



ACCREDITATION and POLICY MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION

The ABFSE Accreditation and Policy Manual (The Manual) provides the framework for institutions and programs, the funeral profession and the public to understand and evaluate the process of accreditation of funeral service education.

The Mission of ABFSE is to advance funeral service education and practice through high standards that prepare students for careers. The Manual includes the accreditation standards and the policies and procedures of ABFSE, including the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws.

The ABFSE Committee on Accreditation (COA) reviews The Manual on a continuous basis, making minor revisions and editorial changes as appropriate. Major revision dates are indicated in the footer of each page of The Manual.

Accreditation Standards undergo formal review every five (5) years as described in [Chapter XI, Section B. Procedures for Review of Standards](#) are found in [Appendix H](#). The most recent Review of Standards involved a two (2) year process which began in 2022 and culminated in April 2024 approval with the revised standards taking effect January 1, 2025.

The Manual is available on-line and may be downloaded without charge from the ABFSE website www.abfse.org via the 'About' tab or the 'Accreditation' tab.

Questions about any aspect of The Manual and/or suggestions for correcting any errors identified in the text are welcomed.

NOTE: At present, the COA only accredits institutions and programs in the United States. However, the COA would consider applications for accreditation from institutions and programs in other countries. Accordingly, references to "state" throughout The Manual are properly viewed as inclusive of other appropriate governmental entities. Similarly, language throughout referring to degrees, semesters, terms, governance, etc., may be considered as implicitly including reasonable equivalencies as determined by the COA.

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ABFSE ACCREDITATION AND POLICY MANUAL

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CHAPTER I

THE AMERICAN BOARD OF FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION: BRIEF HISTORY

The predecessor of the American Board of Funeral Service Education was established in 1946 as the Joint Committee on Mortuary Education (Joint Committee) by joint resolutions of the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA), the Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards of the United States (renamed the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards in 1998 – ICFSEB) and with the concurrence of the associations of school and colleges concerned with funeral service education.

The Joint Committee was composed of three representatives appointed by NFDA, three representatives appointed by The Conference, and three representatives of the schools and colleges.

The original constitution provided that the Joint Committee “shall make and enforce its rules and regulations governing its procedure and conduct, and [it] shall formulate and promulgate and enforce rules and regulations setting up standards concerning the schools and colleges teaching mortuary science.”

The constitution also stated, “the power to accredit schools and colleges of mortuary science shall be vested in the Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards of the United States, Inc.,” with the further provision that “schools and colleges of mortuary science shall have the right of appeal from decisions of the accreditation committee of the Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards of the United States, Inc. to the appellate board of the Joint Committee on Mortuary Education. Rules and procedures for the appellate board shall be promulgated by the Joint Committee on Mortuary Education.”

In 1959, the name of the Joint Committee on Mortuary Education was changed to the American Board of Funeral Service Education.

In 1962, authority for accreditation of funeral service institutions/programs was transferred from the Conference to the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE). The ABFSE has continued that function and is currently the only accrediting agency in the United States in the field of funeral service education.

In keeping with the principle of accreditation by peers, the ABFSE amended its constitution and by-laws in 1970 to provide for the establishment of a Commission on Schools within the framework of a restructured American Board of Funeral Service Education.

The function of the Commission on Schools was described as:

1. to prepare for and certify to the American Board criteria and procedures for accreditation;
2. to receive reports of the Standards and Criteria committee and to certify to the American Board those schools that meet such criteria and are to be accredited; and
3. to establish, in cooperation with the American Board, appellate procedures on accreditation certifications of the Commission.

In 1978, in response to recommendations made by the U.S. Office of Education, an ad hoc committee of the American Board of Funeral Service Education was appointed for the purpose of restructuring the ABFSE in accordance with U.S. Office of Education recommendations. At that time, the Commission on Schools was changed to an autonomous and self-perpetuating standing committee of the Board and renamed the Committee on Accreditation (COA).

The American Board of Funeral Service Education has been recognized by the U.S. Dept. of Education (formerly the U.S. Office of Education) as the accrediting agency in funeral service education since 1972 and the American Board was accepted into the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) in 1988 as a member of its Assembly of Specialized Accrediting Bodies. In 1993, COPA became the Council on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation

(CORPA) which continued recognition of the ABFSE. Since 1997, ABFSE has been recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), which replaced CORPA.

In 2022, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) renewed the recognition of the ABFSE Committee on Accreditation (COA) for a seven (7) year period. ABFSE submitted interim reports to CHEA in 2015 and 2018 and again in 2019-20 as CHEA transitioned to a seven (7) year recognition cycle.

The National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) makes recommendations to the U.S. Department of Education regarding recognition of accreditors. In June 2008, NACIQI recommended that the US Secretary of Education grant continued recognition to ABFSE for the full period of five (5) years. After several delays due to changes at The Department of Education, ABFSE recognition was re-affirmed in 2012.

During 2015, ABFSE completed the re-recognition petition for the U. S. Department of Education and appeared before NACIQI once again. Five (5) year recognition renewal was granted by the US Secretary of Education. The next recognition renewal is expected to commence in 2023.

In 1987, the curriculum of the American Board of Funeral Service Education underwent a complete review and a new policy on annual reviews was implemented to ensure that each curriculum outline is updated at least every five (5) years. In 1988 and again in 1995, The Manual on Accreditation was extensively rewritten and updated to incorporate many necessary policy changes as recommended by USDE, CHEA, and ABFSE members. Additional revisions and editorial changes have occurred on an annual basis since then.

In 1995, all Standards of Accreditation were reviewed and updated by the Committee on Accreditation (COA) and provisions were instituted for future reviews every five (5) years.

In 1995, ABFSE membership included forty-two (42) accredited college and university programs in Funeral Service Education and Mortuary Science, with four (4) additional programs in the process of applying for accreditation. In 2023, there were fifty-eight (58) accredited programs.

In April 2002, the American Board of Funeral Service Education approved a new Constitution and By-Laws which, included provisions for membership of additional funeral service organizations. The National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association (NFDMA) was admitted to full ABFSE membership in September 2002. In 2009, the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCFA) also became a member. Cremation Association of North America (CANA) was approved for membership in 2017 and ICCFA withdrew from membership in May 2018.

The Committee on Accreditation (COA) expanded its voting membership when it welcomed a representative from the National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association in April 2005. In 2012, ICCFA and the College and University Council were added to the voting membership of the COA. ICCFA withdrew from membership in May 2018. CANA was eligible to have a member of COA in 2020, but they did not propose any candidates until 2024. Voting members of COA totaled eleven (11) from 2018-2024: seven (7) educators, two (2) industry representatives and two (2) public members. A CANA representative joined the COA at the start of 2025 so there are once again three (3) industry representatives and COA membership is back to full capacity.

Institutions accredited by ABFSE must offer a program at the associate degree level or higher, or its equivalent (i.e., 60 semester credits of a prescribed curriculum) and meet the required standards of the ABFSE. The ABFSE Accreditation and Policy Manual is available on-line and may be downloaded without charge from the ABFSE website www.abfse.org via the 'About' tab or the 'Accreditation' tab. Revised accreditation standards take effect January 1, 2025.

Interested parties are invited to submit written comments concerning the qualifications for accreditation or candidacy of any listed program. Comments received will be considered by the Committee on Accreditation (COA) as part of its regular program review.

CHAPTER II
**ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION OF THE AMERICAN BOARD OF FUNERAL
SERVICE EDUCATION – *Effective 07-03-2024***

**AMENDED AND RESTATED
ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
OF
AMERICAN BOARD OF FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION, INC.**

**ARTICLE I.
NAME**

The name of the corporation is American Board of Funeral Service Education, Inc. (the “Corporation”).

**ARTICLE II.
MEMBERS**

The Corporation has such members with the rights and obligations as set forth in the Corporation’s Bylaws.

**ARTICLE III.
REGISTERED OFFICE AND AGENT**

The Corporation’s registered agent in the District of Columbia is CT Corporation, 1015 15th St. NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20025.

Name	Address
CT Corporation System	1015 15 th St. NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20025

**ARTICLE IV.
PURPOSES**

- A. The Corporation is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under D.C. Code, Title 29, Chapter 4 (the “Act”).
- B. The Corporation is incorporated and operated exclusively for charitable and educational purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the “Code”) (all references to the Code include the corresponding provision of any subsequent federal tax law). In particular, the purpose of the Corporation is to further education in the field of funeral service and other related fields, to formulate standards of funeral service education, to grant accreditation to qualified programs and institutions of funeral service education, and to do all things incidental to the foregoing. In furtherance of these purposes, the Corporation has all powers granted to a corporation under the Act.
- C. No part of the net earnings of the Corporation may inure to the benefit of or be distributed to any member, director, employee, or other individual, partnership, estate, trust, corporation, or unincorporated association having a personal or private interest in the Corporation. Compensation for services actually rendered and reimbursement for expenses actually incurred in attending to the affairs of the Corporation must be limited to reasonable amounts. No substantial part of the activities of the Corporation may be devoted to the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation in a manner or to an extent that would disqualify the Corporation for tax exemption under section 501(c)(3) of the Code. The Corporation shall not “participate in or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office” within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Code.
- D. Notwithstanding any other provisions of these Articles, the Corporation shall not carry on any activity not permitted to be carried on by:
- (1) a corporation exempt from federal income tax as an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Code;
 - or
 - (2) a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Code.

1 **ARTICLE V.**
2 **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

3 Except as provided herein or in the Bylaws of the Corporation, the activities and affairs of the Corporation shall be
4 managed by or under the direction, and subject to the oversight, of a board of directors. The qualifications, manner of
5 election, number, tenure, powers, and duties of the directors of the Corporation are as set out in the Bylaws of the
6 Corporation.
7

8 **ARTICLE VI.**
9 **DESIGNATED BODY**

10 The Corporation's Committee on Accreditation shall be a "designated body" under the Act, with exclusive authority
11 over actions of the Corporation in relation to accreditation of funeral service education programs, including the
12 approval and revision of standards, granting of candidacy, awarding or denying accreditation, and all other actions
13 related to an applicant's accreditation status with the exception of appellate review. The qualifications, manner of
14 election, number, tenure, powers and duties of members of the Committee on Accreditation are as set out in the Bylaws
15 of the Corporation.
16

17 **ARTICLE VII.**
18 **AMENDMENTS**

19 These Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of the Corporation may be amended as provided in the Bylaws.
20

21 **ARTICLE VIII.**
22 **DISSOLUTION**

23 In the event of the dissolution or final liquidation of the Corporation:

- 24 A. None of the property of the Corporation nor any proceeds thereof shall be distributed to or divided among
25 any of the members, directors or officers of the Corporation or inure to the benefit of any individual.
26 B. After all liabilities and obligations of the Corporation have been paid, satisfied and discharged, or adequate
27 provision made, all remaining property and assets of the Corporation shall be distributed in such manner as
28 the Board of Directors, in the exercise of its discretion, may by majority vote determine; provided, however,
29 that such transfers of property and assets shall be to one or more organizations which are exempt from federal
30 income tax as organizations described in section 501(c)(3) of the Code.
31

1 **BY-LAWS OF THE AMERICAN BOARD OF FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION**
2 **(AMENDED AND RESTATED) – Effective 07-03-2024**

3
4 **ARTICLE I.**
5 **PURPOSE**

6 The purpose of American Board of Funeral Service Education, Inc. (“ABFSE”) is to further education in the field of
7 funeral service/mortuary science and other related fields, to formulate standards of funeral service education, to grant
8 accreditation to qualified programs and institutions of funeral service education, and to do all things incidental to the
9 foregoing. ABFSE shall accredit institutions and programs of funeral service education in accordance with regulations
10 and procedures as set forth in its Accreditation and Policy Manual.

11
12 **ARTICLE II.**
13 **MEMBERSHIP**

14 ABFSE has two classes of members for purposes of the D.C. Nonprofit Corporation Act of 2010 (the “Act”):
15 (i) educational institution members (each, a “Program Member”) and (ii) funeral association members (each, an
16 “Association Member”) with the rights and obligations further described below.

17
18 **A. Program Members**

- 19
20 1. Criteria for Membership. An educational institution is a member in ABFSE if it:
21 a. offers a degree program accredited by the Committee on Accreditation of ABFSE;
22 b. meets the requirements for accreditation as stated in the ABFSE Accreditation and Policy Manual; and
23 c. has paid the fees required for initial or annual renewal of accreditation, as applicable.
24
25 2. Voting; Representatives. Each Program Member is entitled to designate one (1) representative, who shall be
26 the person overseeing such Program Member’s funeral service/mortuary science program or their direct
27 designee, to attend each meeting of the ABFSE membership. Such representative, if present at the meeting,
28 is entitled to one (1) vote on matters before the ABFSE membership; provided, however, that at no time shall
29 Program Members’ representatives be entitled to less than the majority of the total votes cast.
30

31 **B. Association Members**

- 32
33 1. Criteria for Membership. A funeral service association is a member in ABFSE if it:
34 a. is national in scope;
35 b. is non-profit;
36 c. has membership consisting of funeral service licensees or regulators of those licensees;
37 d. has a direct interest in funeral service education; and
38 e. commits to a renewable three-year membership and is current on applicable dues.
39
40 2. Voting. Each Association Member is entitled to appoint one (1) representative to (i) attend meetings of the
41 ABFSE membership and (ii) represent the Association Member as a member of the ABFSE Executive
42 Committee. Such representative, if present at a meeting, is entitled to one (1) vote on matters before the
43 ABFSE membership, or Executive Committee, as applicable.
44
45 3. Term of Representative. Each appointment of a representative by an Association Member shall be made for
46 a term of three (3) years to correspond with the membership term of such Association Member and such
47 representative shall be eligible for reappointment for one additional three (3) year term. Terms shall run from
48 the conclusion of the ABFSE annual meeting. Each representative, however, shall be subject to recall by the
49 appointing Association Member, in which event the successor, when appointed, shall complete the unexpired
50 term.
51

4. Executive Participation. In addition to the voting representatives, an executive officer of each Association Member, or such person's designee, may attend and participate in the meetings of the ABFSE membership, but are not entitled to vote.
5. COA Representation. Each Association Member that maintains ABFSE membership in good standing for a period of at least three (3) consecutive years, shall be entitled to have representation on the Committee on Accreditation as detailed further and subject to the limitations described in [Article VI](#).

C. Procedures

1. Notice of Designations or Appointments. Notice of all designations and appointments of representatives to the ABFSE shall be made in writing by the relevant Association Member or Program Member, ideally at least thirty (30) days but no fewer than twenty-four (24) hours, prior to the meeting for which the designation or appointment is to become effective.
2. Alternates. Each Association Member and Program Member shall have the right to name an alternate representative to the ABFSE who may serve for a specific membership meeting with voting privileges when its regular representative is unable to attend, provided, however, that official notification of such substitute shall be made in writing (at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting) by the Program Member or Association Member concerned. In the case of Program Members, any alternate must be directly involved with the relevant Program Member's funeral service/mortuary science program. The right to name an alternate shall not apply to representatives when serving as members of the Executive Committee.
3. Compensation. Representatives of Association Members and Program Members shall not be compensated by the ABFSE for their service as member representatives. All travel and other expenses of representatives shall be paid by the Association Member or Program Member that designated or appointed them.
4. Annual Meeting. The annual meeting of the ABFSE membership shall be held between April 1 and May 15 of each year unless otherwise determined by the Executive Committee with at least ninety (90) days' notice, which may be given in a written, electronic, or commonly accepted manner to the membership. Special meetings shall be called when deemed necessary by a majority of the ABFSE membership or by the Executive Committee.
5. Quorum and Action. A majority (51%) of designated representatives of the ABFSE membership who are entitled to cast a vote at any meeting shall constitute a quorum. If a quorum exists, action on a matter is approved if the votes cast favoring the action exceed the votes cast opposing the action or, in the case of the election of officers, based on which candidate receives the most votes.
6. Remote Meetings. An annual, regular, or special meeting of the membership does not need to be held at a geographic location if the meeting is held by means of the Internet or other electronic communications technology in a fashion pursuant to which the members have the opportunity to read or hear the proceedings substantially concurrently with their occurrence, vote on matters submitted to the members, pose questions, and make comments.
7. Termination of Membership. Any Program Member or Association Member who ceases to meet the applicable eligibility criteria outlined above, including failure to pay applicable membership dues or accreditation fees, or, in the case of a Program Member, loss or withdrawal of accreditation, shall cease to be a member of ABFSE upon a final determination by the Executive Committee that such organization no longer qualifies for ABFSE membership. All rights of membership, including the right to have representatives on the Executive Committee, Committee on Accreditation or any other body of the ABFSE shall cease immediately upon termination. An individual serving as an officer or member of the Executive Committee of ABFSE as a representative of a terminated member shall be deemed to have resigned such office effective as of the date of the member's termination.

**ARTICLE III.
DUES AND FEES**

The members shall financially support the ABFSE through annual payments. The amount of annual dues for Association Members shall be established by the Executive Committee every three (3) years. Program Members shall be required to pay fees associated with annual renewal of accreditation and other fees for accredited institutions as established by the Committee on Accreditation prior to the annual meeting.

**ARTICLE IV.
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

A. Board of Directors

The board of directors of the ABFSE, for purposes of the Act, shall be referred to as its Executive Committee. except as provided in the Corporation's Articles of Incorporation and Article VI of these Bylaws, the activities and affairs of ABFSE shall be managed by or under the direction, and subject to the oversight, of the Executive Committee.

B. Composition

1. In General. Subject to paragraph 2 immediately below, there shall be seven (7) voting members of the Executive Committee, composed as follows: the President, the Immediate Past President, the Vice President, the Secretary-Treasurer, and one (1) representative from each Association Member, in accordance with [Article II.B](#) of these Bylaws. The ABFSE Executive Director shall be an ex officio non-voting member of the Executive Committee. The chairs of the advisory committees and all Past Presidents shall be entitled to attend and participate in Executive Committee meetings but shall not make motions or be entitled to vote.
2. Additional Members. To ensure that representatives of Program Members continue to be in the majority on the Executive Committee, additional voting members will automatically be added to the Executive Committee any time the number of Association Member representatives equal or exceed fifty percent (50%) of the Executive Committee. The new voting members shall be added in the following order: College and University Council Chair, College and University Council Secretary, and additional College and University Council representatives as elected by that group.

C. Meetings

Executive Committee meetings shall be held as necessary. The Executive Committee shall be required to report its actions at the next meeting of the ABFSE membership.

D. Notice

Written notices of all Executive Committee meetings shall be transmitted by mail or electronically to each of the members of the Executive Committee at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the date of such meetings.

E. Quorum and Action

A quorum of the Executive Committee shall consist of a majority of the Executive Committee members in office before a meeting begins. If a quorum is present when a vote is taken, the affirmative vote of a majority of Executive Committee members present shall be the act of the Executive Committee unless a greater vote is required by the Articles of Incorporation or these Bylaws.

**ARTICLE V.
OFFICERS**

A. Officers

The officers shall be selected from representatives of Program Members who meet the candidate credentials set forth below and they shall be elected by secret ballot at the annual meeting of the ABFSE. If there is only one (1) nominee for an office, the election may be by voice vote or show of hands.

B. Term and Term Limit

Officers of the ABFSE shall hold office for a term of two (2) years or until their successors are elected. No elected officer of the ABFSE shall be represented in a given office for more than two (2) terms in succession.

1 **C. Qualifications**

2 Candidate credentials for the officers of the ABFSE (i.e., President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, and
3 Immediate Past President) shall be at least: 1) a full-time faculty or administrator at an ABFSE accredited
4 institution or program; 2) a current or past member of an advisory committee of the ABFSE; and 3) have attended
5 ABFSE annual meetings for at least three (3) of the previous five (5) years.
6

7 **D. President**

8 The President shall preside at all meetings of the ABFSE membership and Executive Committee and perform the
9 customary duties of the office. The President shall approve along with the Secretary-Treasurer, all written
10 contracts approved by the ABFSE membership or Executive Committee.
11

12 **E. Vice-President**

13 The Vice-President, in the absence of the President, shall have the powers and shall perform the duties of the
14 President.
15

16 **F. Secretary-Treasurer**

17 The Secretary-Treasurer shall be responsible for preparing or supervising the preparation of the minutes of the
18 meetings of the Executive Committee and the membership and for maintaining and authenticating the records of
19 the ABFSE required to be kept under the Act. On behalf of the Secretary-Treasurer, the Executive Director shall
20 send out notices of meetings, conduct correspondence and perform such other duties as may be assigned to the
21 office.
22

23 **G. Staff**

- 24 1. Generally. The ABFSE may retain the services of such persons as it may deem necessary, who shall perform
25 such duties as designated by the ABFSE.
26
- 27 2. Executive Director. The Executive Director is the paid, full-time administrator of the ABFSE. The Executive
28 Director serves as non-voting staff to all committees and is responsible for carrying out all administrative
29 and clerical functions required by the ABFSE and its committees. The Committee on Accreditation (COA)
30 along with minority participation of ABFSE officers are responsible for the hiring and appointment of the
31 Executive Director, with each member of the COA having one (1) vote and each ABFSE officer having one
32 (1) vote. At no time shall the ABFSE officers have more votes than the total combined votes of the members
33 of the COA. The Executive Director is evaluated annually as stipulated in [Chapter XI.B.6](#) of the
34 Accreditation and Policy Manual and serves on a re-appointable, annual basis with remuneration, vacation
35 and other personnel benefits as approved by the COA and the ABFSE officers. The COA shall report on
36 any actions regarding the Executive Director at the ABFSE annual meeting.
37

38 **ARTICLE VI.**
39 **COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION**
40

41 **A. Composition**

42 The Committee on Accreditation (COA) shall consist of twelve (12) voting members, including:

- 43 1. Two (2) public members, neither of whom may be:
44 a. An employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution
45 or program that either is accredited or pre-accredited by the COA or has applied for accreditation or
46 Candidacy;
47 b. A member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated
48 with the COA or ABFSE; or
49 c. A spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in paragraph “a” or “b” of this definition;
50 2. One (1) representative each from the Association Members (subject to [Article II.B.5.](#));
51 3. Three (3) representatives from the single-purpose Program Members;
52 4. Three (3) representatives from the multi-purpose Program Members; and
53 5. One (1) educator representing the College and University Council.
54

The chairs of site visit teams are ex-officio non-voting members of the COA. The chairs may participate in discussion but may not make motions and are not entitled to vote. No officer of ABFSE shall be a member of the COA and ABFSE officers are not entitled to the written reports to, or from, the COA.

At least twenty-five percent (25%) of the voting members of the COA must demonstrate significant experience in Distance Education at the supervisory, developmental, or practitioner level. Such twenty-five percent (25%) shall include at least one (1) educator and one (1) public member.

B. Election and Term

1. Public Members. The public members of the COA are to be elected, from nominations in response to a public call, for a term of one (1) year by the COA and may be eligible for reappointment up to a maximum period of six (6) years of service.
2. Other COA Members. With the exception of the public members, the members of the COA shall serve for a term of three (3) years, exclusive of original appointments, which shall be staggered in such a way as to provide for orderly transition. Members shall be eligible for reappointment for only one (1) additional consecutive three-year period. Members are elected by the COA, in accordance with the composition criteria noted above. The COA will announce vacancies on the COA as they occur and will solicit nominations for individuals to fill the vacancies from the appropriate constituencies as prescribed in the Accreditation and Policy Manual, Chapter XI, Policies, [Section A.8](#). The COA will elect new members only from nominations received.

C. Quorum and Voting

Presence of a majority of the COA's entire membership shall be considered a quorum for the conduct of business and majority vote of those present at a meeting shall be the action of the COA.

D. Function and Authority

As provided in the ABFSE Articles of Incorporation, the COA is a designated body that has exclusive authority over actions of ABFSE in relation to accreditation of funeral service education programs. The function of the COA shall be to approve and revise accreditation standards and to grant candidacy, initial accreditation, or reaccreditation to institutions and/or programs of funeral service education. For the avoidance of doubt, neither ABFSE membership nor the ABFSE Executive Committee shall have any role or involvement with respect to the COA accreditation process, establishing its standards and procedures, or with respect to its decision-making.

1. The COA possesses the sole authority to grant candidacy, initial accreditation or reaccreditation to institutions and/or programs of funeral service education by virtue of the authority set forth in the ABFSE Articles of Incorporation and the recognition awarded by the U.S. Department of Education.
2. An institution or program of funeral service education adversely affected by adverse decisions of the COA may avail itself of the COA's appellate procedure as set forth in its Accreditation and Policy Manual. The COA appellate board shall be appointed by the COA and shall not include any member of the ABFSE Executive Committee.
3. The COA shall elect a chairperson and a vice-chairperson who shall serve as chairperson in the event the chairperson is absent or unable to serve. The Executive Director shall serve as secretary for the COA.
4. The COA shall appoint educators from disciplines other than funeral service education to serve as chairs of the site visit teams. Appointments shall be for a period of three (3) years, renewable. The chairs shall serve as ex-officio members of the COA.
5. The COA shall create and establish its own budget annually and provide it to the ABFSE for inclusion in the overall budget. The COA shall be autonomous in its expenditures and revenues. COA shall collect its own dues and fees, and its funds shall be maintained in accounts separate from those of the ABFSE.

6. The COA shall meet regularly at least twice each year, in the fall and in the spring. The COA may also choose to hold special meetings either in person, by conference call, or by video call when dealing with issues deemed too timely to wait.

ARTICLE VII. COMMITTEES

A. Board Committees

The Executive Committee may create one or more subcommittees of the Executive Committee that consists of one or more members of the Executive Committee.

B. Advisory Committees

The advisory committees of the ABFSE shall be: Scholarship Committee, Curriculum Committee, Accreditation Liaison Committee, College and University Council, Program Committee, Bylaws Committee, and National Board Examination Liaison Committee.

C. Advisory Committee Membership

1. Qualifications. Membership on advisory committees is open to the following: full-time or part-time educator or administrator from an accredited program or institution; Association members. Unless otherwise stated in a committee description, the majority of voting members must be educators from accredited programs or institutions.
2. Term and Appointment. The members of all advisory committees, except the Accreditation Liaison Committee, shall serve for a term of three (3) years, exclusive of original appointments, which shall be staggered in such a way as to provide for orderly transition. Members shall be eligible for reappointment for only one (1) additional consecutive three (3) year term. Members originally appointed to complete an unexpired term are eligible for reappointment to one (1) consecutive term. Members are appointed by the President with the approval of the Executive Committee. The President shall be an ex-officio nonvoting member of all committees, except the COA. In making committee appointments, the President shall strive for a balance in representation of the different types of educational institutions.
3. Committee Leadership. The members of each advisory committee shall elect a chair and a vice chair at their spring meeting to serve for the ensuing year. The President of the ABFSE shall announce vacancies on the committees as they occur and will solicit nominations for individuals to fill the vacancies from the appropriate constituencies.
4. Scholarship Committee. The Scholarship Committee shall consist of a minimum of eight (8) members with educators comprising the majority of the membership but with a representative from each Association Member.
5. National Board Examination Liaison Committee. The National Board Examination Liaison Committee shall consist of a minimum of eight (8) members with educators comprising the majority of the membership but with a representative from each Association Member.
6. Curriculum Committee. The Curriculum Committee shall consist of a minimum of eight (8) members with educators comprising the majority of the membership but with a representative from each Association Member.
7. Program Committee. The Program Committee shall consist of a minimum of eight (8) members with educators comprising the majority of the membership but with a representative from each Association Member. This Committee shall assist with planning for the annual meeting and other programs and workshops.

