ATS Standards

2 Institutional integrity

Institutional integrity is demonstrated by the consistency of a theological school’s actions with commitments it has expressed in its formally adopted statement of purpose, with agreements it assumes with accrediting and governmental agencies, with covenants it establishes with ecclesiastical bodies, and with ethical guidelines for dealing with students, employees, and constituencies.

2.1 Schools accredited by the Board of Commissioners shall carry out their educational programs and institutional activities according to the standards and procedures established by the Commission and its Board of Commissioners, communicate honestly and forthrightly with the board, comply with requests for information, and cooperate with the board in preparation for and conduct of visits.

2.2 With regard to state, provincial, and federal authorities, schools shall conduct their operations in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

2.3 The school shall ensure that all published materials, electronic and print, including catalogs, academic calendars, and promotional literature, accurately represent the institution to its various constituencies and publics, including students and prospective students. All charges and fees, including refund policies, should be fully disclosed. Schools should exercise care in advertising to portray the institution fairly and honestly to the public. Wherever appropriate, published institutional documents shall employ gender-inclusive language with reference to persons.

2.4 The institution shall seek to treat students, faculty, administrators, employees, and the publics to which it relates in ethical ways. Such treatment includes, among other concerns, an equitable policy of student tuition refunds; nondiscriminatory practices in employment, insofar as such practices do not conflict with doctrine or ecclesiastical polity; clearly defined processes for addressing faculty, employee, and student grievances; and integrity in financial management.

2.5 In their institutional and educational practices, theological schools shall promote awareness of the diversity of race, ethnicity, and culture widely present in North America and shall seek to enhance participation and leadership of persons of color in theological education. Schools shall assist all students in gaining the particular knowledge, appreciation, and openness needed to live and practice ministry effectively in culturally and racially diverse settings.

2.6 In their institutional and educational practices, theological schools shall promote the participation and leadership of women in theological education within the framework of each school’s stated purposes and theological commitments. Schools shall assist all students in gaining the particular knowledge, appreciation, and openness needed to live and practice ministry effectively in diverse settings.

2.7 Institutions participating in US federal student financial assistance programs shall comply with prevailing governmental guidelines regulating these programs. Default rates on student loans above the federal threshold, or failure to comply with federal guidelines, is cause for review of an institution’s overall conformity to the standards of accreditation of the Commission. Schools shall demonstrate that they have resolved effectively all areas of deficiency identified in audits, program reviews, and any other information provided by the US Department of Education to the Commission.
2.8 For schools related to colleges or universities, integrity requires that these schools contribute to the overall goals of the larger institution and support its policies and procedures.

2.9. Member schools shall make public a statement of their policy on transfer credits earned at other institutions of higher education, including the criteria used for their decisions.

2.10 Institutions shall establish and enforce policies for the appropriate and ethical use of instructional technology, digital media, and the Internet that are consistent with the institution’s educational purposes and environment.

NEASC Standards

Standard Ten: Public Disclosure

In presenting itself to students, prospective students, and other members of the interested public, the institution provides information that is complete, accurate, timely, accessible, clear and sufficient for intended audiences to make informed decisions about the institution.

. 10.1 The information published by the institution on its website is sufficient to allow students and prospective students to make informed decisions about their education. The institution’s public website includes the information specified elsewhere in this Standard (10.2 – 10.13).

. 10.2 The institution informs the public of the information available about itself and how inquiries can be addressed. It is also responsive to reasonable requests for information about itself. The institution provides notice as to the availability upon request of its publications and its most recent audited financial statement or a fair summary thereof.

. 10.3 The institution’s current catalogue describes the institution consistent with its mission statement and sets forth the obligations and responsibilities of both students and the institution. The catalogue or other authoritative publications present information relative to admission and attendance. Institutions relying on electronic catalogues ensure the availability of archival editions sufficient to serve the needs of alumni and former and returning students.

. 10.4 All forms of print and electronic communications officially representing the institution are consistent with catalogue content and accurately portray the conditions and opportunities available at the institution.

. 10.5 The institution publishes its mission, objectives, and expected educational outcomes; its status as a public or independent institution; if independent, its status as a not-for-profit or for-profit institution; any religious affiliation; requirements and procedures and policies related to admissions and the transfer of credit; a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements; student fees, charges and refund policies; rules and regulations for student conduct; procedures for student appeals and complaints; other items related to attending or withdrawing from the institution; academic programs, courses currently offered, and other available educational opportunities; and academic policies and procedures and the requirements for degrees or other forms of academic recognition.
10.6 The institution publishes a list of its current faculty, indicating departmental or program affiliation, distinguishing between those who have full- and part-time status, showing degrees held and the institutions granting them. The names and positions of administrative officers, and the names and principal affiliations of members of the governing board are also included.

10.7 The institution publishes the locations and programs available at branch campuses, other instructional locations, including those overseas operations at which students can enroll for a degree, along with a description of the programs and services available at each location.

10.8 The institution clearly indicates those programs, courses, services, and personnel not available during a given academic year. It does not list as current any courses not taught for two consecutive years that will not be taught during the third consecutive year.

