REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

to

Sample Seminary
Somewhere, North America

Monday, [Date] to Thursday, [Date]

for

The Board of Commissioners of
The Commission on Accrediting of the
Association of Theological Schools

EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Committee Chair
Rev. Dr. [Administrator's Name], [Seminary], [Title]

Committee
Rev. Dr. [Academic's Name], [Seminary], [Title]
Dr. [Pastor's Name], [Name of Church], [Title]

ATS Staff
Dr. [Commission staff name], Association of Theological Schools, Director, Accreditation and
    Institutional Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

1. Brief description of Sample Seminary

Sample Seminary was founded in 19?? as [another name]. Thirteen years later, The [sponsoring denomination] was formed and Sample Seminary became one of the theological schools of the new denomination. In 19??, The [sponsoring denomination] reorganized its theological education structure making Sample Seminary the church's designated school in the region for education leading to ordination. The school gained initial accreditation in 19?? for a five-year term and the MDiv and MTS degree programs were approved. The accredited status of Sample Seminary was reaffirmed in 20?? for a second five-year term, and the Master of Sacred Theology program was approved.

2. Accreditation History

At the last comprehensive visit in 20??, Sample Seminary received a reaffirmation of accreditation for a seven-year period. There has hardly been a year since that visit when the school has not reported on some dimension of their institutional life and mission. In 20??, the school submitted a report regarding finances, enrollment, governance and institutional goals. In 20??, they reported on finances, and a notation on finances, imposed in 20??, was lifted. In 20??, the school received a focused visit examining planning, enrollment, fund-raising and program assessment. In 20??, they reported on completion of the curricular assessment plan, as well as strategic planning for the institution as a whole, and student recruitment in particular. In 20??, they reported on their recruitment plan. In 20??, they reported on the implementation of their curricular assessment plan, and were notified that the 20?? self-study needed to provide more examples of direct measures and changes made as a result of the assessment process.

3. Adequacy of the Self-study

The self-study process appeared to be broadly subscribed to by a great representation of the Sample Seminary community. The self-study process was led by the faculty member who has served since 20?? as the Curriculum Assessment Coordinator, and the report was edited by a Professor Emeritus from the nearby university. The evaluation committee could see that considerable work has been done regarding issues addressed at the time of the focused visit. In places, the self-study report was somewhat more descriptive than analytic. A limited amount of evidence was introduced to support the narrative of the report, and at least one Standard area lacked recommendations arising from a process of careful examination and assessment. Despite the fact that the report presented as somewhat "thin" in regards to genuine institutional assessment, the committee saw evidence by the breadth of institutional involvement and the informed way in which the various members engaged with the evaluation committee that Sample Seminary took the self-study process seriously and strove to be diligent in their preparations. The committee appreciated the welcome extended by the community of Sample Seminary and the transparency demonstrated throughout the visit.

I. GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS

1. Purpose, Planning and Evaluation

Evidence of a renewed sense of institutional identity and mission following [a recent event] is seen in the school's prompt adoption of a fresh statement of institutional purpose and mission. "Sample Seminary, a theological school of [the sponsoring denomination] seeks to [rest of mission left blank to preserve anonymity]." This purpose statement clearly identifies the context, values, relationships, and purpose of Sample Seminary and serves as a coherent and well-embodied guiding statement for the institution. The evaluation committee witnessed Sample Seminary's deep rootedness in its cultural identity as a school of and for [its geographic region]. This was evident in multiple ways, including the ethos of the MDiv program, and several personnel appointments clearly committed to this particular cultural context. Values

of justice and inclusion were spoken of by faculty and students alike. One of the school's distinctive strengths is its capacity for institutional resilience, attributed, in part, to strategic administrative appointments, demonstrated personal and financial commitment of the faculty, and the strong stewardship of the school's physical resources. Another distinctive strength is its clear cultural identity as a school of and for the [local region], observable in such areas as the ethos of the MDiv program, and faculty appointments committed to the region's cultural context. The relationship between Sample Seminary and [its sponsoring denomination] is noticeable in various ways, including the design of curriculum, the representation of the Board of Trustees, a large percentage of the student body, and the denominational history which the community celebrates in various symbols throughout the building.

Concurrent with their identity as a school of [its denomination], the school relies on a close working relationship with the other denominational schools and strives to deliver theological education in ways that are ecumenical and effective. In addition to partnership with these closest of neighbors, Sample Seminary works collaboratively with a university in Korea in an exchange of faculty and students that has enriched the community in a number of ways since its inception in 20??.

The purpose statement can be seen to guide Sample Seminary in their institutional planning, in their service to their denomination, and in their commitment to providing one-year of free tuition to the MDiv student body, who are preparing exclusively for service in [its sponsoring denomination]. The Board prepared a strategic plan in 20??, has followed it attentively since that time, and anticipates revising it in 20??-20??. This plan is a copious and detailed document addressing issues in curriculum and recruitment/ attraction, alumni and denominational relations, marketing, financial development and building accessibility. Sample Seminary recognizes that one area of planning that requires significant attention in the immediate future is that of planning for various eventualities that originate in bodies with whom they relate. The evaluation committee concurs with the school in their appraisal of this as a crucial area of planning and encourages them to address this at the earliest opportunity.

The school has grown in their understanding of evaluation in recent years and has identified outcomes in relation to which progress will be measured in a number of areas of institutional life. The president holds annual conversations with the members of the faculty and staff for purposes of evaluation. The board evaluates both the president and the strategic plan. The evaluation committee encourages the board to develop practices of evaluating their own effectiveness, as well. Students evaluate individual professors and courses by means of evaluation forms which they sign personally. The committee urges the faculty to review this latter practice, as they came to understand that students omit some concerns from their written evaluations out of concern for their privacy and how this might affect relationships and grades in future courses with the same faculty members. Curriculum assessment processes will be addressed later in this report.

2. Institutional Integrity
The school has persevered through a difficult season in its history and exhibits a celebratory spirit for their recent progress, even though significant challenges remain. In many ways, the school has a 'new face,' and a sense of restored enthusiasm is evident. There is frank recognition of looming difficulties in some of their institutional partnerships, but the prevailing mood remains resilient and hopeful. The school has weathered the previous storm with its integrity intact and seems determined to do the same in the future.

There remains a deep commitment to stated institutional values which include a strong orientation toward justice, radical inclusivity, the integration of theory and practice, a collaborative decision-making model

and a dedication to the geographic context. These values are expressed throughout the institution from the administration to the faculty and staff and among the student body. The school is to be commended for the forthright way in which it provided information to the evaluation committee and for the fine spirit with which all things related to this visit were conducted.

Sample Seminary understands that it operates in full compliance with all necessary laws and regulations. Documentation supplied to the evaluation committee substantiates this conclusion. The school seems committed to conduct itself with integrity in all areas of operation and there was no evidence of any unethical or discriminatory policies or practices within the institution or among its employees.

The school has the applicable and accessible policies to promote the ethical and fair treatment of students, employees, administration and faculty. These include policies on staff and faculty personnel, student conduct and student discipline. A harassment policy required by recent government regulations remains outstanding and the committee understands that this policy will soon be completed. **The evaluation committee recommends the requirement of a report by November 1, 20??, regarding completion of an institutional harassment policy (Standard 2, section 2.2).**

The school's website has been updated, but still contains some accuracy and consistency problems which require some revision. These problems are relatively minor, but may be frustrating to potential and current students who depend on this medium for accurate, current and helpful information. The published policies and general ethos of the school promote an open and affirming ethos and an awareness of the diversity of race, ethnicity, and culture. The school's printed policies on transfer of credits and the appropriate and ethical use of instructional technology, digital media, and the Internet are in order. Sample Seminary appears to comply with this standard in regard to ethics and institutional integrity.

