

ACCREDITING COUNCIL FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA

ACTEA

STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

FOR ACCREDITATION AT

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 SECONDARY level. Similar documents for accreditation of programmes at the post-secondary and post-graduate levels 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 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 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 which correspond in entrance level and in length to some phase of secondary education in the national system of the local country.

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.

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 principal, and the majority of the board, shall normally be African. Where this is not yet the case, the institution must have in operation a realistic plan for achieving this by a reasonably early date. The records of the institution shall be well maintained and sufficient for sound administration.

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. 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 twenty students, and at least two 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 an academic credential representing at least three years of study in relevant fields beyond the level being taught. Otherwise, the average number of years of study in relevant fields beyond the level being taught of all teachers combined should be not less than four 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 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 17 clock hours in 25 class 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.

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. 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 secondary level a library in an anglophone institution should normally contain at least 4,000-5,000 volumes in the regular library collection, and in a francophone institution at least 2,000-3,000. The library should be organised and administered in an orderly manner. The facilities and procedures should be adequate for preserving the holdings against special hazards arising from climate and insects. The selection of books should show special attention to the African context of the institution. The selection of books should fit, in level and in

content, the needs of both the students and the staff. Regular reception of suitable periodicals is encouraged. Specific steps should be taken to encourage regular use of the library's resources.

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.

4. Educational Programme

4a. Programme relevance. The curriculum should show that the institution has not merely borrowed it from elsewhere, nor simply allowed it to develop on an ad hoc basis, but that the institution has carefully planned the curriculum 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.

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

4c. Curriculum balance. The content of the curriculum of the institution must be justified in relation to the normal spread of subjects in theological 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. Institutions at secondary level are encouraged to allocate an adequate segment of the curriculum to general subjects.

4d. Guided practical experience. Institutions are encouraged 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.

4e. 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 institution's programme must be equivalent to the level necessary for admittance into the corresponding phase of standard secondary education in the local country.

4f. 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 an academic programme equivalent in number of years to the corresponding phase of standard secondary education in the local country. This must include an average of 34 to 36 weeks a year, with an average of 20 clock hours a week in class. Institutions offering programmes at the advanced secondary level may justify a lower average of class hours a week on evidence of corresponding increase in assigned academic work students do on their own. ACTEA encourages institutions to conform the names of their terminal credentials to the pattern or trend observable in the local 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 secondary level, these programmes must be distinct in operation. Institutions enrolling fewer than 25 students in an academic programme should be able to point to exceptional circumstances justifying the

independent existence of that programme.

4g. Supplementary programmes. The institution is encouraged to develop programmes which serve the needs of students' spouses lacking training for Christian ministries.

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. 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.