- 1 8. Bylaws Committee. The Bylaws Committee shall consist of a minimum of eight (8) members with
2 educators comprising the majority of the membership but with a representative from each Association
3 Member. This Committee shall periodically review the Bylaws and respond to requests for review.
4
- 5 9. Accreditation Liaison Committee. The Accreditation Liaison Committee shall consist of the officers of
6 ABFSE and three (3) voting representatives of Program Members appointed by the President, who do not
7 currently serve on the Committee on Accreditation. The appointed members of the committee shall serve at
8 the discretion of the President for a one (1) year term. At least one (1) member of the Accreditation Liaison
9 Committee shall represent a single-purpose institution, and one (1) member shall represent a public
10 institution. An appointed member shall not serve more than two consecutive terms (2 years).
11

12 The purpose of the Accreditation Liaison Committee is to foster and enhance communication between the
13 ABFSE membership, the elected officers, and the members of the Committee on Accreditation. The
14 Accreditation Liaison Committee members shall not serve as voting or ex-officio members on the COA and
15 shall not be considered members of the COA. The Accreditation Liaison Committee shall have no role in
16 establishing the standards or policies of the COA, nor shall it be involved in the decision-making of the COA.
17

18 The COA shall allow adequate time on meeting agendas to review the recommendations of the Accreditation
19 Liaison Committee. The Accreditation Liaison Committee shall not be present during regular COA
20 deliberations.
21

22 **D. College and University Council**

23 The College and University Council shall serve as the caucus for all Program Members and shall consist of the
24 representatives from each Program Member, as determined under Article II.A above, with each Program Member
25 representative having one (1) vote. The College and University Council shall meet at least at each annual meeting
26 and shall elect its own officers. Minutes from the meetings will be included as a portion of the official minutes of
27 the ABFSE annual meeting.
28

29 The Council shall perform the following assigned responsibilities:
30

- 31 1. Review all notices of motion prior to each annual meeting of the ABFSE and recommend action to be taken
32 on each.
33
- 34 2. Raise for discussion and recommendation to the ABFSE such issues related to the policies and procedures of
35 the ABFSE and any of its committees deemed appropriate, so long as actual ABFSE vote on new policies
36 follows the requirement of at least thirty (30) days' notice prior to formal ABFSE action.
37
- 38 3. Establish a Nominating Committee to present a slate of names to the membership at the ABFSE annual
39 meeting for each officer position that is available. Candidates for office will be presented by the Nominating
40 Committee of the College and University Council, or they may be nominated from the floor at the annual
41 meeting.
42

43 **ARTICLE VIII.**

44 **INDEMNIFICATION**

45

- 46 A. Any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed
47 cause of action, suit, or proceeding, whether civil, administrative, or investigative (other than a suit by or in the
48 right of the ABFSE) by reason of the fact that such person is or was a director, officer, employee, or agent of the
49 ABFSE or a member of the COA or is or was serving at the request of the ABFSE as a trustee, officer, director,
50 employee or agent of another corporation, partnership, employee, or agent of another corporation, partnership,
51 joint venture, trust or other enterprise, shall be indemnified by the ABFSE for expenses (including reasonable
52 attorney's fees), judgments, fines, and amounts paid in settlement, actually and reasonably incurred by him/her
53 in connection with such cause of action, suit or proceeding if he/she acted in good faith and in a manner he/she

1 reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the ABFSE, and, with respect to any such
2 action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe his/her conduct was unlawful.

3 B. However, no indemnification shall be made in respect of any claim, issue, or matter as to which such person shall
4 have been adjudged to be liable for personal misconduct or intentionally wrongful activity, or any activity outside
5 the scope of his/her duties performed for the ABFSE. Nor shall any damages be paid for negligence or exemplary
6 damages.

7 C. Expenses incurred in defending a civil or criminal action, suit, or proceeding may be paid by the ABFSE in
8 advance of the final disposition of such action, suit, or proceeding as authorized by the Executive Committee in
9 a specific case upon receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the trustee, director, officer, employee, or agent
10 to repay such amount, unless it shall ultimately be determined that he/she is entitled to be indemnified by the
11 ABFSE as authorized in this Article VIII.

12 D. The ABFSE may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any person who is or was a director, officer,
13 employee or agent of the ABFSE or a member of the COA, or is or was serving at the request of the ABFSE in
14 any such capacity.

15
16 **ARTICLE IX.**
17 **RULES OF ORDER**
18

19 When not inconsistent with these Bylaws, the latest edition of Roberts Rules of Order shall govern deliberation of the
20 ABFSE membership, the Executive Committee and the COA.

21
22 **ARTICLE X.**
23 **FISCAL YEAR**
24

25 The fiscal year of ABFSE shall be from October 1 to September 30.

26
27 **ARTICLE XI**
28 **AMENDMENT**
29

30 The ABFSE Articles of Incorporation and these Bylaws may be altered, repealed or amended at any regular or special
31 meeting by a two-thirds vote of the members present, provided written notice of such changes has been transmitted
32 by mail or electronically to all members at least thirty (30) calendar days in advance of such meeting.
33

CHAPTER III

THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

A. DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF ACCREDITATION

1. Accreditation is a process through which a program or institution voluntarily submits to evaluation by its peers against an established set of standards. The American Board of Funeral Service Education, through its Committee on Accreditation, is charged with the responsibility for implementing a process to achieve the following purposes:
 - a. develop, approve and improve the standards of funeral service education and thereby protect the public interest;
 - b. describe the characteristics of an accredited institution/program of funeral service education;
 - c. assist each institution in complying with accreditation standards through a continuing system of self study, visitation, evaluation and consultation;
 - d. provide a basis for prospective students to select an institution offering funeral service education;
 - e. provide a list of accredited institutions to the public and to all agencies interested in funeral service.
2. The accreditation process has four (4) major components:
 - a. *Self study* conducted carefully and thoroughly by the institution. The results are summarized in the Self study Report and submitted to the Committee on Accreditation.
 - b. *Site Visit* conducted by a site visit team selected by the Committee on Accreditation. The site visit team prepares a Site Visit Report which is submitted to the Committee on Accreditation and reviewed by the program.
 - c. *Committee on Accreditation Action* which is based upon a thorough evaluation of all documentation.
 - d. *Maintaining accreditation* through submission of an annual report and ongoing compliance with accreditation standards.

B. THE ABFSE COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION (COA)

1. The COA is a designated body of ABFSE that has exclusive authority over actions related to accreditation of funeral service education programs. It functions autonomously and independently of the ABFSE Executive Committee. The COA has the sole authority to approve and revise standards, grant candidacy, award or deny accreditation, and take all other actions related to an applicant's accreditation status except Appellate Review.

The COA consists of up to twelve (12) members elected by the Committee, including two (2) public members.

2. Representative of the public means a person who is not –
 - a. An employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution or program that either is accredited by the COA or in candidacy status or has applied for accreditation or candidacy;

- b. A member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the COA or ABFSE; or
 - c. A spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in paragraph '1' or '2' of this definition.
3. In addition, voting membership includes one (1) representative from each affiliated organization, three (3) representatives of the private institutions of funeral service education, and three (3) representatives of the public institutions of funeral service education.
 4. At least twenty-five percent (25%) (of which includes one educator and one public member) of the voting members of the COA must demonstrate significant experience in Distance Education at the supervisory, developmental, or practitioner level.
 5. The COA appoints educators from disciplines other than funeral service education to serve as site visit Team Chairs. Team Chairs serve as ex-officio members of the COA. The COA and its staff are responsible for selecting site visit team members in accordance with [Chapter V](#) of this Manual.

C. ELIGIBILITY FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION BY THE ABFSE

1. To be eligible for accreditation by the ABFSE, the applicant must:
 - a. offer a program of at least sixty (60) semester or ninety (90) quarter credit hours leading to a degree, certificate or diploma in funeral service education;
 - b. have state authorization to operate and award a degree, certificate or diploma;
 - c. meet or exceed the published accreditation Standards of the ABFSE;
 - d. have achieved Candidacy Status, including submission of a feasibility study (Chapter IV, Candidacy Status);
 - e. ensure that its program director has attended the Self study Workshop (workshops are offered twice a year).
2. After Candidacy has been awarded:
 - a. the chief administrative officer of the institution makes a formal request to initiate the accreditation process;
 - b. an application for initial accreditation is submitted;
 - c. the program conducts a Self study; a site-visit is scheduled;
 - d. a Self study report and other required documentation is submitted;
 - e. a site visit is conducted;
 - f. a written report is submitted by the site visit team;
 - g. the program is invited to respond in writing to the site visit evaluation report;
 - h. the COA evaluates all documentation and evidence;
 - i. the institution is notified of the COA action; and

j. the COA publishes the accreditation status of the program.

3. Effective Date of Accreditation

- a. For institutions or programs that achieve initial accreditation, the effective date of that accreditation is the date initial candidacy was awarded by the COA. Students who complete all coursework after the date candidacy is awarded, but before initial accreditation is achieved, are considered graduates from an ABFSE accredited program.

D. DURATION OF ACCREDITATION ACTIONS

1. Candidacy is granted for a period of one (1) year and may, at the discretion of the COA, be extended one (1) additional year.
2. Initial accreditation will be no longer than three (3) years.
3. The maximum duration of reaccreditation is seven (7) years. Shorter durations may be awarded based upon stipulations to be addressed by the program. Maintaining accreditation throughout this period is contingent upon the submission of satisfactory annual reports and compliance with any stipulations issued.
4. Probation is granted until the program is in compliance with the Standards, not to exceed one (1) year.
5. Programs whose Candidacy or Accreditation has been Denied or Withdrawn must wait for a period of two (2) years from the date of such action before reapplying for Candidacy. All provisions applying to new programs are required, including a visit by the ABFSE Executive Director.

CHAPTER IV

CANDIDACY

Candidacy for accreditation is not accreditation. Programs seeking accreditation must first meet the criteria for Candidacy. The Candidacy process measures the program's potential to meet the Standards for Accreditation. However, the achievement of Candidacy does not ensure eventual accreditation.

There are two (2) circumstances under which a program might be seeking candidacy:

1. program has never been accredited, and is applying for Candidacy as a first step in this process;
2. program was previously accredited but voluntarily surrendered accreditation or had its accreditation withdrawn.

The Candidate program must submit a detailed document or feasibility study that demonstrates that it meets the Candidacy requirements, has effectively organized resources to enable it to accomplish its educational purpose, and is following realistic plans to acquire, organize, and apply additional resources needed to comply with the Standards for Accreditation. This feasibility study becomes the Candidacy Self study. The institution or program is responsible to the Committee on Accreditation for any questions the COA might have regarding the document. The document should specifically address these eligibility requirements and should include extensive explanation and examples.

DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

It is the obligation of every program applying for candidacy or extension of candidacy to provide the Committee on Accreditation access to all parts of its operations with due regard for the rights of individual privacy and with complete and accurate information with respect to the institution's affairs, including reports from other accrediting, licensing, and auditing agencies. Failure to do so, or to make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure, is sufficient reason in and of itself to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.

The Committee on Accreditation will maintain inviolate the confidentiality of information supplied by the program except in those cases where it is deemed necessary by the American Board to make public information which forms a substantive basis for the committee's decision.

A. CONSULTING VISIT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

1. A program planning to apply for Candidacy is required to have a consulting visit by the ABFSE Executive Director normally accompanied by a representative of the Committee on Accreditation (COA). This visit is to review the status of the program and to provide general application process assistance. This will include the program's, ability to meet ABFSE Candidacy requirements, ABFSE Standards of Accreditation as well as the expectations should the program fail to complete candidacy or attain initial accreditation.
2. The program is to contact the Executive Director to arrange a mutually convenient time for this campus visit. Costs of the visit are paid by the program. Costs of the visit will be travel and related expenses for the individuals who are making the visit. There is no direct compensation for the ABFSE Executive Director. The second individual will be compensated according to the list of fees in [Appendix D](#).

B. STEPS TO BE FOLLOWED IN APPLYING FOR CANDIDACY (See [Appendix M](#))

1. The program must contact the ABFSE Executive Director to arrange the required pre-Candidacy visit.
2. The program must download the Application for Candidacy form from the ABFSE website (www.abfse.org, [Appendix B, Form B-1](#)).

3. The program must submit the Application for Candidacy, the Candidacy Feasibility study (Self study) document, and the required application fee to the ABFSE office not less than sixty (60) days prior to a regularly scheduled meeting of the Committee on Accreditation.
4. Upon approval of the Candidacy Feasibility study, the program will be assigned a three (3) person site visit team consisting of a Team Chair, a funeral service practitioner, and a funeral service educator. Costs (expenses and stipends) for the visit are paid by the program or institution.
5. Following the site visit, program representatives will meet with the COA at a regularly scheduled meeting to discuss the Candidacy Feasibility Study, the site visit and any supplemental materials provided.
6. If Candidacy status is granted by the Committee on Accreditation, the period of candidacy shall be for one (1) year. Candidacy can be renewed for one (1) additional year only. The published renewal fee will be assessed.

Initial Accreditation typically follows Candidacy.

NOTE: See [Appendix D: Accreditation Fee Schedule](#).

C. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR CANDIDACY STATUS

To be considered for Candidacy, a program or its sponsoring institution

1. Must have a license or charter from the appropriate state governmental agency to operate and award a minimum of an Associate Degree or equivalent.
2. Must submit documentation that the program has officially notified the appropriate state funeral service licensing agency and the appropriate state education agency of its intent to offer a program in funeral service education.
3. Must define its service area in specific geographic and demographic terms and provide evidence-based enrollment projections for three (3) consecutive years following Candidacy application. Enrollment projections must be consistent with ABFSE collected new student statistics for the defined service area.
4. Must provide data from state, local, and/or regional workforce studies showing a need for licensed individuals in funeral service in the program's defined service area.
5. Must provide the names and addresses of the governing board that will exercise all powers that may be performed by the institution under the license or charter described in item [Chapter IV.C.1](#).
6. Must have an advisory board composed of not less than seven (7) practicing and licensed members of the funeral service profession who are graduates of ABFSE accredited programs and others that might contribute to the quality of the educational process in the candidate program. In addition, the following information must be provided:
 - a. documentation that advisory board meetings will occur not less than once during each twelve (12) month period.
 - b. written minutes of advisory board meetings.
7. Must provide the name, address, and credentials of the chief executive officer directly accountable to the governing board and the name, address, and credentials of the individual responsible for the funeral service education program, if different.
8. At the time of the Candidacy application the individual responsible for the funeral service education program must:
 - a. be a full-time employee of the institution.

- b. be a graduate of an ABFSE accredited program.
 - c. possess a valid license to practice as a funeral service professional.
 - d. provide official transcripts from a regionally accredited college or university to document completion of a Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree. In such cases where the program director does not possess a Master's Degree or equivalent, the provisions of Standards 1.9 and 6.1 of [Chapter IX](#) apply (i.e. a Master's must be earned within five (5) years of initial appointment).
9. Must provide a detailed written explanation of the plans to meet each Standard of accreditation.
- a. Must show evidence that the program's mission statement and the ABFSE Program Learning Outcomes are being met.
 - b. Must have a catalog and other appropriate official publications available to students and the public containing the mission statement and program learning outcomes including but not limited to admission, withdrawal and graduation requirements, student conduct policies, grading policies, course names and identification numbers, summary descriptions and credit hours, financial policies for tuition, fees, and refunds, and academic calendars.
 - c. Must have an adequate financial base and provide a copy of the current budget, including the funeral service education program budget and a copy of the most recent institutional budget. A copy of the most recent externally reviewed audited institutional financial statement prepared by a Certified Public Accountant must be included.
 - d. Must have in place one (1) or more programs in funeral service education of at least sixty (60) semester or ninety (90) quarter credit hours with students actively enrolled in some phase of the funeral service education program beyond the general education core courses. The curriculum should be logically arranged with evidence to indicate that students are able to complete the program in not more than one and one half (1½) times the normal length of the program.
 - e. Must provide an outline of courses and course descriptions to cover the curriculum content areas of the Accreditation Manual (see [Chapter IX](#)), by quarter or semester hours.
 - f. Must provide course syllabi for all courses offered in the program.
 - g. Must provide evidence that facilities will meet the requirements of the ABFSE Standards of Accreditation prior to accreditation being awarded.
 - h. Must have learning resources adequate for the support of the academic program in funeral service education.
10. Must submit plans for additional funeral service education program faculty and facilities as the program expands and provide financial projections for three (3) consecutive years following Candidacy application.
11. Candidate programs must disclose plans regarding unaccredited programs and additional locations as per [Chapter X.C.1.c](#) and 34 CFR 602.24(f).
12. During Candidacy the program will update the feasibility Self study and prepare for an initial accreditation site visit. The initial accreditation site visit must demonstrate compliance with all accreditation standards.
- D. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS
1. All candidate programs must have a teach-out plan in the event that Candidacy is not completed or the program is not awarded initial accreditation. Teach-out plan details are found in [Appendix P](#).
 2. Teach-out plans must:
 - a. ensure that students completing the candidacy teach-out would meet curricular requirements for professional licensure or certification.
 - b. include a list of the names of other institutions that offer similar programs and a list of other academic programs offered by the institution should the student opt to remain at the institution.
 3. COA will maintain candidacy for currently enrolled students until the institution has had a reasonable time to complete the activities in its teach-out plan to assist students in transferring or completing their programs, but for no more than 120 days.

1 E. WHEN PROGRAMS SEEK TO RE-INSTATE ACCREDITATION

- 2
- 3 1. An institution is not eligible to re-start candidacy for twenty-four (24) months after it has had its
- 4 accreditation or candidacy withdrawn or denied. [34 CFR 600.11(c)]
- 5
- 6 2. Additionally, the program must:
- 7 a. Provide an analysis of the underlying factors resulting in the withdrawal or surrender of accreditation,
- 8 including personnel changes. If a consultant was used, his/her report must be attached.
- 9 b. Provide a detailed description of all steps taken to address program deficiencies in response to the
- 10 withdrawal or surrender of accreditation.
- 11

12 F. PUBLIC INFORMATION

- 13 1. While programs are in Candidacy status, they may only describe their relationship to ABFSE as “Candidate
- 14 for Accreditation.” The Candidate program may not be referred to in any manner which infers accreditation,
- 15 including reference to a student being eligible to take the National Board Examination.
- 16 2. Each program applying for Candidacy, or already in Candidacy status, must publish the following statement
- 17 in all printed materials until the program is accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education:
- 18

19 **CAUTION:** This program is pursuing accreditation but is **NOT** accredited by the American

20 Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE). Until accreditation is achieved, students

21 graduating from this program are **NOT** eligible to take any licensing examination that

22 requires graduation from an ABFSE accredited program.

23

CHAPTER V

STEPS IN ACCREDITATION

Accreditation refers to initial accreditation and re-accreditation (or renewal of accreditation). Candidacy follows the same process.

Accreditation procedures include:

1. an application
2. comprehensive review (also referred to as the Self study)
3. site visit
4. site visit team report
5. response to the team report
6. COA decision

DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

It is the obligation of every program applying for accreditation, annual renewal, continuing accreditation, candidacy, or extension of candidacy to provide the Committee on Accreditation access to all parts of its operations with due regard for the rights of individual privacy and with complete and accurate information with respect to the institution's affairs, including reports from other accrediting, licensing, and auditing agencies. Failure to do so, or to make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure, is sufficient reason in and of itself to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.

The Committee on Accreditation will maintain inviolate the confidentiality of information supplied by the program except in those cases where it is deemed necessary by the American Board to make public information which forms a substantive basis for the committee's decision.

A. APPLICATION

Accredited programs are reminded of an upcoming comprehensive review (Self study) process approximately eighteen (18) months in advance. This notice comes in the form of a letter to the institutional CEO with a copy to the Program Director from the ABFSE office. The comprehensive review schedule for each program appears in the ABFSE Directory of Programs found on the ABFSE website.

The Transmittal Form (found in [Appendix B: Form B-3](#)) serves as the application for all accreditations/re-accreditations.

There is a separate application for Candidacy and Initial Accreditation. Candidate programs must follow the steps described in [Chapter IV: Candidacy](#).

The accreditation process may be initiated only at the request of the sponsoring institution's CEO or other authorized official. The application procedure is considered complete when the following items have been submitted to the ABFSE office:

1. the Transmittal Form,
2. the Self-study Report with all supporting documentation,
3. required fees as specified in the ABFSE Schedule of Fees (see [Appendix D](#)).

B. COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW (SELF STUDY)

1. Comprehensive Review (Self study) is the method by which an institution demonstrates that the accredited program is fulfilling the expectations of accreditation. Self study is both the process of evaluation done by the institution and the document presented to demonstrate the fulfillment of the process.

2. Definition: A Self study is a formal process through which an educational institution or program critically examines its structure and substance, evaluates the program's overall effectiveness relative to its mission, identifies specific strengths and deficiencies, and creates a plan for any necessary modifications and improvements. The process assesses the extent to which the program is in compliance with established accreditation Standards and should include consideration of external factors influencing the educational environment.
3. The Self study is:
 - a. the activity that precedes the report;
 - b. organized and systematic;
 - c. conducted by and for the program with the participation of appropriate constituencies;
 - d. comprehensive and considers all elements of the program;
 - e. an opportunity to summarize the program's strengths, concerns and plans to correct any issues discovered during the Self study process.
4. The Self study:
 - a. critically examines the current status of the program;
 - b. judges overall effectiveness (conclusions should be reached);
 - c. identifies and assesses specific strengths and deficiencies in an open, objective, and precise manner;
 - d. helps establish a plan for modifications and improvements to amend any deficiencies uncovered during the process (formal long-range planning is a logical precursor to the Self study process);
 - e. identifies external factors influencing the educational environment (e.g. conditions within the sponsoring program, projected changes in the profession's role, and the legal, social, political and economic climate affecting the program); and
 - f. determines the extent to which the program is in compliance with established ABFSE Accreditation Standards.
5. Self study Report
 - a. The ABFSE Self study document is created and submitted electronically. Guidance for preparation of the Self study report is provided during Self study workshops held at least twice a year and in Appendix C of this Manual. Resources are also available on the ABFSE website.
 - b. Program Directors and other college personnel should attend a Self study Workshop twelve (12) months prior to the start of the Comprehensive Review/Self study process. New Program Directors are required to attend a Self study Workshop within the first six (6) months of assuming the role.
 - c. For additional guidance concerning the narrative portion of the Self study Report, refer to [Appendix C: Guide for the Self study Process and Report](#).

C. SITE VISIT

1. The site visit provides the opportunity to validate and/or clarify the contents of the program's Self study Report. A three (3) person team visits the campus over a two-three (2-3) day period and reports to COA. Additional time may be necessary if the institution offers more than one (1) accredited program or method of delivery.
2. Each program will be visited both as part of the Candidacy and Initial Accreditation processes, and periodically for renewal of Accreditation (at least once every seven [7] years). In addition, the COA may schedule a re-visit to any currently accredited institution or program if, in the judgment of the COA, situations exist to justify a re-evaluation.
3. The comprehensive review / site visit schedule is maintained by the ABFSE office, reviewed by the COA and appears in the ABFSE Directory with each school's information. The COA determines the academic year in which a program is to be visited.

4. Programs typically receive notification from the ABFSE office eighteen (18) months in advance of a pending visit. Appropriate dates for a scheduled site visit are determined by the ABFSE Executive Director and the Program Director. The visit must be scheduled when students are present.
5. For Initial Accreditation, the visit shall be scheduled to ensure that practical courses in embalming, restorative art, and funeral service have been completed or are in operation either prior to or during the visit dates.
6. Written notification of the selected dates and the names of the site visit team members will be provided to the CEO of the sponsoring institution.
7. The program should provide a private workroom for the Team. They shall have complete freedom to confer with school officials, members of the faculty, students, advisory board and such others as deemed necessary by the team.
8. Team members shall be admitted to all facilities used by the program and will inquire into all phases of management and operation of the program in order to verify the content of the Self study Report. They will verify original faculty transcripts, course outlines/syllabi, transcripts, and other documents provided as evidence in the Self study submission. This verification will also include evaluations and survey responses such as graduate and employer surveys and evidence of job placement.
9. Team members shall visit classes to observe lectures, laboratory exercises, and other methods of instruction. It is understood that team members are not limited to any prearranged schedule but are free to observe and consult as they desire. Schedules of free hours of faculty is important. Team members will seek to cause as little disruption as possible to the routine of the program and institution.
10. Schedule
 - a. The duration, agenda and sequence of events for the site visit may vary according to the nature of the program to be visited. Most visits require three (3) days including travel but may vary depending on the size and nature of the program, location of facilities, and other relevant factors. The site visit is a working assignment with minimal social activities.
 - b. [Appendix C](#) contains a sample site visit agenda.
11. Exit Interview
 - a. Each site visit concludes with an Exit Interview. Representatives from the program and institution meet with the site visit team to review the team report. The Team Chairperson will summarize the team's findings and observations and discuss the subsequent events in the accreditation process. If any factual errors in the team's findings or observations become apparent, they should be addressed during the exit interview.
 - b. [NOTE: Site Visit teams do not make recommendations concerning accreditation.]

D. SITE VISIT TEAM

1. A team ordinarily consists of three (3) members:
 - a. the Team Chair, who is an educator from a discipline other than funeral service education and with administrative experience;
 - b. one (1) funeral service educator member who has been actively engaged in teaching or administration at an ABFSE-accredited program on a full-time basis for at least five years; and
 - c. one (1) funeral service licensee who has been a practitioner for at least five (5) years.
2. The ABFSE officers and members of the COA may not serve on a site visit team, unless the site visit is a focused visit for a specified purpose. The Executive Director assigns the Team Chair and members of the site visit team in consultation with the program being examined. Care is taken to avoid any real or apparent

conflict of interest between team members and the institution being evaluated and to select team members who understand the type of institution in which the program is located.

E. SITE VISIT TEAM REPORT

1. Within thirty (30) days following the site visit, the Team Chair shall provide the ABFSE office with the written team report.
2. Within forty-five (45) days after the visit, the Executive Director shall forward copies of this report to the institutional CEO with a copy to the program director. The institution/program is free to distribute the report as it deems appropriate.
3. The site visit report shall contain narrative comments regarding the team's observations and shall include a summary of the program's strengths and concerns relative to the ABFSE Accreditation Standards. The comments and recommendations made in the report should be clear, factual, and specific without being unduly prescriptive as to the precise manner in which unfavorable factors should be remedied, and with clear emphasis on items the team believes to be most in need of improvement.

[NOTE: Site Visit teams do not make recommendations concerning accreditation.]

F. RESPONSE TO THE TEAM REPORT

The Chief Executive Officer of the institution or the program director shall have an opportunity to provide written comments on the report prior to the COA accreditation decision. This is also an opportunity to provide supplemental (written) materials pertinent to the facts and conclusions in the report before the COA makes a decision.

G. COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION DECISION

1. The Committee on Accreditation (COA) will consider all information obtained from the program's transmittal and program Data Form, Self study Report, the site visit team report and the program's written response to the report and any third party comments received in reaching a decision on the program's accreditation status. The site visit team chair attends the scheduled COA meeting in order to provide an overview of the program and present the findings. In addition, the program is encouraged to exercise its right of appearance before the COA at the time its status is being considered. The purpose of the appearance is to clarify any unresolved questions the COA may have concerning the materials submitted by the program and the site visit team. The institution will be notified of the time and location of the COA meeting during which the accreditation decision will be reviewed.

2. An initial accreditation self study is submitted during Candidacy. An initial accreditation site visit can be scheduled when students are enrolled in or have completed clinical embalming. This is usually when students are completing the second half of courses in the program (often the final semester/quarter).

Most programs strive to complete initial accreditation requirements before the first cohort graduates. Students enrolled during Candidacy are considered graduates of an accredited program when the program earns initial accreditation.

