

SECTION 2

STANDARDS

To be granted ACCS accreditation subsequent to meeting the requirements for approval as a Candidate for Accreditation, a school must demonstrate that it has successfully met the following Criteria for Accreditation and that it can reasonably be expected to continue to meet these standards.

A. Mission, Vision and Planning. The school must show evidence that it is and has been meeting its published school mission and goals, that its vision is consistent with the ACCS, and that it engages in a planning process.

A.I. Classical Christian Commitment: The school must demonstrate that it promotes itself as a classical Christian school, has a mission and vision statement, a statement of faith, that school programs incorporate these statements, and that it serves the cause of Christ consonant with the distinctives of ACCS.

- a. Principle: A school must publish its mission and vision statement and statement of faith to inform parents of what the school is all about and for a degree of public accountability. This ensures that a) the school has drafted mission and vision statements and a statement of faith, and b) that the school is following each and all are consistent with those of ACCS.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. “Classical Christian” is prominent on the school's website and in its marketing materials.
 - ii. “Preparatory school” language, if used, is clarified to emphasize a classical Christian priority.
 - iii. Language in school documents that defines marriage, gender, and human sexuality according to historical biblical understanding.
- c. Documentation: All must be published.
 - i. Mission Statement
 - ii. Vision Statement
 - iii. Statement of Faith (must include a definition of marriage and gender)
 - iv. Explanation in the self study must describe how Scripture is integrated into school programs and curriculum

A.2. Strategic planning: The school board has a mid-term and long-range plan for the overall improvement of the school.

- a. Principle: The school must have a board-developed and approved long-range plan in place that addresses future improvements in the school and which takes into account the facility and grounds, growing financial resources, curricular reviews, the effectiveness of the faculty to teach in a classical Christian method and the application of the Seven Laws of Teaching, constituent support and community outreach, tuition, salaries, and enrollment, among other needs of the school.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. The plan provides detail about who is responsible for different aspects and specifies timelines and targets.
 - ii. The plan covers a term of five years into the future.
- c. Documentation:
 - i. School's mid- and long-range plan
 - ii. Notes explaining how the plan was developed and how it is currently being used by the board and administration

A.3. Goals: The school must be able to document that its program is meeting its published goals for student achievement and advancement.

- a. Principle: Not only must a school publish what its goals are, but it must demonstrate in a concrete way that it is meeting those goals.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Periodic worldview interviews with students
- c. Documentation will include:
 - i. Philosophy of education
 - ii. Description of a graduate
 - iii. School profile (showing matriculations)
 - iv. Results from parent survey)
 - v. Do not include achievement test scores or high-school graduation requirements for this standard.

B. Accountability, Independence, and Stability. The school must demonstrate these qualities in several areas.

B.1. Financial Stability: The school must be able to document general stability with respect to financial resources and continuing constituent support for the school mission.

- a. Principle: ACCS wants to accredit a school that is viable. A school that demonstrates stability/growth, over time, in the areas listed above can generally be expected to continue to thrive in its operation.

- b. Indicators:
 - i. Accredited schools typically receive at least 80% of their income from student tuition.
- c. Documentation will show:
 - i. Annual budget (showing year to-date income and expenditures)
 - ii. Profit and loss statements for the past three to five years
 - iii. Note: Comments should explain whether or not a school is borrowing income from the following year to meet current year obligations.

B.2. Financial Independence: The school's financial support must not create an environment where a single donor (or a single external funding source) has the potential to threaten the future operation of the school by withdrawing support, or attaching new guidelines to funding that would threaten the school's mission. Similarly, if any single financial source through a third-party scholarship program or para-government organization represents a significant portion of the school's budget, it must not encumber or threaten the mission of the school.

- a. Principle: As previously stated, ACCS wants to accredit a school that is viable. The school must disclose its financial support and explain how these resources make the school viable in the long term. Also, the ACCS accredits schools that are independent and at which the board of directors can act without outside coercion, in the interest of the stated mission of the school.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Any donor or funding source controlled by a single entity, government, or person that makes up more than 20% of the operating budget.
 - ii. A clear, documented, and specific financial plan, should a single funding source be lost.
 - iii. A reserve fund equal to 10% of the annual operating budget.

- c. Documentation should include:
 - i. Anonymous list of donor contributions
 - ii. Budget that shows the total amount of donations relative to total budgeted revenue
 - iii. Report showing financial support and/or in-kind gifts from its constituency (which may include products and/or services) to the school, as well as all situations where any individual (or external source) contributes a significant portion of the budgeted school income per year
 - iv. An explanation of these financial arrangements and what they mean to the school

B.2.a States with universal tuition support (e.g., Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs) or vouchers): These revisions apply to schools in states that provide a significant amount of financial support to parents for use in private school education. Particularly programs that are not restricted to low-income families. Revenue from these sources may exceed 20% of a school's budgeted income.