10.9 The institution publishes a description of the size and characteristics of the student body, the campus setting, the availability of academic and other support services, the range of co-curricular and non-academic opportunities available to students; and those institutional learning and physical resources from which a student can reasonably be expected to benefit.

10.10 The institution publishes statements of its goals for students’ education and the success of students in achieving those goals. Information on student success includes rates of retention and graduation and other measures of student success appropriate to institutional mission. As appropriate, recent information on passage rates for licensure examinations is also published.

10.11 The institution publishes information about the total cost of education, including the availability of financial aid and the typical length of study. The expected amount of student debt upon graduation is provided to help students and prospective students make informed decisions.

10.12 The institution has readily available valid documentation for any statements and promises regarding such matters as program excellence, learning outcomes, success in placement, and achievements of graduates or faculty.

10.13 The institution’s statements about its current accredited status are accurately and explicitly worded. An institution placed on probation by the New England Association discloses this status in its catalogue and recruitment materials and in any other publication, print or electronic, in which the institution’s accreditation is mentioned, as well as the availability of additional information on its probationary status.

Institutional Effectiveness

10.14 Through a systematic process of periodic review, the institution ensures that its print and electronic publications are complete, accurate, available, and current. The results of the review are used for improvement.

Standard Eleven: Integrity

The institution subscribes to and advocates high ethical standards in the management of its affairs and in all of its dealings with students, prospective students, faculty, staff, its
governing board, external agencies and organizations, and the general public. Through its policies and practices, the institution endeavors to exemplify the values it articulates in its mission and related statements.

. 11.1 The institution expects that members of its community, including the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students, will act responsibly and with integrity; and it systematically provides support in the pursuit thereof. Institutional leadership fosters an atmosphere where issues of integrity can be openly considered, and members of the institutional community understand and assume their responsibilities in the pursuit of integrity.

. 11.2 Truthfulness, clarity, and fairness characterize the institution's relations with all internal and external constituencies. Adequate provision is made to ensure academic honesty. Appropriate policies and procedures are in effect and periodically reviewed for matters including intellectual property rights, the avoidance of conflict of interest, privacy rights, and fairness in dealing with students, faculty, and staff. The institution's educational policies and procedures are applicable and equitably applied to all its students.

. 11.3 The institution is committed to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It assures faculty and students the freedom to teach and study a given field, to examine all pertinent data, to question assumptions, and to be guided by the evidence of scholarly research.

. 11.4 The institution observes the spirit as well as the letter of applicable legal requirements. It has a charter and/or other formal authority from the appropriate governmental agency authorizing it to grant all degrees it awards; it has the necessary operating authority for each jurisdiction in which it conducts activities; and it operates within this authority.

. 11.5 The institution adheres to non-discriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement. It fosters an atmosphere within the institutional community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds.

. 11.6 The institution manages its academic, research and service programs, administrative operations, responsibilities for students and interactions with prospective students with honesty and integrity.

. 11.7 The institution is responsible for conferences, institutes, workshops, or other instructional or enrichment activities that are sponsored by the institution or carry its name. These activities are compatible with the institution's purposes and are administered within its organizational structure. The institution assumes responsibility for the appropriateness and integrity of such activities.

. 11.8 The institution has established and publicizes clear policies ensuring institutional integrity. Included among them are appropriate policies and procedures for the fair resolution of grievances brought by faculty, staff, or students.

. 11.9 In its relationships with the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, the institution demonstrates honesty and integrity, and it complies with the Commission’s Standards, policies, Requirements of Affiliation, and requests.

11.10 In addition to the considerations stated in this Standard, the institution adheres to those
requirements related to institutional integrity embodied in all other Commission Standards.

Institutional Effectiveness

11.11 The pursuit of institutional integrity is strengthened through the application of findings from periodic and episodic assessments of the policies and conditions that support the achievement of these aims among members of the institutional community.

2 Institutional Integrity & Public Disclosure

ATS Standards 2; NEASC Standards 10-11

2.1 In order to maintain our academic standards, as an accredited member of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS) continually strives to conduct both its educational programs and institutional activities in keeping the standards set forth by the Commission on Accrediting of ATS. The leadership of Gordon-Conwell regularly participates in ATS conferences and seminars, and has responded to recent requests to update our online course offerings (known as Semlink+ at Gordon-Conwell) to ensure they are meeting all ATS standards.

2.2 Gordon-Conwell has a consistent history of complying with the many regulations and laws issued by various local, state or federal authorities. The Seminary seeks legal counsel as needed to ensure compliance, via external and internal (Board of Trustees and Advisors) resources. Where relevant, the various policies and practices are communicated to their intended audiences (ex: students, faculty, staff, administration, donors, etc), typically by either our Vice President of Finance and Operations, Director of HR, Vice President of Academic Affairs, or Dean of Students.

Specifically, the following laws and regulations upheld by GCTS can be found posted on our website:

4. Student Consumer Information.

2.3 In recent years, Gordon-Conwell has shifted away from print publications, and now relies in large part upon the Seminary website to convey critical information, including course catalog's, the academic calendar, student handbook's. While we no longer publish paper versions of these documents, they are available online in PDF format for printing. We have archived hard copies of past versions which were not available electronically. Each campus maintains their own version of course catalogs and student handbook. Tuition, fees, and refund policies are all readily available online for each campus.