H. THIRD PARTY COMMENT

The Committee on Accreditation invites public comment regarding programs seeking accreditation and reaccreditation. The call for comments is posted on the ABFSE website. The Directory of Accredited Programs carries an invitation for any interested third parties to submit to the Committee on Accreditation written comments on any program's qualifications for accreditation or Candidacy prior to its next comprehensive review. The

1 Directory of Accredited Programs includes the dates of the comprehensive review for each program (most recent
2 and next review). The COA shall consider any input received during its program review.
3

4 I. SPECIAL EVALUATIONS OR SITE VISITS TO MONITOR COMPLIANCE WITH ABFSE
5 STANDARDS (FOCUS VISITS)
6

7 It is the responsibility of the COA to ensure that all programs remain in compliance with ABFSE Standards
8 throughout their accreditation or Candidacy period.
9

10 When the COA receives credible information from any source that a program is out of compliance with any of
11 the American Board Standards, the Executive Director will discuss with the Chair of the Committee on
12 Accreditation whether there is a need for a special evaluation or focus visit to that program.
13

14 Focus visits may also be assigned when COA needs additional information to verify compliance issues.
15

16 When a focus visit is determined to be necessary, the following steps will be followed:

- 17 1. The program will be notified in writing regarding the standards/issues to be addressed during a focus visit.
- 18 2. A focus visit follows a format similar to a comprehensive review site visit but addresses the specific issues
19 identified by the COA.
- 20 3. In consultation with the COA Chair, the Executive Director will assign the Focus Visit team.
- 21 4. Participating in the focus visit will be one of the site visit team chairs and a representative of the COA
22 which could be the ABFSE Executive Director.
- 23 5. Cost of the visit is borne by the program. These costs include a stipend to the Team Chair and
24 reimbursement of travel and related costs incurred by team members.
- 25 6. For issues related to health and safety, the focus visit will be scheduled within one (1) week of the decision
26 to proceed with an evaluation.
- 27 7. The focus visit team will draft a report of their findings.
- 28 8. A copy of the report will be sent to the program for a written response.
- 29 9. The report of the focus visit team and the program response to the report will be considered by the COA
30 at its next regularly scheduled meeting. If the compliance issue is considered by the COA Chair to be too
31 serious to wait for the next scheduled meeting a special meeting (virtual or in person), will be scheduled.
32
33

CHAPTER VI

THE COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

A. COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION (COA) MEETING PROCEDURES

The Committee on Accreditation (COA) meets for consideration of program accreditation twice per year, in the spring and fall, with other meetings scheduled as may be necessary. It invites representatives of the programs under consideration to attend the meeting during the COA discussion about their program.

In these cases, the COA functions as follows:

1. All Committee meetings are held in executive session.
2. For comprehensive evaluations, Committee members receive, and read, all pertinent materials prior to the meeting. One member of the COA is appointed to lead the discussion on each program under review.
3. At the meeting, the site visit team chair presents a verbal report on the campus visit.
4. After the chair report, the assigned discussion leader and other COA members query the site visit team chair, if necessary, on items which may be unclear.
5. Once the site visit team chair's report is complete, program representatives are invited into the room for further discussion.
 - a. Following introductions, program representatives are invited to make opening comments.
 - b. The discussion leader queries the program representatives on issues of interest and/or concern. Once the discussion leader has concluded, the floor is opened to other COA members to ask questions, if any.
 - c. Once the questions and discussion session has concluded, the program representatives are asked to leave the meeting room.
6. The COA chair with the committee still in Executive Session, invites a motion from the committee concerning the program under consideration. Following discussion and/or amendment of the motion, a vote is taken.
7. Immediately after the vote, the ABFSE Executive Director conveys the action of the COA verbally to the program representatives, if they are available. A written report of the COA decision follows.
8. Report of Accreditation Decisions.
 - a. Following each accreditation decision of the Committee on Accreditation (COA), ABFSE provides the program with a written report describing the decision.
 - b. The written report shall:
 - i. Describe the program's compliance with the accreditation standards;
 - ii. List all areas of noncompliance with accreditation standards, including those related to student achievement and outcomes; and
 - iii. Cite specifically the accreditation standard(s) applicable to each finding of noncompliance.
 - c. Programs receiving a written report under this section shall provide a response by the date specified in the letter, including submission of additional documentation, progress reports, or evidence of corrective action, as required by the COA.
 - d. The written report, along with the institution's response, are maintained as part of the official record of the accreditation decision.

9. Within thirty (30) days of the conclusion of the COA meeting, the action taken by the COA is sent to the institution's CEO and program director by letter and electronic copy. The U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, and the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency and the public will be notified at the same time the COA notifies the program. A public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website. 'At the same time' is defined as within twenty-four (24) hours or one (1) business day.

10. Committee Review of Materials and Program Testimony

The Committee on Accreditation (COA) will consider all information obtained from the program's transmittal and program Data Form, Self study Report, the site visit team report, the program's written response to the report, and any 3rd party responses received in reaching a decision on the program's accreditation status. The site visit team chair attends the scheduled COA meeting in order to provide an overview of the program and present the findings. In addition, the program is encouraged to exercise its right of appearance before the COA at the time its status is being considered. The purpose of the appearance is to clarify any unresolved questions the COA may have concerning the materials submitted by the program and the site visit team.

B. COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION (COA) ACTIONS

1. The COA makes all accreditation decisions following review of the following:
- the Self study;
 - the site visit report;
 - the program's response to the site visit report;
 - the responses of the program representative(s) present during the COA discussion;
 - and any third party comments received.

Final accreditation decisions will be made based on the extent to which the program complies with the total provisions of The Manual with emphasis on the Accreditation Standards. Freestanding, single purpose institutions must comply with all accreditation standards, however an institution may request an exception to [Standards 11](#) and [12](#) if it is recognized by another institutional accreditor.

2. The COA shall take one of the following actions:

- a. Grant Candidacy Status. This action will be taken in compliance with [Chapter IV](#) when the Candidacy review process confirms that the program has demonstrated the potential to meet the Standards for accreditation. The period of candidacy shall be for one (1) year. Candidacy can be renewed for a maximum of one (1) additional year only.

No later than thirty (30) days after the COA reaches the decision, the program receives written notification of the decision. At the same time, the COA will notify the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency and the public regarding the decision. A public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website.

- b. Candidacy Denied. A program seeking Candidacy status will have Candidacy Denied when it fails to demonstrate the potential to meet the Standards for accreditation or fulfill the Candidacy eligibility requirements in compliance with Chapter IV.

Candidacy Denied is an adverse accreditation action that is subject to appeal under the appeal policies in [Chapter VII](#).

The COA will notify the program in writing regarding the denial within thirty (30) days of the decision. The U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, and the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency will be notified at the same time the COA notifies the program.

A public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website within one (1) business day following written notification to the program of the adverse accreditation action. Once a program receives the notification letter from the COA, it is required to inform all current and prospective students of the accreditation action within seven (7) business days. This notification must include details on how to contact the ABFSE for further information. The program must also revise the Accreditation Statement on its website and in published materials to reflect the action.

Within sixty (60) days following the accreditation decision, the ABFSE website will include a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the decision and evidence that the program has been offered the opportunity to provide official comments regarding that decision. Official comments made by the program will be included in this brief statement. The COA must also provide this statement to the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, and the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency within the sixty (60) days.

- c. Grant Initial Accreditation. When a program in Candidacy demonstrates compliance with all accreditation standards Initial Accreditation may be awarded. The term "initial" is used to indicate that the program is being accredited following Candidacy.

No later than thirty (30) days after the COA reaches the decision, the program receives written notification of the decision. At the same time, the COA will notify the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency and the public regarding the decision. A public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website.

- d. Grant continuation of Candidacy status with stipulations. When the review process identifies deficiencies in compliance with the standards, candidacy status may be continued for an additional year to address stipulations. The program is then subject to renewal of Candidacy and the associated fees. (See [Chapter VI.B.2.f.: Stipulations.](#))

The program receives written notification of the decision, no later than 30 days after the COA reaches its decision. At the same time the COA will notify the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency and the public regarding the decision. A public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website.

- e. Grant Initial Accreditation with stipulations. A program in Candidacy may be awarded Initial Accreditation with stipulations when the review process identifies minor deficiencies to be corrected. (See [Chapter VI.B.2.f.: Stipulations.](#)) The term "initial" is used to indicate that the program is being accredited following Candidacy.

No later than thirty (30) days after the COA reaches the decision, the program receives written notification of the decision. At the same time, the COA will notify the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency and the public regarding the decision. A public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website.

- f. Stipulations: Stipulations are conditions imposed on a program related to inadequate compliance with the Accreditation Standards. The COA decision will contain a clear statement of each deficiency and a due date for a written report documenting compliance with the Standards. Periodic monitoring reports may also be required by the COA throughout the time granted for completion of the final written report. Failure of the program to respond satisfactorily may result in any of the following COA actions:

- i. Reduction of the length of accreditation
- ii. Candidacy Denied
- iii. Accreditation Denied
- iv. Probation
- v. Show cause

Stipulations do not alter the candidacy or accredited status of a program.

- g. Accreditation Denied. A program in Candidacy seeking Initial Accreditation will have accreditation denied when the COA has determined that the program is not in compliance with the Accreditation Standards. The program must re-start the entire accreditation process, beginning with an application for candidacy.

Accreditation Denied is an adverse accreditation action that is subject to appeal under the appeal policies in [Chapter VII](#).

No later than thirty (30) days after the COA reaches the decision the program receives written notification of the decision. At the same time the COA will notify the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency and the public regarding the decision. A public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website.

Once a program receives the denial notification from the COA, it is required to inform all current and prospective students within seven (7) business days. This notification must include details on how to contact the ABFSE for further information. The program must also revise the Accreditation Statement on its website and in published materials to reflect the action.

Within sixty (60) days following the denial decision, the ABFSE website will include a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the decision and disclose that the program has been offered the opportunity to provide official comments regarding that decision. Official comments made by the program will be included in this brief statement. The COA must also provide this statement to the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, and the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency within the sixty (60) days.

- h. Grant Reaccreditation. A currently accredited program will be reaccredited when the accreditation review process confirms that the program meets the Standards.

No later than thirty (30) days after the COA reaches the decision the program receives written notification of the decision. At the same time the COA will notify the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency and the public regarding the decision. A public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website.

- i. Grant Reaccreditation with stipulations. A currently accredited program may be reaccredited with stipulations when the accreditation review process identifies minor deficiencies in compliance to be corrected on a short-term basis. (Please see [Chapter VI.B.2.f.: Stipulations](#).)

No later than thirty (30) days after the COA reaches the decision the program receives written notification of the decision. At the same time the COA will notify the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency and the public regarding the decision. A public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website.

- j. Probation. When an accredited program fails to meet the Standards or policies (such as adequately responding to Stipulations), does not meet conditions imposed upon it by the COA, or is placed on Administrative Probation by the Executive Director (see [Chapter VI.D.8: Administrative Probation](#)), the program will be placed on Probation until the program is in compliance with the Standards, not to exceed one (1) year.

While on probation, the program will be subject to focused scrutiny by the COA including a requirement to provide a teach-out plan for current students, The COA may require specific actions at regularly or specially scheduled meetings, monitoring reports, and a focus visit(s) by representatives of the COA. The institution is responsible for covering the costs associated with these visits.

1 Probation does not alter the accreditation status of the program.

2
3 Probation is not an adverse accreditation action as defined by the US Department of Education and is not
4 subject to appeal.

5
6 No later than thirty (30) days after the COA reaches the decision the program receives written notification
7 of the decision. At the same time the COA will notify the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized
8 accreditors, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency and the public regarding the decision. A
9 public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website.

10
11 Once a program receives Probation notification from the COA, it is required to inform all current and
12 prospective students within seven business days. This notification must include details on how to contact the
13 ABFSE for further information.

14
15 If the program fails to take satisfactory steps to address the issues that led to Probation within the specified
16 time frame, the COA will require the program to Show Cause why accreditation should not be withdrawn

- 17
18 k. Show Cause why accreditation should not be withdrawn. This action will be taken by the COA when a
19 program fails to meet the Standards. The COA will notify the program at least six (6) months in advance
20 that a withdrawal of accreditation will occur unless the program can demonstrate good cause why
21 accreditation should not be withdrawn. A program placed on Show Cause has up to one (1) year to address
22 the deficiencies.

23
24 Show Cause may include further focused scrutiny by the COA. The program must submit an updated teach-
25 out plan. The COA may require specific actions at regularly or specially scheduled meetings, monitoring
26 reports, and a focus visit(s) by representatives of the COA. The institution is responsible for covering the
27 costs associated with these visits.

28
29 Failure to Show Cause why accreditation should not be withdrawn will result in termination of accreditation.

30
31 Show Cause does not alter the accreditation status of the program.

32
33 Show Cause is not an adverse accreditation action as defined by the U.S. Department of Education and is not
34 subject to appeal.

35
36 No later than thirty (30) days after the COA reaches the decision the program receives written notification
37 of the decision. At the same time the COA will notify the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized
38 accreditors, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency and the public regarding the decision. A
39 public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website.

40
41 Once a program receives notification of Show Cause from the COA, it is required to inform all current and
42 prospective students within seven (7) business days. This notification must include details on how to contact
43 the ABFSE for further information.

- 44
45 l. Accreditation Withdrawn. If an accredited program is not in compliance with the standards for which it has
46 been given notice, accreditation will be withdrawn.

47
48 Accreditation Withdrawn is an adverse accreditation action that is subject to appeal under the appeal policies
49 in [Chapter VII](#).

50
51 The COA will notify the program in writing regarding the withdrawal within thirty (30) days of the decision.
52 The U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, the appropriate State licensing or
53 authorizing agency and the public will be notified at the same time the COA notifies the program.

Once a program receives notification from the COA, it is required to inform all current and prospective students within seven (7) business days. This notification must include details on how to contact the ABFSE for further information.

The program must also revise the Accreditation Statement on its website and in published materials to reflect the action.

Within sixty (60) days following the accreditation decision, the ABFSE website will include a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the decision and include evidence that the program was offered the opportunity to provide official comments regarding that decision. Official comments made by the program will be included in this brief statement. The COA must also provide this statement to the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, and the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency within the sixty (60) days.

Following withdrawal of accreditation, a program may be eligible to re-apply after a two (2) year waiting period. The program must re-start the accreditation process beginning with the application for candidacy.

- m. Voluntary Withdrawal of Candidacy or Accreditation. This is not a decision rendered by the COA but rather an acknowledgement that a program has chosen to voluntarily withdraw from Candidacy or relinquish its accredited status.

The COA will notify the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, and the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency within ten (10) business days following receipt of written notification by the program of the withdrawal. This notification must include details on how to contact the ABFSE for further information. Public notification will be provided via the ABFSE website.

Following voluntary withdrawal, programs must wait two (2) years to re-start the candidacy process.

- n. Recommendation. A Recommendation is a non-binding suggestion for improvement in certain areas of the Program.

C. ADVERSE ACCREDITATION ACTIONS

1. The following actions of the COA shall be defined as Adverse Accreditation Actions (*aka adverse actions*) and are subject to appeal:

- a. Candidacy Denied
- b. Accreditation Denied
- c. Accreditation Withdrawn

Initiated Adverse Action: A formal notice by the Committee on Accreditation (COA) of its intent to take an adverse action which is not yet final and is subject to institutional response or appeal.

Final Adverse Action: A conclusive decision by the COA, following exhaustion of applicable review and appeal processes, to take an adverse action against an institution or program.

2. In all cases of adverse action, the COA will notify the program in writing regarding the decision and provide the program with written reasons for the decision. The COA will also advise the program of its right to appeal as outlined in [Chapter VII](#).

The U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, and the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency will be notified of adverse actions at the same time the COA notifies the program. (within thirty [30] days of the COA decision)

A public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website within one (1) business day following written notification to the program of the adverse accreditation action. Once a program receives notification from the COA, it is required to inform all current and prospective students within seven (7) business days.

This notification must include details on how to contact the ABFSE for further information. The program must also revise the Accreditation Statement on its website and in published materials to reflect the action.

Within sixty (60) days following the accreditation decision, the ABFSE website will include a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the decision and evidence that the program has been offered the opportunity to provide official comments regarding that decision. Official comments made by the program will be included in this brief statement. The COA must also provide this statement to the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, and the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency within the sixty (60) days.

3. All communications relating to the following will be by registered or certified mail (or its equivalent):
 - a. Probation
 - b. Show Cause
 - c. All adverse accreditation actions

Communications will be addressed to the chief administrative officer of the institution with a copy to the program director.

When applicable, a copy of the ABFSE Appeal Policy ([Chapter VII](#)) will be included.

4. The following actions will require the program to re-start the entire accreditation process beginning with the application for candidacy. (See [Chapter IV.E.1](#))
 - a. Candidacy Denied
 - b. Accreditation Denied
 - c. Accreditation Withdrawn
 - d. Voluntary Withdrawal of Candidacy or Accreditation
5. The following actions of the COA will include written reasons for the action and advise the program of the necessary requirements to remove the designation and meet all criteria and standards:
 - a. Continuation of Candidacy Status with Stipulations
 - b. Reaccreditation with Stipulations
 - c. Probation
 - d. Show Cause
6. Gatekeeper institutions disputing an adverse action must submit to arbitration before initiating any other legal action. (20 U.S. Code § 1099b) (See [Appendix R: Arbitration Policy.](#))

D. DURATION OF ACCREDITATION ACTIONS

1. Candidacy Status is granted for a period of one (1) year and, at the discretion of the COA, may be extended one (1) additional year.
2. Initial accreditation will be no longer than three (3) years.
3. The maximum duration of reaccreditation is seven (7) years. Shorter durations may be awarded based upon stipulations to be addressed by the program. Maintaining accreditation throughout this period is contingent upon the submission of satisfactory annual reports and compliance with any stipulations issued.
4. Probation is in effect until the program is in compliance with the Standards, not to exceed one (1) year without good cause.
5. Show Cause is in effect until the program is in compliance with the Standards, not to exceed one (1) year.
6. Programs whose Candidacy or Accreditation has been Denied or Withdrawn must wait a period of two (2) years from the date of such action before reapplying for Candidacy. All provisions applying to new programs are required, including a visit by the ABFSE Executive Director.
7. All issues of noncompliance must be corrected within the time specified by the COA, not to exceed 150% of the program length (three [3] years for associate degree level programs) or four (4) years (for bachelor degree programs) if extensions become warranted. Failure to correct specified issues will result in immediate adverse action.

8. Administrative Probation is an action originated by the ABFSE Executive Director for a maximum of ninety (90) days when an institution or program is not in compliance with one or more of the following requirements for maintenance of accreditation:
 - a. Program Director qualifications. The change of program director requires notification to the ABFSE office via the Substantive Change process ([Appendix K: Change 1](#)). Administrative Probation applies when an interim program director does not possess the qualifications described in the Standards.
 - b. Failure to:
 - i. Pay accreditation-related fees and charges within sixty (60) days of the invoice date;
 - ii. Submit reports or other required information by established due dates;
 - iii. Agree to a reasonable site visit date at or near the time established by the ABFSE Executive Director;
 - iv. Advertise its programs ethically and accurately according to ABFSE policies.
 - c. Noncompliance with the requirements of Administrative Probation will result in COA action.

E. PUBLICATION OF ACCREDITATION DECISIONS

1. The COA annually publishes the ABFSE Directory of Accredited Programs on the ABFSE website. The Directory contains a summary of recent accreditation activity for each accredited program. Public disclosure of accreditation decisions is added to the electronic version of the Directory following final COA actions.
2. The COA will publicly announce its accreditation decisions within thirty (30) days following each COA decision meeting. Public disclosure is currently via the ABFSE website. The United States Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, and the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency receive direct notification.
3. When the COA makes a decision to award initial accreditation or candidacy or a decision to renew accreditation or candidacy, the COA will notify the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, and the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency at the same time the program is notified (within one business day). A public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website within one (1) business day following written notification to the program.
4. The COA will notify the United States Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, and the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency at the same time the program is notified of a decision (within one business day):
 - a. to place an institution or program on probation or equivalent status (including Show Cause);
 - b. to deny or, withdraw the accreditation or Candidacy of an institution or program.
5. Once a program receives official notification from the COA regarding probation, Show Cause or adverse action decisions the institution is required to inform all current and prospective students of the decision within seven (7) business days.
6. A public disclosure notice will be available on the ABFSE website within one (1) business day following written notification to the program of all accreditation decisions including probation, Show Cause or adverse actions.
7. Within sixty (60) days following any COA decision of adverse action, the ABFSE website will include a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the decision and evidence that the program has been offered the opportunity to provide official comments regarding that decision. Official comments made by the program will be included. The COA must also provide this statement to the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, and the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency within the sixty (60) days.
8. The COA will notify the U.S. Department of Education, other recognized accreditors, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency, and, upon request, the public, and place notice on the ABFSE web site, if an accredited or candidate institution or program decides to withdraw voluntarily from the accreditation process

or lets its accreditation or candidacy lapse. Such notification will be made within ten (10) business days of receiving notification from the institution or program that it is withdrawing voluntarily from accreditation or within ten (10) days of the date on which accreditation or candidacy lapses.

9. The COA shall submit, upon request, to the Department of Education:
 - a. A copy of the ABFSE Directory that is updated annually.
 - b. A summary of the COA's major accrediting activities via the USDE DAPIP system. Note: DAPIP reporting for probation and adverse actions includes a copy of the COA decision letter and the school response.
 - c. Any changes in standards, committee policies, or procedures, which might alter the COA's
 - i. scope of recognition; or
 - ii. compliance with the criteria for recognition.
 - d. The name of any institution or program it accredits that the COA has reason to believe is failing to meet its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities or is engaged in fraud or abuse, along with the reasons for concern about the institution or program; and
 - e. Information that may bear upon an accredited or candidate institution's compliance with its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities, including the eligibility of the institution or program to participate in Title IV, HEA programs
10. The COA will share with other appropriate, recognized accrediting agencies and recognized State licensing or authorizing agencies, upon request, information about the accreditation or Candidacy status of an institution or program and any adverse actions it has taken against an accredited or candidate institution or program.

F. ADVERSE ACTION BY A STATE OR OTHER ACCREDITING AGENCY

1. When the COA is the institutional accrediting agency or gatekeeper, it will not accredit or offer Candidacy to institutions that lack the legal authorization under applicable State law to provide a program of education beyond the secondary level.
2. Unless the COA is satisfied that there is good reason to do otherwise (see also F3 below), the COA will not grant initial or renewed accreditation or Candidacy to an institution, or a program offered by an institution, if the COA knows, or has reasonable cause to know, that the institution is the subject of:
 - a. pending or final action brought by a state agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the State;
 - b. a decision by a recognized agency to deny accreditation or Candidacy;
 - c. a pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation or Candidacy; or
 - d. probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized agency.
3. The COA may grant accreditation or Candidacy to an institution or program described in this section (F.2.a-d) if it provides to the Secretary of Education, within thirty (30) days of its action, a thorough and reasonable explanation, consistent with its Standards, why the action of the other body does not preclude the COA's grant of accreditation or Candidacy.
4. If a COA-accredited or candidate program has had an adverse action taken against it, or against its institution, by another accrediting agency or state agency, the COA shall require the program to submit a written report describing the reason(s) for the action and the impact the action has, if any, on the program's ability to continue to meet the ABFSE Accreditation Standards. The report will be discussed and acted upon, as necessary, at the next scheduled meeting of the COA. If, in the opinion of the Executive Director and the Chair of the COA, the adverse action requires earlier consideration by the COA, a special meeting may be called.

1 The COA will review the information submitted by the institution against the requirements of this policy and
2 advise the institution if additional information is needed or if the COA plans to take additional action based
3 on the information. That action may include requesting a formal report, scheduling a site visit, or such other
4 action as the COA determines is appropriate based on the situation.
5

6 G. NEW FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR REVIEW IN AN ADVERSE ACTION 7

- 8 1. If an initiated adverse action is based, in whole or in part, on financial deficiencies, the institution or
9 program may submit new financial information for consideration.
- 10 2. The COA shall review new financial information only if it meets **all** the following conditions:
 - 11 a. The financial information was unavailable to the institution or program until after the COA's decision
12 to initiate an adverse action;
 - 13 b. The financial information is significant and bears materially on the financial deficiencies identified by
14 the COA, with criteria for significance and materiality determined by the COA; and
 - 15 c. The financial information is verifiable and supported by appropriate documentation.
- 16 3. An institution or program may seek review of new financial information under this provision only **once**
17 during the initiated adverse action process.
- 18 4. The COA will determine whether the new financial information resolves the financial deficiency. If so, the
19 COA may rescind, defer, or modify the initiated adverse action. If not, the initiated adverse action will
20 proceed.
- 21 5. ABFSE will **not** consider new financial information after a final adverse action has been issued.
22

CHAPTER VII

APPEALS PROCEDURE

A. ELIGIBILITY FOR APPEAL

Any adverse action decision by the Committee on Accreditation (COA) may be appealed by the affected program or institution. Adverse actions are defined as denial or withdrawal of accreditation or Candidacy of an institution or program. The initial decision letter from the COA will inform the institution of its right to appeal.

B. FILING A NOTICE OF APPEAL

To initiate an appeal:

1. The institution must submit a written notice of appeal to the Executive Director of the American Board.
2. The notice must be signed by an authorized representative of the institution.
3. It must be submitted within thirty (30) days of receiving the COA's decision.
4. COA will publish the appeal status of the original decision on its website and notify the U.S. Department of Education and other relevant entities.

C. APPEAL COSTS

1. Appeal Fee: A required deposit of \$25,000 must be submitted with the statement of intent to appeal. This fee covers stipends, expenses, and fees for:
 - a. The Presiding Officer
 - b. Appeals Panel members
 - c. Stenographic services
 - d. Facility expenses for site of appeal meeting, including meals, technology fees, and other expenses associated with holding the meeting.
 - e. The institution will receive an invoice for expenses exceeding \$25,000. If expenses are less than \$25,000 a refund will be issued.
2. American Board: Responsible for its own legal, administrative, travel, and other internal expenses.
3. Appeals panel members are reimbursed for all reasonable travel expenses and receive a \$500 Stipend
4. Appealing Institution: Responsible for its own associated costs regardless of outcome.
5. Upon a decision of reversal, ABFSE will refund the appeals fee only.

D. APPEALS PANEL COMPOSITION

1. Membership
 - a. The Appeals Panel will consist of three (3) members:
 - i. Two (2) members who are former members of the ABFSE Committee on Accreditation
 - ii. One (1) member who is not affiliated with funeral service education and has higher education accreditation experience.
 - b. Panel members are recommended by the COA Chairperson from a list maintained by the Executive Director. Panel member list is sourced from former COA members and from members of the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors.
 - c. The institution will have the opportunity to accept or reject the potential panel members.
 - d. All panel members must:
 - i. Satisfy conflict-of-interest criteria ([Appendix G](#) and [Chapter XI, Section A](#)).
 - ii. Sign a Conflict of Interest form.
 - e. A Panel Chairperson: is selected by panel members themselves.
2. Term
 - a. A new Appeals Panel is appointed for each appeal.
 - b. The same panel may hear multiple appeals on the same day.
3. ABFSE Executive Director
 - a. The Executive Director of the American Board serves as Secretary without vote or voice.
4. Presiding Officer

- a. The presiding officer has no voice or vote and their role is to maintain order and ensure protocol is followed.
- b. ABFSE will identify the Presiding Officer who may be the ABFSE attorney.

E. APPEALS PROCESS

All deadlines assume thirty (30) calendar days unless negotiated otherwise.

1. Hearing Date

- a. Within ten (10) days of panel appointment, the Executive Director notifies the institution of the hearing details.
- b. The hearing date is expected to occur within sixty (60) days after panel appointment, pending availability of counsel, panel members, and the facility. Efforts will be made to arrange a mutually suitable location for the appeal meeting.

