



Adventist  
Accrediting  
Association

# ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK

2019

**Accrediting Association  
of Seventh-day Adventist  
Schools, Colleges and Universities**

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## PREFACE

The **Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities** is the accrediting body established by the Seventh-day Adventist Church to provide coordination, supervision, and quality control of its education system. It is responsible for evaluating the implementation of the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of education in order to foster the unity and mission of the Church<sup>1</sup>. The Association is commonly known as the **Adventist Accrediting Association** and operates under the acronym of **AAA**. The association serves the thirteen Divisions of the world church and is assisted in its work by the Divisions' directors of education and the educational commissions and committees of each Division.

Accreditation is a self-regulatory mechanism of the education community and plays a significant role in fostering confidence in the educational enterprise of the church. Accreditation and the self-study process serve to maintain minimum standards, enhance institutional effectiveness, and provide inter-institutional recognition.

Accreditation is concerned principally with the continuous improvement of educational quality in institutions operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church around the world. Accreditation of an institution by AAA signifies that the institution appropriately provides a Seventh-day Adventist education of sound academic quality to its constituency and has the resources, programs, and services sufficient to accomplish the institution's goals. Each Seventh-day Adventist educational institution shall seek AAA accreditation.

Like other accrediting bodies, the Adventist Accrediting Association evaluates compliance with defined threshold standards. Consistent with its broad definition of wholistic education in the context of a redemptive goal, the AAA moreover evaluates evidence that the school is comprehensively achieving success in the spiritual domain and that it is truly "Adventist." Accreditation by the AAA is available only to church-owned schools and degree programs. A variety of indicators are examined to affirm that the overall educational experience furthers the development of the whole person and promotes a biblical worldview. The complete list of standards and criteria for review are detailed in this Handbook.

The accrediting standards used by the Adventist Accrediting Association make up the benchmarks for accreditation. These standards are subject to periodic evaluation and provide consistent guidelines for the evaluation of educational institutions.

Institutions with a track record of maximum accreditation with regional/national bodies are eligible for review using abbreviated standards (Form B). This allows the evaluation team to focus on whether the school is achieving its mission in the spiritual domain and is integrating faith and learning in content areas, worldview and co-curricular elements. Cross-referencing the report done for national/regional accreditation eliminates unnecessary duplication.

As changes occur in the church and in the world, Seventh-day Adventist higher education must embrace and respond to the demands of such change. The international nature of Seventh-day Adventist higher education demands a wide range of attention to international standards by and for international contextualization. For this reason, there is no single best system, no one-size-fits-all approach to quality assurance. At the same time there must be assurances that loyalty to Seventh-day Adventist educational philosophy and practice is preserved and that faithfulness to the church's values, ethos, and mission is strengthened.

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<sup>1</sup> *GC Working Policy*, 2010-2011, FE 20 35, pp. 270-274.

In countries where the application of these procedures may seriously compromise the ongoing viability of the institution, because of the requirements of government and educational agencies, it is recognized that while the underlying principles will not differ, the application of those principles may vary.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, in such circumstances the Division Board of Education shall provide to the AAA documentation of the institution's accreditation from its government, attesting to its academic and professional integrity, and shall relate to the AAA for endorsement of the institution's spiritual ethos and theological faithfulness. Under all circumstances institutions must maintain allegiance to their position and purpose in the Church.

A key component of the process of accreditation is the self-study. Each institution applying for initial or continuing accreditation is required to conduct a self-study of its philosophy, mission, purpose, programs, and services which shall be written up in a formal document typically referred to as the *Self-Study*. At the culmination of the self-study, the Association conducts an evaluation visit with a team of professional peer evaluators to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the institution and to evaluate the institution's effectiveness in reaching its stated goals and in complying with the criteria for review.

The visiting team will supply the AAA Board with a written report of their findings and make a confidential recommendation for a term of accreditation to be voted by the Adventist Accrediting Association Board.

Students and their parents select Adventist education from among other options. Through the accreditation process, the institution demonstrates how it aligns its efforts and resources to provide the best academic education possible—while also nurturing faith in God and preparing students for positions of leadership in their communities and churches. The accreditation process helps the institution accomplish these goals.

Accreditation provides not only accountability for the integration of faith and learning and for quality education, but also serves as a forum for reflection and re-commitment (including financial commitment by governing boards or sponsoring organizations). The process promotes transparency and demonstrates accountability to the constituency. Furthermore, this form of intentional dialogue fosters collaboration and understanding between the work of education and the mission of the Church.<sup>3</sup>

This *Accreditation Handbook* is the official handbook of AAA and provides details of the accreditation philosophy, the process of accreditation visits, accreditation standards, and the expectations of a *Self-Study*.

