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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Adventist Accrediting Association
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA
Phone: 301-680-5066
Fax: 301-622-9627
Web: AdventistAccreditingAssociation.org

² GCWP 2010-11, FE 20 55 7.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
ACCREDITING ASSOCIATION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
2015 - 2020

Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, Chair, Director of Education, General Conference
Mike Lekic, Executive Secretary, Associate Director of Education, General Conference
Loren Agrey, President, Burman University
Juvenal Balisasa, Director of Education, West-Central Africa Division
Lena Caesar, Loyola University of Maryland
Mario Ceballos, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, General Conference
Lawrence Domingo, Director of Education, Southern Asia-Pacific Division
Daniel Duda, Director of Education, Trans-European Division
George Egwakhe, Associate Treasurer, General Conference
Gamaliel Florez, Director of Education, Inter-American Division
Gerald Grant, Professor, Ontario, Canada
Juanita Gurubatham, Director, Institutional Review and Development, ACCSC
Mozecie Kadyakapita, Director of Education, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division
Ginger Ketting-Weller, President, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies
Hudson Kibuuka, Associate Director of Education, General Conference
Raquel Korniejczuk, Vice President, Academic Affairs, Montemorelos University
Thomas Lemon, Vice President, General Conference
Edgard Leonel Luz, Director of Education, South American Division
Geoffrey Mbwana, Vice President, General Conference
James Mbyirukira, Education Department, Oakwood University
David McClintock, Director of Education, South Pacific Division
Julian Melgosa, Associate Director of Education, General Conference
Marius Munteanu, Director of Education, Inter-European Division
Daryl Murdoch, Director, South Pacific Division Adventist Schools
Andrew Mutero, Director of Education, East-Central Africa Division
G. T. Ng, Secretary, General Conference
Arne Nielsen, Vice President for Education, North American Division
R. N. Prabhhu Das, Director of Education, Southern Asia Division
Juan Prestol, Treasurer, General Conference
Ivan Riapolov, Director of Education, Euro-Asia Division
Steven Rose, Vice President, Financial Administration, Walla Walla University
Richard Sabuin, Director of Education, Northern Asia-Pacific Division
Sadrail Saint-Ulysse, Director of Education, New Jersey Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Rubens Silva, Education Director, South Brazil Union Conference
Ella Simmons, Vice President, General Conference
John Wesley Taylor V, Associate Director of Education, General Conference
Aimee Vitangcoi-Regoso, Registrar, Andrews University
Ted Wilson, President, General Conference
Robert Young, Vice President, Academic Administration, Southern Adventist University

Invitees:
Paul Douglas, Auditing Service, General Conference
Tim Northrup, Adventist Risk Management, General Conference
Tom Wetmore, Office of General Counsel, General Conference
The table that follows identifies the dates of publication and implementation of *Accreditation Handbook* updates. The date of publication will be the date when changes to the *Handbook* are voted by AAA. On the date of implementation, all accreditation visits will operate under the terms of the new updates. By agreement between AAA and individual institutions, new procedures and/or documentation may be used in **advance** of the implementation date. Old procedures and/or documentation will normally not be acceptable **after** the implementation date.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Publication</th>
<th>Date of Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 8, 2004</td>
<td>January 1, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7, 2005</td>
<td>January 1, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 15, 2012</td>
<td>July 1, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 9, 2013</td>
<td>April 9, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 3, 2019</td>
<td>April 3, 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Accreditation Handbook is in four parts. Each part can stand alone and has its own table of contents. However, only the Accreditation Handbook in its entirety explains and outlines the full accreditation process managed by AAA. A table of contents covering the full Handbook will precede Part I.

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

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

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

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

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

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

*An explanation of which institutions will be accredited under the terms of Form A and Form B are given in Part I of the Accreditation Handbook.
AAA  Adventist Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges and Universities. The term Adventist Accrediting Association will also be used throughout the Accreditation Handbook to refer to the Association.

BMTE  Board of Ministerial and Theological Education. This division-level board recommends to the General Conference IBMTE (see below) new programs in theology and pastoral studies and arranges for endorsement of religion/theology faculty.

IBE  International Board of Education. This General Conference board approves new programs in all disciplines other than religion/theology and recommends new institutions for candidacy status to AAA.