- a. Principle: While ACCS is thankful that ESAs and vouchers make private school tuition more affordable, we view the state funding of tuition as much of a threat as an opportunity. We are concerned that these tuition programs may be a modern Trojan horse. As noted in standard B.1., accredited schools must be financially stable, and many schools may not be stable if they reject all participation in these programs. Short-term stability may require significant involvement in these programs. However, we believe long-term stability requires measures to mitigate against the potential loss of these funds. A school that compromised on Biblical truth (e.g., marriage and gender issues) to continue receiving government funds would be in danger of losing ACCS-accredited status.
 - b. Indicators
 - i. Schools take steps to mitigate against the potential loss of these funds and remain positioned to end participation in these programs to ensure faithfulness to the school's mission. Steps *might* include any of all of the following measures:
 - (a) Schools limit receipt of these funds to a set percentage of budgeted revenue.
 - (b) Schools allocate some funds to a reserve fund.
 - (c) Schools limit the available funds they will accept per student below the state allocation to ensure that parents are responsible for at least part of the student's tuition.
 - ii. Schools establish a reserve fund to be used if continued participation in these programs threatens the school's mission. The reserve fund amount is sufficient to keep the school operating for a time absent state funds.
 - c. Documentation should include:
 - i. Board-approved policy or guidelines that explain the board's rationale for the school's participation in ESA programs. Board policy must acknowledge a commitment to stop accepting funds, even if that means closing the school rather than operating in a way that conflicts with Scripture, particularly regarding marriage and gender issues.
 - ii. Financial plans or documents showing the board's mitigation plans against the potential loss of funding or if the school must cease receipt of these funds to protect the school's mission.
 - iii. Budget that shows the total amount of ESA revenue relative to total budgeted revenue.
 - iv. Examples of how the school communicates to parents about participation in these funding programs.
 - v. Language submitted when applying for participation in the program expressing the school's right to operate according to their religious beliefs. (ACCS has sample language from ADF.)
- B.3. Outside Influence:** The original voucher policy was reviewed given new instruments for government funding models, including those that offer private vehicles with strings attached. Voucher Policy 5.09 was replaced with Outside Influence Policy 5.10.

- a. Principle: ACCS-accredited schools may not accept funds if the school is required to sign an agreement with the government or an outside organization to access the funding if that agreement creates a future obligation, or, if by statute, accessing the fund obligates the school to future obligations by the state or another agency besides the ACCS. In other words, if the school stops accepting the funding, any strings must immediately be severed.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. ACCS-accredited schools may not accept funds that create future obligations. All obligations must end when the school stops accepting such funds.
 - ii. ACCS may refer to “The ABCs of School Choice,” published by EdChoice, to help evaluate the specific requirements of an outside funding source.
- c. Documentation shall include:
 - i. School policies or written statements (if any) that address acceptance of outside funding
 - ii. A list of outside funding sources, government or private, along with an explanation of obligations required to receive these funds.
 - iii. Financial document that shows source(s) of tuition revenue

B.4. Financial Accountability: The school must provide a financial accountability report verified by an independent accounting source.

- a. Principle: ACCS believes schools should operate with a high level of financial accountability. We also recognize that a formal “accounting audit” may be excessive and expensive for the required purpose. Therefore, at a minimum, an examination by an independent, qualified person, whether an accountant or bookkeeper not directly associated with the school, provides an objective look at how the school conducts its financial business internally. This type of accounting review is sufficient.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. An “independent, qualified person” may make recommendations to the school regarding how to improve its financial operations.
 - ii. The Financial Integrity Requirements (See Appendix B) provide the basis for this review.
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Include responses to the questions in the Financial Integrity Requirements provided separately.
 - ii. A CPA may not be the best source to complete this report. A person knowledgeable about business financial management and who is independent of the school will suffice.

B.5. Public Perception: The school must have been free of public ethical scandal or have taken appropriate action in resolving the same.

- a. Principle: ACCS does not want to represent as “accredited” a school that has an unresolved public ethical scandal. The operative word is “unresolved.” We all live in a sinful world, and so sin at some

point is not improbable for even an accredited school. The issue is how it is dealt with if it should occur.

- b. Indicator:
 - i. Any major conflict has been resolved, insofar as it depends on the member school within the boundaries of its mission and governance, at the time of application and accreditation.
- c. Documentation will provide:
 - i. A statement printed on school letterhead signed by the head of school or board chairman

B.6. Enrollment and Employment Stability: The school must disclose data for the past five years in the following areas along with an explanation of the trends and what they mean for the school: student enrollment and retention rates; retention of school administrators; teacher retention rate (year by year). Employee attrition and retention must indicate stability and support for the school mission.

- a. Principle: Total enrollment numbers for stable schools are generally consistent over time. However, stable schools sometimes see a decline in enrollment for a short time, for reasons related to maintaining faithfulness to the school's founding mission and vision. In such cases, schools should explain the reasons for such a decline.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Actual student enrollment numbers will equal budgeted student enrollment numbers.
 - ii. Student retention rates are greater than 80%. Use this formula: number of students who left the school between September 30th of the prior year and September 30th of the current year, not including graduates, as a percentage of the current year's overall enrollment.
 - iii. Student enrollment should not show an overall year-to-year decline of more than 10%.
- c. Documentation will include:
 - i. Enrollment numbers for the past five years showing grammar enrollment, secondary enrollment, and total enrollment
 - ii. Teacher retention rate for the past five years
 - iii. Administrator retention rate for the past five years

C. Governance and Administration. The school must have established adequate structures and procedures for governance and administration to achieve its mission.

C.1. Constitutional Organization: The school must have a written constitution and/or bylaws that clearly and comprehensively provide a basis for school administration and governance; lines of authority and areas of responsibility must be explicit.

- a. Principle: A school must know the reason for its existence, how it is structured, and the lines of authority so that it can operate smoothly and consistently. The adoption and publication of these

standards help develop a trusting relationship between the school and both parents and the local community.