The evaluation committee affirms that the school meets expectations for adherence to Commission Standard 2, Institutional Integrity, with special attention to those areas specified in the Targeted Issues Checklist, which is appended to this committee report. However, the committee identified one area of growth under this standard. While the school seems to be in full compliance with all state regulations, the file indicates the school has very recently requested recognition by three states for distance education: [name the states]. A response from one of those three states had not yet been received at the time of the visit. The committee sees no reason such recognition will not be forthcoming, so does not see this as a significant concern *(see Targeted Issues Checklist 2.2).*

3. *Theological Curriculum: Learning, Teaching and Research*

In considering the theological curriculum at Sample Seminary, the evaluation committee was able to draw on the self-study report prepared by the school, including handbooks, curricular documents, assessment manuals, syllabi, faculty publications, faculty and committee minutes, and interviews with faculty and students. The supplementary materials and interviews in particular enabled the committee to gain a good picture of the interactions of faculty, librarians, and students in teaching, learning, and research that constitute the over-arching theological curriculum at Sample Seminary.

The school's sense of mission and its five core values guide the theological curriculum and the teaching, learning and research that go on within it at Sample Seminary. Teaching, learning, and research at the school are more specifically ordered around the goals of the school's several degree programs, and the specific outcomes aligned with those goals. The goals and outcomes for the Master of Divinity clearly reflect various aspects of the mission statement and the five guiding values. The goals and outcomes for the Master of Theological Studies are more generic in nature, and less directly reflect the institution's

mission and values. However, at the course level, theological curriculum certainly reflects the school's sense of mission, values, and context. This is especially true for the MTS where most courses taken for that degree are designed with the MDiv degree in mind.

Faculty and senior leadership also speak less formally of the school seeking to serve its geographic context, and shaping its work to prepare students for ecclesial leadership in that context. Evidence of the efficacy of the total theological curriculum in carrying out this aim is found in what faculty report anecdotally, namely, that many of the school's students come to their studies from urban contexts, but almost all graduate to serve in rural contexts with real success. This aim is also reflected in the research specialties of the two faculty members who share the ethics/church and society position, which are particularly relevant to geographic concerns (e.g., food, environment, ethnic rights, etc.). Other faculty note that certain aspects of the curricular ethos at the school, notably the critique of accepted wisdom and the established exercise of power, as well as an openness to venture into creativity and a relishing of challenge, are characteristic of society in the area, and as such represent a geographic contextualization of the theological curriculum.

Teaching and learning practices at the school strongly favor interactive approaches with students presenting their own research and engaging each other in respectful and challenging discussion, creating a powerful peer learning community. Students and faculty both point to the value of the ecumenical presence of students from other related schools as bringing the diversity of the church into these discussions, enriching and deepening them. A particularly characteristic implementation of the theological curriculum at Sample Seminary is the year-long required Integration Seminar, taken in the second year of the MDiv program. Students bring into the seminar a year's work of work in Bible, history, theology, ethics, and pastoral studies, and continue that work alongside the seminar. Within the context of the seminar, they are placed in a role in a social service agency in the city. This engages them with the lived reality of local society, urban <u>and </u>rural, and their own location in and in relation to it. At the same time, the seminar promotes three axes of integration: of experience and theological reflection; across the theological disciplines; between self and social world. The course teaches skills in social analysis, cultural analysis, and contextual theological reflection, but is chiefly run as a seminar-style collaborative, interactive learning endeavor. The aim of the integrative process is to support students in understanding their own social identity more clearly and in relation to others, and in shaping an answer to the questions, "who am I in ministry," and "who am I as a pastoral theologian in ministry." This is to prepare students to embark upon the third "year" (actually 18-20 months) of their MDiv program when they undertake a pastoral residency in a congregation under the supervision of an established pastor.

Syllabi demonstrate a regular awareness of the diversity of global and local expressions of the church and its theologies, as well as the global interconnectedness of the contexts in which the church ministers. This is seen in textbooks assigned, discussion topics, and assignments. Faculty note this as they track the additional cultural diversity brought to geographic society by recent waves of immigration. Guest lecturers (e.g., from Germany and the West Indies) augment these local experiences. The pastor-in-residence role brings an experienced [denominational] pastor to campus every year to work with students. However, the most striking and powerful instance of the school taking account of the diversity of church and global society is found in its partnership with [a school] in Korea, agreed upon in 20??. One faculty member and several students have gone to Korea on exchange; and one to two students per semester have come from Korea to the school on exchange. The typical exchange period is one semester. Students speak of this as a powerful and eye-opening experience; and faculty speak of the added dimensions the exchange students bring to learning experiences at the school.

The engagement with diverse publics among church, academy and the broader public that is evident in

these teaching/learning experiences is visible also in the publications and service activities of the faculty. The school's faculty publish in a range of venues for multiple audiences in academy, church, and secular society. Some of the diverse publics are actually involved in decision-making related to the school's educational endeavors through the Academic Committee, which brings together faculty, librarian, students, trustees, and representatives from the geographic judicatories of [the sponsoring denomination].

The school has a stated policy vouchsafing freedom of inquiry, and in the case of the faculty it protects this with a system of tenure. All the evidence the evaluation committee saw shows that the school adheres to these policies (see further under Standard Five.) The school demonstrates its on-going concern for the quality of teaching by the use of course evaluations that are taken up into annual faculty evaluation sessions with the president (see further under Standard Five.) The school has an excellent code of conduct for students that, in addition to offenses against persons and against property, addresses a series of academic offenses related to the ethical conduct of research. Degrees that present opportunities for research with human subjects have a well-crafted policy concerning research with human subjects that is connected to standards and procedures widely accepted in the academy.

4. *Library and Information Resources*

4.1 Library Collections
In considering the library at Sample Seminary, the evaluation committee was able to draw on the self-study report prepared by the school, a consultant's evaluation and recommendations concerning the library from November, 20??, the job descriptions for the Head Librarian's position and other staff positions, collection development and circulation policies, the library web site and online resources, and interviews with library staff, the Library Committee, and the school faculty and students. The supplementary materials and interviews in particular enabled the committee to gain a good picture of the situation and character of the library.

The school's data reports to the ATS show that at the present time its library holds [number] printed books (not the [number] of the self-study report). The other libraries related to this school together hold approximately [number] volumes. The apparent total of [number] volumes is somewhat deceiving. The consultant's report of November 20?? estimates that at least 30% of the monographs held by all of the libraries are duplicates. Collection development policy, which mandates each of the libraries to collect across the board in all theological disciplines, would lead to this result. Spot tests in the joint catalog by the evaluation committee suggest that duplication indeed attains at least this level. Thus the joint collection probably amounts to something more like [number] unique titles.

Nevertheless, the collections in the school's library and in the other related libraries make available a quite sufficient body of printed books and periodicals to meet current and future needs of faculty, students, and researchers. Testimony of faculty and students, as well as spot checks of course book lists and research bibliographies, demonstrate this. Since the collecting institutions represent different streams of Protestant Christianity, the collection has an admirable theological breadth. It represents well the diversity of a global church, as well as offering historical depth. The library at Sample Seminary is distinctive for its holdings in regional church history, especially in its local geographic context.