2. Briefs and Communications

- a. All correspondence must go through the ABFSE office.
- b. Each party receives copies of all documents submitted.
- c. The institution may submit a brief within thirty (30) days of filing its notice of appeal.
 - i. The brief must include:
 - (a) A full explanation of its objections to the COA's decision.
 - (b) Arguments regarding the relevant standards and criteria.
 - (c) The COA must submit a response brief (10 electronic copies) within thirty (30) days of receiving the institution's brief.
 - (d) If a party wishes to present oral arguments, it must indicate this on the title page of its brief with: "Oral Argument Desired."

3. Scope of Appeal

The Appeals Panel will review:

- a. The institution's and COA's briefs
- b. Copy of the COA decision letter to the institution and
- c. Minutes from the relevant COA meeting(s).
- d. The Self study document, including narrative and evidence
- e. The appeals panel will review only the evidence considered as part of the original decision. No new or additional evidence may be submitted.
- f. The panel may also assess whether existing ABFSE regulations are unfair, unjust, or unworkable as applied to the specific case.

4. Hearings

- a. Prior to the hearing, the COA provides panel members with an overview of ABFSE/COA operations.
- b. All hearing materials must be shared with the institution.

5. Presiding Officer

- a. An attorney appointed by the American Board of Funeral Service Education presides but does not participate in panel deliberations.
- b. The COA's own legal counsel may serve in this role.

6. Oral Testimony

- a. Permitted during the hearing.

7. Oral Arguments

- a. Both parties may present oral arguments.
- b. The institution may rebut COA's arguments.
- c. The Appeals Panel may establish time limits for oral arguments.

8. Report of Proceedings

- a. The hearing will be recorded.
- b. The institution may request and pay for a typed transcript.

9. Legal Representation

- a. Both parties may be represented by legal counsel with the same rights as the institution or COA.

10. Panel Report

- b. The panel's written report will include the rationale for its decision.

F. APPEALS PANEL DECISION

1. The panel may:
 - a. Uphold the COA decision.
 - b. Recommend reconsideration by the COA.
 - c. Amend, modify, or remand the COA's decision.
 - i. In such cases, the panel must clearly state the terms and conditions of the decision.
2. COA action
 - a. The COA must implement the Appeals Panel's decision.
 - b. There is no further appeal beyond the panel's decision.
3. Written Opinion
 - a. The panel's written opinion must be prepared within 30 days of the date of the hearing.
 - b. The Executive Director must send the decision to the institution and the COA within 10 days of receiving it. Electronic copies are standard; physical copies may be requested with tracking.
 - c. If the case is remanded to the COA, the panel must specify the issues to be addressed. The COA must comply with those instructions.

G. COA POST-APPEAL DECISION

1. If reconsideration is recommended, the COA must make a final decision within thirty (30) days and notify the institution within ten (10) days of the final decision.
2. The outcome will be:
 - a. Posted on the ABFSE website
 - b. Reported to the U.S. Department of Education (e.g., DAPIP)
 - c. Shared with any other relevant entities
3. The public announcement will include:
 - a. Any official response or rebuttal from the institution.
 - b. If the rebuttal is lengthy, it will be shared via link or electronic format.
 - c. If no response is received, the website will note this.

NOTE: To comply with U.S. Department of Education rules, ABFSE/COA must:

- Reference the specific standards violated
- Publicly report all adverse actions
- Include the institution's response (if provided)

H. APPEALS PROCESS TIMELINE

Step	Action	Deadline
1	COA Decision Issued	—
2	Notice of Appeal Filed (signed by institution's authorized representative)	Within 30 days of receiving the COA decision
3	Appeal Fee Submitted (\$25,000)	With Notice of Appeal
4	Appeals Panel Appointed	Within 30 days of Notice of Appeal
5	Hearing Date Set	Within 10 days of panel appointment
6	Hearing Scheduled	Between 30–60 days after panel appointment
7	Institution Files Appeal Brief	Within 30 days of filing Notice of Appeal
8	COA Files Response Brief	Within 30 days of receiving institution's brief
9	Hearing Conducted	On scheduled date at selected location
10	Appeals Panel Issues Written Decision	Within 30 days of hearing
11	Executive Director Distributes Panel Decision	Within 10 days of receipt of the written opinion
12	COA Final Decision (if remanded)	Within 30 days of receiving the panel's recommendation
13	Public Notification of Appeal Outcome	Following final COA decision; published on ABFSE website and reported to the U.S. Department of Education

CHAPTER VIII

MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION

DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

It is the obligation of every program applying for accreditation, annual renewal, continuing accreditation, candidacy, or extension of candidacy to provide the Committee on Accreditation access to all parts of its operations with due regard for the rights of individual privacy and with complete and accurate information with respect to the institution's affairs, including reports from other accrediting, licensing, and auditing agencies. Failure to do so, or to make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure, is sufficient reason in and of itself to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.

The Committee on Accreditation will maintain the confidentiality of information supplied by the program except in those cases where it is deemed necessary by the American Board to make public information which forms a substantive basis for the committee's decision.

A. ANNUAL RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION AND MEMBERSHIP IN THE ABFSE

ABFSE operates on a fiscal year defined in the Articles of Incorporation as October 1 through September 30. Accredited institutions and programs receive an invoice for annual renewal of accreditation and membership in May. The invoice is payable by September 1. Accreditation fees are established by the COA. The fee schedule is maintained in [Appendix D](#).

When ABFSE serves as the gatekeeper, its institutional accreditation allows freestanding, single-purpose institutions to be eligible for title IV, HEA programs. Institutions that are accredited or in candidate status must clearly state if their accreditation does not include participation in title IV, HEA programs.

B. ANNUAL REPORT

All programs accredited by the American Board must submit an Annual Report to the Committee on Accreditation for the purpose of continuing their accreditation. The Annual Report is to be submitted in addition to any other interim or progress reports the COA may require of the program as the result of an accreditation action.

The Report shall be sent to the Executive Director of the American Board no later than February 15 each year. Failure to submit the Annual Report in a timely fashion will result in the program's being placed on Administrative Probation immediately and could lead to removal of accreditation.

The Annual Report will:

1. Inform the Committee on Accreditation about any significant changes which have taken place during the past year, including those involving administration, budgets, faculty, curriculum, physical facilities, and other pertinent matters.
2. Provide information as to action by the program on recommendations or stipulations made by the Committee on Accreditation following a recent site visit or other accreditation action.
3. Furnish accurate, current data to be published in the Directory of Accredited Programs.
4. Provide the Committee on Accreditation with the following:
 - Applicable licensing examination pass rate for past year.
 - Record of written student complaints received, if any.
 - Summary of U. S. Department of Education financial aid reviews (for "gatekeeper" colleges only).
 - Default rate for federal student financial aid (for "gatekeeper" colleges only).
 - Applicable student outcomes information for past year.

The Executive Director of the American Board shall report in writing to the Committee on Accreditation the failure of any program to provide required reports.
The Annual Report Form is currently accessed via the ABFSE website with the Student Tracker.

C. CONTINUATION OF ACCREDITATION

All programs accredited by the American Board must undergo a site visit and comprehensive review at least once every seven (7) years; the interval between visits may be shorter if so specified by the Committee on Accreditation.

When an accredited program is due for comprehensive review, the Executive Director of the ABFSE will notify the program approximately eighteen (18) months prior to the anticipated date of the site visit so that the program will have sufficient time to prepare for its re-evaluation. The procedures for applying for the re-evaluation and continuation of accreditation are described in Chapter V and Appendix C of this Manual.

All single-purpose, non-regionally accredited, funeral service institutions must be visited at least once during the normal comprehensive review term (a mid-cycle review). The visit is to be conducted by representatives of the Committee on Accreditation for confirmation of continuing compliance with ABFSE Standards. Costs of the visit will be borne by the institution.

If ABFSE identifies actual or potential non-compliance with the relevant Title IV provisions during its accreditation or review processes, ABFSE must notify the U.S. Department of Education promptly and in writing.

Within ten (10) business days of identifying actual or potential non-compliance, the ABFSE Executive Director will prepare a written notification to the Department of Education to include:

1. Details identifying the institution and program in question.
2. A clear description of the identified or suspected non-compliance.
3. Evidence or circumstances supporting ABFSE's observation.
4. Date ABFSE became aware of the issue.
5. A statement affirming that ABFSE is not taking enforcement action itself.

D. PROGRESS REPORTS

Progress reports may be required by the Committee on Accreditation and are always required when a COA action is accompanied by a stipulation related to an accreditation standard. The program shall be notified of the issues to be addressed in the Progress Report and the date on which the report is due. Reports are to be submitted to the Executive Director of the American Board who will forward them to the COA for action.

Programs must ensure that the reports address all items cited and be submitted within the specified period of time. Failure to respond may jeopardize the program's accreditation status.

E. COMPLAINTS ABOUT ACCREDITED PROGRAMS

The discussion in this section applies to complaints about accredited programs or institutions whether received randomly, received during a site visit, or received as part of the "third party comment" provisions outlined in [Chapter V.H.](#)

No action shall be taken unless the complaint specifically deals with an accreditation standard, involves what appears to be a significant ethical violation, or involves what appears to be a legal issue.

Complainants will be directed to the ABFSE website for access to the ABFSE Complaint Policy. Upon request a printed copy of the complaint policy will be provided.

A form for the submission of complaints is available on the ABFSE website or by contacting the ABFSE office. Use of the form encourages compilation of the information necessary to adequately evaluate the complaint.

1. Alleged Violations

Includes: Manual Update approved October 2025
Manual update proposals Summer 2025
Language Corrections December 2023
Fee Revisions approved April 2022

ABFSE and COA Accreditation and Policy Manual

Revised Standards effective January 1, 2020
Revised Standards effective January 1, 2025

- a. Neither the COA nor the ABFSE attempts to resolve disagreements or misunderstandings concerning course grades, teaching methodologies, fee and tuition structures, program requirements, employment issues, etc. among various parties and/or organizations that are unrelated to accreditation standards. When either the COA or the ABFSE receives such complaints, individuals submitting the complaint(s) are encouraged to submit the matter directly to the program director, institution president, or other party or parties involved utilizing the institution's complaint/grievance procedures.
- b. Complainants are encouraged to submit their concerns in writing.
- c. For complaints submitted to COA:
 - i. Notification of alleged violations of the Standards of Accreditation should be made within three (3) months of the complainant becoming aware of the standard alleged to have been violated **and** after all available campus procedures have been pursued. The Committee on Accreditation will not consider alleged violations which can be and are more properly resolved within the institution's own system of due process and grievance or situations which are outside the accreditation standards.
 - ii. Complainant must specifically authorize the COA/ABFSE to discuss the matter with the appropriate party or parties.
 - iii. If the complaint raises a serious ethical issue, the complainant will be advised that a written complaint is the best way to proceed.
 - iv. If the complaint raises a legal issue, the complaint will be encouraged to report the matter to the appropriate civil authorities.

2. Investigation and Consideration of Alleged Violations

The Executive Director of the American Board will acknowledge written complaints within ten (10) business days of its receipt. Also, within ten (10) days of receipt, the COA Chairperson is notified of the complaint, and a copy goes to the institution when investigation is required.

Copies of written complaints are archived in the ABFSE office.

3. Formal Complaints

- a. When the Executive Director receives a formal complaint, it is reviewed to ensure that it properly alleges non-compliance with a Standard. If the complaint does not allege non-compliance with a Standard, the complaint is dismissed by the Executive Director and the complainant is given notice of such action. (Alternatively, the complainant could be given the opportunity to amend the complaint within thirty [30] days). The ABFSE office staff is authorized to provide assistance to the complainant to properly format a complaint.
- b. If the Executive Director determines the complaint does allege non-compliance with a Standard, the Executive Director forwards the details of the complaint to the responsible official at the school, citing the Standards that are alleged to have been violated.
- c. The school has thirty (30) days to respond.
- d. Within thirty (30) days of receipt of the school response, the Executive Director, in consultation with the COA Chair, will:
 - i. determine that there is not a sufficient basis to sustain the allegations in the complaint. The Executive Director will then notify the school and the complainant that the complaint has been dismissed. This action will be reported to the full COA at the next regular meeting.

OR

- ii. refer the matter to the COA at the next regularly scheduled meeting (if within sixty [60] days from the receipt of the school's response) or by special meeting if more than sixty (60) days before the next regular meeting or if the Executive Director determines that the complaint is of an urgent nature.
- e. When a complaint is forwarded to the COA for action, the COA may:
 - i. appoint an individual or a subcommittee to investigate the complaint to establish facts,
 - ii. if sufficient facts are established, require the school to take certain action to comply with the Standard(s),
 - iii. defer the inquiry to the next re-accreditation process for the school or
 - iv. dismiss the complaint.

4. Anonymous Complaints

- a. When an anonymous complaint is received, the Executive Director is to determine if the complaint alleges non-compliance with a Standard. If the complaint does not allege non-compliance with a Standard, the complaint is dismissed.
- b. If the complaint does allege non-compliance with a Standard, the complaint is reviewed by the site visit team during the next re-accreditation visit.
- c. If the Executive Director determines that:
 - i. the anonymous complaint is of a serious nature and
 - ii. requiring identification of the complainant would jeopardize the investigation and pose a significant risk to the complainant, the complaint will be referred to the COA for consideration at the next regular meeting (if within sixty [60] days from the receipt of the complaint) or by special meeting if more than sixty (60) days before the next regular meeting or if the Executive Director determines that the complaint is of an urgent nature.
- d. Following are the actions available in responding to a complaint:
 - i. Should evidence submitted in answer to the complaint satisfy the Committee on Accreditation, the committee shall clear the institution of the charges. Both complainant and institution will be notified of this within forty-eight (48) hours of the committee meeting.
 - ii. Should the answer to the complaint not satisfy the Committee on Accreditation, it may delay a decision and require additional information from either or both the complainant and the institution. The request for additional information shall be sent within seven (7) days of the COA meeting and any additional information will be required to be filed with the COA within thirty (30) days thereafter.
 - iii. Should the institution's answer to the complaint not satisfy the Committee on Accreditation, and if no further information is required, the COA will make its decision, give notice to the program and advise the complainant. The decision will be published in the ABFSE Directory and reported to appropriate entities as required.
 - iv. Action by the Committee on Accreditation is final, subject only to the appeal process for adverse actions (see [Chapter VII](#))

Note: Complaints about the COA are addressed in [Chapter XI](#).

CHAPTER IX

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

(New Standards effective January 1, 2025)

INTRODUCTION

Accreditation of Funeral Service Education programs is intended to help ensure that the same basic elements of funeral service education apply regardless of where a student is educated. Standards have been developed to foster this goal.

Accreditation decisions, including Candidacy, are based upon compliance with the Standards.

Accredited programs will be referred to as programs throughout the Standards whether offered by a single purpose institution or multi-purpose institution. Provisions to address the specific characteristics of the different types of institutions and different delivery modalities do exist.

The provisions contained in the Standards are separable. If any section, sub-section, paragraph, sentence, clause, phrase, or requirement contained herein shall be held to be illegal or unenforceable, such illegality or unenforceability of such part shall not affect or in any way impair the validity, application, or enforceability of the remaining portion of that section.

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

STANDARD 1: STRUCTURE, ORGANIZATION, and ADMINISTRATION

STANDARD 2: PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

STANDARD 3: ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES AND ETHICAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 4: FINANCE

STANDARD 5: CURRICULUM

STANDARD 6: FACULTY

STANDARD 7: FACILITIES

STANDARD 8: LIBRARY / LEARNING RESOURCES

STANDARD 9: STUDENTS

STANDARD 10: PROGRAM PLANNING AND EVALUATION / ASSESSMENT

STANDARD 11: DEFAULT RATES IN THE STUDENT LOAN PROGRAMS UNDER TITLE IV and
COMPLIANCE WITH TITLE IV PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

STANDARD 12: PROGRAM LENGTH, CREDIT HOURS, TUITION, AND FEES MUST RELATE TO
SUBJECT MATTER

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

STANDARD 1: STRUCTURE, ORGANIZATION, AND ADMINISTRATION

- 1.1 The institution must provide evidence that it assumes responsibility for:
 - 1.1.1 curriculum content,
 - 1.1.2 classroom teaching, distance instruction, clinical education, including clinical field experience,
 - 1.1.3 appointment and evaluation of faculty,
 - 1.1.4 policies and procedures for institutional admission, as well as program admission if that process differs,
 - 1.1.5 approval by the appropriate governing authority in which it is located or within which it offers instruction to award the diploma, certificate and/or degree(s) for which it seeks accreditation, and
 - 1.1.6 awarding a diploma, certificate, or degree documenting completion of the program based upon the federal definition of credit hour (see [Appendix S](#)).
 - 1.1.7 distance education (where applicable) see [Appendix E](#)
 - 1.1.7.a Institutions with one or more program courses available through distance education must demonstrate that the program is authorized to operate where its students reside.
 - 1.1.7.b Institutions with fifty percent (50%) or more of their program available through distance education must demonstrate how distance education is incorporated into the institution's systems of governance and academic oversight.
- 1.2 If a program is associated with, or financially sponsored by, an organization whose main purpose is other than education, the program must provide written evidence of sufficient separation between the sponsoring organization and the program to guarantee an effective, independent, and objective learning environment.
- 1.3 The governing board must be the legally constituted group which holds the assets of the institution in trust. It must be responsible for sustaining the institution, approving its objectives, and implementing and controlling the program.
 - 1.3.1 The institution must provide a complete list of members of the governing board.
 - 1.3.2 The institution must maintain the by-laws, agenda, minutes or other governing documents pertaining to the governing board for review since the last comprehensive review. These documents must be available for review by the site visit team.
- 1.4 Programs must have a nine (9) member advisory board.
 - 1.4.1 Advisory board is to be composed of:
 - 1.4.1.a at least seven (7) funeral service practitioners who are graduates of ABFSE accredited programs
 - 1.4.1.b at least 1 student representative
 - 1.4.1.c at least 1 member of the public
 - 1.4.2 Advisory board meetings must occur at least once annually.
 - 1.4.3 Minutes of advisory board meetings must be maintained since the last comprehensive review.
- 1.5 The authority and responsibility of each organizational component of the sponsoring institution (governing board, campus and program administration, faculty, students) together with the processes by which they function or interrelate, must be clearly described by means of a current constitution, by-laws, or some similar means.
- 1.6 The administration of the institution must:
 - 1.6.1 provide educational leadership to establish learning opportunities for students that are current and require a level of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded,
 - 1.6.2 create working conditions that support faculty productivity,
 - 1.6.3 demonstrate that an effective process exists for communication flow both downward and upward within the entire organization and the program.
- 1.7 An institution must have a published mission and demonstrate student success relative to that mission.
- 1.8 Organizational charts showing the hierarchy from the governing board to the program level must demonstrate support of mission. Organizational structure should include units related to assessment/evaluation and distance education.

- 1.9 The funeral service education program must be administered as follows:
- 1.9.1 A single purpose institution must be administered by a chief administrative officer, directly accountable only to the governing board for the management of the institution. All other employees must report directly, or indirectly, to this chief administrative officer.
- 1.9.1.a This officer may also be a member of the teaching faculty, as long as the teaching load is reduced to reflect administrative duties.
- 1.9.2 Each program must have a program director (or comparable title) meeting the following
- 1.9.2.a must be a full-time employee of the institution.
- 1.9.2.b must be primarily responsible for the operation, supervision, evaluation and revision of the program.
- 1.9.2.c must be a graduate of an ABFSE accredited program.
- 1.9.2.d must possess a valid license to practice as a funeral service professional.
- 1.9.2.e must possess an academic background consistent with the position of leadership held.
- 1.9.2.e.i. This will always involve a master's degree or higher from a regionally accredited college or university. If a Program Director starts in the position without a master's degree, the degree must be earned within five years of the date of the initial full-time appointment in funeral service education.
- 1.9.2.e.ii. For program directors earning degrees in colleges or universities outside the United States, the institution awarding the degree must have fulfilled governmental standards which in the judgment of American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) are acceptable or similar to those of the ABFSE.
- 1.9.2.f Program Director may also be a member of the teaching faculty as long as the teaching load is reduced to reflect administrative duties.

STANDARD 2: PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

- 2.1 The mission of an ABFSE-accredited program must be to educate students in every phase of funeral service so that program graduates are prepared for entry-level employment in funeral service. In support of this mission, a program must adopt at least the following Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of an accredited program, students will be able to:

- 2.1.1 Explain the importance of funeral service professionals in developing relationships with the families and communities they serve.
- 2.1.2 Identify standards of ethical conduct in funeral service practice.
- 2.1.3 Interpret how federal, state, and local laws apply to funeral service in order to ensure compliance.
- 2.1.4 Apply principles of public health and safety in the handling and preparation of human remains.
- 2.1.5 Demonstrate technical skills in embalming and restorative art that are necessary for the preparation and handling of human remains.
- 2.1.6 Demonstrate skills required for conducting arrangement conferences, visitations, services, and ceremonies.
- 2.1.7 Describe the requirements and procedures for burial, cremation, and other accepted forms of final disposition of human remains.
- 2.1.8 Describe methods to address the grief-related needs of the bereaved.
- 2.1.9 Explain management skills associated with operating a funeral establishment.
- 2.1.10 Demonstrate verbal and written communication skills and research skills needed for funeral service practice.
- 2.2 These Program Learning Outcomes must be published on the program website and in the program handbook.

STANDARD 3: ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES AND ETHICAL STANDARDS

- 3.1 Each institution and program must conduct their business and academic activities in an ethical manner.

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- 1 3.1.1 In this regard, each institution program must:
- 2 3.1.1.a publish and adhere to a personnel policy assuring equal employment opportunity for all
- 3 qualified persons
- 4 3.1.1.b demonstrate that processes are in place to protect student privacy.
- 5 3.1.2 maintain admissions, financial aid, and education services policies for students assuring equal
- 6 consideration without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, or
- 7 veterans' status and other protected classes pursuant to federal law.
- 8 3.1.3 ensure that website/catalog accurately portrays the realities of the program and institution so that
- 9 students can make informed decisions before admissions. Advertising and marketing materials must
- 10 include a link to the website/catalog.
- 11 3.1.3.a Each institution must publish curriculum and program of study information including:
- 12 3.1.3.a.i course names and identification numbers;
- 13 3.1.3.a.ii summary descriptions and credit hours;
- 14 3.1.3.a.iii requirements for admission;
- 15 3.1.3.a.iv requirements and processes for withdrawal and graduation;
- 16 3.1.3.a.v academic calendars;
- 17 3.1.3.a.vi policy regarding changes in modality of course offerings;
- 18 3.1.3.a.vii grading policies;
- 19 3.1.3.a.viii financial policies for tuition, fees, and refunds.
- 20 3.1.3.a.ix information about the potential challenges of distance education
- 21 3.1.3.a.x information regarding on-campus requirements for distance education
- 22 3.1.3.a.xi technology requirements
- 23 3.1.3.a.xii protocols used to verify student identity including additional charges
- 24 associated with verification, if applicable
- 25 3.1.4. The institution must maintain proper records and reports as follows:
- 26 3.1.4.a Secure filing systems for student academic records must exist and policies must be in place
- 27 to ensure maintenance of these records in perpetuity.
- 28 3.1.4.b Program records, such as clinical reports, surveys, affiliation agreements and accreditation-
- 29 related documents must be organized and maintained from the date of the last
- 30 comprehensive review. Institutional oversight and procedures must be in place to ensure
- 31 maintenance and continuity of these records when personnel changes take place.
- 32 3.1.4.c Student academic transcripts must indicate the quality of the student's work in each course
- 33 and the extent of each course, expressed in either semester or quarter credits. Grading
- 34 systems must be explained on the transcript.
- 35 3.1.5. In the event a program ceases to function, a plan must be in place to ensure maintenance of student
- 36 academic records in perpetuity.
- 37
- 38 3.2 Any reference by a program to accreditation in catalogs, bulletins, or other official publications and
- 39 communication or other media must read as follows:
- 40

41 Programs in a multi-purpose institution will use:

42

43 The (name of the accredited degree program) at (name of sponsoring institution) is accredited by the

44 American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), 992 Mantua Pike, Suite 108, Woodbury Heights,

45 NJ 08097 (816) 233-3747. Web: www.abfse.org

46

47 When ABFSE serves as 'gatekeeper' for the single purpose institution the statement should read: (name of

48 sponsoring institution) and the (name of the accredited degree program) are accredited by the American

49 Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), 992 Mantua Pike, Suite 108, Woodbury Heights, NJ 08097

50 (816) 233-3747. Web: www.abfse.org

51

52 NOTE: The reference to accreditation must name the specific program accredited by the ABFSE. If the

53 institution offers more than one degree (or its equivalent) program accredited by ABFSE, the names

54 of all accredited programs must appear in the accreditation statement. (This requirement is

- 1 particularly important in those institutions offering other areas of instruction which are not
2 accredited, or eligible for accreditation, by the ABFSE.)
3 “This academic program is designed to meet specific state or professional needs. It is not accredited
4 by the American Board of Funeral Service Education. Students graduating from this program will
5 not have the academic credential for licensure in states where graduation from an ABFSE accredited
6 program is required.”
7
8 3.3.2 In addition, the academic transcript for graduates of unaccredited programs must carry the
9 statement: “This academic program is designed to meet specific state or professional needs. It is
10 not accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education. Students graduating from this
11 program will not have the academic credential for licensure in states where graduation from an
12 ABFSE accredited program is required.”
13
14 3.3.3 The requirements of Standard 3.3 do not apply to a bachelor degree completion program which
15 requires graduation from an ABFSE accredited program as a condition for admission.
16
17 3.4 Published policies must exist which ensure due process for students, faculty, and staff, including grievance
18 procedures, clearly defined disciplinary policies, and sexual harassment policies.
19 3.4.1 All written student complaints about the program that follow the institution’s or other governing
20 entity’s stated procedure must be available for review.
21 3.4.2 The program must file a written response or demonstrate resolution of complaints that have been
22 received.
23
24 3.5 Honesty and integrity are required of all accredited programs and each program will conduct itself in an
25 ethical manner. Violations of ethics include, but are not limited to:
26 3.5.1 Providing false, misleading, or distorted information directly or by omission to the ABFSE or
27 Committee of Accreditation (COA);
28 3.5.2 Engaging in illegal conduct;
29 3.5.3 Presenting false information to students, faculty, staff or the public;
30 3.5.4 Engaging in intentional conduct that is coercive to students or prejudicial to student learning or
31 outcomes
32 3.5.5 Any other conduct that is generally regarded as unethical in higher education, accreditation of
33 educational programs and institutions, or funeral service
34
35 3.6 See also Standards 4, 6.3, 9.1, and 11 for additional topics subject to Administrative Practices and Ethical
36 Standards
37
38

39 STANDARD 4: FINANCE

- 40
41 4.1 The institution/program must have sustainable and sufficient financial resources to provide instruction and
42 facilities in compliance with this manual.
43 4.2 The program must have resources budgeted on a continuing basis that are sufficient to provide instruction,
44 current technology, equipment, student and academic support in compliance with this manual’s standards.
45 4.3 The institution must have processes in place to address unexpected expenditures.
46 4.4 The Executive Director of the ABFSE must be notified of any unexpected expenditures or revenue short-
47 falls that might impact instruction or compliance with this manual’s standards.
48 4.5 A program in a multiple-purpose institution must have program level involvement in the budget development
49 process.
50 4.6 The institution must employ acceptable accounting practices and must provide the most current audited
51 financial statements. Any audit exceptions or advisories that appear in the most recent audit must be
52 reported to the Executive Director of the ABFSE.
53 4.7 Institutions for whom the ABFSE acts as gatekeeper :
54 4.7.1 must demonstrate a ratio of current assets to current liabilities that is at least 1:1 for the most recent