- b. Indicators:
 - i. Members of the staff are aware of the limits and extent of their decision-making authority.
 - c. Documentation:
 - i. School by-laws or similar documents must be included.
 - ii. Notes should explain the governance structure of the school. Also, identify specific sections of the by-laws that define items included in this standard.
- C.2. Board Governance:** The school must have a board of control that determines policy in the areas of administration, business management, academic affairs, and student life, as evidenced by a single, comprehensive policy manual. The board shall ensure that it manages conflict of interest issues in its own composition and its oversight of the school.
- a. Principle: “Board members are the fiduciaries who steer the organization towards a sustainable future by adopting sound, ethical, and legal governance and financial management policies, as well as by making sure the nonprofit has adequate resources to advance its mission” (National Council of Nonprofits). Regardless of the governance model used at the school, boards must demonstrate a focus on these duties as opposed to spending time on the day-to-day operations of the school. This requirement does not preclude conflict of interest issues for board members, but does require that there be a mechanism for managing conflict of interest issues.
 - b. Indicators:
 - i. The policy manual is referenced and understood by members of the administrative team. In other words, it is demonstrated that the manual is not a “dust collector,” but is actually used.
 - c. Documentation:
 - i. Policy manual (or other governance documents)
 - ii. Board minutes from the last 6 to 12 months
 - iii. Identify the location for the conflict of interest policy. (See the sample Conflict of Interest policy at the National Council of Nonprofits website.)
 - iv. Notes should explain where all policies exist, i.e., is there a separate policy manual or do policies exist in handbooks? If policies are in the faculty or parent-student handbook, include them as well. Identify the specific sections in these documents that address items in this standard.
- C.3. Records:** The school must have complete, accurate, legible, and securely maintained records. These are to include board minutes, school personnel files, student files, and administrative reports.
- a. Principle: A school must be able to professionally document what it is doing as well as provide for the privacy of the people it is serving. Security is required for certain documents such as student

records and teacher performance reports, while other documents are more public in nature such as board minutes (usually). The school must demonstrate its maturity and professionalism by providing adequate handling procedures for all records.

- b. Indicators:
 - i. Show a record plan for electronic records that provides for security and backup.
 - ii. Files should demonstrate completeness, all documentation is in one location, and a standard organization for each type of file.
- c. Documentation: This will be evaluated during the site visit.
 - i. Notes should identify where these records are stored. Visit committees will examine records for completeness and consistent organization.
 - ii. Notes should also identify any policy that defines general record retention policies.

C.4. Conflict Resolution: The school must have constructed and promulgated biblical and public policies for resolving school conflicts concerning policies, administrators, faculty, and students.

- a. Principle: Although not all possible situations can be anticipated, a general process for locally addressing conflicts at/within the school are mandatory because Jesus said that all men will know His disciples by how they treat one another in love. The Bible provides general guidelines for addressing/resolving conflict, and these need to be followed by those who are in submission to Christ. Where there are a large number of people, there will be sin. Schools must prepare for inevitable conflicts and develop principled guidelines in anticipation of difficulties, not in reaction to them.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. In general, policies should have conflict dealt with between the affected parties, and then bring in an appropriate chain of command if the grievance escalates.
 - ii. Grievances found in the official record should show examples of the organizational adherence to these principles.

- c. Documentation will include:
 - i. Policy Manual
 - ii. Faculty Handbook
 - iii. Parent-Student Handbook
 - iv. Notes that identify the location of the grievance policy in the handbooks

C.5. Executive Leadership: The school's head administrator must have a clear job description, obviously act as the liaison between the board and staff, and be sufficiently available to the teachers for support and guidance. Schools must have a policy ensuring that the head of school receives an annual evaluation from the board. Boards must complete an annual evaluation for the head of school.

- a. Principle: Just as Christ is the head of the Church, there was a chief priest in the Old Testament temple system, and as a husband is the head of a family, so too a school as an organization must follow this pattern with a single leader/representative as the head of school. He represents the school to the board, the board to the school, and the school to the community. He may have others to support and aid him in this task, but he is the leader of the entire school and accountable for its sound operation. He provides uniformity and consistency in the day-to-day operation of the school. A well-written job description protects both the administrator and the board.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Have a written set of attributes or virtues that are aspirational for the head of school position.
 - ii. Schools are expected to have one head administrator.
- c. Documentation will show:
 - i. Head of school job description
 - ii. Document or policy outlining process for head of school's annual evaluation
 - iii. Note whether or not the head of school has received a formal evaluation from the board in each of the past five years (those completed evaluations should NOT be included in the self-study)

C.6. Board of Directors: Board members must meet ACCS and documented school standards for their office and must be able to articulate, at an appropriate level, the classical Christian vision for their school. The board must provide adequate training for all board members in classical Christian philosophy and school board practices common to long-term ACCS-accredited schools.

- a. Principle: Board members, collectively, are the guardians of the vision and success for the school. Classical Christian Education's paradigm challenges the common understanding of school to such a degree that vision drift is easy and common. For this reason, board members must be carefully selected and trained to understand, appreciate, and deeply support the foundations of the classical Christian vision.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Board members sign a statement of faith and conflict of interest statement.
 - ii. A training plan for board classical Christian philosophy and function is in place and practiced.
 - iii. Board selection processes will require prospective members to learn and show that they understand classical Christian philosophy and pedagogy.
 - iv. All board members are regularly engaged in learning, particularly about classical Christian education through demonstrated participation in ACCS conference attendance, selected readings in classical Christian education, webinar or onsite training, mentoring, conference recordings, attendance at parent education events, OR other training and development.

- v. Annual improvement activities are conducted including board self-evaluations or readings on board best practices.
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Policies regarding the qualifications, election, and training of board members will be included.

C.7. Compliance with the Law: The school must meet state and local health, safety, and security requirements as well as any state statutory requirements for operating a private school.

- a. Principle: The state, county, and municipal authorities have requirements for health and safety which, in general, are consistent with a biblical view of civil government, and ACCS desires to support these requirements when they are not in conflict with Scripture. Schools have a responsibility “in loco parentis” to provide for the physical well-being of students entrusted to their care.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. How does the school comply with the state’s compulsory education law (for example, number of school days)?
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Documentation should identify the state and local requirements for private schools.
 - ii. Health: Note requirements and compliance with vaccination reporting. For example, if your school is required to do CPR or concussion training, please document this.
 - iii. Safety: Include certificates from annual fire inspections or building inspections and any risk management reports.
 - iv. Security: Show emergency management or disaster response plans and training.
 - v. State laws: Demonstrate requirements and compliance with laws concerning length of the school year and other requirements specified by the state in which the school resides.