Sample Seminary's library does not have its own collection development policy, but follows with the other related libraries a single collection development policy adopted in 20??. The collection development policy does not provide for a single common collection composed of these libraries with interlocking specializations. Instead, it authorizes each of the libraries to collect across the full range of theological

disciplines with ample allowance for duplicate purchases. Print is specifically defined as the "primary format" for collection. Electronic formats are provided for only as far as bibliographic indexing databases are concerned. Audio-visual media are collected at a subordinate level. There is no provision in the policy for collecting eBooks, and none is currently held. There is no provision in the policy for acquiring access to journal databases, and except for the ATLA Serials full text database, none is available to patrons through the school's library, either on-site or remotely. School faculty and students have access to journal databases through a local university library, but only through terminals on site at that library. The lack of attention to electronic resources bespeaks a library that has not yet reckoned fully with the transition from serving a campus population to serving a significantly dispersed student body studying in the school's online courses and off campus in the congregational residency phase of the MDiv. The evaluation committee also heard that financial restraints have slowed movement in library acquisitions and services.

4.2 Contribution to Learning, Teaching, and Research
On campus, the library offers a well-lit, well-equipped reading room with easy access to OPAC computer terminals, the library technician's workspace, reference works and current periodicals, and the open stacks. This welcoming and functional space serves library patrons well as a place for bibliographic research. Online patrons can access from a password-protected web page the common online catalog for the STU libraries, as well as the OCLC WorldSearch, RTA, and ATLAS databases. As the school's self-study suggests, the online catalog is clunky and has a rudimentary interface. The OCLC database is quite separate from the catalog, being on a separate page altogether. While there is a decent amount of functionality for bibliographic research available online, it could be better organized and presented to support efficiency and ease of use by library patrons. Responsibility for patron training in research practices and information literacy, as well as reference services, falls in the job description of the Head Librarian. Since July 20??, the library has been without the services of a Head Librarian, and even before that effectively had only a quarter-time Head Librarian. To fill the gap, training in research practices and information literacy has been integrated by faculty as modules in several introductory courses. This appears to have been an effective solution.

4.3 Partnership in Curriculum Development
Judging by the testimony of both faculty and students, the library's collections and services meet the needs of the educational programs and research endeavors of the school. All spoke well of the adequacy of the collections, and the particular strengths of the collection described in the self-study report correspond well to curricular emphases and research interests of faculty and students. The adequacy of normal patron services is similarly affirmed by faculty and students. Since the departure of the Head Librarian, no library staff has participated in curriculum planning. Even before the departure of the Head Librarian, there was less library involvement in curriculum planning than would be typical of many ATS schools because the Head Librarian position is a *de facto* quarter-time position due to these libraries' sharing a single head. The Head Librarian is a member of the Academic Committee and attends selected faculty meetings. This gives that individual substantial involvement with curricular decisions without consuming a third to a half of their available time with meetings.

4.4 Administration and Leadership
The evaluation committee arrived shortly after the position description for a new Head Librarian had been approved, and while the decision to proceed with the search was being weighed. (Between the time of the visit and the submission of this report, Sample Seminary informed the committee that the position for the Head Librarian is now posted on the school website, as well as on a national and regional job website.) The position description requires the occupant to hold an MLIS degree and prefers a theological degree as well, and defines responsibilities in planning and collection management, human resources management, financial oversight and reporting, library services, curriculum support and development,

and communication and liaison. Having a single Head Librarian for all the libraries offers the opportunity for managing the libraries as a single coherent collection with each school taking responsibility for only a portion of the whole. In actual practice, this opportunity seems never to have been realized, but the arrangement has been seen as a simple cost-sharing arrangement with each library getting its own part-time Head. Most of the schools participating in the consortium of libraries have adopted board resolutions that cede their collections to the remaining schools in the event a particular school closes. Beyond this there is no formal agreement defining the relations among the libraries. Cooperation has proceeded nicely in many ways in spite of that lacuna. However, as the participating schools face uncertain futures and the Sample Seminary library needs to transition to serving more fully an increasingly dispersed student body, a formal definition of the partnership is in everyone's interests.

4.5 Resources

The library is housed in a purpose-built wing of the school building with a reference/reading room, circulation area, open stacks, closed spaces for special collections, an office for the Head Librarian, and workspaces. The building is in good condition although signage has not caught up with the re-organization of the stacks to make space for the collection from [two other libraries]. Climate control for archival materials could be improved. Technological resources are adequate although, as noted above, there is significant room for improvement. The school has routinely spent 5% of its budget on the library in contrast to an ATS average of 4.3%. The school's IPPR shows that the share of its expenditures going to library and academic support falls below the median for its self-defined peer group, but in comparison to all ATS schools (ATS average) the school is doing well by its library. There is a three-year plan (20??-20??) for the library, but it is purely routine operational planning (action steps for most goals are "on-going"), rather than any sort of strategic plan as the three-year span might imply. The evaluation committee found no evidence that the library has been factored into the school's strategic planning. The Library Committee is an advisory body only, and has no authority to commit the library/libraries to particular plans or policies.

The print collection available to the school's faculty and students, and the library services associated with that collection are a credit to the school and a significant resource for its educational enterprise. At the same time, there are significant issues that need to be addressed in formalized agreements, leadership, planning, and electronic resources. Specifically, a new Head Librarian must be hired. Without filling that position, the school does not meet the requirements of Standard 4.4.1. **The evaluation committee recommends the requirement of a report by November 1, 20?? regarding how the need for a chief library administrator has been met (Standard 4, section 4.4.1).**

Once the Head Librarian is in place, the evaluation committee encourages the school to clarify and formalize the partnership among the STU libraries, and engage in a strategic planning process for its library that addresses how the library will respond to a changing student body and the changing patterns by which the school delivers its education. **The evaluation committee recommends the requirement of a report by November 1, 20??, demonstrating ongoing strategic planning for, and evaluation of, the library (Standard 4, section 4.4.3).**

5. *Faculty*

In considering the faculty at Sample Seminary, the evaluation committee was able to draw on the self-study report prepared by the school, handbooks, faculty CVs and publications, and interviews with the school faculty, administrators and students. The supplementary materials and interviews in particular enabled the committee to gain a good picture of the situation and character of the faculty at the school.

Sample Seminary is blessed with a highly competent, deeply committed faculty of [number] persons. Individual members of the faculty hold full-time positions in Hebrew Scriptures, Church History and Ecumenics, Systematic Theology, and Pastoral Studies (teaching worship, preaching and Christian education), and in [subject discipline]. The other subject areas required by the school's degree programs are covered through courses taught by full-time members of the faculties of two other related schools. The faculty members all hold research doctorates in their fields, earned at a variety of major institutions. One faculty member was born and educated through the Masters level in Korea. Two others have various forms of international experience. Two have experience as pastors and a third as judicatory staff. The longest serving member was appointed in 19??, the most recent in 20??.

The faculty of Sample Seminary is composed of gifted teachers and accomplished researchers, who demonstrate a high level of commitment to students and to governance of the academic programs of the school. All members of the faculty have substantive records of published research, some quite extensive, with works appearing in journals and from major theological and university publishers in North America, Europe and Asia. Faculty members also share the results of their research in the classroom as is evident in course syllabi, and in public contexts in the church and society. Indeed, a high commitment to public theology is a distinctive characteristic of more than one member of this faculty. Syllabi show a faculty of teachers who are pedagogically creative, keep courses current with their fields, and structure learning experiences to foster integration. Students speak highly of faculty members' passion for promoting independent, critical thinking in students, for their subjects, and for integrating the academic and the practical. Students also speak highly of faculty members' commitment to student well-being and their availability and responsiveness to students outside the classroom.