IBMTE  International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education. This General Conference Committee approves new programs in theology and pastoral studies recommended by the division BMTEs and approves processes for the management of pastoral training at division level.

GC  General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

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

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handbook Updates</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of the Accreditation Handbook</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART I: Philosophy, Purpose, and Types of Accreditation

### Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Education

- Aim
- Philosophy
- Tertiary Institutions

### Seventh-day Adventist Accreditation: Philosophy and Responsibilities

- Responsibility for Quality Management and Accreditation
- Philosophy of Seventh-day Adventist Accreditation
- Accreditation Objectives and Responsibilities
- Relation of AAA Accreditation to Government and Regional Accreditation/Approval

### Seventh-day Adventist Accreditation Processes and Benefits

- The International Board of Education (IBE) and the International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (IBMTE)
- Candidacy Status and Initial Accreditation
- Continued Accreditation Responsibility
- Expectations of an Accreditation Visit
- Changes to Accreditation Status
- Extension of Accreditation
- Benefits of AAA Accreditation

### Types of Accreditation Visits

- Regular Accreditation Visit (Form A)
- Regular Accreditation Visit (Form B)
- Interim Visit
- Administrative Review Visit
- Focused Visit
# PART II: The Accreditation Visit

## The Regular Accreditation Visit
- Parameters of Visit
- Initial Arrangements
- Committee Selection
- Financial Arrangements
- Pre-Visit Expectations
- Overall Schedule
- Required Documentation
- The Accreditation Report
- Accreditation Recommendation
- Right of Appeal
- Accreditation Recommendation for an Institution Facing Initial Accreditation
- Final Report and Accreditation Action

## The Interim Accreditation Visit
- Parameters of Visit
- Initial Arrangements and Committee Appointments
- Financial Arrangements
- Pre-visit Expectations
- The Visit
- Follow-up
- Summary Time Line

## The Administrative Review Visit
- Parameters of Visit
- Initial Arrangements and Committee Appointments
- Financial Arrangements
- Pre-visit Expectations
- The Visit
- Follow-up

## Focused Accreditation Visit
- Parameters of Visit
- Procedures
- Financial Arrangements
- Follow-up
PART III: Institution of Excellence and the Self-Study (Form A)

Institution of Excellence

Institutional Self-Study Functions

Self-Study Process

Self-Study Instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Study Section A</td>
<td>III-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Study Section B</td>
<td>III-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 1: Philosophy, Mission, and Objectives</td>
<td>III-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 2: Spiritual Development, Service, and Witness</td>
<td>III-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 3: Governance, Organization, and Administration</td>
<td>III-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 4: Finances, Financial Structure, and Industries</td>
<td>III-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 5: Programs of Study</td>
<td>III-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 6: Faculty and Staff</td>
<td>III-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 7: Library, Resource Centers, and Technology</td>
<td>III-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 8: Academic Policies and Records</td>
<td>III-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 9: Student Services</td>
<td>III-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 10: Physical Plant and Facilities</td>
<td>III-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 11: Public Relations and External Constituencies</td>
<td>III-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 12: Pastoral and Theological Education</td>
<td>III-44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PART IV: Institution of Excellence and the Self-Study (Form B)

Institution of Excellence

Institutional Self-Study Functions

Self-Study Process

Self-Study Instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Study Section A</td>
<td>IV-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Study Section B</td>
<td>IV-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Study Section C</td>
<td>IV-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 1: Mission and Identity</td>
<td>IV-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 2: Spiritual Development, Service, and Witness</td>
<td>IV-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 3: Governance, Organization, and Administration</td>
<td>IV-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 4: Programs of Study</td>
<td>IV-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 5: Faculty and Staff</td>
<td>IV-19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Outline of Accreditation Report</td>
<td>APP-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Writing Commendations and Recommendations</td>
<td>APP-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Typical Decision Tree for Recommendation Options</td>
<td>APP-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Criteria for Review of Urban Campuses</td>
<td>APP-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Criteria for Review of Research Degrees</td>
<td>APP-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Best Practices for Distance Education</td>
<td>APP-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>AAA Conflict of Interest Policy</td>
<td>APP-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Substantive Change Policy, Processes, and Guidelines</td>
<td>APP-25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>