D. Cultivation of Student Virtue (II Peter 1:5–6, Phil 4:8) and the School Community. The school must recognize that its missional success is tied to a systemic school community, and that all aspects of the school’s operation should seek to bring about the cultivation of Christian virtue and living.

D.1. Admissions Process: The school must exercise family and student admissions and retention policies that are consistent with the school’s mission (missional or covenantal), and that support a biblical Christian ethos of the school.

- a. Principle: Schools are made up of students, faculty, and programs. Each plays a vital role in forming paideia in students. If families enroll that uphold values in juxtaposition with the school community, they will disrupt the school’s ethos. In other words, students will be in conflict over acceptance of what is taught, and what is present in the community. This is particularly evident with false values around LGBT inclusion or non-Christian enrollment (Mormon, Muslim).

- b. Indicators:
 - i. Careful admissions policies that screen students based on specific criteria are in place.
 - ii. The person responsible for family interviews can articulate the types of families the school admits and how he or she determines their qualification.
- c. Documentation should show:
 - i. Written admissions policies and guidelines that describe the school's goals with respect to the religious makeup or the constituency of the school.
 - ii. Written admissions policies and guidelines that may include direction regarding unbelievers or those who openly practice non-biblical life choices.

D.2. Aesthetics: The school must apply appropriate aesthetic standards to its classrooms, hallways, facilities, programs, and staff.

- a. Principle: The standards of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty are humane, intertwined, and God-given. Students, faculty, and parents are influenced greatly by aesthetic standards. “Higher” rather than “vulgar” (low) standards help create a learning environment that depicts transcendence. Classical influences in art help to ground classical schools in the transcendent. While not the only “beautiful” form of art, the classical forms of music, art, performance, and architecture are less likely to reflect modern false-values connected with individualistic expression.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Schools should demonstrate the application of their educational philosophy through the school's decor.
 - ii. The Western canon of thought (writings and great books), literature, fine art, theater, and music are used in such a way as to build appreciation and affection for them.
 - iii. Important and classical works of great art are given prominent place and presence in the school environment. Older forms that were based in a pursuit of ideal truth, goodness, and beauty are elevated examples. Products of twentieth- and twenty-first-century art and music are rightly assessed and ordered in the school environment, with earlier art given more prominence. Modern works tend to be subjective and individualistic in nature.
- c. Documentation: This will primarily be evaluated during the on-site visit.
 - i. If the school has relevant documentation, such as an aesthetic vision or directions to teachers on classroom decor, that could be included here.
 - ii. Most curricular items will be included in the curriculum guide. A listing of example items not included in the curriculum guide such as theatrical plays, ambient music choices, or music chosen for chapel (or equivalent) will be helpful.

D.3. Habits and Manners: Habits, manners, and decorum of the students and staff should comport with Christian and Western tradition appropriate to the mission of the school.

- a. Principle: Schools help to transfer a way of life (Ephesians 6:4, Proverbs 22:6). Habits practiced from an early age often become part of a person's nature and often become common practice in a Christian community. One of the great educational errors of our age is the notion that education is merely information and skills transfer. Schools must work against this widely held pressure as they cultivate the soul to love truth, goodness, and beauty. Classical Christian education is concerned with the moral and spiritual training schools provide to students.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Order and joy should be evident throughout the school community.
 - ii. Classroom and school-wide practices in manners and politeness should be evident.
 - iii. As appropriate, regular practices in prayer, song, and memory should be present in the school day.
 - iv. Student dress code and grooming standards should be documented, and consistent with the principles above.
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Include examples of liturgical readings, hymns, or other sacred songs formally used in the community.
 - ii. Policies or written expectations for students should include:
 - Habits /etiquette
 - Uniforms
 - Order
 - iii. Observed joy. (This will be evaluated on site.)

D.4. Activities: Non-classroom activities are consistent with the school's vision for providing moral and spiritual training to students.

- a. Principle: Virtue formation requires that all school-sponsored events are aligned with the vision and mission of a classical school.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. How do your activities flow out of your mission and vision statements?
 - ii. Expectation for student behavior in activities is commensurate with expectations in the school.
 - iii. Spiritual qualifications, conduct, and discipleship practices for coaches are comparable to spiritual standards for teachers.
- c. Documentation will include:
 - i. Handbooks or guidelines for coaches or other supervisors of co-curricular activities

- ii. Policies on students' participation in these activities
- iii. Hiring policies for coaches, etc., or a list of qualifications for staff holding these positions

D.5. Discipline: The school has and adheres to adequate overall discipline and behavioral standards.

- a. Principle: The school must have a policy or policies that define how discipline is effectively established and consistently maintained at the school. It should be evident to visitors in the hallways and on the playground as well as in the classrooms. Schools must establish a well-ordered environment that facilitates instruction and learning. Students also learn many lessons by the manner in which discipline is handled at the school.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Clearly communicated standards like postings, handbooks, etc.
 - ii. Environment of student respectfulness toward adults, and staff toward their respective authorities.
 - iii. Male/female students exercise appropriate discretion in their relationships.
- c. Documentation: The practical application will be observed during the on-site visit.
 - i. Notes should identify the policies related to student discipline in the policy manual, faculty manual, and parent-student handbook.

D.6. Male and Female Roles: The school encourages male/female roles that are consistent with biblical Christian virtues. Leadership is encouraged in different ways between boys and girls.

- a. Principle: “God created them male and female.” The distortions of our age often cause us to ignore important Christian distinctions in the virtues and the roles of men and women. Christians affirm the equality of the sexes, while rejecting the “sameness” of the sexes, either in nature or purpose. Part of cultivating virtue is to appropriate the right virtues and to help students live according to scriptural standards.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Practice and training in manners, with male/female distinctive roles.
 - ii. Policies against ambiguous dress and/or other grooming styles that may promote ambiguous appearance among students.
 - iii. In sports or PE, boys and girls do not compete in ways that might encourage boys to be rough with girls.
 - iv. Events that focus on distinctives between the sexes, for example, protocol events, social events, etc.
- c. Documentation should include:
 - i. Examples of indicative policies in training, handbooks, communications, activities, or manuals
 - ii. Operational documents outlining the philosophy or practice for dances, dating, etc.