The school has a clear and well-structured policy of tenure review. All full-time members of the faculty are tenured. The most recent tenure decision came in 20??, and by all reports that process unfolded quite normally. Faculty are expected to teach the positions of the sponsoring denomination where those have been stated formally, and to locate their own views in relation to those positions, but they are not required to consent to those views or otherwise to make doctrinal commitments. The school has a clear statement protecting freedom of inquiry. The procedural protection for freedom of inquiry is tenure, and with the exception of a single ambiguity, this seems sufficient. Faculty certainly feel supported in full freedom of inquiry, and in the free expression of the results of those inquiries, even when they may be controversial among the church or the larger public. The ambiguity is found when the tenure policy says that tenured members of the faculty may only be terminated for cause but does not specify the causes that may result in termination. The school's policy on terminating faculty essentially provides only for termination for cause. The president clearly understands the expression in the tenure policy to refer to a more limited list of causes than is given in the termination policy, but the school might wish to clarify the implications of the present language.

Policies and procedures for recruiting, hiring, supporting, compensating, evaluating, and terminating members of the school's faculty are clear, functional, and equitable. They are clearly published along with other policies related to working conditions as well as faculty rights and responsibilities in a manual of "Faculty Personnel Policies." The school is committed to equitable, non-hierarchical treatment of all faculty members, and thus does not differentiate rank, according each member the title "Professor," and compensates each at the same rate as a sign of solidarity and non-competition. Compensation for faculty is benchmarked to a corresponding level in the salary structures of the sponsoring denomination. The school subsidizes faculty attendance at professional conferences through a professional development allowance. There is also a dedicated fund, created by faculty gifts, that enables the subsidizing of costs associated with the publication of research. Time for research is provided through eight weeks of study leave per year, and a well-designed sabbatical policy. Sabbaticals have been regularly applied for, granted, and taken in accord

with policy. The efficacy of these forms of support for research is seen in the productivity of the faculty in publication. Support for professional development as teachers has mostly taken the form of training in teaching online.

Formally, faculty workload is defined as one third teaching, one third research, and one third service to the school, church, and larger community. In practice, the demands of working with students and the time demands of collective academic administration and a significant commitment to external service mean that in a non-sabbatical year faculty time is more likely distributed as 40% to teaching, 20% to research, and 40% to service. It appears that members of the faculty are generally comfortable with the realities of their workload, and find the School a good and productive place to work.

Each faculty member has a job description that defines the school's expectations for their position. Since there are no ranks, the only comprehensive evaluation of faculty performance comes at the tenure decision. However, each faculty member is evaluated annually by the principal. All evaluations include consideration of student feedback received through course evaluations.

6.   *Student Recruitment, Admission, Services, and Placement*
The stated mission of Sample Seminary is to provide theological education for ordered and lay ministries in the [sponsoring denomination] that is based on justice and the particularities of the geographic context. Although there are students from other denominations in the student body, the self-declared emphasis is upon students from the three conferences of the [sponsoring denomination]. Sample Seminary remains a relatively small learning community which desires to recruit more students but not at the cost of the ethos of close community enjoyed by its faculty and students.

The school has a six-point recruitment plan, although their preferred nomenclature is student attraction, rather than recruitment. Chief responsibility for student attraction has been tasked to the [titles listed], and they have been given the responsibility for direct communication with prospective and current students. These individuals share a part-time position which has been organized to maximize their availability to students. The printed and electronic materials available to prospective students give an accurate picture of the school as well as prospective vocational options for each of the programs offered.

Each of the programs offered at Sample Seminary has appropriate admissions policies and procedures. Each admission is processed by the faculty in a collegial fashion. The size of the student body facilitates this practice which contributes to a thorough analysis of each potential student. The admission policies clearly state the prerequisite of an undergraduate degree for entrance into its degree programs. Other requirements in lieu of such a credential are published as well, but student enrollment is small enough that this option cannot be available to many. Sample Seminary encourages diversity in race, ethnicity, region, denomination, gender, and disability. The size of the school and the accessibility of students to faculty and staff create a rather responsive and personal way of monitoring the overall quality of the student population. In this environment, student diversity and a broad baccalaureate preparation are encouraged.

The policies relating the students' rights and responsibilities, and a code of student discipline are clearly identified and published. The size of the learning community facilities a personal and close-knit attention to student needs and to the way such needs are addressed. Student records are collected, and maintained mostly with appropriate and secure backups. The one exception is that the working files, while kept in a secured room, are not filed in a fire-proof cabinet. The evaluation committee urges the school to correct this immediately.

The program requirements, tuition, and fees are appropriate to the degree programs offered and all the requirements for degree programs, including courses, noncredit requirements, grading, financial aid, and other academic policies are readily available to the students. The evaluation committee reviewed the folder of student complaints and found that the school had acted appropriately and promptly in addressing each complaint, following carefully its published procedures for such complaints.

There is an evident sensitivity to the financial pressures experienced by seminary students and Sample Seminary has a variety of forms of student aid. These include a number available on the basis of financial need (some administered through the School administration and some by the faculty), a book allowance for each semester and one full year of paid tuition for those enrolled in the MDiv program. The evaluation committee commends the school for the practical ways in which it responds to the general costs of theological education for its students. The school's most recent cohort default rate for student loans was only 2%, well below the national average of 11%. The school abides by all regulations for Title IV participation and has a clean audit on financial aid. The school also follows requirements of the Clery Act and Title IX.

Student placement rates are exceptionally high, especially for MDiv graduates (100%). Part of this success may be due to the small graduating classes and the pressing need for clergy in the [sponsoring denomination], but these placement rates remain impressive. The size of the student body and the accessibility to faculty facilitate an enhanced approach to placement, as the students receive helpful direction in finding a place of ministry. The faculty acts as an advocate on behalf of the students and the students are appreciative of this benefit.

7.   *Authority and Governance*
Sample Seminary received a charter from the [government] in 19?? and redrafted its bylaws in 20??. It is the only seminary endorsed by [the sponsoring denomination] in the geographic region to prepare persons for ordained ministry in the denomination. As such, Sample Seminary's authority is limited by [the denomination], requiring it to relate closely to the denomination and to develop its curriculum and programs in such a way that includes dialogue with its regional conferences. This takes place through denominational representation on the board and Academic Committee of Sample Seminary, and through faculty involvement and reporting to annual conferences and regional presbyteries. Sample Seminary has been given approval to pilot an MDiv curriculum considerably different than that of its sister schools in other regions of the denomination, thus working out in a concrete and observable way the exercise of authority and relationship between the school and its ecclesiastical body.

The board of Sample Seminary clearly exercises confidence in the administration and the faculty, and the challenges of the period in the school's history surrounding the de-amalgamation appear to be in the process of being resolved. The evaluation committee observed the board of Sample Seminary as being characterized by a high degree of collegiality, a strong representation from its three conferences, and a sense of enthusiasm about the work of theological education at the school. The board appears to delegate authority appropriately, to take their financial and fiduciary responsibilities seriously, and to exercise authority appropriately.