Maintaining these documents online allows the Seminary to make updates in real-time, and ensures that the latest information is available to all. When changes are made, former versions are saved electronically allowing for ready access to the history of these documents.

Additionally, in the last three years (2011-14) Gordon-Conwell has published an annual report that is sent in print form to all institutional donors, and is also available online. This publication chronicles the plans and achievements of the intuition, and also provides an annual financial snapshot of the Seminary.
2.4 Our standards for ethical treatment of all constituent groups are first rooted in biblical principles, as outlined in our Community Life Statement in our Staff Handbook.

As an equal opportunity employer, Gordon-Conwell is committed to non-discrimination in its hiring practices, as outlined in the staff handbook. Disciplinary procedures are also outlined in the student, faculty and staff handbooks. All new hires are required to sign off on the handbook, and to take an online assessment to build knowledge and awareness of what sexual harassment is, and our guidelines.

The student handbook contains a ‘sliding-scale’ tuition refund policy, ranging from 100% to zero, depending upon the timing of withdrawal form a course. This policy is regularly communicated via email to enrolled students to heighten their awareness, and allow them ample opportunity to make a decision that will have the least negative financial impact on them, when deciding to withdraw or remain enrolled in a particular course.

Integrity in financial matters is ensured through our auditing process, which involves a third-party to self-audit (Berry Dunn). Gordon-Conwell is a Charter member of ECFA, and posts its audited financials and annual reports under the accreditation section of the website. A statement is included on the website for obtaining copies of our IRS form 990, for those interested.

While these forms are available to anyone who accesses our website, it may not be evident where to find them. They are currently located on the Financial Stewardship page vi, which is reached by clicking first on “About Us”, then on either “Why Gordon-Conwell” or “Accreditation”

Recommendation: Create a direct link to this information on the “About Us” page, to make it more readily available to those searching for this data. It may not be intuitive to look under the two aforementioned pages to find this information.

2.5 In keeping with our institutional vision to (“To advance Christ’s Kingdom in every sphere of life by equipping Church leaders to think theologically, engage globally and live biblically”), Gordon-Conwell promotes diversity of race, ethnicity and culture in North America and throughout the world. This is reflected in our curriculum, our faculty, our student body and in many of our partnerships.

Of the current Administration, 30% are people of color (3 of 10 administrators); in faculty ranks, 15% (10 of 65) are people of color, while our Board of Trustees consists of 4 people of color (20%).

In the last five years (will change to last ten years – since last accreditation), two new administrators have been hired – one being a person of color. Of 8 new Faculty members, 3 are people of color, and on our board of trustees, of 4 new members in the last five years, none are people of color. vii

2.6 As pertains to women n leadership roles, on our Administration, 1 of 10 administrators is a woman (10%). Within our faculty, there are 9 women, or 14% of faculty, while on our board of trustees, 7 of 25 (28%) are women.

Recommendation for 2.5 and 2.6: When openings occur, employ search strategies that encompass a more diverse slate of qualified candidates to include people of color and women. Also look for opportunities to develop internal talent who may be qualified to serve in leadership, should the right role open.

2.7 Financial Aid Compliance: Gordon-Conwell consistently complies with government standards, and has also instituted some additional practices to coach students prior to taking on more debt. Our default rates are as follows: Ham:____ BOS:____ CLT:____ JAX:____.

Recommendations: (More to come...)
2.8 Not applicable (for embedded seminaries).

2.9 The Seminary’s policy of transferring of credit\textsuperscript{iii} is readily available online, and in the student handbook. It includes the criteria for acceptance.

2.10 Our Information Technology Accepted Use Policy\textsuperscript{x} (IT-AUP) is clearly stated in the staff handbook, and was last emailed to all staff and reviewed live on September 19, 2013 at a staff meeting.

\textsuperscript{i} Seven courses meeting ATS standards are currently offered online for distance learners. Details can be found here: \url{GCTS SemLink Courses}

\textsuperscript{ii} These policies may be viewed in their entirety here: \url{GCTS Compliance}

\textsuperscript{iii} The Course catalog for Hamilton may be found here: \url{Hamilton Current Course Catalog} (Note: Need to obtain for CLT, JAX, BOS)

\textsuperscript{iv} The Hamilton student Handbook maybe found here: \url{Hamilton Student handbook} (Note: Need for all campuses, as well as calendar)

\textsuperscript{v} Our Staff Handbook may be found here: (Note – insert hyperlink)

\textsuperscript{vi} The Financial Stewardship page on our website may be found here: \url{Financial Stewardship}

\textsuperscript{vii} See Appendix for details (Robin to create chart for 2.5 and 2.6 that will include cited figures with detailed numbers depicting people of color and women in leadership.)

\textsuperscript{viii} To view our policy for transferring of credit, click here: \url{Search results for "Transfer Credits" on GCTS site}

\textsuperscript{ix} Our IT-AUP may be viewed here:

\url{Summary of AUP}

September 18 2013.