

APPENDIX A

WORKING RULES OF THE COMMISSION ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The University Senate is charged 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 full connection.” (*The Book of Discipline* 2012, ¶1417.2)

In addition to the review of United Methodist-related schools of theology, the Commission on Theological Education implements the University Senate policy regarding the identification, invitation, and review of non-United Methodist schools of theology listed to educate candidates for ordained ministry. Specific criteria for evaluating United Methodist and non-United Methodist schools of theology are found in Appendix B.

General Guidelines

1. The policies and procedures of the Commission on Theological Education shall be communicated routinely to the Boards of Ordained Ministry throughout the denomination. These boards are in turn responsible for informing the students under their care of these policies and procedures.
2. Three categories shall be employed by the commission to describe the status of United Methodist and non-United Methodist schools of theology approved to educate clergy in The United Methodist Church:
 - a. Approved for Listing for the preparation of candidates for ordination in The United Methodist Church
 - (1) Without qualification (public information)
 - (2) With monitoring (not public information)
 - (3) With alert (not public information)
 - b. Approved for Listing with Public Warning (public information)
 - c. Not Approved for Listing (public information)
3. Schools of theology being invited for consideration will be expected to provide a plan for the development of opportunities for United Methodist students to grow in their own tradition (see Appendix B). 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.
4. Since the task of the commission is to review the whole system of theological education to fulfill the mission of

the church, there is no appeal process during the identification and invitation stage.

Academic Credit and Approval

1. Academic credit earned at schools approved by the University Senate for the preparation of candidates for ordination in 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 was approved by 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.
3. Academic credit earned at schools with conditional approval by the University Senate is recommended without prejudice to the annual conference Boards of Ordained Ministry, provided the work leading to the credit was completed during an academic year in which the school enjoyed conditional approval.
4. If a school is removed from the list of schools approved by the University Senate, a student enrolled in 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 school in pursuit of a theological degree. This provision is intended to protect only those students who enter an approved school and continue attending the school when it subsequently loses approved status during the time of uninterrupted attendance, normally not to exceed five years.
5. Academic credit earned at schools prior to the date of approval is not recommended by the University Senate to annual conference Boards of Ordained Ministry. Approval or conditional approval of a school is not retroactive, except when the University Senate takes action in response to the appeal of a school of theology or an annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry. The action must specify the academic years during which academic credit earned at the school is approved.
6. All schools approved by the commission for the preparation of candidates for ordination are to maintain close ties and to conduct continuing conversations with the bishops, conferences, and agencies of The United Methodist Church in their geographic areas.

Procedure for Review of Non-United Methodist Schools of Theology

1. The commission, through the Division of Ordained Ministry, shall provide the school with the necessary forms and timeline for review. All non-United Methodist schools of theology listed as approved for the preparation of candidates for ordination in The United Methodist Church shall be reviewed on a quadrennial basis. The commission shall initiate this review on behalf of the University Senate by notifying the school and sending the necessary forms and

information. A school removed from the approved list may request reconsideration as outlined in Section VI, “Procedure for Reconsideration of a Senate Decision.”

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 the school 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 the Board of Ordained Ministry.
4. In rare instances, the commission will 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 address the specific nature of the commission's concerns.
5. Materials presented to the commission by the school shall not be shared with other schools or with the public. The information provided and deliberations regarding this information will be held in confidence by the commission and the University Senate.
6. The school shall be notified immediately concerning the University Senate's decision. Bishops and Boards of Ordained Ministry shall be notified within thirty (30) days after the final action of the University Senate has been conveyed to the school.
7. 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 school's regular faculty;
 - b. adequate and accessible library resources;
 - c. classes that have at least 75 percent M.Div. degree candidates; schools with fewer than 75 percent 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 conducive to learning and community building;
 - e. a community of students and faculty large enough and consistent enough to provide community building,

dialogue, and interaction that helps in the deepening and integration of the learning process. The community should also provide opportunities for common worship and spiritual formation. 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.

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

8. The only distance education courses allowed to count toward a degree for a candidate seeking ordination in The United Methodist Church shall be offered by one of the 13 official United Methodist schools of theology and Asbury Theological Seminary. All United Methodist schools of theology and Asbury Theological Seminary are allowed to offer two-thirds of the Master of Divinity degree as distance education (as defined by ATS Standard ES.4), with one-third of the degree required to be campus-based (as defined by ATS Standard ES.2).

The following definitions and standards for on-line, hybrid, and blended courses are set by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), which is the accrediting agency for seminaries and schools of theology, and the policies of the University Senate are the same as the ATS policies regarding on-line, hybrid, and blended courses. Of course, *The Book of Discipline* 2012 states that “the requirements set forth herein are minimum requirements only” (§1370.3), and Boards of Ordained Ministry may set more restrictive requirements, if desired.

The policies of the Association of Theological Schools state the following:

The credits awarded for a hybrid or blended distance education course will count toward residency for those degrees that require residential instruction only if the majority of instructor-directed learning occurs in situations where both faculty and students are in person on the school's main campus or at an extension approved for the school to offer the full degree. (ES.4.2.19)

The above policy clarifies the definition of “hybrid or blended” courses as distinct from “on-line” courses. If more than 50% of class time is in a setting where faculty and students are in person on the school's main campus or approved extension site, these courses, which may have some on-line components, are defined as “hybrid or blended.” Thus, “on-line” courses are ones where less than 50% of course time is in a setting where faculty and students are together in person on the school's main campus or approved extension site.

Another relevant ATS policy states the following:

Because MDiv education expects regular and substantive student-faculty interaction to achieve the stipulated learning outcomes, this interaction requires that at least one year of full-time academic study or its equivalent shall

be completed at the main campus of the school awarding the degree or at an extension site of the institution that has been approved for MDiv degree-granting status. An exception may be granted if a school can demonstrate how its educational design and delivery system accomplishes the learning outcomes associated with residential theological study. (A.3.1.3)

The above policy means that at least 1/3 of an MDiv degree shall be completed on campus and 2/3 may be completed “on-line.” With the definitions stated above, an “on campus” course may be “hybrid or blended” (more than 50% of course time with faculty and students together on the main campus or approved extension site), and an “on-line” course would have less than 50% time with faculty and students together on the main campus or approved extension site.

To further clarify, the above referenced passages from the ATS Standards are quoted below:

Distance education is a mode of education in which a course is offered without students and instructors being in the same location. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous and employs the use of technology. Distance education courses may consist of exclusively online or other technologically assisted instruction or a blend of intensive classroom and online instruction. In all cases, distance education courses shall ensure regular and substantive interaction of faculty and students. (ES.4.1)

Campus-based education involves classroom-based learning and a range of opportunities for student-faculty interaction among students. While it may take different forms and reflect different educational qualities, campus-based education is a model of theological education that typically includes the presence of faculty, students, administrative-support services, and library and information resources in a common location. It provides in-person classroom teaching and learning and opportunities for corporate worship, informal interaction, and other activities that support or enhance students’ educational experiences. (ES.2)

Annual Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry and schools of theology will have to work together to verify that students are complying with these policies within their MDiv degree programs for ordination in The United Methodist Church.

9. A school of theology has a maximum of four years to secure the unqualified approval of the University Senate.

Approved Undergraduate Institutions

A bachelor’s degree or its equivalent from any regionally accredited college or university will meet The Book of Discipline’s undergraduate requirement for the preparation and education of candidates for ordained ministry.