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- fiscal year.
- 4.7.2 must maintain copies of all education-related contracts in force since the last comprehensive review.
- 4.7.3 The financial accounting system for gatekeeper institutions may not be combined with financial affairs of any other organizations

STANDARD 5: CURRICULUM

- 5.1 The ABFSE recognizes the Associate Degree, or its equivalent, as the minimum educational standard for preparation for the funeral service profession.
- 5.1.1 The program must consist of not less than sixty (60) semester (90 quarter) credits.
- 5.2 The program must have and follow an organized curriculum plan.
- 5.2.1 The plan must follow a logical sequence and result in a diploma or degree appropriate to the length and depth of the curriculum.
- 5.2.2 Semester or quarter credit hours must be assigned to all courses and apportioned appropriately.
- 5.2.3 A syllabus must be available for each course offered in the program and follow a consistent format. Each syllabus must include relevant student learning outcomes and must be distributed to students at the beginning of that course. The student learning outcomes for each course must be reviewed on a continuing basis and be aligned with the Program Learning Outcomes.
- 5.2.4 All required prerequisite courses must be clearly indicated in institutional publications.
- 5.2.5 The program curriculum must consist of at least two components: general education courses and funeral service courses. At least twenty-five percent (25%) of the total credits must be in the general education component.
- 5.2.6 Instruction must be at a postsecondary education level and encourage individual growth and critical thinking.
- 5.2.7 The program must require student use of multiple learning resources reflecting a variety of points of view.
- 5.2.8 Students must be evaluated at reasonable intervals and kept informed of their progress in a timely manner.
- 5.3 When the funeral service education program and/or courses are delivered via the distance modality the guidelines in [Appendix E](#) must be followed. These guidelines include securing necessary approvals, providing effective student and academic support services and faculty training, assuring integrity of distance offerings, maintaining regular and substantive interaction, assessment, and generally assuring that distance offerings and traditional modes of instruction are comparable.
- 5.4 Accredited programs may decide how to implement the ABFSE content areas. Course offerings in the accredited program must cover the content of the ABFSE curriculum outlines; however, course names may differ from the curriculum outline titles.
- 5.5 Each program must document curriculum distribution by ABFSE content area by completing [Form B-6](#) and/or [Form B-6B](#), "Curriculum Distribution by ABFSE Content Area." (found in Appendix B)
- The accredited degree program must be distributed across these content areas:
- 5.5.1 Public Health and Technical fourteen (14) minimum semester (21 quarter) credits. The curriculum must involve a distribution of study in the following content areas:
- 5.5.1.a Chemistry
- 5.5.1.b Microbiology
- 5.5.1.c Human Anatomy
- 5.5.1.d Pathology
- 5.5.1.e Restorative Art
- 5.5.1.f Embalming
- 5.5.2 Business Management and Professional sixteen (16) minimum semester (24 quarter) credits. The curriculum must involve a distribution of study in the following content areas:
- 5.5.2.a Funeral Service Management
- 5.5.2.b Funeral Merchandising

- 5.5.2.c Cremation
- 5.5.2.d Funeral Directing
- 5.5.2.e Small Business Management with Accounting
- 5.5.2.f Professional or Business Communications
- 5.5.3 Social Sciences/Humanities six (6) minimum semester (9 quarter) credits. The curriculum must involve distribution of study in the following content areas:
 - 5.5.3.a Sociology
 - 5.5.3.b History of Funeral Service and Embalming
 - 5.5.4.c Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling
- 5.5.4 Legal, Ethical, Regulatory three (3) minimum semester (4 quarter) credits.
 - 5.5.4.a Funeral Service Law
 - 5.5.4.b Business Law
 - 5.5.4.c Ethics
 - 5.5.4.d Federal Trade Commission
- 5.5.5 General Education – Each associate degree student must earn a minimum of sixty (60) (90 quarter) credits; each bachelor degree student must earn a minimum of 120 (180 quarter) credits of which at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the total credits required by the program for earning a degree must be in general education, non-technical courses. In addition, each student must complete sufficient general education credits to meet graduation requirements for the Associate Degree (or its equivalent) or Baccalaureate Degree as described by each state or province/territory and institution if the student is enrolled in a degree program. Courses labeled as Funeral Service/Mortuary Science by course name or number are not appropriate as General Education.
- 5.5.6 Embalming is a requirement of the curriculum:
 - 5.5.6.a Each student must actively participate in at least ten embalming cases in order to fulfill the clinical embalming component of the curriculum.

There shall be no more than five (5) students per case receiving credit for a specific embalming. There may be additional students observing; however, they may not interrupt or interfere with the embalming process or distract the preceptor while the embalming is in process.
 - 5.5.6.b Active participation means hands-on learning and must include, at a minimum, the following tasks:
 - 5.5.6.b.i raising vessels
 - 5.5.6.b.ii mixing fluids
 - 5.5.6.b.iii injecting fluids
 - 5.5.6.b.iv cavity treatment
 - 5.5.6.b.v suturing incisions
 - 5.5.6.b.vi posing features
 - 5.5.6.c There shall be no more than five (5) students per case receiving credit for a specific embalming. Additional students may observe; however, they may not interrupt or interfere with the embalming process or distract the preceptor while the embalming is in process. Credit for individual cases will be allowed only for those students actively participating.
 - 5.5.6.d A standardized embalming case report must be used by the program to validate student participation and must be signed by the student and the instructor or preceptor. Each case report must document details of :
 - 5.5.6.d.i embalming treatments
 - 5.5.6.d.ii the student's participation in the case
 - 5.5.6.e A qualified faculty member as defined in [Standard 6.1.1](#) must assess and document, in person, the minimal technical competence of each student prior to graduation.
 - 5.5.6.f Embalming case reports must be retained since the last comprehensive visit.
 - 5.5.6.g Embalming cases must be completed in an on-campus setting or at an approved off-campus instructional site.
 - 5.5.6.h Off-campus embalming instructional sites where students receive college credit are to be inspected and approved by a qualified faculty member as defined in [Standard 6.1.1](#), prior

- to the start of instruction. See [Standard 7.2](#)
- 5.5.7 Each student must participate in an on-campus laboratory setting in which the application of restorative art principles is practiced.
- 5.5.8 Participation in Funeral Directing is a requirement of the curriculum.
- 5.5.8.a Each student must actively participate in the funeral tasks included in this standard. These tasks can be done in a simulation setting.
- 5.5.8.b Students must utilize the following forms:
- 5.5.8.b.i First call form
- 5.5.8.b.ii Arrangement worksheet
- 5.5.8.b.iii FTC-compliant General Price List
- 5.5.8.b.iv FTC-compliant Casket Price List
- 5.5.8.b.v FTC-compliant Outer Burial Container Price List
- 5.5.8.b.vi Embalming Authorization form
- 5.5.8.b.vii Cremation Authorization form
- 5.5.8.c First call – Students must demonstrate the process of receiving five (5) first calls. This can be done in a simulation setting.
- 5.5.8.d Transfer of remains – Students must demonstrate the process of performing a body removal. This can be done in a simulation setting.
- 5.5.8.e Arrangement Conference – Students must participate (observe or assist) in five (5) Arrangement Conferences. If done in a simulation setting, no more than five (5) students may receive credit for that simulation.
- 5.5.8.f Students must prepare the following at least one time:
- 5.5.8.f.i Death Certificate
- 5.5.8.f.ii Burial Transit permit
- 5.5.8.f.iii Social Security form (Statement of Death by Funeral Director)
- 5.5.8.f.iv Death notice and/or Obituary
- 5.5.8.f.v FTC-compliant Statement of Funeral Good and Services Selected
- 5.5.8.f.vi Department of Veterans Affairs forms – flag application, burial benefits, and headstone/marker
- 5.5.8.f.vi Final disposition permit
- 5.5.8.g. Students must demonstrate the process of dressing/casketing/preparation for disposition.
- 5.5.8.h. Funeral Observation – Students must attend five funeral related practices; at least one must be live and in-person. Three of the five must be from the following list: Liturgical, Non-liturgical, Secular, Chapel, Graveside, Military, Fraternal, Memorial (without the deceased), Direct Cremation, or Other (describe). Credit may be awarded for only one experience per case. (i.e. the same funeral cannot satisfy a liturgical service and a graveside service) The program will ensure that students attend a variety of services.
- 5.5.8.i Method of documenting student’s funeral observation shall be at the discretion of the program, but records must be maintained since the last comprehensive review.
- 5.6 The only Bachelor degree option recognized for accreditation by ABFSE is a degree leading to original licensure. There are no provisions in the standards to evaluate Bachelor degree completion or Associate Bachelor degree options (when the original associate degree meets all accreditation requirements).
- 5.6.1 The institution must demonstrate that it has approval to award the bachelor degree(s), issued by the appropriate governing authority in which it is located or within which it offers instruction. (See Standard 1.1.5)
- 5.6.2 The bachelor degree program must consist of not less than 120 semester (180 quarter) credits including the ABFSE prescribed curriculum in Standard 5.5. The degree program must be described in a B-6B curriculum distribution.
- 5.6.3 Instruction must be at a level generally held commensurate with postsecondary education at the bachelor degree level and directed toward the individual growth of each student encouraging critical thinking and requiring student use of multiple learning resources reflecting a variety of points of view.
- 5.6.4 Thirty percent (30%) (minimum of 40 semester credits or equivalent) of the bachelor program

- 1 must consist of upper division coursework (including the major and general education). The
2 academic credit awarded for upper division courses within baccalaureate degree programs must be
3 clearly distinguished from that of lower division courses via [Form B-6B](#).
4 5.6.5 At least thirty (30) semester credits (or equivalent) of general education is required (25%),
5 including at least nine (9) semester credits (or equivalent) of upper division general education
6 coursework.
7
8

9 STANDARD 6: FACULTY

- 10
11 6.1 Members of the teaching faculty must meet certain degree and professional requirements in order to be
12 deemed qualified faculty members:
13 6.1.1 All full-time or part-time faculty must have a bachelor's or higher degree from a regionally
14 accredited college or university.
15 6.1.2 All newly and re-appointed full-time faculty must earn a master's degree or higher from a regionally
16 accredited college or university within five years of their initial appointment date. Faculty who fail
17 to meet the five-year requirement are not allowed to teach in any ABFSE accredited program until
18 the degree is awarded. For faculty earning degrees in colleges or universities outside the United
19 States, the institution awarding the degree must have met degree standards which in the judgment
20 of AACRAO are acceptable or similar to those of ABFSE.
21 6.1.3 Degrees must be documented by official transcripts.
22 6.1.4 Qualified faculty members who teach embalming, funeral directing, or restorative art courses must
23 be graduates of an ABFSE-accredited program. If the faculty member graduated from a funeral
24 service program outside the United States, the program must have academic requirements and
25 standards equivalent to an ABFSE-accredited program. The following additional requirements must
26 also be met:
27 6.1.4.a a faculty member teaching embalming must have sufficient training to enable proper
28 instruction, have at least one year of embalming experience, and be a licensed embalmer
29 where required by law. Clinical embalming instructors must be licensed in the state where
30 they teach (where required by law).
31 6.1.4.b a faculty member teaching funeral directing, merchandising or funeral service management
32 must have sufficient training and experience in funeral service practice to enable proper
33 instruction, and be licensed to practice funeral directing where required by law;
34 6.1.4.c a faculty member teaching restorative art must have sufficient training and experience to
35 enable proper instruction, and be licensed to practice embalming where required by law;
36 6.1.4.d a faculty member teaching other required or elective courses must have sufficient
37 specialized education or experience in these subjects to enable proper instruction.
38 6.2 All personnel serving as off-campus preceptors must be licensed to practice funeral directing, embalming or
39 both where required by law. Preceptors must be graduates of ABFSE accredited programs. If the preceptor
40 graduated from a funeral service program outside the United States, the program must have academic
41 requirements and standards equivalent to an ABFSE accredited program.
42 6.2.1 Preceptor credentials must be verified by the program in one of the following ways:
43 6.2.1.a Have on file an official transcript from the ABFSE accredited funeral service program from
44 which the preceptor graduated plus a copy of the preceptor's state license where required
45 by law;
46 6.2.1.b If the state requires graduation from an ABFSE accredited program, have on file a copy of
47 the preceptor's license from the state licensing authority.
48 6.2.1.c Have on file a copy of (or be able to provide access to) verification from the State web site
49 that the preceptor has a current license in good standing (if the state requires graduation
50 from an ABFSE accredited program).
51 6.2.2 If preceptors are used, there must be an identified certification process in place and formal
52 documentation that each preceptor has been properly oriented about the school's requirements
53 concerning knowledge base, competency, and evaluation of student procedures and criteria.
54 6.3 All faculty and staff must adhere to ethical practices in student-related matters.

- 6.4 Faculty development opportunities must be available for all modes of instruction.
 - 6.4.1 The program must provide evidence of training for faculty without prior teaching experience.
 - 6.4.2 Ongoing professional development for faculty must be available. Such opportunities must consider professional development for teaching and continuing education for maintaining licensure.
 - 6.4.3 The program must provide evidence of training for faculty teaching distance education courses who do not have prior distance teaching experience.
 - 6.4.4 The institution offering distance education must provide evidence that faculty have access to periodic distance-focused faculty development as technology and best practices for e-learning evolve.
- 6.5 Faculty must be involved in maintaining the academic program including standards pertaining to instruction.
- 6.6 The institution must provide instructional support for faculty, including library access, office facilities, technological resources, and involvement in program planning and assessment.
- 6.7 Student-teacher ratios must be available for review and must not exceed 30:1 overall (full-time equivalent per federal/state guidelines/definitions) in the funeral service program, and no more than 25:1 headcount for laboratory sessions, no more than a 5:1 headcount may be maintained for each clinical embalming case and no instructor may supervise more than 3 embalming cases at any one time.
- 6.8 Every program is required to have at least two full-time faculty members, one of whom shall serve in the role of the program director. (by January 1, 2027)

STANDARD 7: FACILITIES

- 7.1 Facilities refer to classrooms, laboratories, and any other physical areas used for instruction. Areas must be adequate in number and size and must allow for quality instruction to support the program and to meet the needs of students.
 - 7.1.1 Classrooms and laboratories must have adequate light and ventilation. They must be cleaned and furnished with adequate equipment and supplies for carrying out instruction.
 - 7.1.2 The laboratories must have sufficient equipment and supplies for students to work in small groups or individually. Sufficient equipment and supplies must be available to carry out all research and instruction mentioned in program and institution's publications. The equipment must be current with funeral service practice.
 - 7.1.3 All instructional facilities on or off-campus must meet federal, state, provincial/territorial, and local regulations.
 - 7.1.4 Each program must maintain an on-campus embalming/preparation space either fully functional or for demonstration purposes. The embalming space must be of sufficient size to accommodate at least one preparation table. It must have an electric embalming machine, instruments, and real or simulated chemicals. In the case of a demonstration lab, it must adequately reflect an actual functional embalming facility.
- 7.2 The following is for off-campus instructional sites which includes instruction for management, funeral directing and embalming clinical. Whenever students receive program credit for work carried out off the main campus, the following facilities requirements must be in effect:
 - 7.2.1 The facility where students receive credit must be licensed by the appropriate authorities;
 - 7.2.2 Off-campus instruction must take place in locations which offer adequate learning space for students. In the case of instruction in embalming, the facility must be of sufficient size to allow for satisfactory participation by each student.
 - 7.2.3 Inspections of off-campus instructional sites must occur at least once every three years or prior to each use if the use occurs intermittently over a period of several years. Inspections must also occur whenever physical changes to the facility are reported.
 - 7.2.3.a Inspections of off-campus instruction sites must ensure the location has a valid, current license.
 - 7.2.3.b Inspections must ensure that off-campus sites are clean and adequate for instructional purposes.
 - 7.2.3.c The inspection must ensure that appropriate equipment and protocols (drench shower, eye wash station, SDS and blood borne pathogen program, ventilation system, proper

- protective equipment, etc.) are in place and functioning.
- 7.2.4 The program/institution must have written affiliation agreements with each off-campus instructional site. Affiliation agreements must be comprehensive and include the following:
- 7.2.4.a Responsibilities of the institution and the site.
- 7.2.4.b Responsibilities relative to supervision and instruction of students and liability. This should include what is expected of the instructional site and what is provided by the program/institution.
- 7.2.4.c. Personnel at the instructional site may be given faculty appointments by the institution.
- 7.2.4.d The program must have a written policy for student dismissal and interruption from the clinical experience. Personnel at off-campus instructional sites must be aware of this policy.

STANDARD 8: LIBRARY / LEARNING RESOURCES

- 8.1 Learning resources, whether physical or electronic, must be both sufficient in scope and readily accessible to students to provide adequate support to the accredited program.
- 8.2. To the extent quality and availability affect program outcomes, learning resources that reflect a variety of points of view must be readily accessible to all students.
- 8.3 To the extent quality and availability affect program outcomes, learning resources must be accessible to students outside of regular classroom hours. The program must require student utilization of these resources as described in institutional and program publications.
- 8.3.1 A written acquisition policy relevant to funeral service education must be in place and the program director and faculty must be involved with the annual acquisitions related to this program.
- 8.3.2 Sufficient space must be devoted to learning resources to provide for the needs of students in funeral service and must be accessible during reasonable hours and administered by qualified staff.
- 8.3.3 Learning resources must be catalogued according to a recognized standard method.
- 8.4 There must be in place an orientation for students regarding use of the available learning resources including use of the Internet, how to access course materials and how to access technological support.

STANDARD 9: STUDENTS

- 9.1 Ethical Practices:
- 9.1.1 A program must adopt and enforce ethical practices recognized in higher education in all student-related matters. These practices include, but are not limited to:
- 9.1.1.a presentation of clear and accurate information about the program;
- 9.1.1.b student rights, responsibilities and processes;
- 9.1.1.c program requirements;
- 9.1.1.d a statement regarding program adherence to ethical practices in student-related matters must be published in program informational materials;
- 9.1.2 All student policies and regulations must be equally applied to all students.
- 9.2 Admissions:
- 9.2.1 Admissions requirements must be publicly stated in institutional publications including the catalog and must be administered as published.
- 9.2.2 The minimum educational requirement for admission to a program is:
- 9.2.2.a graduation from an accredited four-year high school or its recognized equivalent, or
- 9.2.2.b a minimum of nine (9) semester hours (or the equivalent) of post-secondary coursework exclusive of developmental courses from a regionally accredited institution and a minimum 2.0 grade point average.
- 9.2.3 A student shall not be enrolled in a program until evidence is supplied that Standard 9.2 has been satisfied. Such evidence must be:
- 9.2.3.a Official transcript of high school or college credit, received directly from the institution from which the credits were received or from a nationally recognized provider of electronic transcripts or

- 9.2.3.b Evidence that the applicant has a recognized credential equivalent to the high school diploma. A credential must be certified by an authorized official of a recognized high school, the state department of education or its equivalent, or
- 9.2.3.c Evidence that the applicant has fulfilled the requirements of state law for recognition of high school completion or its equivalent in the jurisdiction where the student resided at the time of completion.
- 9.2.3.d In the case of applicants from outside the United States, a statement from a recognized education authority certifying that the applicant has completed formal educational requirements at least equivalent to high school graduation in the United States.
- 9.2.3.e In the case of applicants from outside the United States, a statement from a recognized education authority certifying that the applicant has completed formal educational requirements at least equivalent to high school graduation in the United States.
- 9.2.4 Transfer credit policies must be published and available to students and the public. These policies must include:
 - 9.2.4.a the criteria for the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.
 - 9.2.4.b any types of institutions or sources from which the institution will not accept credits
 - 9.2.4.c a list of institutions with which the institution has established an articulation agreement
- 9.2.5 If credit for prior learning (experiential learning) is utilized by the program, a substantive change application must be submitted and approved by COA before the program initially offers credit for prior learning.
 - 9.2.5.a Policies for obtaining credit for prior learning must be clearly stated in the program's catalog and informational materials.
 - 9.2.5.b No more than twenty percent (20%) of the total number of credits for the program may be awarded through credit for prior learning. All of the curriculum requirements contained in [Standard 5](#) are incorporated in awarding credit for prior learning.
 - 9.2.5.c Credit earned for prior learning must be documented, evaluated, and appropriate for the level of degree awarded. The evaluation must be carried out by persons academically qualified to make the necessary judgments.
 - 9.2.5.d Achievement of student learning outcomes must be measured for courses in which credit for prior learning is offered. Methods to determine achievement of outcomes may include standardized tests, prior learning portfolios, technical skill demonstrations, and written or oral exams.
- 9.3 Attendance, Progress, Graduation:
 - 9.3.1 Orientation must be offered to students prior to the start of coursework. Orientation may take place in-person or be delivered online and, at a minimum, must cover safety, student policies, facilities and student services.
 - 9.3.2 Policies regarding grading, academic progress, attendance and graduation must be clearly stated and provided to students in writing before starting coursework.
 - 9.3.3 Graduation must include a certification that all program and college requirements have been met.
- 9.4 Student Health and Safety:
 - 9.4.1 A program must have written policies and procedures ensuring safety of its students.
 - 9.4.2 The institution must have health services information available to students.
 - 9.4.3 Campus safety policies must be communicated to the students.
- 9.5 Guidance and Student Involvement:
 - 9.5.1 Students must have access to services for personal and academic matters. Services must address academic difficulty, veterans' affairs, academic advising, conduct, licensure and employment information and personal issues.
 - 9.5.2 Opportunities must exist for student involvement in program governance.

STANDARD 10: PROGRAM PLANNING AND EVALUATION / ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 Each ABFSE accredited program must have a continuous system of planning and assessment in place to measure its effectiveness and to implement necessary improvements.

Includes: Manual Update approved October 2025
Manual update proposals Summer 2025
Language Corrections December 2023
Fee Revisions approved April 2022

ABFSE and COA Accreditation and Policy Manual

Revised Standards effective January 1, 2020
Revised Standards effective January 1, 2025

- 10.1.1 Each accredited program must have a documented assessment plan which incorporates guidelines, procedures, and methodologies of planning and assessment. The plan must:
 - 10.1.1.a assess the ABFSE learning outcomes.
 - 10.1.1.b be in writing and approved by the appropriate administrative authority of the institution.
- 10.1.2 Each accredited program must establish a comprehensive, ongoing system of planning and assessment that ensures instructional quality and documents student outcomes. The assessment plan and system must include:
 - 10.1.2.a provisions for collecting, maintaining, and analyzing data since the last comprehensive review;
 - 10.1.2.b methods for continuous feedback from students, faculty, and other constituents;
 - 10.1.2.c regularly scheduled student evaluations of courses and faculty;
 - 10.1.2.d regularly scheduled supervisory evaluation of faculty and program administrators;
 - 10.1.2.e results of annual surveys of graduates and employers to include satisfaction with instructional quality, preparation for employment, and expectations of employment;
 - 10.1.2.f methods used to measure the attainment of expected instructional outcomes;
 - 10.1.2.g review of clinical programs;
 - 10.1.2.h evaluation of advisory committee input;
 - 10.1.2.i curriculum review and updates;
 - 10.1.2.j review of written program materials such as handbooks, guidebooks, webpage;
 - 10.1.2.k facilities and technology updates;
 - 10.1.2.l review of program policies and procedures.
- 10.1.3 The continuous system of planning and assessment must:
 - 10.1.3.a include documentation of how the assessment efforts are used to improve instructional and program quality.
 - 10.1.3.b be reviewed annually.
- 10.1.4 When funeral service courses are available via distance education, the institution must demonstrate that distance education is integrated into its regular planning and evaluation processes.
- 10.1.5 The program must assess the achievement of the Learning Outcomes in each of the following:
 - 10.1.5.a courses
 - 10.1.5.b licensing exam pass rates
 - 10.1.5.c graduation rates
 - 10.1.5.d job placement/employment rates.
- 10.2 If the program has been evaluated previously by ABFSE, the program must document actions since the last review to correct any deficiencies that may have been cited in reference to the Standards.
- 10.3 Since the last comprehensive review, the program must maintain, calculate, and explain how it has utilized the following data for planning and assessment purposes:
 - 10.3.1 Pass Rates on the National Board Examination (NBE): Accredited programs must report statistics for both the “Arts” and “Sciences” sections of the National Board Examination on the Annual Report.
 - 10.3.2 Graduation/retention rates:

New Enrollee and Graduate information will be tracked by ABFSE and published in the Directory of Programs. New Enrollees will be tracked to graduation (or other departure from the program) upon entry into the ABFSE School Reporting system.

Graduation/retention rates based upon the number of new enrollees who successfully complete the accredited program (graduation) and those continuing their education (retention) will be reported after two (2) years and three (3) years.
 - 10.3.4 Graduation/retention, employment and NBE pass rates must be separately calculated for students who take fifty percent (50%) or more of their courses through Distance Education. The rates for campus based and distance education students will be considered both combined and separately in accreditation actions.
- 10.4 Programs maintaining satisfactory pass rates on the national licensing examination (NBE) will be considered in good standing.

- 10.4.1 Programs must maintain a seventy percent (70%) persistence pass rate on both the NBE Arts and NBE Sciences. Persistence Pass Rate will include all attempts by an individual within one year from graduation.
- 10.4.1.a A program that does not maintain satisfactory pass rates in a calendar year must submit a report to the Committee on Accreditation by March 1 of the following year. The report must analyze the reason(s) for the substandard pass rate and detail plans for improvement. Failure to submit this report will lead to negative accreditation action.
- 10.4.1.b Failure to maintain satisfactory licensing examination pass rates for two consecutive years will result in an accreditation status of Probation
- 10.4.1.c Failure to meet Standard 10.4.1 for three (3) consecutive years will result in an accreditation status of ‘Show Cause why accreditation should not be removed’.
- 10.4.2 When graduates do not take the national licensing examination (NBE), evidence of comparable performance on an alternate examination will be evaluated
- 10.5 Programs maintaining a sixty percent (60%) graduation/retention rate will be considered in good standing.
- 10.5.1 A program with a single year graduation/retention rate below sixty percent (60%) is subject to additional monitoring and must submit a report to the Committee on Accreditation by March 1 of the following year. The report must analyze the reason(s) for the substandard rate and detail plans for improvement. Failure to submit this report will lead to negative accreditation action. An institution with sporadic graduation/retention rates will be reviewed and may be subject to comparable reporting action as identified above.
- Note:** the sixty percent (60%) *brightline* will remain in effect while graduation/retention data is collected in order to determine if this is an appropriate measure of program quality
- 10.5.2 When the graduation/retention rates do not improve, the following accreditation status applies:
- 10.5.2.a two consecutive years of sub-standard graduation/retention rates: Probation.
- 10.5.2.b three consecutive years of sub-standard rates: ‘Show Cause why accreditation should not be removed’.
- 10.6 Programs maintaining a sixty percent (60%) job placement/employment rate will be considered in good standing. (Definitions of employment are found in 10.3.3; *note:* FS-related and overall job placement are currently reported in the Directory <https://www.abfse.org/docs/ABFSEDirectory.pdf?page#14>)
- 10.6.1 A program with a single year employment rate below sixty percent (60%) is subject to additional monitoring and must submit a report to the Committee on Accreditation by March 1 of the following year. The report must analyze the reason(s) for the substandard employment rate and detail plans for improvement. Failure to submit this report will lead to negative accreditation action
- An institution with sporadic job/placement/employment rates will be reviewed and may be subject to comparable reporting action as identified above. *Note:* the sixty percent (60%) *brightline* will remain in effect while graduation/retention data is collected in order to determine if this is an appropriate measure of program quality.
- 10.6.2 When job placement/employment rates do not improve the following accreditation status applies:
- 10.6.2.a two (2) consecutive years of sub-standard employment rates: Probation.
- 10.6.2.b three (3) consecutive years of sub-standard rates: ‘Show Cause why accreditation should not be removed’
- 10.7 The pass rate of first-time takers on the National Board Examination (NBE), and program job/placement/employment rates and graduation/retention rates for the most recent three (3) year periods will be posted in the Directory of Accredited Programs on the ABFSE website.
- 10.7.1 So that the public and prospective students can easily access these and other datapoints, programs must maintain up-to-date information provided by the ABFSE on the program website.
- 10.7.2 The following statement must also appear in the institution’s catalog: “National Board Examination pass rates, graduation/retention rates, and job/placement/employment rates for this and other ABFSE-accredited programs are available at www.abfse.org in the Directory of Accredited Programs.