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<sup>2</sup> GCWP 2010-11, FE 20 55 7.

<sup>3</sup> Beardsley, L. M. (2008). Purpose and function of the Adventist Accrediting Association. *The Journal of Adventist Education*, 70 (4), 15-19.

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Tim Northrup, Adventist Risk Management, General Conference  
Tom Wetmore, Office of General Counsel, General Conference

## HANDBOOK UPDATES

The table that follows identifies the dates of publication and implementation of *Accreditation Handbook* updates. The date of publication will be the date when changes to the *Handbook* are voted by AAA. On the date of implementation, all accreditation visits will operate under the terms of the new updates. By agreement between AAA and individual institutions, new procedures and/or documentation may be used in **advance** of the implementation date. Old procedures and/or documentation will normally not be acceptable **after** the implementation date.

Please note that new versions of the Handbook will be sent to all institutions accredited by the AAA. On occasions the date of implementation may precede the date of publication as policy changes may be announced to accredited institutions and published on the website more frequently than the update to this Handbook.

### **Date of Publication**

April 8, 2004

April 7, 2005

April 15, 2012

April 9, 2013

April 3, 2019

### **Date of Implementation**

January 1, 2005

January 1, 2005

July 1, 2012

April 9, 2014

April 3, 2020

## USE OF THE ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK

The *Accreditation Handbook* is in four parts. Each part can stand alone and has its own table of contents. However, only the *Accreditation Handbook* in its entirety explains and outlines the full accreditation process managed by AAA. A table of contents covering the full *Handbook* will precede Part I.

Users of the handbook may find the following a useful summary of contents.

**Part I** is concerned with the **accreditation philosophy** of AAA, its purposes, and the types of accreditation available through AAA. This section is useful to all involved in an accreditation visit as it provides the context for the accreditation visit, explains what the focus of the visiting team should be, and defines the expectations of the Adventist Accrediting Association.

**Part II** focuses on the **accreditation visit** in all its forms and on the roles and responsibilities of all involved in a visit. It also provides a timeline and outline of the final report for a regular accreditation visit. This is a basic manual for both an institution facing accreditation and for the members of a visiting team.

**Part III** provides **information for Form A institutions\*** on writing the *Self-Study* and provides the standards that describe an institution of excellence in this category. It also identifies the Criteria for Review (CFRs) under each standard, with corresponding evidences. All involved in a Form A institution visit should be thoroughly acquainted with this section of the *Accreditation Handbook*.

**Part IV** provides **information for Form B institutions\*** on writing the *Self-Study* and provides the standards that describe an institution of excellence in this category. It also identifies the Criteria for Review (CFRs) under each standard, with corresponding evidences. All involved in a Form B institution visit should be thoroughly acquainted with this section of the *Accreditation Handbook*.

A separate document, *The Accreditation Process: A Manual for Team Chairs*, is available from the General Conference Department of Education for all those asked to chair a AAA accreditation visit.

\*An explanation of which institutions will be accredited under the terms of Form A and Form B are given in Part I of the *Accreditation Handbook*.

## GLOSSARY

- AAA** Adventist Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges and Universities. The term Adventist Accrediting Association will also be used throughout the *Accreditation Handbook* to refer to the Association.
- BMTE** Board of Ministerial and Theological Education. This division-level board recommends to the General Conference IBMTE (see below) new programs in theology and pastoral studies and arranges for endorsement of religion/theology faculty.
- IBE** International Board of Education. This General Conference board approves new programs in all disciplines other than religion/theology and recommends new institutions for candidacy status to AAA.
- IBMTE** International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education. This General Conference Committee approves new programs in theology and pastoral studies recommended by the division BMTEs and approves processes for the management of pastoral training at division level.
- GC** General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

The following terms will also be used as generic terms throughout the *Accreditation Handbook*, although in some division territories or institutions different terms are used.

**Education Director** is called the Vice-President for Education in some division territories.

**President** is the chief administrative officer of an academic institution. Throughout the world equivalents may include but not be limited to: Principal, Rector, and Vice-Chancellor.

**Nontraditional programs**, including distance education, refer to the delivery of education via a method other than the “traditional” teacher in front of a group of students in a standard classroom for a standard semester or quarter. Such programs may be delivered to students who are either younger or older than the traditional expectations, to part or full-time students, and may include a variety of modes including but not limited to mail and video correspondence, internet and web delivery, and short-term intensive sessions.



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