

**WORKING RULES
for the
EVALUATION OF NON-UM SEMINARIES AND SCHOOLS OF THEOLOGY**

The Commission on Theological Education assists the University Senate in fulfilling its responsibility to "prepare annually a list of approved schools, colleges, universities and graduate theological seminaries for use by Annual Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry in determining candidate educational eligibility for admission into the annual conference." (Discipline, para.1520.2)

In fulfilling this task, the commission shall identify, invite and review non-United Methodist seminaries and schools of theology to be reviewed for the task of educating and training candidates for ordained ministry. The commission has the established criteria for evaluation (see Appendix B) and the following working rules:

I. GENERAL GUIDELINES:

1. The policies and procedures of the Commission on Theological Education shall be communicated routinely through the newsletter of the Division of Ordained Ministry to the boards of ordained ministry throughout the denomination which boards are in turn responsible for informing the students under their care of these policies and procedures.
2. Public statements regarding senate action shall be made by the president of the senate who may refer inquiries to the chairperson of the commission.
3. Four categories shall be employed by the commission to describe the status of non-United Methodist theological schools seeking University Senate approval to educate the clergy of The United Methodist Church:
 - a. Schools Approved for the Quadrennium: These institutions are recommended to the University Senate for inclusion in the list of approved schools to be used by annual conference boards of ordained ministry. Approval is for the quadrennium.
 - b. Schools Approved with Notations: These institutions are recommended to the senate for inclusion on the list of approved schools with notations regarding recommended stipulations. They are approved for one academic year only. Their status shall be reviewed by the commission the following year to determine whether the conditions stipulated for full approval have been met or are being met. Schools approved with notations may be continued on the list for more than one year.
 - c. Not Approved: Schools failing to receive the approval of the commission are forwarded to the University Senate with the recommendation of non-inclusion in the list of approved schools. A list of schools reviewed by the commission each year will be provided to the University Senate together with the rationale which led the commission to withhold its recommendation for approval.
 - d. Schools Still Under Review: Schools from whom the commission is seeking additional information.
4. Schools being invited for consideration will be expected to provide a plan for development of opportunities for United Methodist students to grow in their own tradition. (See Criteria) Realizing that it will require time for this plan to be implemented, the commission will review the school at the end of the first quadrennium based on their implementation of the plan.
5. There is no appeal process during the identification stage since the work of the commission is to look at the whole system of theological education to fulfill the mission of the church.

II. ACADEMIC CREDIT AND APPROVAL

1. Academic credit earned at schools approved by the University Senate for the education of the clergy of The United Methodist Church is recommended without prejudice to the annual conference boards of ordained ministry (who bear final responsibility for determining the ministerial status of these students)

provided the work yielding the academic credit is completed during an academic year in which the school enjoyed the approval of the University Senate.

2. Academic credit which has been earned at schools not approved by the University Senate is not recommended to annual conference boards of ordained ministry of The United Methodist Church.
3. Academic credit earned at schools enjoying conditional approval (with notations) by the University Senate is recommended without prejudice to the annual conference boards of ordained ministry provided the work yielding the credit was completed during an academic year in which the school enjoyed conditional approval.
4. If a seminary is removed from the list of those schools approved by the University Senate, a student enrolled and attending such a school shall be permitted to continue his or her studies moving toward graduation from said school, but shall be encouraged to enroll at an approved theological seminary in pursuit of a theological degree. The intent of this provision is to protect only those students who enter approved schools and continue attending these schools which subsequently lose approved status during the time of their uninterrupted attendance, normally not to exceed five years.
5. Academic credit earned at schools prior to the date when the schools have been approved (with or without notations) is not recommended by the University Senate to annual conference boards of ordained ministry. The approval or conditional approval of a school shall never be retroactive except by special action of the University Senate in response to the appeal of a theological school or an annual conference board of ordained ministry which specifies the academic years during which academic credit earned at the school is approved.
6. All schools approved by the commission for the education of United Methodist clergy shall be urged to maintain close ties and to conduct continuing conversations with the bishops, conferences, and agencies of The United Methodist Church in their geographic areas.