D.7. In Loco Parentis: Parents are the authority from which the school operates and must therefore work in concert with the school in educating their children.

- a. Principle: God calls parents, specifically fathers, to raise their children in the education of the Lord (Ephesians 6, Deuteronomy 6). As schools, our authority must therefore be delegated from the parents, not the state or the church.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Fathers, in particular, are held to some account for addressing school-related concerns.
 - ii. Enrollment documents make this responsibility clear to parents.
 - iii. The school has policies that, by enrolling, parents are joining with the school and delegating authority. If they will not support key aspects of school policy, they are advised not to enroll.
- c. Documentation will show:
 - i. Public documents or communication stating the school's in loco parentis position
 - ii. Communications to parents that educate them about the school's mission, vision, and programs

E. Academics. The school must provide adequate classical Christian curriculum requirements to achieve its mission. The content and goals of the entire curriculum should be challenging and of high quality.

E.1. Sayers and Gregory: Instructional and teaching methods should reflect an understanding, application, and value for those ideas described by Dorothy Sayers in "The Lost Tools of Learning" and by John Milton Gregory in *The Seven Laws of Teaching*.

- a. Principle: The recovery of classical Christian education is based on the Trivium, the first three of the seven liberal arts. Dorothy Sayers drew important observations from the Trivium as she described medieval education. She also correlates the Trivium to the developmental stages of a child: Poll-parrot (grammar stage), Pert (logic stage), and Poetic (rhetoric stage).
 - i. From the earliest days of the movement, *The Seven Laws of Teaching* were helpful in describing a core set of timeless and fundamental pedagogical practices. The ACCS is committed to the "Seven Laws of Teaching" as described by John Milton Gregory.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. There should be regular reviews of the Seven Laws. Adherence to the laws will go a long way to ensuring that the school is offering high-quality instruction.
 - ii. Grammatical methods should be clearly applied at all levels of the grammar stage, dialectic techniques should be used throughout that level, and rhetoric practically observed in the upper grades.
 - iii. Sayers' various methods of instruction associated with each aspect of the Trivium should be evident at the appropriate stages of development/student instruction.
 - iv. Gregory's seven laws should be evident throughout all stages of the Trivium in each classroom, as well as in teacher evaluations and teacher training sessions.

- v. The tools of learning are integrated with classroom observation forms or teacher evaluation forms. Include those forms here.
 - c. Documents:
 - i. This will be observed during classroom instruction as part of the on-site visit.
 - ii. Training plans and records of past training should include material consistent with Sayers and Gregory.
- E.2. Program and Graduation Requirements:** The complete school program inclusive of graduation requirements must be well-organized, realistic, and publicized in its entirety.
- a. Principle: Schools seeking accreditation should be able to address in detail what is required in the way of coursework, credits, and accomplishments for a student to graduate from their school. In addition, these criteria must be published where parents and others can readily find them, and they must be consistent with the ACCS mission and vision. By establishing graduation requirements, a school demonstrates that it has considered both the scope and the culmination of its academic program.
 - b. Indicators:
 - i. A rhetorical thesis presentation required for every graduate (not specifically a senior thesis).
 - c. Documentation will show:
 - i. Published high-school graduation requirements
 - ii. Description of Diploma tracks. All ACCS-authorized diplomas must have requirements that meet ACCS academic standards. Certificates of completion are not considered diplomas.
- E.3. Complete Curriculum:** The school must provide adequate classical Christian curriculum requirements to achieve its mission. The content and goals of the entire curriculum should be challenging and of high quality. The entire curriculum must be documented in a clear and specific manner within the school's curriculum guide(s).
- a. Principle: The original Latin meaning of curriculum is “the course, the path, the road.” A school must know what it is teaching in each class at each grade level. This information is contained in the school's curriculum guide(s). Curriculum guides demonstrate planning and are an effective means for the school to provide accountability for the content of classroom instruction.
 - b. Indicators:
 - i. The curriculum guide must be a published document that has been approved by the proper authority at the school.
 - ii. Curriculum materials should be detailed enough to guide classroom instruction. This is most often accomplished through the inclusion of objectives, though not excessively.
 - iii. Good discussion questions are part of the written curriculum.
 - iv. A documented sequence over time is necessary to create pacing for teachers within the curriculum.

- v. The objective of a lesson includes virtue development as well as knowledge and skill development. “The student will know” and “The student will be able to” are not the only, or even the primary, purpose of education.
- c. Documentation should include:
 - i. Curriculum guides for grammar and secondary school
 - ii. A document that shows all courses taught in the grammar and secondary schools
 - iii. One example of how the written curriculum for a particular course is designed to fulfill a part of the vision for graduating students

E.4. Academic Program Requirements: The academic program must require the following for all students:

E.4.A Phonics: For all schools in their elementary academic program, instruction in reading through use of phonics

- a. Principle: Teaching children how to pronounce new words is essential to developing reading skills. “English is a phonetic language, which a child can quickly learn to read if he or she is taught the sounds of the various letters or combinations of letters” (Wilson, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*, p. 31). “Phonics involves matching the sounds of spoken English with individual letters or groups of letters. For example, the sound k can be spelled as c, k, ck or ch. Teaching children to blend the sounds of letters together helps them decode unfamiliar or unknown words by sounding them out. For example, when a child is taught the sounds for the letters t, p, a and s, they can start to build up the words: “tap”, “taps”, “pat”, “pats” and “sat” (National Literacy Trust).
- b. Indicators:
 - i. A phonics-based reading curriculum in K, 1st, and 2nd. However, some “sight words” consistent with phonics pedagogy are expected
 - ii. The absence of whole-word-based pedagogy in grammar school
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Provide notes that identify the sections in the grammar curriculum guide that includes phonics instruction.