- 10.7.3 Accredited programs in which students take fifty percent (50%) or more of their courses via distance education must also make available NBE pass rates, graduation/retention rates and employment rates for this modality.
- 10.7.4 Institutions failing to comply with [Standard 10.7](#) will be placed on administrative probation immediately. Continued non-compliance may lead to the removal of accreditation.

STANDARD 11: DEFAULT RATES IN THE STUDENT LOAN PROGRAMS UNDER TITLE IV AND COMPLIANCE WITH TITLE IV PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

This Standard applies to freestanding, single-purpose funeral service institutions for which ABFSE serves as the Title IV, HEA gatekeeper. An institution may request an exception if it holds recognition from another institutional accreditor.

- 11.1 Single purpose institutions for which the ABFSE serves as “gatekeeper” must also demonstrate compliance with all obligations under Title IV, including results of compliance audits and program reviews. (See Appendix F).
- 11.2 Recognizing the primary role of financial aid auditors to ensure compliance with Title IV, COA will limit their review under this standard to the following:
- 11.2.1 Examination of the most recent three years of financial aid audits, including any audit exceptions.
 - 11.2.2 Default Rates for the Title IV Student Loan Program for the years since the last accreditation review, as reported to the college by the U. S. Department of Education.
 - 11.2.2.a for institutions in which most recent rates are above the federal guidelines, plans to bring rates into compliance must be reported to the ABFSE office.
 - 11.2.3 The most recent financial aid audit, the default rate info (as indicated in 11.2.1 and 11.2.2), and the most recent financial aid composite score will be attached to the Annual Report each year to be reviewed by a sub-committee of the COA.
- 11.3 Any adverse communications relative to Title IV eligibility must be reported to the ABFSE office in a timely manner (within 30 days of receipt).
- 11.3.1 Non-compliance with Title IV obligations will be considered in ABFSE accreditation decisions

STANDARD 12: PROGRAM LENGTH, CREDIT HOURS, TUITION, AND FEES

This standard applies to freestanding, single-purpose funeral service institutions for which ABFSE serves as the Title IV, HEA gatekeeper. An institution may request an exception if it holds recognition from another institutional accreditor.

- 12.1 The institution must provide evidence of how credit hours are measured/calculated and how the program’s hours are distributed by term. This should be done for on campus as well as distance education, programs. (See Appendix S)
- 12.2. The institution must demonstrate that the subject matter taught relates reasonably to tuition and fees charged and to length of the program. Documentation must include length of program(s) and the number of hours and the corresponding tuition and fees for each program

CHAPTER X

CHANGES TO EXISTING PROGRAMS

A. SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

The Committee on Accreditation requires that institutions apply for, and obtain, COA approval of any substantive change before the change is included in the scope of accreditation or candidacy previously granted to the institution. Approval is based on evidence that the proposed change will not adversely affect the capacity of the institution/program to continue to meet the Standards. Note that some changes require site or virtual visits in addition to submission of the appropriate application forms and fee. Application forms are available via the ABFSE website in [Appendix K](#) of the Manual.

Changes that significantly impact the financial stability or enrollments of an institution/program, receipt of more than three (3) applications at one time, or any other changes that affect the institution's ability to comply with the Standards will result in the need for a comprehensive evaluation. COA will consider substantive change applications on a case-by-case basis to determine whether a comprehensive evaluation is appropriate. Programs subject to probation, show cause or other limitation on its accreditation or candidacy status must address those limitations in the Substantive Change application.

1. Substantive Change includes the following:

- a. Change in the program director (Substantive Change [Form 1](#))
- b. Change of sixty percent (60%) or more within one year to the faculty who report directly to the program director. (Substantive Change [Form 2](#))
- c. Change of President or CEO. (Substantive Change [Form 3](#))
- d. Any change in the established mission or program learning outcomes of the institution or program. (Substantive Change [Form 4](#))
- e. Addition of programs that represent a significant departure, in either content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the COA last evaluated the institution or program (site visit required). This specifically includes when an accredited program expands distance education offerings to fifty percent (50%) or more, (See [Appendix E](#)), any change between semester credit hours and quarter credit hours, and initial approval of credit for prior learning. (Substantive Change [Form 5](#) and [Form 6](#))
- f. Addition of accredited programs at a degree or credential level different than that which is included in the institution's or program's current accreditation or candidacy (site visit required). (Substantive Change [Form 6](#))
- g. A twenty-five percent (25%) or more change in the number of credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program (site visit required). (Substantive Change [Form 7](#))
- h. Relocation of the institution's or program's permanent instructional site (site visit required). (Substantive Change [Form 8](#))
- i. A change in the legal name of the institution or program. (Substantive Change [Form 9](#))
- j. Any change in the legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution or program (site visit required). (Substantive Change [Form 10](#))

- 1 k. The acquisition of any other accredited institution or any program or location of another institution (site
2 visit required). Accreditation shall be based upon “Initial Accreditation” procedures and criteria.
3 Currently accredited programs seeking approval must present the new curricula or curriculum. However,
4 COA has discretion to approve without a formal Self study document, a site visit, or payment of fees.
5 (Substantive Change [Form 10](#))
6
7 l. Mergers. A merger occurs when two (2) or more accredited institutions sponsoring programs in funeral
8 service education combine to form one institution. The resulting institution must meet the accreditation
9 requirements as a new institution. In such instances, candidacy status for the new institution may be
10 waived at the option of the Committee on Accreditation. (Substantive Change [Form 11](#))
11
12 m. Establishment of a Branch Campus (See Chapter X.E) (Substantive Change [Form 12](#))
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14 n. Establishment of an Additional Location geographically apart from the main campus at which the
15 institution or program offers at least fifty percent (50%) of an educational program. (See Chapter X.E.2)
16 (Substantive Change [Form 13](#))
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18 o. The addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution or program is conducting a teach-
19 out for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their
20 program of study (site visit required). (Substantive Change [Form 13](#))
21
22 p. Program Closing. (Substantive Change [Form 15](#))
23
24 q. Change of Institutional Accreditor and/or institutional accreditation status. (Substantive Change [Form](#)
25 [14](#))
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27 Note: changes to individual courses within the accredited program are not considered Substantive Changes
28 requiring COA approval. Changes that alter the B-6 curriculum distribution should be reported on the ABFSE
29 Annual Report.
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31 2. Special Substantive Change (Substantive Change [Form 16](#))

32 The following substantive change applies to institutions whose recognition by the COA allows them to seek
33 eligibility to participate in Title IV, HEA programs (i.e. ABFSE serves as gatekeeper).
34

35 When an institution enters into a contract under which an institution or organization not certified to participate
36 in the Title IV, HEA programs offers more than twenty-five percent (25%), but less than fifty percent (50%)
37 of one or more of the accredited institution’s educational programs this is a substantive change.
38

39 COA procedure requires:

- 40 a. notify the ABFSE office at least ninety (90) days prior via a Substantive Change Application; and
41 b. meet all the requirements of the Substantive Change Application
42 c. demonstrate, to the COA’s satisfaction, that the institution has effective educational oversight
43 d. schedule a site visit, within six (6) months, cost to be borne by the program.
44

45 3. The COA reserves the right to require a comprehensive evaluation (i.e. Self study and site visit) at any time
46 it believes there may be a violation of one or more accreditation Standards.
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48 Certain substantive changes require a comprehensive evaluation, site visit, or other action. These changes
49 include when an institution:

- 50 a. establishes one (1) or more branch campus programs (see also [Section E](#). below)
51 b. changes sponsorship to the extent that it likely will affect a program’s continued compliance with the
52 Standards for Accreditation and the related provisions of The Manual (see [Section D](#) below).
53 c. adds a new or additional accredited funeral service program or curriculum (see also [Section B](#))
54 d. makes a substantive change that places an institution in potential violation of one or more Standards.

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4. Determination of comprehensive evaluation/review. Determination of whether a comprehensive evaluation is appropriate will be made using the following procedure: Within ten (10) business days of the notice of substantive change, the COA staff shall advise the institution whether in the staff's opinion a site visit, a comprehensive evaluation, or other action may be appropriate. The institution shall be given ten days to respond to the staff's determination. At the end of those ten (10) business days, the COA shall review the institution's request for substantive change, the staff's analysis, and the institution's response to the staff's analysis.

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Within ten (10) business days of that review, the COA shall determine if a site visit or other action is appropriate. In instances where the COA has determined a comprehensive evaluation (which would likely include a Self study and related materials as well as a site visit) is appropriate, the timeline shall be established by the COA in consultation with the institution. In such cases, the comprehensive evaluation shall occur within six (6) months.

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5. The COA will generally designate the date of its formal action as the effective date of any substantive change. When there is good and obvious reason for a later date, the later date will be used as the effective date. The date will not be retroactive other than in the case where a change in ownership occurs within thirty (30) days prior to the COA's action. In such case, the COA may establish the effective date to coincide with the change in ownership.

22 B. NEW PROGRAM ADDITIONS IN ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS

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When an accredited institution wishes to offer a new or additional funeral service program or curriculum, including a new method of delivery, the appropriate Substantive Change application and cover sheet (see Appendix K) must be submitted. A site visit will be conducted, with costs borne by the institution within six (6) months of the effective change date. COA recognition of the new program or curriculum will be acknowledged upon COA approval that documentation for the new or additional program(s) is in compliance with the Accreditation Standards and the Manual requirements.

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Note: Offering the accredited program from an additional location requires COA approval.

33 C. UNACCREDITED PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS

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Pursuant to 34 CFR 602.24(f) and the requirements for recognized accrediting agencies, the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) must address unaccredited programs, branch campuses, and other locations.

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1. When institutions with ABFSE accredited programs choose to offer unaccredited programs, branch campuses, and other locations they must comply with the following procedures:
 - a. Institutions seeking initial or continuing accreditation with ABFSE must disclose all programs, branch campuses, and locations.
 - b. Institutions must identify any programs or campuses that are not subject to ABFSE accreditation.
 - c. Candidacy programs must disclose plans to operate unaccredited programs leading to licensure or certification, branch campuses, and/or other locations where programs are to be offered.
 - d. Institutions must submit a Substantive Change to add an unaccredited program(s), branch campuses, or other location.
 - e. Unaccredited programs, branch campuses, and other locations will be reported on the ABFSE Annual Report.
 - f. Failure to provide full and accurate disclosure may result in adverse action, including withdrawal of accreditation.
 2. Consistency with Federal Requirements
 - a. This policy shall be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with federal regulations governing the recognition of accrediting agencies and Title IV participation.
 - b. Any change in accreditation status (probation, show cause, or adverse actions) for institutions with unaccredited programs, branch campuses or other locations will be reported to the Secretary of the US

- 1 Department of Education and to the Federal Student Aid Office of the US Department of Education
2 (FSA).
- 3 3. When institutions with ABFSE accredited programs choose to offer unaccredited programs, they must
4 comply with the following procedures:
- 5 a. Publications describing the unaccredited program must contain the following caveat: "This academic
6 program is designed to meet specific state or professional needs. It is not accredited by the American
7 Board of Funeral Service Education. Students graduating from this program are not eligible to take any
8 licensing examination for which graduation from an ABFSE accredited program is required."
- 9 b. The academic transcript for graduates of unaccredited programs must carry the following wording: "This
10 academic program is designed to meet specific state or professional needs. It is not accredited by the
11 American Board of Funeral Service Education. Students graduating from this program are not eligible
12 to take any licensing examination for which graduation from an ABFSE accredited program is required."
- 13 c. This requirement does not apply to a bachelor degree completion program which requires graduation
14 from an ABFSE-accredited program as a condition for admission.
15

16 D. CHANGES IN SPONSORSHIP/OWNERSHIP/CONTROL

17 Sponsorship is the institutional oversight and control of a program.
18

- 19 1. Types of sponsorship include:
- 20 a. A single-purpose institution with both program and the institution accredited by the ABFSE.
21 b. A single or multiple purpose institution with regional (or equivalent) accreditation and an ABFSE-
22 accredited funeral service program.
23 c. A non-educational entity that owns and operates one or more locations or institutions offering one or
24 more ABFSE-accredited funeral-service programs.
25 d. A change in sponsorship occurs when an institution or entity offering an accredited funeral
26 service/mortuary science program relinquishes oversight and control of the program to another
27 institution.
28
- 29 2. At least ninety (90) days prior to a change in sponsorship, the institution relinquishing sponsorship shall
30 provide written notice to the notify the ABFSE office stating:
- 31 a. the reasons for the change,
32 b. the anticipated effective date of the change, and
33 c. contact information for the new sponsoring institution and its Chief Executive Officer and Program
34 Director. (name, address, telephone, email)
35
- 36 3. The institution assuming sponsorship of the accredited program shall provide to the ABFSE office written
37 notice of its intent to accept sponsorship and shall submit the appropriate substantive change form (See
38 Appendix K) and fee.
39
- 40 4. Committee on Accreditation action may include:
- 41 a. Approve the change in sponsorship and continue the accreditation status of the program.
42 b. Request additional information before reaching a decision.
43 c. Require the new institution to conduct a program Self study.
44 d. The COA action shall depend upon its assessment of the extent to which the change in sponsorship
45 affects the program's continued compliance with the Standards for Accreditation and the provisions of
46 The Manual.
47
- 48 5. In all cases of change in sponsorship, the institution now in control must undergo a site visit conducted by
49 the Committee on Accreditation. This visit must take place within six (6) months of the change of
50 sponsorship, with costs borne by the institution
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E. BRANCH CAMPUS AND ADDITIONAL LOCATION(S):

If an accredited funeral service institution/program intends to establish a [branch campus](#) or [additional location](#), this is a Substantive Change. Notification to the Committee on Accreditation (COA) is required through a Substantive Change Application. (See Appendix K [Change 12](#) and/or [Change 13](#).)

1. Branch Campus

The COA will consider as a “branch campus” for purposes of this and all other Standards any off-campus location of the program at which at least fifty percent (50%) of the educational program is offered. Each branch campus (or other location as noted herein) must meet all ABFSE/COA Standards of Accreditation as if it were a separate campus in and of itself.

a. As defined in the Federal Register 34 CFR 600.2, **branch campus** is a location of an institution or program that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution/program and is within the same ownership structure of the institution, and that also:

- i. is approved by the Secretary as a branch campus; and
- ii. is independent from the main campus, meaning the location:
- iii. is permanent in nature;
- iv. offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized education credential;
- v. has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and
- vi. has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

b. Institutions planning to establish a new Branch Campus must:

- i. notify ABFSE of intent ninety (90) days in advance
- ii. submit a Substantive Change application which includes
- iii. complete Self study for the Branch campus, following all required ABFSE guidelines;
- iv. host a site visit within six months of the establishment of a Branch Campus program. Cost of the visit is to be borne by the institution.

c. Once accreditation has been extended, each Branch Campus will:

- i. be visited for regular accreditation comprehensive reviews
- ii. submit its own Annual Report and other documentation required of all accredited programs
- iii. submit accreditation renewal fees

2. Additional Location

a. As defined in the Federal Register 34 CFR 600.2, an **additional location** is a location of an institution or program that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution/program and is within the same ownership structure of the institution at which the institution offers at least fifty percent (50%) of the educational program. An additional location participates in Title IV, HEA programs only through the certification of the main campus.

b. When an institution seeks to establish an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least fifty percent (50%) of an educational program, the addition of such a location must be approved by the COA. The institution has must:

- i. notify the ABFSE office at least ninety (90) days prior via a Substantive Change Application; and
- ii. meet all the requirements of the Substantive Change Application which includes satisfactory evidence of:
 - (a) Fiscal and administrative capacity to operate the additional location;
 - (b) Clearly identified academic control;
 - (c) Regular evaluation of the locations;
 - (d) Adequate faculty, facilities, resources, and academic and student support systems;
 - (e) Financial stability;
 - (f) Programmatic assessment and
 - (g) Long-range planning for expansion
- iii. host a site visit within six (6) months of the establishment of the additional location. Cost of the visit is to be borne by the institution.

- 1 c. Locations offering general education/prerequisite courses only do not require a substantive change
2 application. These additional locations are not required to be evaluated in the institution's self study, but
3 they must be disclosed.
4
- 5 d. Institutions with additional locations must be included in the institution's annual report and self-study.
6 Each additional location will be visited as part of accreditation comprehensive reviews.
7
- 8 e. COA will not approve additional locations:
9 i. unless the institution demonstrates to COA satisfaction that it has a proven record of effective
10 educational oversight
11 ii. while an institution/program is subject to probation or show cause or is subject to some limitation
12 by the COA on its accreditation or Candidacy status.
13 iii. after an institution undergoes a change in ownership with the result being a change of control, until
14 the institution demonstrates that it meets the conditions for the COA to approve additional locations
15 described in section b above.
16
- 17 f. The COA's accreditation activities will include visits to additional locations of institutions that operate
18 more than three (3) additional locations using the same schedule as visits to the primary location,
19 although more frequent visits may be scheduled if the COA determines it appropriate to do so; and the
20 COA may include special visits to additional locations to ensure that accredited institutions experiencing
21 rapid growth in the number of additional locations maintain educational quality.
22

23 The purposes of the visits described in this section include verifying that all additional locations have
24 the personnel, facilities, and resources indicated in the institution's application for approval of the
25 locations.
26

27 F. TEACH-OUT PLANS AND AGREEMENTS (SEE [APPENDIX P](#)) 28

- 29 1. Upon the occurrence of any of the following events, the COA requires a teach-out plan from institutions to
30 which accreditation or candidacy are granted:
31 a. Institution or program is placed on Probation status.
32 b. The COA acts to deny, withdraw, or terminate the accreditation or candidacy status of the institution.
33 c. The institution notifies the COA that it intends to cease operations entirely or close a location that
34 provides one hundred percent of at least one program, including if the location is being moved and
35 is considered by the Secretary to be a closed school.
36 d. A state licensing or authorizing agency notifies the COA that an institution's license or legal
37 authorization to provide an educational program has been or will be revoked.
38 The United States Department of Education's Secretary notifies the COA that
39 e. the Secretary has initiated an emergency action against an institution, in accordance with Section
40 487I(1)(G) of the HEA, or an action to limit, suspend, or terminate an institution participating in
41 any title IV, HEA program, in accordance with Section 487I(1)(F) of the HEA, and that a teach-out
42 plan is required.
43 f. for a nonprofit or proprietary institution, a determination by the institution's independent auditor
44 expressing doubt about the institution's ability to operate as a going concern or indicating an
45 adverse opinion or a finding of material weakness related to financial stability.
46 g. the institution is participating in Title IV, HEA programs under a provisional program
47 participation agreement and the Secretary has required a teach-out plan as a condition of
48 participation.
49 h. it has placed the institution on the reimbursement payment method under 34 CFR 668.162(c) or
50 the heightened cash monitoring payment method requiring the Secretary's review of the
51 institution's supporting documentation under 34 CFR 668.162(d)(2).

52 Where applicable, a teach-out **agreement** may be required (F.4). COA must approve all plans and
53 agreements.

When COA approves a teach-out plan for an accredited program or institution that is accredited by another recognized accrediting agency, COA will notify that accrediting agency of its approval.

2. Teach-out plan. A written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution, or an institutional location that provides 100% of at least one (1) program, ceases to operate or plans to cease operations before all enrolled students have completed their program of study.
3. The COA will evaluate the teach-out plan to ensure it provides for the equitable treatment of students, specifies additional charges, if any, and provides for notification to the students of any additional charges. Requirements for Teach-out plans and Teach-out agreements are found in [Appendix P](#). Approval of teach-out by COA will include establishing a reasonable time to complete the activities in a teach-out plan or to fulfill the obligations of any teach-out agreement.
4. Teach-out agreement. A written agreement between institutions that provides the opportunity for students at one institution to complete their program of study at another institution when the original institution or program ceases to operate or plans to cease operations.

When an institution enters into a teach-out agreement either on its own or at the request of the COA, the teach-out agreement must be approved by the COA. The COA will approve the teach-out agreement only if the agreement is between institutions that are regionally or nationally accredited, is consistent with applicable standards and regulations, and provides for the equitable treatment of students. Equitable treatment requirements are described in [Appendix P](#).

G. CLOSED INSTITUTIONS.

If an institution the COA accredits or has granted candidacy to closes without a teach-out plan or agreement, the COA will work with the United States Department of Education and the appropriate State agency to the extent feasible, to assist students in finding reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional charge.

CHAPTER XI

POLICIES

INTRODUCTION

Funeral service practitioners are licensed because funeral service involves significant considerations of public health, both as it relates to the proper disposition of human remains and to the counseling of bereaved persons. Accordingly, programs of education relating thereto must maintain as high a standard of excellence as possible in the light of existing knowledge.

The COA encourages each program to develop and implement experimental programs designed to expand and improve the professional education of its students.

The COA will, upon request, assist individual institutions to secure an educational consultant to advise in matters pertaining to Standards for Accreditation. The expenses incurred shall be paid by the requesting program.

A. ACCREDITATION POLICIES

1. Disclosure and Confidentiality

It is the obligation of every program applying for candidacy, extension of candidacy, accreditation, annual renewal, or continuing accreditation to provide the Committee on Accreditation access to all parts of its operations with due regard for the rights of individual privacy and with complete and accurate information with respect to the institution's affairs, including reports from other accrediting, licensing, and auditing agencies. Failure to do so, or to make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure, is sufficient reason in and of itself to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.

The Committee on Accreditation will maintain inviolate the confidentiality of information supplied by the program except in those cases where it is deemed necessary by the American Board to make public information which forms a substantive basis for the committee's decision.

The COA will announce publicly, as appropriate, through its Executive Director, the fact an institution's and/or program's

- a. candidacy or accreditation has been approved;
- b. candidacy has been extended or its accreditation renewed;
- c. candidacy has not been renewed, or its accreditation has been terminated;
- d. has been placed on probation and the reasons therefore;
- e. has been given a show cause order effective at a specific date and the reasons therefore;
- f. application for candidacy or accreditation has been denied.

If a program so conducts its affairs that it becomes a matter of public concern, the COA may announce, through its Executive Director, any action the Committee on Accreditation has taken and the basis for that action, making public any pertinent information available to the COA.

2. Conflict of Interest ([Appendix G](#)): Real as well as perceived conflicts will be avoided.

- a. Committee on Accreditation Members: Members must abstain from voting and from the discussion if they have a real or perceived Conflict of Interest. Committee members from within the state of the program being evaluated may not make motions, participate in the discussion, or vote concerning that program. Committee members employed by the program being evaluated or any other program within the same educational system must absent themselves during the executive session and voting concerning that program.

- b. Selection of Site Visitors:
- No individual who has served as consultant to a program may serve as a site visitor to that program.
 - No personnel from programs potentially in direct competition with the program being evaluated may serve on the site visit team.
 - No recent (within 5 years) graduate nor recent faculty member (within 5 years) of the program being evaluated may serve on the site visit team.
 - No faculty or practitioners from within the same state in which the evaluated program is located may serve on the site visit team.
 - No faculty member from within institutions in the same systems as the program being evaluated may serve on the site visit team.
 - Except for focused visits, no member of the Committee on Accreditation or the ABFSE chairperson may serve on the site visit team.
- c. Site Visit Behavior: Site visitors are prohibited from using the site visit as either an employment opportunity for themselves or to hire faculty away from the program being evaluated.
- d. Persons serving as consultants, administrative staff, or in any other way serving the committee shall avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest and shall follow all policies listed in #1-3 above. Members of the COA, site visit teams and employees of the ABFSE will be expected to sign a Conflict of Interest statement. (See [Appendix G](#))

3. Reference to Accreditation Status by a Program

- a. Any reference to accreditation in catalogs, bulletins or other official publications and communication or other media shall read as follows:

“The (name of accredited degree program) at (name of sponsoring institution) is accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), 992 Mantua Pike, Suite 108, Woodbury Heights, NJ 08097. (816) 233-3747. Web: www.abfse.org.”

Please note that the reference to accreditation names the specific program accredited by the ABFSE; this requirement is particularly important in those institutions engaged in other areas of instruction which are not accredited by, or eligible for accreditation by, the ABFSE.

Institutions accredited by ABFSE (for Title IV eligibility) will use the following accreditation statement:

“(Name of sponsoring institution) and the (name of accredited degree program) are accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), 992 Mantua Pike, Suite 108, Woodbury Heights, NJ 08097. (816) 233-3747. Web: www.abfse.org.”

- b. ABFSE accredited institutions/departments which choose to offer, in addition to accredited programs, unaccredited programs, must comply with the following procedures:
- Publications describing the unaccredited program must contain the following information: “This academic program is designed to meet specific state or professional needs. It is not accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education. Students graduating from this program will not have the academic credential for licensure in states where graduation from an ABFSE accredited program is required.”
 - The academic transcript for graduates of an unaccredited program must carry the following information: “This academic program is designed to meet specific state or professional needs. It is not accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education. Students graduating from this program will not have the academic credential for licensure in states where graduation from an ABFSE accredited program is required.”

1 4. Protection of Students

- 2 a. Accredited programs/institutions must demonstrate that processes are in place to protect student
3 privacy. ([Standard 3.1.3](#))
4 b. Any projected additional charges associated with verification of student identity must be disclosed at
5 the time of registration or enrollment.
6 c. Students matriculated into an accredited program which loses accreditation prior to graduation are
7 considered graduates of an accredited program when they complete the program according to the
8 teach-out plan.
9

10 5. Good Cause

11 The Committee on Accreditation may waive policies related to accreditation as contained in this Manual
12 when, in its opinion, unusual or compelling reasons supporting such actions exist.
13

14 U.S. Department of Education allows accreditors to extend the time frame to come into compliance when
15 'Good Cause' for such action is determined. (34 CFR 602.18) Such determination will be reviewed on an
16 annual basis not to exceed three (3) years.
17

18 6. Publication of Inaccurate Information

19 In the event an ABFSE accredited program or its sponsoring institution publishes or otherwise disseminates
20 information that misrepresents or distorts action taken by the Committee on Accreditation with respect to the
21 accreditation process or status of the program, the following will occur:
22

23 The administrative officer of the sponsoring institution and the director of the funeral service program will
24 be notified in writing of the misrepresentation or distortion and will be directed in writing to take corrective
25 action regarding the misrepresentation or distortion.
26

27 Should the sponsoring institution and/or the funeral service program fail to take prompt corrective action, the
28 Committee on Accreditation will publish a statement providing correct information to appropriate publics
29 which will appear on the ABFSE website and in whatever other forms deemed appropriate by the Committee.
30

31 Administrative Probation and applicable fines will apply.
32

33 7. Collection of Default Rates

34 Accredited institutions for which the ABFSE serves as primary accreditor ('gatekeeper'; single purpose,
35 stand alone, non-regionally accredited funeral service colleges) must submit, along with the annual report,
36 default rate for USDE Title IV programs. The COA will take appropriate action thereupon at their next
37 scheduled meeting or at a special meeting if the default rates warrant immediate action.
38

39 8. Process for Appointing Members to the COA (See APPENDIX B: [Form B-7](#) and [Form B-8](#).)