Orientation to the work and responsibilities of the board is held for new board members and on-going education occurs, as well. The board evaluates the work of the president annually. The board appears to be of an appropriate size (13 members) to ensure effective work. Normally, the board meets three times annually, but on occasion the board meets by teleconference, as well. The existence of an Executive Committee of the board is provided for in the bylaws, but to date a teleconference of the board has been the preferred practice, rather than holding a meeting of the smaller body.

The administration of Sample Seminary appears to enjoy the support of the entire community and to be working equitably and in keeping with the ethos of the school as a whole. A reasonably lean institution in terms of the number of employees in relation to the task, individual members of the community participate in the vision and mission of the institution with commitment and mutual support. The faculty exercise strong and able leadership in academic policy and curriculum, and have a clear voice in contributing to institutional decision-making. Students are represented on the board and on various committees. There is limited diversity in the personnel in terms of ethnicity and gender, and the evaluation committee encourages the board to consider this in future hiring opportunities.

The section of the self-study on Authority and Governance is the clearest evidence of that which described as more descriptive than analytical in the self-study report, and contains no recommendations for improvement. The evaluation committee urges Sample Seminary to adopt evaluative attitudes and practices regarding governance, in keeping with its efforts to mature a culture of assessment throughout the entire institution. The evaluation committee encourages the Board to begin the practice of self-evaluation of their own procedures and effectiveness in addition to their regular evaluation of the strategic plan, and to understand increasingly the role of a Board in holding an institution accountable to accreditation standards.

8. *Institutional Resources*

Sample Seminary appears to place considerable value on the various individuals who make up their community, choosing a non-hierarchical model of faculty governance despite the challenges of such a model and seeking to give as much voice as possible to each person in the institution. Procedural fairness appears to mark their ways of relating and persons are dealt with as individuals and with respect. Appropriate policies are in place to ensure good working conditions for all personnel, and are found in various handbooks for faculty, staff and students, with the one exception of the outstanding institutional harassment policy currently being completed. There appears generally to be an adequate number of personnel for implementation of the breadth of programs offered. Equitable patterns of compensation exist, and the board has acted to reinstate faculty salaries that were reduced during a time of financial strain in 20??.

The financial condition of the school is stronger at the time of this visit than it was previously, and the note of "Going Concern" on past yearly audited financial statements has not been warranted in the last two years. The school has healthy cash flow, particularly due to careful management of a revenue-generating lease agreement with a nearby university, and grants from both [unnamed entity] and [the sponsoring denomination]. As the lease agreement provides the single largest revenue stream for the institution and is a crucial component in the institution's long-term financial stability, the evaluation committee affirms the diligence of the [title] in seeking to obtain a longer-term agreement with the university than that which currently exists. The school has much less voice in the grants it receives from either the denomination or the [unnamed entity], and the evaluation committee encourages the administration to seek additional sources of fund-raising, particularly in light of its expectation that monies received from the denomination will decrease, rather than increase, in upcoming years. Endowments are managed responsibly and prudently with draw-downs of no more than five per cent.

Sample Seminary is audited annually by an independent audit firm in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The school responded promptly to recommendations made in the most recent annual management letter regarding matters such as a preferred accounting practice, the format of financial statements, and the inclusion of legal advice concerning endowment funds in orientation

materials for the board. Sample Seminary employed a community-based budgeting model in the past two years, which enabled consultation with a broad base of faculty and staff. The CFO provides financial reports to the president and board on a quarterly basis, and the evaluation committee wonders if a more frequent practice, such as monthly reporting, might be considered. The CFO is eminently well-qualified and experienced. Her knowledge of the local university, gained from many years of employment there, is a significant asset to Sample Seminary, and the move to market-based rent for the parts of the facility leased to the university which the CFO oversaw has been a significant factor in the strengthened financial position of the School.

The development plan of Sample Seminary is the responsibility of the president, the [title], and the development committee, comprised of the board chair, the CFO, and three members-at-large. The president spends 60% of his time on development and student attraction, working with a multi-faceted plan. Leasing of space within the Sample Seminary to the local university generates approximately 30% of annual revenue. Grants received from [the sponsoring denomination and an unnamed entity] account for another 10% each. Individual donors include 15–20 major donors who give a minimum of $1,000 annually and are a portion of the ?? donors who have contributed over the last three years. A number of individual congregations of the [denomination] and various congregational women's groups also donate annually to Sample Seminary, although there is seen to be limited growth potential in these two streams as the general population of the denomination ages. School Sundays, in which student or faculty speakers represent Sample Seminary in the constituency, are seen as an important means of nurturing the relationship between congregations and the school for purposes of development and communication. Approximately ?00 of ?00 [denominational] congregations contribute to Sample Seminary. Grant-writing for a capital campaign to increase building accessibility has generated some success for specific projects, such as the installment of an elevator, and the alumni have been involved in small projects, also. The evaluation committee encourages the development committee to continue to strategize alternate streams of revenue in the event of what is anticipated to be diminished financial support from the denomination. The school is encouraged to give attention to the need for long-term financial stability, given the uncertainty of ongoing denominational support and the ongoing lease status of its excess facility capacity (Standard 8, section 8.2.1.2).

The physical plant of Sample Seminary is a handsome building well-situated at the university and clearly well-maintained. The boiler that generates the heat has recently been replaced, and a program of maintenance, including window and roof replacement, is carefully and conscientiously followed. A recent assessment contracted by an independent evaluator resulted in the appropriate increase of rent rates charged for classroom lease throughout the building. Faculty and staff have adequate space in which to pursue their work, and students have plenty of space in which to meet for academic or social purposes. Student housing exists within the building, with the accommodations almost exclusively occupied by students from the university, rather than Sample Seminary. The school uses adequate technologies by which to manage its institutional data. The evaluation committee encountered what it interprets as by-products of the chosen non-hierarchical governance model in what might be observed as less-than-clear pathways for dealing with conflict, one less-than-logical pattern of reporting) and a modest, yet voiced measure of concern on an employee satisfaction survey regarding conflict. The evaluation committee encourages that attention be given to the challenges of the adopted faculty governance model, including ensuring effective patterns of management, exchange of information, and mechanisms that address conflict (Standard 8, section 8.5.2).

Sample Seminary uses instructional technology for its online courses, and technical support is obtained through the local university. While computer hardware is included in the annual budget of Sample Seminary, adequate training for faculty is not part of the overall academic plan. The evaluation

committee urges Sample Seminary to develop and implement a technological training program for the faculty and students immediately, and to design and implement appropriate evaluation procedures for the use of its instructional technology.

III. EDUCATIONAL STANDARD

ES.1 Degree Program Nomenclature
The degree programs for Sample Seminary all conform to the expectations for this standard.

ES.3 Extension education
Sample Seminary has two extension sites: one in [cite name and specific mailing address] that offers less than half a degree program and one in [cite name and specific mailing address] that offers a complete degree program. According to Commission Procedures (VI.B.3), extension sites offering less than half of a degree do not need to be visited, so the evaluation committee did not visit that site. However, the committee reviewed all relevant documentation and interviewed key personnel involved with that site (including one by phone). That site offers less than half of the MDiv degree. Interviews and document reviews indicates that this site aligns well with Commission requirements for such sites.