E.4.B Latin or Greek: At least four years of Latin or Greek instruction, with at least two years in the secondary (i.e., after sixth grade),

Note: A year is generally understood to be 120 hours of class time with an instructor over the course of an academic year, i.e., a Carnegie unit.

- a. Principle: For membership, ACCS requires that a school teach at least two years of Latin or ancient Greek. Because ACCS accreditation has a higher bar than membership, accredited schools must require a minimum of four years of either language, with at least two of those years after the sixth

grade. Teaching these languages also helps students develop their writing skills and facilitates their participation in the “great conversation” of Western civilization.

- b. Indicators:
 - i. This refers to requirements for students attending the school K–12.
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Provide notes that identify the pages in the curriculum guides for the Latin courses. Notes should specify the number of days per week and the length of class periods for Latin courses.

E.4.C Logic and Rhetoric: For all schools in their secondary education, provide at least one year each of formal logic and formal rhetoric.

Note: A year is generally understood to be 120 hours of class time with an instructor over the course of an academic year, i.e., a Carnegie unit.

- a. Principle: Logic and rhetoric are two elements in the Trivium, and should influence the teaching methods throughout their respective phases. As specific courses, logic and rhetoric provide students with some of the most powerful tools of learning. These requirements reflect only the bare minimum for membership in ACCS.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. In addition to the time requirement cited here, it is expected that logical and rhetorical tools will be integrated into other courses. This standard presumes such integration; however, this standard requires discrete instruction in logic and rhetoric.
 - ii. A rhetorical thesis presentation is required for every graduate (not specifically a senior thesis).
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Provide notes that identify the pages in the curriculum guides for the logic and rhetoric courses. Notes should specify the number of days per week and the length of class periods for logic and rhetoric courses.
 - ii. High-school graduation requirements should address these courses.

E.4.D Western Civilization: Significant study in Western history and a canon of Western literature,

- a. Principle: Because history is the revelation of God’s created order in time and on earth, and because the ACCS mission “is both to promote the classical approach, and provide accountability for member schools to ensure that our cultural heritage is not lost again,” we require schools to teach children their Christian heritage which has developed predominantly through the West.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Many schools have found benefit in using more primary sources than textbooks in the secondary.
 - ii. Children’s literature used in the classroom represents the classical canon for children.

- iii. The secondary school has students read a significant portion of the Western canon of works in translations as close to the original as practical.
 - iv. Socratic and ethical discourse are evident in the treatment of great texts.
 - v. The school's definition of the "Western Canon" is based in some accepted tradition (Harvard Classics, The Great Books of the Western World, generally accepted tradition, etc.)
- c. Documentation:
- i. Notes should identify at least some of the areas in the curriculum guides that relate to these subjects. Notes should also describe when students receive training in these subjects.
 - ii. List the Western Canon texts read in grades 7–12.

E.4.E Writing: Training in writing (both prose and poetry), grammar, spelling, and composition

- a. Principle: Because ACCS wants graduates who are capable communicators, which includes their ability to write, this requirement is included and reflects the need for instruction at all levels of the Trivium, from the early grammar stage where students learn spelling and English grammar, to the rhetoric years where compositions are required. The rhetoric stage presumes that students now have independent thoughts and ideas and that these students must be taught to communicate eloquently and persuasively.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Prose and poetry should be apparent at all stages of the Trivium in an age-appropriate format. (progymnasmata).
 - ii. Writing practices will incorporate logical defense and the classical rhetorical form (reference progymnasmata, Cicero, Quintilian).
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Notes should identify courses in the curriculum guides where students are taught to write poetry and prose. Also, remember to include student writing in the samples of student work.

E.4.F Bible: Training in the Scriptures should include and foster a well-integrated scriptural understanding of all subjects.

- a. Principle: ACCS is committed to the restoration of our Christian culture which is grounded on the Bible. It is necessary that ACCS schools have courses that study the Bible, but that by itself is not sufficient. As this standard indicates, biblical integration is essential.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. The Scriptures must permeate every course of instruction since all knowledge derives from Christ (Col. 2:3).

- ii. Teachers take advantage of the natural opportunities in their lessons to integrate Scripture, while respecting the plain context of the scriptural passage. It is not expected that every lesson observed by the visit committee will include scriptural integration.
- c. Documentation: This will also be evaluated during the site visit.
 - i. Notes should identify courses where students receive training in the Scriptures. Also include information that tells what Bible reading students complete. Give examples of how the Scriptures are integrated into other subjects.

E.4.G Mathematics: Training is required in general mathematics, arithmetic, algebra, and geometry, at a minimum, with trigonometry offered, but not required.

- a. Principle: God is the source of order in the universe, and it is expected that proficiency with numbers is necessary for a graduate from an accredited ACCS school. Note that both arithmetic and geometry are liberal arts. While mathematical rigor is encouraged, the specific course selections should be consonant with the mission of the school.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Students are required to complete through Algebra II and have an option to take a pre-calculus course.
 - ii. Math teachers understand the unique contribution of the quadrivium in its relationship to the classical liberal arts.
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Notes should identify courses where students receive training in math. Also provide an explanation as to what courses are required and what are elective courses.

E.4.H Science: Training in general science, biology, chemistry, and an opportunity to take physics, science instruction supports student's faith in Scripture.