40 When the term of any member of the Committee on Accreditation is set to expire, the Executive Director
41 will notify the appropriate constituency of the pending vacancy twelve (12) months in advance.
42

- 43 a. Educators Representing Public and Private Institutions: The Executive Director will send a notice to all
44 accredited institutions and programs when an educator seat on the Committee on Accreditation will be
45 or is vacant. The notice will specify whether the position was filled by a representative from a private
46 or public institution. The College and University Council will nominate three (3) qualified individuals
47 for each open seat on the Committee on Accreditation. Consistent with [Article VI.B.2](#) of the By-laws,
48 the COA shall select the new member(s) from the applications or nominees submitted to it by the College
49 and University Council for the applicable private/public seat. In making their selection the COA will
50 strive to maintain the traditional balance of membership with three (3) individuals representing programs
51 in the public institutions and three (3) representing the private, single purpose institutions. Individuals
52 selected by the COA to serve as one of the Educator members of the committee must be full-time funeral
53 service faculty or administrators at an ABFSE accredited institution/program, possess a minimum of a
54 master's degree, be credentialed as a Funeral Director in their state of employment, have completed the

Self study/Accreditation Workshop, sign the ABFSE/COA Conflict of Interest Statement (see [Appendix G](#) of The Manual), and have at least three years' experience in funeral service education at an ABFSE accredited institution or program. See application form(s) in [Appendix B](#).

b. Educators Representing the College and University Council: In the event it becomes necessary to seat one or more representatives from the College and University Council as required by Section A of Article VI of the By-Laws, a notice will be sent to members of the College and University Council soliciting three or more nominations from that group for membership on the COA. Member qualifications are cited in 8.a. above. The COA will elect from the list of those nominated. Following that election as future vacancies occur in the College and University representative, the COA will advise that group twelve (12) months prior to a vacancy occurring and solicit nominations in the manner noted above. See application form in [Appendix B Form-8](#).

c. Member Associations A notice will be sent to the appropriate association requesting that the association nominate three qualified individuals to be considered for appointment. The nominees from each member association may not include its chief executive officer or any sitting members of its board (whether elected or non-elected). Nominees must be selected by a vote of the membership, and not by the board or chief executive officer. When each association receives the invitation to nominate candidates, it will be provided with instructions on how to document its nomination and election procedures. The COA may choose from the list of nominees or it may request that additional names be submitted. The appointment of an association representative to the COA is the sole responsibility of the Committee on Accreditation.

Individuals selected by the COA to serve as Professional members of the Committee must be licensed as funeral service practitioners at the time of their appointment, be actively involved in the profession, sign the ABFSE/COA Conflict of Interest Statement (see [Appendix G](#) of The Manual), be members in good standing of their respective national and/or state professional associations, and complete the Self study/Accreditation Workshop within six months of their first meeting.

d. Public. A notice will be sent to accredited programs, the associations, and appropriate funeral service organizations requesting that they publish the request for nomination of individuals to serve as public members. The notice will indicate that the public member must be from outside the field of funeral service or funeral service education. (See [Appendix B Form-7](#)) The appointment of a public member to the COA is the sole responsibility of the Committee on Accreditation. Individuals selected by the COA to serve as Public members of the committee must sign the ABFSE/COA Conflict of Interest Statement (see [Appendix G](#) of The Manual), complete the Self study/Accreditation Workshop within six months of their first meeting, and meet the 'public member' definition appearing in [Article VI.A.1](#) of the By-laws.

At least twenty five percent (25%) (of which includes one Educator and one Public Member) of the voting members of the COA must demonstrate significant experience in Distance Education at the supervisory, developmental, or practitioner level.

9. Complaints about the Committee on Accreditation

When a written complaint is filed regarding the COA, the following actions will be taken:

- a. the complainant will be notified within ten (10) days of receipt of the complaint in the ABFSE office. The COA will review the complaint and respond to complainant within thirty (30) days;
- b. if specific COA members are cited in the complaint, they will not participate in the review of the complaint;
- c. after COA meeting, the complainant will be notified of the result(s) and will also be notified of the opportunity for appeal or further considerations by COA, as appropriate. This notice to complainant will be sent within ten (10) days after the COA meeting at which the complaint was discussed;

- d. the complainant may appeal the COA decision to the ABFSE Executive Committee for independent review. Complainant has 30 days from receipt of the COA decision to file this appeal;
- e. following receipt of an appeal request, the ABFSE Executive Committee will review the COA's decision within thirty (30) days;
- f. the Executive Committee will prepare a report and recommendation to the Committee on Accreditation for its consideration. A copy will be provided to the complainant;
- g. the COA will review the report and recommendation of the Executive Committee within 30 days of the receipt of the report and make a final decision on the complaint; and
- h. the decision of the COA is final.

B. OPERATING POLICIES

1. Revisions of the Accreditation and Policy Manual and Standards

- a. Recognizing that the funeral service profession is continuously evolving, periodic review of ABFSE policies, procedures, and Accreditation Standards is an on-going process.
- b. The Committee on Accreditation (COA) is responsible for all policies related to Accreditation, including Standards, accreditation process, accreditation procedures, accreditation policies, and granting or taking other actions regarding Candidacy and Accreditation.
- c. Although it may review them at any time, the Committee on Accreditation will review the Standards of Accreditation at least once every five (5) years. If the COA determines at any point during its systematic program of review that it needs to make changes to its Standards, the Committee will initiate action within 12 months and make the changes within a reasonable period of time (normally six months). The formal review of the Standards every five (5) years will follow the process outlined in [Appendix H](#) of The Manual.
- d. For changes in the Standards of Accreditation requiring immediate attention to satisfy US Department of Education, CHEA and/or other legal requirements, COA will make the necessary adjustments and notify all interested parties. The COA will provide advance notice to allow interested parties opportunity to comment on the proposed changes prior to their adoption. To ensure opportunity for broad input, the process to ensure broad review will follow the guidelines in items 3, 4, and 5 of [Appendix H](#) of The Manual.
- e. Changes to non-accreditation ABFSE policies will be approved by two thirds vote of members present at an official meeting of the ABFSE.
- f. The Committee on Accreditation uses several indices to ensure that the Standards of Accreditation are valid, current, consistent, and relevant indicators of the quality of the education needed for entry into the funeral service profession. Among the indices used are
 - i. annual reports from each program providing information on demographics, attrition, and program changes;
 - ii. on-going liaison with the Curriculum Committee to ensure that the required curricula includes all areas tested by the National Board Examination, which, itself, is based on task analyses provided by practitioners in the field;
 - iii. Introspective analysis by the Committee (to ensure its application of Standards is consistent).

2. Continuity of ABFSE Operations

1 The ABFSE realizes that continuity of operations in the event of incapacitation of the Executive Director is
2 vital. In order to provide such continuity, it has an agreement with an individual who is trained in all ABFSE
3 operations.

4
5 This individual is prepared to take over temporarily in the event of the incapacitation of the Executive
6 Director. This individual would assume all duties of the Executive Director if such became necessary; would
7 immediately take over all operations of the ABFSE office to ensure total continuity of operations; would be
8 titled Interim Executive Director; and would serve in this capacity until a permanent successor is identified
9 by the ABFSE.

10
11 3. File Maintenance

12 For each accredited program the ABFSE office shall maintain on file at least the last two full accreditation
13 and/or Candidacy reviews. This shall include the last two committee decisions, periodic review reports, if
14 any, institutional responses to reports, special reviews, if any, responses to stipulations, if any, and committee
15 final actions. The file shall also contain the most recent Self study Report. In addition, the written record of
16 all decisions made throughout an institution's or program's affiliation with the COA regarding its candidacy,
17 accreditation, and any substantive changes – including all correspondence that is significantly related to those
18 decisions – will be maintained by the ABFSE office. ABFSE Document Retention and Destruction Policy is
19 found in [Appendix L](#).

20
21 4. Directory of Officers and Committees

22 The Directory of Officers will include the following information about each officer listed:

- 23 a. Full name
24 b. Academic qualifications
25 c. Professional qualifications
26 d. Employment affiliation
27 e. Organizational affiliations

28
29 The Directory of Committees will include:

- 30 a. Full Name
31 b. Employment or Association affiliation
32 c. Contact info with email

33
34 5. Curriculum Outlines

- 35 a. The following statement shall appear at the bottom of each page of the Curriculum Outlines: "This
36 outline and glossary may not be reproduced without the express written permission of ABFSE."
37
38 b. Member schools are authorized to distribute glossaries to their students.
39
40 c. Member schools agree that
41 i. The outline is available to ABFSE accredited member institutions and approved candidates for
42 educational purposes only.
43
44 ii. The Executive Committee of ABFSE, at its discretion, has the authority to distribute these
45 documents, as it considers appropriate, to ABFSE affiliated members and other member
46 organizations only.
47
48 d. The following policies apply to the use and distribution of curriculum outlines:
49 i. Glossaries (but not Outlines) may be reproduced and distributed to students.
50
51 ii. Outlines are not to be reproduced or distributed to anyone other than funeral service or related
52 faculty.
53
54 iii. Outlines may not be posted to public access media (e.g., the www) unless password protected.

iv. Outlines and glossaries are not to be duplicated for sale in any form without the written permission of ABFSE.

e. Use of ABFSE curriculum outlines and glossary.

i. The curriculum outlines and glossary of the ABFSE are viewed as intellectual property of the ABFSE. ABFSE holds copyright for the Outlines and accompanying glossaries. Duplication of glossaries in textbooks must be approved by ABFSE.

ii. In lieu of royalties for use of the ABFSE outlines and glossaries the following will apply:

Duplication of glossary and use of outline as basis for a textbook

applicable for life of outline (until next revision) \$1000

Access to all outlines/glossaries for use in textbooks on continuous basis..... \$1500/year

Purchase of complete set of curriculum outlines (hard copy)..... \$10,000

Purchase of outlines by interested schools/programs (including candidate schools) does not authorize use or distribution for textbooks and is subject to the policy cited above.

6. Executive Director Evaluation

a. A detailed, written annual evaluation of the Executive Director is the responsibility of the Chair of the COA and the ABFSE President.

b. The Executive Director prepares an annual self-evaluation which is sent to the COA Chair and the President. The self-evaluation will include a discussion of the following: an overall assessment of the accomplishments for the year based on the list of responsibilities of the Executive Director; a list of those areas that merited special attention; areas that may need special attention; and goals for the next year.

c. The Executive Director, the COA Chair, and the President will discuss the self-evaluation and any other issues that they may wish to consider.

d. The COA Chair and the ABFSE President shall prepare a written evaluation of the Executive Director based on the Executive Director's work with the COA and with the ABFSE in its entirety. The COA Chair and President shall solicit input from ABFSE Committee chairs, Executive Committee members, and others. The written evaluation includes a discussion of strengths, areas needing more attention, and recommendations for renewal of appointment (if that is the decision) and also for an appropriate salary increase. Also included in the evaluation are any suggestions for improvement that might be thought beneficial to ABFSE, the COA, and the Executive Director. The Executive Director has an opportunity to review the written evaluation and discuss it with the COA Chair and President before it is finalized.

e. The evaluation of the Executive Director is put on the agenda of the Committee on Accreditation. ABFSE officers shall be invited to the COA meeting for the agenda item. The ABFSE President and officers shall not be present during regular Committee on Accreditation matters prior to the Executive Director evaluation agenda item and shall be excused from the meeting once the agenda item is concluded. A copy of the Executive Director's self-evaluation as well as the written evaluation by the chair of the COA and President is included as supporting material for that agenda item. At the meeting, the Executive Director is invited to make a brief presentation to the Committee on Accreditation and then the COA Chair and President make a presentation, including their recommendations.

f. Members of the Committee on Accreditation and ABFSE officers are invited to ask questions of the Executive Director, the Chair of the COA, and/or the President.

- 1
2 g. Following full discussion, the Committee on Accreditation and the ABFSE officers vote on the
3 recommendations of the COA Chair and President, including any amendments to the motion. Each
4 member of the Committee on Accreditation receives one vote and each ABFSE officer receives one vote.
5 At no time shall the ABFSE officers have more votes than the total combined votes of the members of
6 the Committee on Accreditation.
7 h. The action of the Committee on Accreditation and the ABFSE Officers is reported to the full
8 membership.
9

10 7. Use of ABFSE Logo

- 11 a. The logo created by ABFSE to create brand recognition is for the express use of ABFSE only.
12
13 b. In the event an accredited program/institution desires a visual demonstration of accreditation status, the
14 use of the logo in college publications may be authorized with written consent of the Executive Director.
15
16 c. Written requests to use the ABFSE logo must designate the name of the school/program as recognized
17 by the ABFSE, the purpose for which the logo will be used and the anticipated length of time the logo
18 will be used.
19
20 d. Use of the ABFSE logo in connection with an unaccredited program, including a program in Candidacy,
21 is strictly prohibited.
22

23 8. ABFSE Banking/Investment Policy

- 24 a. ABFSE funds shall be held in FDIC insured banking institutions with attention paid to limits on total
25 deposits per institution.
26
27 b. Appropriate balances are to be held in operating accounts. Excess funds should be transferred to money
28 market (or equivalent) accounts where practical.
29
30 c. Where possible, Certificates of Deposit (or similar instruments) shall be utilized.
31
32 d. Accounts designated via audit as “Donor Restricted” accounts will be designated on the Budget reports.
33 (example: Scholarship funds).
34

35 9. Acknowledgement of Illness and Death Policy

- 36 a. When the ABFSE office is notified of the illness of an ABFSE member, a Get Well card will be mailed
37 as soon as possible.
38
39 b. ABFSE will acknowledge the death of a member, spouse, child, or parents of members with an email
40 notification to the ABFSE community, sympathy card and flowers or a donation to either the memorial
41 chosen by the family or to the ABFSE Scholarship Fund (\$100)
42
43 c. The same policy will apply for members of the ABFSE Executive Committee, Committee on
44 Accreditation, ABFSE staff and past officers of ABFSE.
45
46 d. Email notification to the ABFSE community and card are authorized for past members of ABFSE.
47
48 e. An ABFSE representative to attend the funeral is authorized for an ABFSE member. The Executive
49 Director has the discretion to make exceptions.
50
51 f. ABFSE makes every effort to acknowledge the loss of members (and family) during the Annual
52 Conference “Prayer of Remembrance.”
53

54 10. ABFSE Expense Reimbursement Policy

Includes: Manual Update approved October 2025
Manual update proposals Summer 2025
Language Corrections December 2023
Fee Revisions approved April 2022

ABFSE and COA Accreditation and Policy Manual

Revised Standards effective January 1, 2020
Revised Standards effective January 1, 2025

1 Individuals authorized to represent ABFSE and COA are eligible for reimbursement of reasonable and
2 necessary travel expenses (i.e., site visits, invited guests/presenters, attendance at COA meetings, etc.).
3

4 Reimbursement is to include:

- 5 a. Transportation, i.e., regular airfare (no 1st class) with bag fees, mileage to/from airport, parking, transfers,
6 rental car when that is best option, and mileage at current IRS approved rate, etc. (when personal auto is
7 mode of travel, mileage reimbursement should be comparable to other modes of travel).
- 8 b. Lodging, including local taxes. Early arrival or late departure not related to the event will be the
9 responsibility of the traveler.
- 10
- 11 c. Meals (alcoholic beverages will not be billed to an institution during site visits without prior approval).
- 12
- 13 d. Ground transportation to meals and back to the hotel during authorized travel.
- 14
- 15 e. Gratuities.
- 16

17 11. Travel Disruption Policy

18 In the event that travel for site visits, etc. is disrupted, the following will apply to travel reimbursement
19 considerations:

- 20 a. When weather and issues outside the control of the traveler intervene, reasonable efforts to re-schedule
21 should be attempted. Re-booking fees will be included in the travel reimbursement request.
- 22 b. Should illness prevent a team member from participating in an assignment, COA may approve
23 reasonable expenses and time spent in preparation.
- 24

25 Purchase of travel insurance is not recommended unless extenuating circumstances apply. Such occurrences
26 should be reviewed with the Executive Director prior to the purchase of travel insurance, unless this is
27 impossible.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

1. **Accreditation.** The voluntary submission of an institution to the close scrutiny of the ABFSE Committee on Accreditation, which is composed of educational representatives, funeral professionals, and laity for adherence to high standards of educational opportunity for all students.
2. **Accreditation Term.** The period for which accreditation is awarded.
3. **Additional location.** A physical facility that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution and within the same ownership structure of the institution, at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program. An additional location participates in the title IV, HEA programs only through the certification of the main campus.
4. **Adverse Action.** 34 CFR 602.3 describes adverse action as denial, withdrawal, suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation or candidacy. Withdrawal and revocation are equivalent terms for COA. Termination is removal of accreditation at the conclusion of the accreditation period. Suspension is not an option.
5. **American Board.** American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE).
6. **Bachelor's or Master's Degree.** When required of faculty or administration such degrees shall be awarded by a college or university accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
7. **Branch campus.** Branch Campus is a location of an institution or program that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution or program. Such a location is permanent in nature, offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential, has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization, and has its own budgetary and hiring authority. (as defined by 34 CFR 600.2)
8. **Candidacy.** This is the pre-accreditation status for programs seeking recognition/accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation of ABFSE. (see Chapter IV)
9. **Chairperson of the Site Visit Team (Team Chair).** A non-funeral service educator, experienced in the evaluation of institutions of higher learning, who has been appointed by the COA.
10. **Chief Administrative Officer.** If the curriculum in funeral service education is part of other curricula offered by the college or university, then the chief administrative officer shall be the highest administrative officer of the central administration. In this case, all matters concerning accreditation shall be sent to both the central administration and the department that offers instruction in funeral service education. In a single purpose institution, the chief administrative officer is that person so designated by the institution.
11. **CHEA.** Council for Higher Education Accreditation is a United States organization that serves as a major national voice and advocate for higher education accreditation and quality assurance.
12. **Clinical Instructor.** An individual licensed and employed full or part time to assist in teaching a laboratory or clinical offering under the supervision of the qualified faculty member responsible for the classroom lecture course in which the lab is offered.
13. **Committee on Accreditation (COA).** An autonomous standing committee of the ABFSE with sole authority to grant candidacy, initial accreditation or reaccreditation to institutions of funeral service education. (see By-Laws, Article VI)
14. **Comprehensive review.** The process by which an accredited institution or program, including a candidate program, is evaluated in the context of the ABFSE accreditation standards and policies. Comprehensive review includes the self study and site visit.
15. **Continuous System of Program Planning and Assessment.** A written, well-defined process that produces a documented plan directly related to the program's learning objectives and which contains guidelines, procedures, and methodologies for continually ensuring the on-going educational quality of the instructional program and the attainment of expected student outcomes.
16. **Distance education.** Instruction offered through online and/or other electronic means, where the student and faculty member are in separate physical locations.
17. **Distance education course.** Instructional content of the course is substantially delivered (50% or more), either synchronously or asynchronously, to students located in a physical location separate from the instructor.

- 1 18. **Distance education program.** Refers to an accredited program in which 50% or more of the courses are
2 delivered, either synchronously or asynchronously, to students located in a physical location separate from the
3 faculty member.
- 4 19. **Executive Director.** The person responsible for the function of the office of the American Board.
- 5 20. **Feasibility Study.** A detailed document that demonstrates that a program/institution meets the requirements for
6 accreditation, has effectively organized resources to enable it to accomplish its educational purpose, and is
7 following realistic plans to acquire, organize, and apply additional resources needed to comply with the Standards
8 for Accreditation. This document becomes the candidacy Self study.
- 9 21. **Focus Visit.** A visit by a representative(s) of the Committee on Accreditation, to a program about which the COA
10 has a specific concern. These visits are for the purpose of reviewing items of COA concern. Expenses are the
11 responsibility of the program/institution being visited.
- 12 22. **Funeral Service Education or Mortuary Science Education.** An educational program designed to prepare an
13 embalmer, funeral director, and/or similarly designated professional.
- 14 23. **Gatekeeper.** Status resulting when accrediting agency approval provides the means for the institution to be
15 eligible to receive federal financial aid funds.
- 16 24. **Hybrid course.** Refers to delivery of course content whereby some is in-person and some is via distance. When
17 less than 50% is in-person, the course is considered a distance course. Hybrid courses may be described in other
18 terminology such as blended or web-enhanced, etc.
- 19 25. **HyFlex.** Short for Hybrid-Flexible, HyFlex, is a course design that gives students the choice to participate in
20 person or online, either synchronously or asynchronously, for each class session.
- 21 26. **Initial Accreditation.** Status that applies when a program moves from Candidacy to Accreditation.
- 22 27. **Institution.** A school, college, or university offering a program of funeral service education, whether identified
23 as an academy, a college, an institute, a school, or by similar designations.
- 24 28. **IPEDS.** Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. It is a system of interrelated surveys conducted
25 annually by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). IPEDS gathers
26 information from every college, university, and technical and vocational institution that participates in the federal
27 student financial aid programs.
- 28 29. **Manual.** Accreditation and Policy Manual of the American Board of Funeral Service Education.
- 29 30. **National Board Examination (NBE).** The formal certifying examination for the funeral service/mortuary
30 science profession developed and administered by the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining
31 Boards (ICFSEB or The Conference), 1885 Shelby Lane, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72704. The purpose of the
32 National Board Examination (NBE) as described by ICFSEB is to provide official licensing agencies with a
33 national evaluation of an applicant for licensure in the diverse areas of competency required for the field of funeral
34 service. The Conference develops, administers and provides score reporting services to the state licensure boards.
35 The NBE is utilized by the states and the District of Columbia as an assessment of content knowledge needed to
36 practice as a licensed Funeral Director or Embalmer.
- 37 31. **Pre-Candidacy.** This represents the time during which a program/institution is considering or anticipating the
38 application for Candidacy. A consulting visit by ABFSE representatives is required to review the status of the
39 program including the ability to meet ABFSE candidacy eligibility requirements. Pre-candidacy is not an ABFSE
40 accreditation status (see Chapter IV).
- 41 32. **Preceptor.** A licensed individual employed by a funeral home or other licensed funeral facility who agrees to
42 oversee/supervise on the job training for a student enrolled in an accredited program. Preceptors under this
43 definition must meet qualifications as indicated in this manual.
- 44 33. **Program.** The funeral service education offering provided by a comprehensive, multi-purpose institution.
- 45 34. **Public Members.** Representatives who are laypersons in the sense that they are not educators in or members of
46 the profession for which the students are being prepared, nor are in any way directly related to the institutions or
47 programs being evaluated.
- 48 35. **Qualified Instructor.** A full- or part-time faculty member meeting qualifications as indicated in this manual.
- 49 36. **Substantive change.** Any change at the institution or program level with the potential to impact the ability to
50 maintain compliance with standards. See [Chapter X.A.](#) and [Appendix K](#) for examples and associated fees.
- 51 37. **Self Study.** Is a formal process (which culminates in a written document) during which an educational institution
52 or program critically examines its structure and substance, judges the program's overall effectiveness relative to
53 its mission, identifies specific strengths and deficiencies and indicates a plan for necessary modification and
54 improvements. A similar document is prepared for candidacy and is also referred to as a feasibility study.

- 1 38. **Site Visit Team.** Individuals appointed by the COA to visit and evaluate an institution/program for purposes of
- 2 accreditation/re-accreditation.
- 3 39. **Teach-out plan.** A written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students
- 4 if an institution, or an institutional location that provides 100 percent of at least one program, ceases to operate or
- 5 plans to cease operations before all enrolled students have completed their program of study. (34CFR 600.2)
- 6 40. **Teach-out agreement.** A written agreement between institutions that provides the opportunity for students at
- 7 one institution to complete their program of study at another institution when the original institution or program
- 8 ceases to operate or plans to cease operations.

1 **APPENDIX B: SAMPLE FORMS**

2 **AMERICAN BOARD OF FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION**
3 **FORM B-1: APPLICATION FOR CANDIDACY**
4
5

Name of Institution _____

Program Title _____

Program Director/Dean or other contact person during Candidacy?

(Name/title) _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ FAX _____

Email _____ Web _____

Degree(s) to be offered _____

Will Degree be offered via Distance Education? YES ☐ NO ☐

6 Department/Division, etc. in which program will be
located? _____

7 Proposed location of clinical embalming On-Campus ☐ Off-Campus ☐ Both ☐

8
9 Define the target service area:

10
11 Are there other ABFSE accredited or Candidate programs in your projected service area?
YES ☐ NO ☐

12 (If yes, list the programs)

13
14 CERTIFICATION: I certify that the following items have been, or are being submitted in support of this
15 application:

- 16 1. the Candidacy Self study via WEAVE or other platform as described in Chapters IV and V of the
17 Accreditation and Policy Manual, and
18 2. Candidacy Fee as specified in [Appendix D](#) of the Accreditation and Policy Manual.
19

20 Signature of person authorized to act on behalf of the institution:

Signature Date

Title

Includes: Manual Update approved October 2025
Manual update proposals Summer 2025
Language Corrections December 2023
Fee Revisions approved April 2022

ABFSE and COA Accreditation and Policy Manual
Revised Standards effective January 1, 2020
Revised Standards effective January 1, 2025

AMERICAN BOARD OF FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION
FORM B-2: APPLICATION FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION

We hereby certify that _____
(name of institution or program)

meets the eligibility criteria for Initial Accreditation by the American Board of Funeral Service Education as stipulated in Chapter III. C. of the ABFSE Accreditation and Policy Manual, and makes formal application for Initial Accreditation.

We further certify the following materials are being submitted in support of this application:

1. Initial Accreditation Self study as described in Chapter V including applicable appendices from the Accreditation and Policy Manual, and any literature descriptive of the Funeral Service Program, *and*
2. applicable fees as specified in [Appendix D](#) of the Accreditation and Policy Manual.
 - a. Initial Accreditation Comprehensive Review (aka Self study) Fee
 - b. Site Visit Expenses deposit.

We understand that an invoice for the current year Initial Accreditation will be presented when the COA approval is granted.

Signed:

(Person directly in charge of the Funeral Service Program)

(Title)

(Chief Executive Officer of the Institution)

(Title)

Date

1 **AMERICAN BOARD OF FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION**
2 **COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION**

3
4 FORM B-3: TRANSMITTAL FORM

5 Date _____
6

7 This Application for Accreditation is submitted by:

8 _____
9 Name and Address of Institution

10 for use by the site visit team and the Committee on Accreditation for the purpose of
11 recommending whether or not this institution should be accredited, by the American Board of
12 Funeral Service Education.

13 We certify that:

- 14
15 1. In preparing this Application, there was broad participation by members from all
16 applicable segments of the institution;
17 2. We believe this Application truly and accurately portrays this institution.
18
19

20 Signature _____

21 Name and Title Chief Academic Officer
 (President, Chancellor, etc.)

22 Signature _____

23 Name and Title Head of the Funeral Service Education Program

24 Signature _____

25 Name and Title Faculty member - Officially representing the Faculty

26 Signature _____

27 Name and Title Student officially representing the Student Body
28

29 (***SAMPLE** –Should be signed by all groups participating; delete this line before submission*)
30

FORM B-4: PROGRAM AND INSTITUTION DATA FORM FOR SELF STUDY

Name of Program _____
 Program Director _____
 Address _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

Institution _____
 Institution Phone _____
 CEO _____
 Address _____
 (if different than Program) _____ Email _____

Name and Title of Individual to Whom Program Director Reports

(note: An Organizational Chart for the Institution must be provided to satisfy Standards 1.7 & 2)

Type of Institution: ☐ Public ☐ Single Purpose
☐ Private Multi-Purpose
☐ Two-year or Community College
☐ Four-year College or University

Is the institution regionally accredited? ☐ Yes ☐ No
 If yes, give agency name and date of last action _____

Has any adverse action been taken or is any adverse action currently in effect concerning the institution by any accrediting agency approved by the US Secretary of Education?