The second site, offering a complete degree program, does require an evaluation visit, according to Commission Procedures (VI.C). Consequently, prior to evaluation the school's main campus, the committee visited the [name] extension site. *[NOTE: Some sites are visited by a separate committee that issues a separate report, but this site was close enough for it to be visited by the same committee.]* This site, located in a larger supporting church, regularly enrolls nearly twenty students. Most of the courses are taught by full-time members of the seminary faculty who commute there, as well as by a few local adjuncts—all appropriately qualified. Students at this site have access to the same services as students on the main campus, primarily through electronic means, though a student personnel officer and academic coordinator from the main campus visit the site at least twice per month. Library resources and services, including Interlibrary Loan, are available through the main campus library and the local university. There is a computer lab and a small library (1,500 select volumes) located at this site. Two well-equipped classrooms in this church setting are available for seminary classes, as well as ample parking, security, ADA access, and wireless technology. The Learning Management System (LMS) used for online delivery of courses provides a platform for communication between students and faculty and for course documents and assignments to be uploaded. The committee's review of course syllabi and interactions with faculty and students at the site demonstrated that the student learning outcomes for this extension site program achieve the same educational values and goals associated with learning on the main campus.

ES.4 Distance education
In addition to the self-study report, in evaluating the school in relation to standard ES.4 the evaluation committee was able to draw on course syllabi, faculty minutes, a completed online course, and interviews with faculty, library staff, and students. Since the processes for development, approval, staffing, etc. for online courses at Sample Seminary are the same as for face-to-face courses, various handbooks also served as resources even though they did not make specific reference to online courses as a separate entity.

In June 20??, Sample Seminary received approval to offer a comprehensive distance education program. The school thus has been offering online education for some years, and during that time has made good use of its affiliation with the local university to obtain at no cost the use of the university's LMS and help-desk services for the school's online offerings. Currently this means access to an up-to-date version

of the LMS [named], and the necessary student and faculty help-desk support for the use of that platform.

Online courses at Sample Seminary are offered only within the MDiv and MTS degrees, and are offered as sections of identical face-to-face required or elective courses within those two degree programs. Online courses at the school are fully online; the school does not use hybrid online courses in the meaning of standard ES.4.2.19. The school allows only 50% of the credits for each of the two degrees to be completed online. Comparison of syllabi demonstrates that the online versions of courses are identical in objectives/outcomes, textbooks, and course content to the face-to-face versions of those courses. Faculty minutes document that the processes and criteria for approval for online courses are the same as for face-to-face courses. Thus, online courses are also formed out of the same patterns of collaboration as the school's face-to-face courses. Instructors for online courses are the same as those for the face-to-face versions of the courses. In other words, they are taught by the regular faculty of the School, who are fully involved in the school's online education. This also means that the school's online faculty is fully covered by its faculty personnel policies and forms of faculty support. As a result of these policies and processes, online courses demonstrably implement institutional and degree program standards, and address coherence, values and patterns of interaction among courses in a degree program to the same extent as the school's face-to-face courses.

The school currently obtains the use of its LMS and associated technical support services for faculty and students from the university without cost. This arrangement has not been formalized, but seems nevertheless to function effectively. Students and faculty both testify to the efficacy and timeliness of technical support received by students. Students feel well supported, and faculty have not observed any instances of students being hindered in their work in online courses due to technical difficulties or a delay in receiving support. Faculty and students similarly affirm the adequacy of the support received from the school's library for online learning, which consists primarily of the availability online of the joint catalog for the libraries, the prompt mailing of books from the circulating collection, and the availability online of the ATLA Religion database with Serials, giving online access to full-text files of articles in major theological journals. Assignments in online courses require students to engage and use these library resources. Sample Seminary does not rely on other libraries to resource its students at a distance in the meaning of standard ES.4.2.9.

Neither website nor application forms detail the technological and skill requirements for participation in online courses. However, Sample Seminary requires all students who wish to register for online course to complete an online learning readiness assessment. This questionnaire covers the categories of self-directedness, learning preferences, study habits, technology skills, and computer equipment capabilities. The tool is self-scored by the student, and comes with interpretive text and links to resources that assist the student in securing the capacities needed to pursue online courses effectively. Apart from student-initiated pursuit of learning resources highlighted in the assessment tool, the school does not appear to offer specific training to students for navigating online courses. On the other hand, courses that are likely to be the first online course a student takes typically begin with an opening module that guides the student through online modalities used in the course and introduces techniques for finding and obtaining bibliographic resources online. However, this may not be enough for some students since several described themselves as having received no preparation or training for participating in online courses. The self-study report also notes assessment data suggesting that students need more training. Students in online courses and the MDiv third-year congregational residency program report that they receive ready access to advising, registrar and other student services functions at a distance via e-mail or telephone.

Support for faculty teaching online seems more uneven. All faculty members have received a basic orientation and some training in [its LMS]. One member of the faculty has taken the course on teaching online offered through the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, and

reported that to be extremely helpful. Most faculty members seem satisfied with the level of technical support received from the university's help desk. However, it also appears that there is little or no support for faculty in instructional design. It also appears that, because of the nature of the school's arrangement with the university concerning the LMS and support, there is also no technical staff input in on-going systemic evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's resources and support for online education.

The school is to be commended for the way it has integrated its online offerings within its existing programs and systems. Nevertheless, there appears to be more work to do to raise the quality of the students' experience of those offerings to match the experience in the school's face-to-face courses. Students interviewed by the evaluation committee expressed appreciation for the ability to engage a portion of their program without having to move to [the city], thus making a theological education accessible for them. Students also described the experience as lonely and isolating, and courses as very heavy on reading and not giving much sense of being in a conversational community. This is consistent with the appearance of the one complete online course the evaluation committee was able to see. It was pedagogically well-organized and made use of interactive peer-to-peer learning. However, it was very text-heavy with a relatively low proportion of audio-visual clips, and a low proportion of visuals, including a lack of images of the instructor and participants. The interactive peer-to-peer learning opportunities, while often quite creative, appeared to constitute a lower proportion of the work of the course than would be characteristic of the same course in a face-to-face context on campus.

The evaluation committee concurs with the assessment of the self-study report regarding the need to develop evaluation practices in the area of distributed learning. The evaluation committee encourages the school to give attention to developing best practices for online courses, defining norms and criteria for evaluating such courses, conducting evaluation of instructors as online teachers, offering training and support for faculty teaching online, and identifying how effective teaching online will be factored into regular faculty evaluation and tenures decisions (ES 4.2.3 and ES 4.2.10).

ES. 6 Assessment of student learning outcomes

Attention was first drawn to the need for improvement in institutional assessment at Sample Seminary at the time of the 20?? re-affirmation visit, and student learning assessment, specifically, as early as 20??. The implementation of an intentional and articulated model of program assessment and student learning outcomes, and the need for continuous curricular review were identified as areas requiring particular attention during the 20?? focused visit. The focused visit resulted in the requirement of a report in 20?? regarding the completion of the plan for ongoing curricular assessment of the MDiv and MTS programs. This report generated the requirement of a subsequent report providing evidence, analyzing assessment data, and demonstrating the implementation of educational effectiveness. Upon reception of this final report, Sample Seminary was directed to report more examples of direct measures and changes that have resulted from its assessment efforts.

Sample Seminary has made progress in the area of assessment of student learning outcomes, but not at the pace nor to the extent to which it has been directed. The self-study report offers some reasons for why this might be the case, including the small size of the faculty, the small size of the student body, the lack of an Academic Dean, and a general resistance to assessment. Through the tasking of one faculty member with responsibility for leading the faculty in the work of curriculum assessment and recognizing this extra work through a measure of course relief, Sample Seminary now has a plan. This plan looks as though it could be workable, as it has identified learning goals, artifacts and rubrics for measurement, is built around indicators both direct and indirect, and, as in the case of all matters of academic life at Sample Seminary, involves the entire faculty in the process. However, the self-study admits that there are

"very few tangible results" and the few results there are "are not much better than anecdotes at this point in time." Low student numbers is the reason provided in the self-study for the lack of results to date. The evaluation committee reminds Sample Seminary that regular implementation of a carefully crafted student learning assessment plan utilizing instruments that match the size and ethos of the institution is the clearest way for any institution –small or large—to be confident that the educational endeavor is effective.

