme

4a. Programme integration. The institution's programme should evidence a holistic approach, combining both curricular and extracurricular activities in an educational plan which embraces concern for the students' spiritual and vocational as well as academic development. Thus worship, community life, work, sports, social activities, practical Christian service, and so forth, should be intentionally and manifestly shaped to participate in the educational objectives of the institution. Institutions are also encouraged to develop co-curricular enrichment programmes, such as lectureships, workshops, and field trips.

4b. Programme relevance. The curriculum as a whole and the syllabus for each individual course subject should show that the institution has not merely borrowed these from elsewhere, nor simply allowed them to develop on an ad hoc basis, but that the institution has carefully planned the curriculum and each syllabus to meet its own

particular objectives, for the specific Christian community it is serving, for the specific vocations for which the students are being prepared, and for the specific cultural context in which the students will minister. Selection of textbooks should also show sensitivity to contextual relevance.

4c. Programme publication. The institution's current educational programme, with its rationale, should be available in printed or duplicated form. A syllabus for each individual course subject, updated regularly, should also be on file.

4d. Curriculum balance. The content of the curriculum of the institution must be justified in relation to the normal spread of subjects in theological post-secondary curricula, with regard to Biblical, theological, historical, practical, and general areas of study. There must also be neither significant omission nor undue overlap in the overall body of knowledge and skills being conveyed.

4e. Educational objectives. Institutions are required for their BTh programme, and encouraged for their DipTh programme, to develop written objectives for each curricular programme, and for each individual course subject, which correlate with the objectives of the institution as a whole.

4f. Guided practical experience. Institutions are required for their BTh programme, and encouraged for their DipTh programme, to incorporate into the requirements for graduation arrangements for guided practical experience in the specific vocations in which the individual students are being prepared. This may, for example, take the form of an internship programme.

4g. Admission. The institution must have selective admissions procedures which include careful attention to the Christian character and Christian vocational experience of the applicants, as well as to their academic qualifications. Academic requirements for admittance to the BTh programme shall match the principal written requirements for the regular first degree university course in the local country. Academic requirements for admittance to the DipTh programme shall normally be the completion of full secondary schooling in the local country, or the equivalent; alternatively entrance for the DipTh programme may be set at a recognised entry point for secondary schooling in the national educational system, provided that the length of the DipTh programme is then extended by attaching preliminary years equivalent to the relevant period in secondary schooling. These entrance requirements must be met before taking up the programmes, not merely before the granting of the credentials. Mature entry admissions must be limited to bona fide cases and cannot average more than 10% of admissions a year. Students transferring from one programme to a higher one may not have credits earned in the former evaluated as equivalent to credits required for the latter. Priority in admissions must be given to students who completed their secondary schooling in a recognised government institution or in

an institution accredited by ACTEA or a similar agency.

4h. Graduation. The institution must show that consideration of the spiritual and vocational as well as the academic development of the student is an integral part of the evaluation procedures which determine the student's suitability for graduation. Graduation requirements must include satisfactory performance in a 3 year course for the BTh programme, and a 2, 3, or 4 year course at post-secondary level for the DipTh programme, for an average of 34 to 36 weeks a year, with an average of 12 to 14 clock hours a week in class. If the entrance requirements in use for the BTh programme relate to a four year university course, then the BTh programme should itself likewise be a four year course. Publications and credentials relating to an accredited DipTh programme must always specify whether it is a 2, 3, or 4 year DipTh programme. ACTEA encourages institutions to conform the names of their terminal credentials to the pattern or trend observable in that country or region. The language of instruction should normally be that in use in the local national system at the same level. Where an institution is offering more than one academic programme within the post-secondary level, these programmes must be distinct in operation. Institutions enrolling fewer than 20 students in an academic programme should be able to point to exceptional circumstances justifying the independent existence of that programme.

4i. Supplementary programmes. The institution is encouraged to develop programmes which serve the needs of students' spouses lacking training for Christian ministries. The institution is also encouraged to provide placement counselling, organised contacts, and continuing education opportunities for its graduates.

## 5. Students

5a. Services and housing. Housing for resident students must correspond reasonably to that of similar institutions in the country, in size, furnishings, and sanitary facilities. Housing, grounds, and facilities must be consistently clean and well maintained. Food service must show careful attention to hygiene and nutrition, and preparation must be acceptable by normal local custom. The institution must ensure that health services are conveniently available for resident students.

5b. Counselling. The institution must have an organised arrangement whereby all students are regularly in contact with designated staff for personal counselling and encouragement.

5c. Discipline. Major disciplinary action must in every case be taken (i) in keeping with written procedures; (ii) with regard to written regulations plainly available to the students; (iii) on the basis of discussion and decision by a group rather than by an individual; (iv) with written records kept of action taken. Wherever possible such action should also be taken in consultation with the

student's church or sponsoring body.

5d. Community life. The institution should make every effort to foster a healthy sense of community life among all members of the institution. An adequate programme of extracurricular activities with this in view should be conducted, including provision for social and physical recreation, under the general supervision of the administration. All student organisations should be properly organised and operated, and consciously fitted to the overall objectives of the institution. Opportunity should be made for student involvement in the decision-making process for the community life of the institution. The institution should also seek to foster healthy relations and involvement with the local community in which it is situated, and especially with the local Christian community.

5e. Fees. Student fees should be regularly reviewed, to make sure that they correlate both with the financial needs of the institution and with the financial abilities of the students and their sponsors. Scholarship aid programmes should be administered in keeping with written procedures, on the basis of group consultation and decision, and with formal records maintained of action taken.

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