- a. Principle: All order in creation derives from the Creator, and it is important to ensure students have a rudimentary understanding of how that creation is structured. These courses provide that rudimentary level of knowledge and understanding. Wherever practical, these subjects should be taught in a form consistent with natural philosophy and natural history, the classical tradition that orients the natural world to its relationship with the divine Creator's form and purpose.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Students interviewed by the visit committee will demonstrate confidence in the truth of Scripture, especially as they express personal beliefs in creation.
 - ii. Scientism (the belief that the scientific method is the path to ultimate truth) is identified and refuted in favor of knowing God through His natural revelation.
- c. Documentation:

- i. Notes should identify courses where students receive training in science. Also provide an explanation as to what courses are required and what are elective courses.
- ii. Include policy or guidelines instructing teachers how to present creation.

E.4.I Theology:

- a. Principle: Historically, theology has been considered the “queen of the Sciences.” In other words, the study of God leads to all other knowledge. For this reason, classical Christian schools should train and teach either in the historic tradition of theology or in the narrower field of apologetics. Apologetics is instruction in how to give a defense of the Christian faith; it addresses the antithesis between Christ and all other religions, and how every thought needs to be brought captive to the lordship of Christ.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Sound biblical and theological components are regular components of discussions in all subjects.
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Notes should identify the pages in the curriculum guide for the apologetics course **or training in theology**. Course objectives and textbook materials should also be included.

E.4.J.a Art: During the grammar and logic stages, the curriculum includes required instruction in the theory and practice of the visual arts. “Visual art” refers to drawing, painting, sculpture, etc. In the rhetoric stage, there are some required credits in fine arts (excluding music). “Fine arts” include the historic arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, and poetry, the performing arts of theatre and dance, and modern forms such as film, photography, and design. (Music, also a historic art, is addressed separately in standard E.4.J.b.)

- a. Principle: ACCS is committed to truth, beauty, and goodness. These traits are found in every course but are the very heart of this requirement. “Instruction in the arts” does not include art appreciation, which is considered “general instruction.” Art appreciation is embedded or included throughout the Trivium.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Grammar and logic school students receive instruction in visual arts.
 - ii. Rhetoric school students receive instruction in fine arts.
 - iii. High-school graduation requirements include required credits to ensure training in fine arts.
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Notes should identify visual arts training courses (not appreciation courses) required during the grammar and logic stage of the Trivium.
 - ii. Class schedules for grammar school specials.
 - iii. Identify relevant courses found in the curriculum guide.
 - iv. Identify what elective choices logic and rhetoric students have.

v. High-school graduation requirements.

E.4.J.b Music: During the grammar, logic, and rhetoric stages, the students receive required instruction in the theory and practice of the music. Music can be inclusive of instrumental or vocal training. Instruction does not have to be a class (however, students should show evidence of vocal training when they sing).

a. Principle: ACCS is committed to truth, beauty, and goodness. These traits are found in every course but are the very heart of this requirement. "Instruction in the arts" does not include music appreciation, which is considered "general instruction." Music appreciation is embedded or included throughout the Trivium.

b. Indicators:

i. Students receive instruction in music in grammar, logic, and rhetoric schools.

c. Documentation:

i. Notes should identify the music training courses (not appreciation courses) required during each stage of the Trivium. Or, if not in a class, when students regularly sing or play.

ii. Class schedules for grammar school specials.

iii. Identify relevant courses found in the curriculum guide.

iv. Identify what elective choices logic and rhetoric students have.

v. High-school graduation requirements.

E.5. Academic Evaluation and Assessment: The academic program will be regularly evaluated by documented, annual administration of an appropriate, nationally recognized, standardized exam and other academic assessments that reflect classical pedagogy.

a. Principle: ACCS wants an objective means for our schools to evaluate how they are doing in instructing their students. Again, this criterion does not require that students be tested at each grade level, but only that they be tested at some regular, but unspecified intervals. Assessment using humane, thought-oriented oral, written, and discourse methods is also desired.

b. Indicators:

i. Testing assesses verbal and quantitative reasoning (sometimes called critical reading, math concepts, etc.) which are influenced by the classical method.

ii. ACCS encourages schools to utilize the ERB CTP-5 standardized test but allows any of the others commonly available on the market, as long as the test does not direct the school's programs toward a state-standard like the Common Core.

iii. The ACCS recommends the use of the Classic Learning Test wherever appropriate.

c. Documentation:

i. Provide copies of class score reports as received from the testing service.

- ii. Schools may also add their own internally created reports. If so, be sure to identify what scores are being reported and how results were calculated. Does the school have targets for student learning; if so, what scores are used to measure this growth?
- iii. Most importantly, schools should explain how schools utilize test results. Is testing being conducted to appease parents? Are scores used to evaluate instruction, learning, or curriculum? Has the school completed an analysis to see how well the written curriculum, the taught curriculum, and the test curriculum match?
- iv.

F. Faculty and Instructional Resources. The school must have sufficient faculty, instructional, and facility resources to achieve its mission.

F.1. Faculty Requirements: The school must demonstrate that each of its faculty meets the school's written requirements for the position(s) that they hold.

- a. Principle: A school must have written requirements for hiring teachers which include either a specific job description or general standards of conduct, knowledge and teaching ability consistent with the subjects which the person has been hired to teach. These documents communicate that the school has considered what qualities are inherent in successful teachers and is thoughtfully applying these standards in hiring practices.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. ACCS-accredited schools have found greater success hiring inexperienced teachers who don't require re-training. A preference for hiring long-term public school teachers with experience suggests a lack of understanding of the distinctives of classical Christian pedagogy. It's very hard to successfully re-train a teacher.
 - ii. Teachers must be professing Christians who know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior (John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:23). Staff must be in agreement with and adhere to the school's Statement of Faith as part of the qualifications for their position of employment.
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Include updated documentation as provided with the application for candidacy status (list of teachers, academic degrees, and classes taught).
 - ii. Show school's hiring policy (or documentation that defines qualifications to be a full-time teacher).
 - iii. Notes and documentation should explain the school's policy and requirements for mandatory enrollment of children of full-time employees.
 - iv. Notes should explain whether or not the school conducts criminal background checks on applicants.