The evaluation committee retains some questions about the practice of requiring students to sign their names to course evaluations. While the evaluation committee has been assured that these signed course evaluations are not used in the assessment of student learning, the committee encourages Sample Seminary to revisit this practice, nevertheless, as the committee learned that students do not always report fully on their signed course evaluations due to concerns about the lack of anonymity.

It is not clear whether the school has included in their assessment plan a comprehensive evaluation of the plan itself. The self-study reports that the learning goals and objectives of the programs have not yet been added to the student handbook for the MDiv/MTS programs or to the institution's website. The evaluation committee urges Sample Seminary to publish this information, to assign responsibility for maintaining the educational effectiveness statement on the website, to plan for someone to take responsibility for learning assessment in 20?? when the current Curriculum Assessment Coordinator goes on sabbatical, and to analyze the data that is generated in the immediate and on-going implementation of its plan for curricular assessment. **The evaluation committee recommends the requirement of a report by November 1, 20??, demonstrating the results of the assessment practices for each degree program (Educational Standard, section ES.6).**

ES.7 Academic Guidelines

As noted in the discussion of Standards 2 and 6, Sample Seminary has appropriately published and practiced admissions standards.

The registrar's office evaluates any requests for transfer credits. Only graduate credits which were earned from an accredited institution in the last seven years with a grade of at least a B- are transferable, and never more than half of the hours of a completed graduate degree. The seminary does not offer any shared credit. The seminary offers up to 12 hours of advanced standing in the MDiv degree program, less than the one sixth limit set by this standard. Students must have earned at least a B grade in the relevant undergraduate classes, and must demonstrate their proficiency through an assigned essay to be granted the advanced standing credit.

ES.8. Non-degree Instructional Programs

The school offers two certificate programs. The Certificate in Ministry is a non-credit, one-year program for lay leaders in the denomination. The Certificate in [Specific Denomination] Studies is an option for MDiv students who desire to be ordained in that denomination. It is offered for graduate credit, and the courses in that certificate program meet the same academic standards and have access to the same educational resources as is the case for the seminary's MDiv degree program. A review of several course syllabi for this for-credit certificate program and interviews with several faculty and students involved in that program confirmed that perspective.

IV. DEGREE PROGRAM STANDARDS

Degree Program Standard A. Master of Divinity (MDiv)

A.1 Purpose/Goals/Assessment
The Master of Divinity program at Sample Seminary is the ordination track for ministry in the [sponsoring denomination], with Sample Seminary the only [denominational] seminary [in the region] with ATS accreditation. It is the school's largest program with just under 50% of their total enrollment, almost exclusively those seeking ordination in the [denomination]. The goals of the program undergird the institutional mission and reflect their stated values and ethos. The six learning outcomes for the MDiv program have been revised recently. While they are somewhat generic, the learning outcomes do facilitate the development of institutional values delivered within the course content. The outcomes, as mentioned previously, have not been printed in the school calendar or website. Ensuring that these outcomes become embedded and known will provide evidence of the school's growth in developing a culture of assessment.

The MDiv program requires 120 semester hours for completion and is the equivalent of four years of full-time study. This is somewhat unique in comparison with other MDiv programs, but dovetails well with the ordination process in the [sponsoring denomination]. The MDiv program at Sample Seminary is also unique from other seminaries in the denomination and is currently operating as an extended pilot project. MDiv programs offered at other [denominational] seminaries are designed with a more familiar three year curriculum followed by the two year residency required by the denomination before ordination. The integrated four years offered at The school shortens the process by a year and consciously integrates the learning of the ministry residency with the rest of the curriculum, which the evaluation committee views to be a strength of the program. However, this uniqueness presents some difficulties in publicizing the merits of the program, since at first sight it appears longer, rather than shorter.

Placement rates for the MDiv are nearly 100%, a commendable achievement for its students. The most recent graduation rate for the MDiv is 80%, with several students discerning during their program that they no longer felt called to ministry. The school is encouraged to continue to find ways to help students with their discernment process.

A.2 Content
The MDiv program has three phases [described here but left out for anonymity sake]. The integrated design of this program offers structured opportunities to develop a comprehensive and discriminating understanding of the religious heritage, both denominational and historical. The integration of classroom and fieldwork is a particular strength of the program and facilitates the cultural sensitivity of the students. The Integration Seminar is worthy of note in terms of cultural context. This transitional experience does much to ground the student in the practice of ministry within a wider community context. It allows for some myth-demolishing experiences as to what constitutes a geographic context and prepares the student for their ministry residency. The school offers a breadth of opportunities for personal and spiritual formation found in both curricular and co-curricular experiences, as well as in the accessibility of staff and faculty to students. The capacity for ministerial and public leadership is offered through the same blend of in-class, in-the-field and in-the-hallway relationships. The supervisors for the ministry residency (both on-site and off-site) are required to take a 12-day training workshop in preparation to their roles. The Ministry Residency Coordinator allots appropriate energies to the process of selection, development, evaluation and termination of the ministry residencies. This integration between theology and practice that characterizes the whole MDiv is one of the school's distinctive strengths.

A.3 Resources
The learning environment at Sample Seminary is diverse – on campus courses, off-campus courses (some through transfer, other through distance education), ministry residencies and co-curricular experiences. The small and affirming ethos of the School is open and inviting and peer learning is both spontaneous and structured. The instruction demonstrates institutional values and requires a mandatory year of on-campus studies. Instructions on the off-campus portions of the program are clear and there is strong staff support for students as they prepare themselves for these program components. Access to faculty, library and peer resources is sufficient and the culture and practice of assessment is nascent, but growing.

The length of the program is challenging for part-time students to complete within the ten-year limit, but components of the curriculum are designed to be taken in a block (e.g. ministry residency) which concentrates parts of the program. The MDiv program at Sample Seminary is enhanced by faculty and community resources that support ministerial education. Although the faculty is small, they are experienced, several are ordained and all serve the students well. The school is well connected with the surrounding community and this connection is well-cultivated by regular placement of students in community organizations for the Integration Seminar and churches for ministry residencies.

A.4 Admissions
The school calendar states the admission requirements clearly, as well as the exceptional means to gain admission in lieu of a baccalaureate degree. Student numbers are small so this exception cannot be exercised very often. The School is recognizing the various factors that are impeding the growth in the size of this program. There are factors within the [sponsoring denomination] which promote the need for equipped lay leadership through the Designated Lay Ministry program, and the design of the program makes it difficult for any student outside the [denomination] to enroll. Funding for students in the ministry residency could be greater, thereby demonstrating increased sensitivity to the familial status of these students and the costs associated with return trips to the campus for the learning circles. The evaluation committee encourages the school to continue with its intention to address the concern about what may appear at first consideration to be an excessive length of the program by thirty hours. Although the program is small, it is vibrant and effective. The MDiv program is the flagship degree at Sample Seminary and in many ways is exemplary, including program design, contextual sensitivity, and the integration of theology and practice.