III. PROCEDURE FOR REVIEW

1. The commission shall provide the school with the necessary forms and timeline for review. All approved schools shall be reviewed on a quadrennial basis. The commission shall initiate this review on behalf of the University Senate by notifying the institution and sending the necessary forms and information. Schools which have been removed from the approved list and have taken steps to address and to rectify the concerns of the commission and senate are ordinarily eligible to reapply one year following final action of the University Senate.
2. The board of ordained ministry and the presiding bishop of the episcopal area in which a school is located shall be invited to submit a letter commenting on the school relative to the commission's criteria. The invitation is to be made at the time the commission initially notifies seminaries they are to be reviewed.
3. The review of the school shall be based primarily on materials submitted by the institution. The commission shall also take into consideration information provided by the bishop and board of ordained ministry.
4. Only in rare instances will the commission choose to send a visiting team or invite the school to send a representative to meet with the commission. The team shall be appointed by the chairperson of the commission and shall include at least one team member who is directly involved in theological education. The visit or meeting with a representative of the school shall be designed to meet the specific nature of the commission's concerns.

5. Materials presented by schools to the commission shall not be shared with other institutions or with the public. Because of the confidential basis upon which this information is sought and provided, it shall be held in confidence by the University Senate and by the Commission on Theological Education whose deliberations and evaluations of this information shall also be confidential.
6. An institution shall have ninety (90) days in which to submit an appeal and appropriate supporting documents to the executive secretary of the University Senate. The appeal, based only on failure of following process, shall be heard by the Reconsideration Committee at the time and site of the next regular meeting of the Senate. At the time of its consideration by the Reconsideration Committee, the institution may have its case presented by no more than three representatives--the chief executive officer, the chair of the Board of Trustees, and/or another person who shall be a member of a constituency related to the institution.
7. Upon completion of the review, the Reconsideration Committee will present its recommendation to the University Senate, and the senate's action shall be final.
8. In all cases, the institution shall be notified immediately concerning the University Senate's decision. Bishops and boards of ordained ministry shall be notified within thirty (30) days after final actions of the University Senate have been conveyed to the institution.
9. Certification of extension centers requires independent recommendation of the commission. The commission recommends extension centers for Master of Divinity Degree work when those centers are consistent with the broader institutional mission and offer educational resources and communal settings of comparable quality to the main campus. Educational resources must include:
 - a. courses, 75 percent of which are taught by the seminary's regular faculty;
 - b. adequate and accessible library resources;
 - c. classes which have at least 75 percent M.Div. degree candidates (Schools with fewer than 75% M.Div. degree candidates in these courses must demonstrate that the intent of instruction is consistent with the goal of preparation for ordained ministry.);
 - d. physical facilities that are conducive to learning and community building; and
 - e. a community of students and faculty large enough and consistent enough to provide community building, dialogue, and interaction that help in deepening and integrating the learning process. The community should also provide opportunities for common worship and spiritual formation.

In addition, the center must provide a United Methodist ethos to assist in forming United Methodist students in their tradition. The center must also meet the standards of inclusiveness of gender and ethnicity and stress the social principles required of all the approved seminaries.

Finally, students may do no more than 50 percent of their M.Div. program at the extension center. All extension center courses shall be clearly noted on the student's transcript. The same admissions requirements and procedures operating on campus, or alternatives demonstrably commensurate, shall be utilized.

10. Certification of distance learning programs requires independent recommendation of the Commission. The review of distance learning programs would normally be done at the time of review. The Commission will recommend distance learning programs for master-of-divinity degree work and other masters= degrees leading to ordination when the programs are consistent with criteria for evaluating United Methodist institutions and non-United Methodist institutions.

Guidelines for review include:

- a. courses, 75 percent taught by seminary=s regular faculty and offered to students on the main campus
- b. adequate and accessible library resources

- c. classes which have 75 percent M.Div. degree students
- d. classes which have regular interaction and access to faculty
- e. comprehensive training for faculty and students
- f. integration of Christian formation and academic instruction in students= experiences of on-line learning
- g. evidence of regular evaluation by faculty and administration
- h. expectation of the same academic standards as on-campus students.

In addition, the distance education program must provide a United Methodist ethos to assist in forming United Methodist students in their tradition. With approval of the Commission on Theological Education, up to two-thirds of coursework toward the M.Div. degree and other masters programs leading to ordination may be taken through distance learning.

11. Ordinarily, a seminary should be given no more than four years to secure the unqualified approval of the University Senate.
12. In regard to the undergraduate requirement for the training of candidates for the ordained and diaconal ministry, the University Senate recognizes all regionally accredited colleges and universities for training of candidates for the ordained and diaconal ministry. A Bachelor of Arts degree or its equivalent from any of these institutions will meet the undergraduate requirements of the Book of Discipline.

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