F.2. Class Size: The school must show that its program for assigning teaching responsibilities and student-faculty ratio is consonant with its stated goals. ACCS expects schools to be consistent with their

own policy. ACCS does not have a specified class size. Schools have adopted class sizes for enhanced marketing, for facility limitations, or for tradition. ACCS recognizes that the adopted class size has a direct correlation on teacher salaries.

- a. Principle: The school must have a policy that specifically defines how many students are assigned to a teacher. It is also important to note how many classes a teacher is assigned to teach each day, and what the allotted preparation time is for each class. The school wants to ensure that it is not running good teachers into the ground and as a consequence hampering student instruction.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Overall student/teacher ratios for the school, maximum class size, and other limits on class size are published and followed.
- c. Documentation should indicate:
 - i. Policy on class size (or a published statement on class size used to market the school to prospective parents)
 - ii. Class rosters from the previous or current year
 - iii. Explain how many prep periods full-time grammar and secondary school teachers receive during the week

F.3. Books and Ad Fontes: An obvious love and respect for reading and books should be evident throughout the entire school's program. For example, there should be a wide variety of literature available to the students in classroom and/or school libraries.

- a. Principle: Christians are people of The Book. We put a high priority on the written word because God has done so in providing us with the Scriptures. There should be a visible emphasis placed on the importance of reading from the head administrator down, and on the quality and quantity of books available to students at each grade level.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Books in the school's holdings are curated for quality.
 - ii. Students have ready access to "Great Books," original source material, and reference texts.
- c. Documentation: This will be observed during the on-site visit.
 - i. If the school has a summer reading program, include descriptive information here.

F.4. Teacher Development: The school must have an established, ongoing teacher development program, which is consistent with the ACCS vision. This should include taking advantage of ACCS-approved conferences, training, audio/video recordings, and/or materials.

- a. Principle: Because what ACCS is doing has not been done for well over a century and a half, we are working to re-establish a classroom model that has been essentially expunged and for which none of

us has any personal recollection. Teacher training is essential to help prepare teachers and hone their teaching skills for the classroom. This is an ongoing need, not a one-time event. Teachers need to be continually challenged to think in terms that are not common to their past experience and instruction outside of ACCS.

- b. Indicators:
 - i. Teachers are able to describe the training program and how they participate in it.
 - ii. The content of teacher training and development is unique to classical and/or Christian education.
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Show schedules from teacher training meetings provided during summer orientation programs as well as during the school year.
 - ii. Description of specific faculty training

F.5. Classroom Observation: The school shall have written procedures that describe regular and ongoing supervision and classroom observation of all teachers. Policies should require written year-end evaluations for every teacher.

- a. Principle: Regular and ongoing supervision of teachers is necessary to ensure teachers continue to teach classically.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. Completed faculty evaluations include items for teachers to improve on. Evaluations don't solely consist of praise and positive affirmations.
- c. Documentation should include:
 - i. Faculty Handbook, which shows policy addressing observation and supervision of teachers
 - ii. Job description of the administrator assigned these responsibilities
 - iii. Summary of specific faculty observations conducted during the previous year

G. Student Work Samples. The school must provide sample student work along with the self-study.

- a. Principle: This provides the visit committee with another means to evaluate the school.
- b. Documentation: Include scanned copies of student work in these areas:
 - i. Assignments that show instruction in phonics
 - ii. Writing assignments from all levels, especially ones showing teacher corrections, including two from logic school and two from rhetoric school
 - iii. Examples of poetry writing from all levels
 - iv. Examples of tests from all levels
 - v. Assignments from Latin

- vi. Assignments from logic
- vii. A senior thesis (from rhetoric)
- viii. Photos of student art work

H. Standards for Renewal Accreditation.

H.1. Teacher Certification: (Renewal Only) The school must provide a record of the implementation of the school's teacher certification plan and the status of each teacher in that plan. (See Appendix H, p. 64.)

- a. Principle: The ACCS accreditation standards require that schools applying for ACCS accreditation agree to actively participate in the ACCS teacher certification process. This standard ensures that ACCS accredited schools are actually doing so.
- b. Indicators:
 - i. The teachers are aware of their certification level and how it impacts them.
- c. Documentation:
 - i. Provide teacher certification plan.
 - ii. Show status of teachers in the school's plan.
 - iii. Note: The school must submit its teacher certification plan to the ACCS Director of Accreditation for review and approval. The ACCS plan was updated in June, 2016.

H.2. Addressing Recommendations and Discrepancies: (Renewal Only) Provide a letter from the school explaining the correction of each discrepancy and any action taken on each recommendation. (This requirement is found on the application for accreditation renewal.)

- a. Principle: Schools submit this letter as part of the application for school renewal accreditation. To ensure that the Visit Committee receives this information, the same letter submitted with the application should be included here.
- b. Documentation:
 - i. Provide a letter explaining the correction of each discrepancy and any action taken on each recommendation.

I. Collaborative: See Appendix A for additional requirements for this endorsement.

J. State Guidelines: See Appendix E for additional requirements for these states:

1. Georgia School Accreditation
2. Tennessee School Accreditation
3. Texas State School Accreditation
4. Virginia Council for Private Education

K. Requests for Substitutions or Adjustments:

In rare cases, a particular school does not comply with one of the accreditation standards. For example, a missional, service-oriented inner city school funded through private contributions may not conform to indicators for tuition-based funding. Or, a school's mission may serve learning-disabled students who may not conform to all requirements.

In such cases, schools should include requests for adjustments with the application for candidacy status. Such adjustments are only granted when the school is deemed to be in a highly unique situation and they have missional (not practical) reasons for requesting the adjustments.

Exceptions required because the school has a non-traditional model are covered under "Endorsements."