Degree Program Standard D. Master of Theological Studies (MTS)

D.1 Purpose/Goals/Assessment
The purpose of the degree Master of Theological Studies (MTS) at Sample Seminary is "to provide a solid theological foundation for [rest of purpose statement omitted for anonymity]." The purposes for which students might use the degree are articulated in somewhat greater detail, but all fall within the category of "general educational purposes" (D.1.1).

The school articulates three goals for the degree. The program requirements allow a student, after building a broad foundation in a range of theological disciplines, to pursue a specialized focus, but at the level of its goals, the aim of the degree is to provide a broad foundation in the theological disciplines. This is seen in the specific outcomes associated with the first goal, in which the student is expected to describe key concepts and methods in six theological disciplines. For the first two goals, the school has articulated demonstrable learning outcomes that clearly contribute to meeting the program goals. The third goal is treated as already expressed as a demonstrable outcome that is capable of assessment as it stands.

Achievement of the learning goals is assessed by both direct and indirect evidence. The direct evidence is a pair of papers that students write, one as they enter the program, and the other as they conclude the program. Both papers are substantive analyses and responses to case studies provided by the school. These require students to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes in a comprehensive and integrated way that corresponds to the distinctive educational values and goals of the School. By following a pre-test/post-test assessment pattern, they also provide direct evidence of the learning that results from student engagement with the work of the degree program. The school's assessment program calls for this evidence to be gathered and collated annually by the Curriculum Assessment Coordinator, to be presented to the faculty at its fall workday for evaluation, and subsequently to be presented along with any faculty recommendations for change to the Academic Committee at its October meeting.

The indirect evidence consists of a set of questions added to course evaluations, and a graduates' survey. The questions added to the course evaluation ask for the student's assessment of the relevance of the course to MTS program goals. The Graduating Students' Survey is an instrument similar to the ATS Graduating Student Questionnaire, but developed and administered locally by Sample Seminary with the assistance of staff at the local university. Some of the questions on this survey ask for respondents' assessment of their learning as specifically related to MTS program goals. This indirect evidence is collected, compiled, and evaluated on the same annual cycle as the direct evidence. The school's statement of educational effectiveness on the web site gives evidence of tracking completion or placement rates, but the evaluation committee could find no evidence that these are tracked as a part of assessment of the MTS program. Nor is there evidence of regular assessment of whether the goals of the program meet student and community needs, although it must be said that the committee encountered evident satisfaction with the program itself.

Placement rates for the MTS are not nearly as high as for the MDiv, with only 50% of the most recent MTS graduates reporting placement within a year of their graduation. And the most recent graduation rate for the MTS of only 60% is also a source of some concern. The school is encouraged to continue to find ways to help MTS students complete their degrees and find meaningful placement afterwards.

D.2 Content
The MTS at Sample Seminary requires sixty semester credits of work, a heavy two full time equivalent years of academic study. Thirty-six credits are spread over six theological disciplines (Hebrew Scriptures, Christian Scriptures, Theology, Ethics/Church and Society, Church History, Pastoral Theology). Three credits are devoted to program-based requirements, i.e., orientation courses and a capstone course. This leaves twenty-one credits for elective courses. This allows students to choose an area of specialization (minimum twelve credit hours). This curricular structure is consistent with the emphasis on the program goals on a broad foundation, while allowing for specialization as foreseen in the standards (D.2.1). The long-standing areas of specialization are Biblical Studies, Church History, Ethics/Church and Society, Systematic Theology, and Pastoral Theology.

D.3 Resources
By relying on courses offered by faculty at [several other related] schools to supplement those offered by tits own faculty, students are able to study with at least two different faculty members in each area of specialization. More recently a specialization in Spiritual Care has been added, requiring twelve credit hours earned in units of Clinical Pastoral Education and a three-credit course in professional ethics. The CPE units are taken through the [named entity] with which the school concluded a formal agreement in 20??. This specialization caters to a new audience for the degree, persons seeking certification by the [named entity].

Students eligible for the honors option may complete a substantial thesis, which functions as their summative exercise. Otherwise, the one-credit MTS capstone course serves as the summative exercise for students in this degree. A minimum of thirty of the sixty credits for the degree must be taken on the campus of the school as semester or intensive courses. Up to thirty credits may be taken online or accrued by transfer, or a combination of the two.

D.4 Admissions
Admission to the MTS program requires "a baccalaureate degree from a recognized university, or its educational equivalent." The educational equivalent is defined as a minimum of thirty credits completed at a recognized university or university-transfer program along with enough additional post-secondary education to amount to a baccalaureate degree.

The MTS degree at Sample Seminary is constructed in accordance with Standard D and appears to be a program of high quality. The program appears to achieve its goals and provide an eminently satisfactory experience for students. The paucity of data and the small number of students the committee was able to meet point to the primary issue with this degree program, namely, its low enrollment (for the last five years, head counts of 9, 9, 11, 2, and 8 were recorded). For the most part, this does not seem to deprive students in the MTS program of a peer learning community, since they share courses and many educational concerns with MDiv students, and so are part of a larger peer learning community. However, it does mean that evidence for assessment accumulates quite slowly since there are few completions in any given year (0-2 for the last five years).

V. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Evaluation Committee recommends to the Board of Commissioners the following actions:

1. To reaffirm accreditation of Sample Seminary for a period of ten years, with the next comprehensive evaluation visit in spring 20??, one term before the period of accreditation expires.

2. To approve the following degree programs:

    > Master of Divinity
    > Master of Theological Studies (Academic MA)

3. To approve the following extension sites:

    The [?? site] at [specify mailing address] as an ongoing course site to offer less than half of the MDiv degree program (and less than half of any other basic programs oriented toward ministerial leadership that the school is approved to offer).

    The [?? site], located at [specify mailing address] as a complete degree-granting site for the MDiv degree program only.

4. To grant approval to offer comprehensive distance education: Yes

5. To encourage that attention be given to maintaining and enhancing these distinctive strengths:

    a. Clear cultural identity as a school of and for the [local region], observable in such areas as the ethos of the MDiv program, and faculty appointments committed to the region's cultural context

    b. Capacity for institutional resilience attributed, in part, to strategic administrative appointments, demonstrated personal and financial commitment of the faculty, and the strong stewardship of the school's physical resources

    c. The integration between theology and practice that characterizes the whole of the MDiv program

6. To encourage that attention be given to the following areas of needed growth during the next period of accreditation:

    a. The need for long-term financial stability, given the uncertainty of ongoing denominational support and the ongoing lease status of its excess facility capacity (Standard 8, section 8.2.1.2)

    b. The challenges of the adopted faculty governance model, including ensuring effective patterns of management, exchange of information, and mechanisms that address conflict (Standard 8, section 8.5.2)

    c. Developing best practices for online courses, defining norms and criteria for evaluating such courses, conducting evaluation of instructors as online teachers, offering training and support for faculty teaching online, and identifying how effective teaching online will be factored into regular faculty evaluation and tenure decisions (Standard ES, sections 4.2.3 and ES 4.2.10).

7. To take action regarding the following areas of needed improvement:

    a. To require a report by November 1, 20??, regarding completion of an institutional harassment policy (Standard 2, section 2.2) and how the need for a chief library administrator has been met (Standard 4, section 4.4.1).

    b. To require a report by November 1, 20??, demonstrating ongoing strategic planning for, and evaluation of, the library (Standard 4, section 4.4.3) and the results of the assessment practices for each degree program (Educational Standard, section ES.6).