If yes, describe below (add additional sheets if necessary)

Is ABFSE a 'gatekeeper' for Title IV eligibility for the institution? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Indicate the accredited program(s) offered. Check all that apply:

☐ Associate degree ☐ Diploma ☐ Certificate
☐ Other (specify): _____
☐ Bachelor's degree (leading to funeral service licensure)
☐ Bachelor's degree (leading to funeral service degree completion)

Can students complete courses in any accredited program via Distance Education? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is 50% or more of the accredited program available via Distance Education? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, indicate the number of credit hours applicable to the program(s) that are available via Distance Education:

The accredited program (or Candidate program) primarily draws students from which area?:

☐ National ☐ Regional ☐ Local _____

Comments (optional):

Institution/program operates under the statutory authority of which state? (Standard 1.6)

Program Background.

Year in which the accredited Program was originally established _____

Has the program operated continuously at this institution and/or location? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, explain:

Year in which first class graduated _____

Total number of graduates to date _____

First year Class capacity _____

Provide a three-year summary of the following data (which is available via Annual Reports)

	Year	New enrollees	M/F	Related	Graduates
Current year					
Previous year					
2 years prior					

Curriculum Overview. (required to fulfill expectations of Standard 6 along with Form B-6)

- List all courses for each accredited program(s) in a single document (preferably a single page).
- Include both general education and funeral service specific courses.
- Group courses by semester/quarter and identify the sequence in which the terms occur.
- For each course, provide the course number, course title, and credit hours assigned.
- Designate the delivery modality (on-campus, online, blended) for each program course.
- Indicate which courses are elective.

Faculty Data for Self study (is submitted as a separate report for Standard 7).

URL Directory

College website _____

Program webpage _____

College catalog _____

Program curriculum page(s) _____

Accreditation Statement _____

Student Handbook _____

Faculty Handbook _____

Constitution and By-Laws _____

Other _____

Includes: Manual Update approved October 2025
Manual update proposals Summer 2025
Language Corrections December 2023
Fee Revisions approved April 2022

ABFSE and COA Accreditation and Policy Manual

Revised Standards effective January 1, 2020
Revised Standards effective January 1, 2025

FORM B-5: ABFSE ANNUAL REPORT

**The following link will take you to the ABFSE Student Tracker /
Annual Report and related Sample Forms
<https://star.abfse.org/>
(password required)**

Form B-6: CURRICULUM DISTRIBUTION BY ABFSE CONTENT AREA

Course #	Course Title	Credits	Totals
Public Health & Technical (Min: 14 sem/21 qtr)			
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
SUBTOTAL in Public Health			
Business Management and Professional (Min: 16 sem/24 qtr)			
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
SUBTOTAL in Business Management			
Social Sci/Humanities (Min: 6 sem/9 qtr)			
1			
2			
3			
4			
SUBTOTAL in Social Science			
Legal, Ethical, Regulatory (Min: 3 sem/4 qtr)			
1			
2			
SUBTOTAL in Legal			
General Education (25% of Total in Line 52 [including Gen Ed])			
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
TOTAL in General Education			
TOTAL CREDITS REQUIRED IN PROGRAM			

Form B-6B: CURRICULUM DISTRIBUTION BY ABFSE CONTENT AREA (FOR
BACCALAUREATE DEGREE PROGRAM

Academic credit awarded for upper division courses within the baccalaureate degree program must be clearly distinguished from that of lower division courses via this Form.

Course #	Course Title	Credits	Totals
Public Health & Technical (Min: 14 sem/21 qtr)			
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
Upper Division Courses			
1			
2			
SUBTOTAL in Public Health			
Business Management and Professional (Min: 16 sem /24 qtr)			
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
Upper Division Courses			
1			
2			
SUBTOTAL in Business Management			
Social Sci/Humanities (Min: 6 sem / 9 qtr)			
1			
2			
3			
4			
Upper Division Courses			
1			
2			
SUBTOTAL in Social Science			
Legal, Ethical, Regulatory (Min: 3 sem / 4qtr)			
1			
2			
3			
Upper Division Courses			
1			
2			
SUBTOTAL in Legal			

1 General Education (30%) - minimum of 40 semester credits or equivalent.

2
3 Lower Division General Education Courses

4 1

5 2

6 3

7 4

8 5

9 6

10 7

11 8

12
13 Upper Division General Education Courses (at least nine (9) semester credits)

14 1

15 2

16 3

17 4

18 TOTAL in General Education

19
20 TOTAL CREDITS REQUIRED IN PROGRAM

21
22
23 Total Upper division coursework must consist of 30% of the degree. (includes the major and general education
24 combined)

Form B-7: COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION: PUBLIC MEMBER NOMINEE WORKSHEET
American Board of Funeral Service Education

Name of Nominee
Contact Information

Address

City

State

Zip

Telephone

Email Address

A. ☐ Nominating Individual or Organization (Identify):

☐ Self-Nomination

1. Is this nominee an employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution or program that either is accredited or pre-accredited by the Committee on Accreditation, or has applied for accreditation of Candidacy?

No ☐
Yes ☐

If yes, please explain:

2. Is this individual a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the Committee on Accreditation or the American Board of Funeral Service Education

No ☐
Yes ☐

If yes, please explain:

3. Is this individual a spouse, parent, child, or sibling, or an individual identified in the first or second paragraph of this definition?

No ☐
Yes ☐

If yes, please explain:

COMMENTS:

--

B. Nominee should provide 1) brief resume and 2) brief statement describing his/her interest in serving on the COA

C. List two references:

Name	Address/Phone/Email	Position

Name/Title of Person Completing This Report

Date

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Fee Revisions approved April 2022

ABFSE and COA Accreditation and Policy Manual

Revised Standards effective January 1, 2020
Revised Standards effective January 1, 2025

Form B-8: COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION: EDUCATOR MEMBER APPLICATION

Name of Applicant _____

Representing ABFSE accredited institution/program

Name _____

Type: Single purpose _____ Multi-purpose _____

Applicant is: FT Faculty _____ FT Administrator _____

State of licensure _____

Number of years in funeral service education _____ Date started _____

Attended Self study workshop?

	Yes	Date
_____ No		

Distance Education Experience

_____ Yes
_____ No

(At least 25% of the voting members of the COA must demonstrate significant experience in Distance Education at the supervisory, developmental, or practitioner level. (By-Laws Article VI. A.)

Attach resume. (include accreditation and/or site visit experience)

Individuals selected by the COA to serve as one of the Educator members of the committee must:

- be full-time funeral service faculty or administrators at an ABFSE accredited institution/program,
- possess a minimum of a master's degree,
- be credentialed as a Funeral Director in their state of employment,
- have completed the Self study/Accreditation Workshop,
- have at least three years' experience in funeral service education at an ABFSE accredited education institution or program
- sign the ABFSE/COA Conflict of Interest Statement (see [Appendix G](#) of The Manual)

(ABFSE Bylaws, Article VI, Policy Manual. [Chapter XI. A.8.](#))

Additional considerations:

- As a designated body of the ABFSE, COA selects its own members as per the By-laws in order to maintain separate and independent status necessary for recognition as an accreditor by USDE and CHEA.
- Candidates should demonstrate familiarity with ABFSE activities via attendance at ABFSE annual meetings, ABFSE committee participation, documented participation in institutional Self study preparation, participation as a member of a site visit team, etc.

Form B-9: COMPLAINT ABOUT ABFSE ACCREDITED PROGRAM

Complainant Contact Information

**Name Complainant
Contact Information**

Address

City

State

Zip

Telephone

Email Address

Summary of Complaint (Attach additional pages, if necessary)

Name of ABFSE Accredited School

1. Provide a brief summary of the complaint. Include any documentation or other evidence to support the allegation. (Attach additional pages if necessary)

2. Indicate the Standard(s) alleged to have been violated and when the alleged violation(s) took place.

3. Describe how the alleged complaint is in violation of ABFSE Standards:

4. Describe attempts to resolve the issues with the accredited program and/or sponsoring institution and any responses received.

By signing below, I authorize a copy of this complaint to be sent to the institution and to provide the ABFSE with further information as requested in its investigation. I have read the complaint process outlined in the ABFSE Manual and I understand that the ABFSE only investigates complaints related to the standards of accreditation and does not resolve issues between individuals and an accredited institution or program. Actions taken against a program or institution as the result of a complaint are limited to the sanctions outlined in the ABFSE Manual and do not adjudicate or resolve any other causes of action or disputes.

Signature

Date

Form B-10: FACULTY WITHOUT MASTERS
(to be printed on school letterhead)

Note: this form is for institutional use; it is not submitted to ABFSE office.
The form is intended to be printed on college letterhead in order to have new faculty acknowledge the requirement.
(Standard 6.1.2)

All newly- and re-appointed full-time faculty must earn a master's degree from a regionally accredited college or university within five years of their initial appointment date. Faculty who fail to meet the five-year requirement may not be allowed to teach until the degree is awarded.

Institution/program name _____

Faculty Member name _____

Date of initial employment (month/year) _____

I/we understand that full-time faculty members must earn a Master's Degree from a regionally accredited institution within five years of initial appointment.

- Faculty who fail to meet the five-year requirement are not allowed to teach until the degree is awarded.
- Violation of this standard is reason for the program to be placed on 'Probation' immediately.

Faculty member

Date

Program Director

Date

Dean/Academic Officer

Date

APPENDIX C: GUIDE FOR THE SELF STUDY PROCESS AND REPORT

INTRODUCTION:

This section of the Accreditation and Policy Manual is intended to assist programs with the Self study process and prepare the Self study document prior to an accreditation visit. Chapter V of the Accreditation and Policy Manual presents an overview of the accreditation process and important information related to the Self study process and report. It should be read before proceeding with this section.

Program directors are expected to attend a Self study workshop held in April and October each year. PowerPoint notes from the workshop are available at the 'For Educators' page of the ABFSE website.

I. ORGANIZING AND CONDUCTING THE SELF STUDY PROCESS

As noted in Chapter V, a Self study is a formal process during which an educational institution or program critically examines its structure and substance relative to the established accreditation standards, judges the program's overall effectiveness relative to its mission, identifies specific strengths and deficiencies and identifies a plan for any necessary modification and improvements. Because the formalized process takes many months, programs should begin well in advance of an anticipated site visit.

Ideally, the Self study should be an integral part of the program's ongoing self-evaluation and not constitute the only evidence of planning which takes place.

Programs seeking Initial Accreditation often use consultants as guides through the process. This is not an ABFSE requirement, but many programs find it to be valuable. The American Board of Funeral Service Education office can provide contact info for individuals who have provided consultant services.

Following are general procedures to follow in the preparation of the Self study.

- A. Approximately 18 months in advance of reaccreditation, the program is notified by letter of the approximate date for the next comprehensive evaluation. This letter also suggests a timeline for the process.
- B. Approximately one year in advance, the program should establish a Self study Steering Committee whose responsibility will be completion of the final document. The makeup of the committee varies. However, the committee should include representation from the institution's administrative staff, teaching faculty, students, alumni, and the governing board. Advisory Board input is valuable. Departmental personnel, librarians, faculty, staff and administrative officers must look at themselves critically in order to appraise objectively and to report honestly.
- C. The committee is typically chaired by the head of the program. It is important that one person be assigned overall responsibility for insuring that the work assignments are made, the time schedule is maintained, and the format of the Self study Report is accomplished.
- D. The committee organizes itself to collect data with regard to each of the standards of accreditation. This process generally involves meetings with campus personnel, program alumni, and advisory board members. Task Committees dealing with specific standards are often used. All committees used should be structured to be analytical and encouraged to question and debate broadly. A result of the Self study should always be a broader knowledge of the program, its underlying philosophy, and the application of that philosophy to its students. Demonstrating how departmental goals are integrated with institutional goals is always important.

- E. To conduct the Self study, the program director should preview the Word version of the Self study available from the ABFSE office or via the ‘For Educators’ page of the ABFSE. This is intended as a resource to ensure that the questions about each standard are adequately addressed.
- F. The Self study will be submitted electronically. Evidence to support answers and responses to the standards is to be uploaded. Scanned documents or PDF files are preferred for presentation of evidence in the Self study document.
- G. Chapter V of the Accreditation and Policy Manual describes items to be submitted to the ABFSE with the Self study. The electronic version of the Self study provides instructions to attach the necessary documents. Site visitors will review the documentation. To satisfy USDE requirements site visitors **will** verify evidence of job placement (original survey data must be available).

II. ORGANIZING AND COMPLETING THE SELF STUDY REPORT

A. Instructions for organizing the Self study.

The Self study is expected to be a document of evidence. Questions related to each standard are designed to ensure that necessary information is provided. For each Standard there is an option to supplement the with analysis and projection, to provide additional clarity regarding the manner in which the standards are being met and to explain future plans.

The electronic Self study Report is organized as follows:

INTRODUCTION

STANDARDS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Introduction will include:

- Transmittal Form ([Appendix B Form-3](#))
- Program and Institutional Data Form ([Appendix B Form-4](#))
- Curriculum Distribution by ABFSE Content Area ([Appendix B Form-6](#) or [Form B-6B](#))
- Brief description of the Self study process, including a list of the participants and their assignments;
- A brief historical overview of the program;
- Description of steps taken to address any concerns from the last comprehensive review.

Introduction:

1. TRANSMITTAL FORM. ([B-3](#))

This form is uploaded in the Introduction section. The original form accompanies payment of the comprehensive review invoice.

2. PROGRAM AND INSTITUTION DATA FORM ([B-4](#))

Complete the Program and Institution Data Form (B-4), providing data in short answers or chart form as indicated in the directions on the form. Items 19 and 20 are completed via the Curriculum Overview (Excel) Chart and the Faculty Data Sheet (Word and Excel). Both are uploaded in response to other standards.

3. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SELF STUDY PROCESS

Describe the process which resulted in the Self study Report, including the names and titles of individuals involved, their Self study committee assignments and the time schedule followed.

4. DESCRIPTION OF REMEDIATION OF PREVIOUSLY CITED DEFICIENCIES

If the program has been evaluated previously, indicate what the program has done since the last review to correct any deficiencies that may have been cited.

Standards

The program is expected to provide a realistic description of its present status with regard to each Standard. Questions for each standard have been provided in order to focus the response on areas of interest to COA. Supporting documents and evidence will be uploaded with responses.

Responses will typically be a narrative text, answers to yes/no type questions and / or upload of supporting documents. In some cases, the URL will be requested. However, **links to evidence documents are not acceptable**. Since the Self study will be stored electronically, the basic document and supporting materials must be accessible in the future. Uploaded Word, Excel and/or PDF files are expected. Links are unlikely to survive changes to websites, etc. and therefore will not be accessible over time. In some cases, uploaded photos will fulfill the expectations.

After completing the questions associated with each standard there is an opportunity to provide an optional summary of the manner in which the program maintains compliance with the overall Standard. The optional summary is an opportunity to comment on compliance efforts not covered by the questions.

Additional Information includes Summary and Conclusions.

This is the opportunity to provide a brief summary of program strengths, concerns, and plans to correct any problems discovered during the Self study process.

The Self study is an opportunity to summarize the program's strengths, concerns and plans to correct any issues discovered during the Self study process. Programs offering distance education must be sure to address the appropriate questions.

The Self study Workshop is an essential aspect of preparation.

B. Completing the Report

One advantage of using the accreditation software (Weave) is the organization that is provided for the report. For example, No Table of Contents for the Self study Report is necessary. Page numbers are assigned automatically.

III. DOCUMENTS. Pertinent documentation should be uploaded in the response to each Standard. If this is not possible or practical, exceptions must be discussed with the team chair in advance and noted in the Self study document.

Institutions are expected to label each evidence file or folder using a readily identifiable name or title and/or by standard and substandard number, i.e. for Standard 1.1 or Standard 6.8.9. Embalming case reports by year/semester, student, etc.

When paper documents are necessary, they should be available in the team workroom for review during the site visit.

IV. SITE VISIT. The actual sequence of the site visit will vary depending upon the program to be visited. A sample site visit agenda is presented as a guide.

Appropriate dates for a scheduled site visit are determined by the ABFSE Executive Director and the Program Director. In establishing dates, consideration is given to the time necessary to conduct the Self study and prepare the Self study Report. The visit will be scheduled when students are present.

The program should provide a private workroom for the team, and materials relevant to the program that are not included in the Self study Report should be available for review in that location.

1
2 Team Members shall be admitted to all facilities used by the program. They shall inquire into all phases of
3 management and operation of the program in order to verify the content of the Self study Report. They shall
4 have complete freedom to confer with school officials, members of the faculty, students, advisory board and
5 such others as deemed necessary by the team.

6
7 Team members shall visit classes to observe lectures, laboratory exercises, and other methods of instruction. It
8 is understood that team members are not limited to any prearranged schedule but are free to observe and consult
9 as they desire. Schedules of free hours of faculty is important. Team members will seek to cause as little
10 disruption as possible to the routine of the program and institution.

11
12 The team will hold an exit interview with administration and program staff to make known its findings. Those
13 present for the exit interview are as selected by the administration. The purpose of the meeting is to make
14 known to the program the findings of the team committee.

15
16 Most visits begin with a private team meeting. This allows the team members to coordinate their efforts, review
17 the site visit schedule and identify areas of the program requiring specific attention. Depending on the location,
18 the site visit may begin with a tour of clinical facilities on day one.

19
20 A brief campus tour of the funeral related facilities is customary. This will familiarize team members with the
21 physical plant and the locations of scheduled appointments. Care must be taken so that this tour is brief. Campus
22 maps for team members will aid in this orientation.
23

24 **The Self study Report, the team's site visit report, the program's response to that report, and the**
25 **interaction of program representatives with the Committee on Accreditation form the basis on which**
26 **the COA determines compliance or non-compliance with the Accreditation Standards and ultimately**
27 **the accreditation decision.**

28
29 **The site visit team does NOT make accreditation decisions. They report their findings.**

1 SAMPLE SITE VISIT AGENDA

2 DAY 1

3 Team Travel

4 Initial meeting of the site visit team in host school location.

5 *Optional:* Pre-arranged visit(s) to clinical sites.

6 (important when sites are on the route from airport to institution)

7 DAY 2

8 Morning: Preliminary meetings with key program personnel

9 Brief tour of campus, program offices, classrooms, labs

10 Team meeting

11 Interviews begin

12 Noon: Working lunch; faculty, students, advisory committee are encouraged to
13 be present

14 Afternoon: Interviews continue

15 The following assignments are divided among team members.

16 Tour clinical (practicum) sites

17 Interview administrative officer(s) of program

18 Interview faculty

19 Interview students, graduates, advisory committee

20 Observe classes in session

21 Review and observe support services, such as library, financial aid,
22 registrar, and maintenance of student records, etc.

23 Evening: Team meeting to review observations from the day, identify areas still to
24 be evaluated or requiring additional attention, and work on draft of site visit
25 report.

26 DAY 3

27 Morning: Complete remaining interviews, tours, etc.

28 Team meeting to review the main findings to be discussed during the exit
29 interview (and included in the written site visit report).

30 Noon: Working lunch for team: continuation of the above discussions and final
31 report preparation as necessary.
32 Complete draft of the written report.

33 Afternoon: Exit interview.
34 Institutional CEO determined those to be present. (typically, the
35 administrative leadership team, program leadership and faculty and others
36 who participated in the Self study process).

37 Final brief meeting, if needed.

38 Team departure.

39 *Note:* Travel logistics are coordinated between the Team Chair and the Program Director.
40 Depending on connection opportunities, additional travel time may be necessary.
41 Institutions with two or more accredited programs may require additional time for site visit review.
42 (examples: AS and AAS, AS and BS, any program offered via distance modality)

VI. RESPONSIBILITIES DURING ACCREDITATION

A. PROGRAM DIRECTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Adhere to the appropriate time frames. Prepare and submit to the ABFSE office all materials required for the comprehensive review, including the Self study Report. Make certain that copies are made for the institution's own use.
2. Ensure that all necessary fees related to the accreditation process and site visit are submitted in a timely manner (see [Appendix D](#)).
3. Confirm dates of visit with the ABFSE office, ensure that the date is acceptable to key personnel within the program. Notify practicum/clinical sites and preceptors to be visited and obtain necessary permissions for visitors.
4. Arrange for reasonably priced, convenient, and comfortable hotel accommodation for the team.
5. Provide in advance to the Team Chair all information regarding hotel accommodations, availability of taxi or limo service between airport and hotel, and transportation arrangements between hotel and program.
6. Work with the Team Chair to determine the site visit schedule, including individuals to be interviewed and visited.
7. Secure a private workroom on the institution's premises for team use. Have any supporting documents available in the workroom that have not been uploaded into the Self study.
8. Coordinate the activities during the site visit.
9. Facilitate a written response to the site visit and team report for consideration at the assigned COA meeting. If necessary, submit supplemental information to COA following receipt of the team report. Proper format for the response and supplemental materials will be coordinated with the ABFSE Executive Director. Electronic submission is preferred. Instructions are provided in the communication with the institution.
10. Programs are encouraged to provide to the ABFSE office written evaluation of the site visit and the team itself.

B. SITE VISIT TEAM CHAIRPERSON'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Confirm dates of visit and team roster with the Executive Director and the Program Director.
2. Assume responsibility for all visit related correspondence with team members.
3. Provide team members with details of hotel accommodations and transportation. Schedule appropriate time for a preliminary team meeting (on the evening) prior to the start of the visit.
4. Well in advance of the visit, thoroughly review all Self study materials including the report from the preceding site visit.
5. Be familiar with the ABFSE accreditation procedures, policies and the Standards.
6. Work with Program Director in arranging the visit schedule, including individuals to be interviewed and off-campus locations to be visited.
7. In advance of the visit, inform team members of their assignments and specific areas requiring their attention and expertise.
8. During the visit, conduct preliminary meeting with program personnel, as well as the exit interview. The Team Chair has the primary responsibility to see that time is used efficiently and resist any tendency on the part of the team members or the program to engage in irrelevant discussions and activities. The Chair should ensure that all essential personnel, sites and support services are reviewed and visited.
9. The Team Chair should ensure that any faculty, student, or other interested persons who wish to speak to the team have the opportunity to do so. The Team Chair must guide the team members in maintaining objectivity and sensitivity throughout the visit.
10. Draft final report and circulate it among team members for their signature. Submit the final report to the ABFSE office within thirty (30) days after the site visit.
11. Attend the COA meeting at which the program's accreditation status will be reviewed and be prepared to discuss the team findings with the COA.

1
2 C. SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3 1. Review thoroughly all program materials well in advance of the visit, including the Self study Report
4 with uploads, and the program and institutional website.
5 2. Become familiar with the ABFSE accreditation procedures, policies, and the Standards, including
6 any software system currently in use for Self study preparation.
7 3. Work with Team Chairperson in determining specific areas to be evaluated during visit.
8 4. Avoid irrelevant discussions and activities during the visit and make every effort to maintain
9 objectivity throughout the visit and evaluation. Members should bear in mind that the program is to
10 be evaluated in light of its own stated objectives.
11 5. Participate in the exit interview and the timely preparation of site visit report, including timely
12 submission of expenses.
13
14

APPENDIX D: ACCREDITATION FEE SCHEDULES

Effective 2025

(Subject to change -- contact the ABFSE office to confirm current fees)

Fees are due as indicated. Failure to submit when due may also lead to additional fees, warning, probation, or loss of accreditation.

1. **CANDIDACY**

a. **CANDIDACY VISITATION EXPENSE**

Each program anticipating applying for Candidacy is required to have a consulting visit by the ABFSE Executive Director normally accompanied by a member of the COA or one of the site visit team chairs. This visit is to review status of the program, including its ability to meet ABFSE Candidacy Eligibility Requirements and ABFSE Standards of Accreditation. The visit allows the Executive Director to provide general application process assistance. Cost of the visit is borne by the program. A \$2,000 deposit is required. Costs include travel expenses for the Executive Director and 2nd person plus a stipend of \$750 to the 2nd person. Costs in excess of \$2,000 will be billed to the institution. Refund is provided when costs are less than the deposit.

b. **CANDIDACY FEE – \$22,000**

Must accompany the "Application for Candidacy Status" form (B-1) and feasibility Self study. Candidacy fee includes purchase of curriculum outlines*.

*programs seeking to re-instate accreditation see [Chapter IV.D](#).

c. **RENEWAL OF CANDIDACY FEE – \$10,000**

Renewal (or continuation) of candidacy status is required when the program is not prepared for initial accreditation (Self study and site visit) within one year from the date of the original grant of candidacy status. The program must initiate the request for continuation of candidacy status.

2. **INITIAL ACCREDITATION FEE -- \$7,500**

Invoice will be presented when accreditation is approved by COA.

Initial Accreditation fee is not pro-rated and is payable regardless of the time of approval.

Initial Accreditation requires a Self study and site visit.

Programs applying for Initial Accreditation receive a separate invoice for the Comprehensive Review Fee and Site Visit Expense payable sixty (60) days prior to the scheduled visit and accompanied by the "Application for Initial Accreditation" [form \(B-2\)](#).

3. **ABFSE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE (ANNUAL RENEWAL of ACCREDITATION) -- \$7,500**

Must be submitted on or before September 1 of each year. If fiscal policy necessitates a reasonable delay, exceptions must be approved by the Executive Director of the American Board.

Effective September 1, 2026 (for ABFSE fiscal year 2026-27).....**\$8,000**

Effective September 1, 2027 (for ABFSE fiscal year 2027-28).....**\$8,500**

4. **COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW FEE (aka Selfstudy) -- \$6,000; (\$7,000 for multiple programs or programs with distance education and traditional delivery effective October 2022).**

Stipend to the team chair (\$2000) is part of the comprehensive review fee. *Note:* The comprehensive review fee is in addition to the annual renewal of accreditation fee, if applicable at the time of the visit.

Each institution scheduled for accreditation must submit the Self study AND a comprehensive review fee sixty (60) days prior to the scheduled visit.

1 **5. SITE VISIT EXPENSE**

2 There is no set fee for site visit expenses. The institution/program being visited is responsible for the entire
3 cost of the visit, including team travel related expenses and stipends. (Site visit team members each receive
4 a stipend of \$750 effective January 1, 2020).

5
6 Institutions/Programs to be visited must submit a \$4,500.00 Site Visit Expense Deposit at the time of
7 submission of the Self study. This will be credited against final site visit team expenses and the program will
8 be provided with a final statement within forty five (45) days of the visit. The institution is responsible for
9 all reasonable expenses regardless of school policy.

10
11 Site visit team member expenses are submitted directly to the ABFSE office for immediate reimbursement
12 according to ABFSE policy. As soon as all expenses are reimbursed, a final statement will be sent to the
13 program/institution (along with copies of receipts). Payment of the balance, if any, will be due upon receipt.
14 Refund, if any, will accompany the final statement.

15
16 Expenses charged will be in conformance with the ABFSE Guidelines for Expense Reimbursement in effect
17 on the dates of the visit. Challenge to any portion of the final statement shall be made to the Executive
18 Director. If the institution/program wishes to dispute the Executive Director's decision on such expenses, it
19 may file a written appeal directly with the Executive Committee of the ABFSE, which will consider the
20 matter at its next regularly scheduled meeting. Executive Committee decisions are final.

21
22 **6. FOCUS VISIT**

23 When deemed necessary by the ABFSE Committee on Accreditation, a Focus Visit will be scheduled.
24 Participating in the Focus Visit will be one of the site visit team chairs and the ABFSE Executive Director.
25 Cost of the visit is borne by the program. These costs include a stipend of \$1,500 to the Team Chair and
26 reimbursement of travel and related costs incurred by both members of the team (effective January 1, 2020).

27
28 Approval of a substantive change to add Distance Education requires a Focus Visit. This visit will be
29 completed by a two-person team – one of the Team Chairs accompanied by a COA representative with
30 distance education experience. Compensation for the Team Chair is \$1,500; second person \$750. Travel
31 expenses are the responsibility of the program.

32
33 **7. COURSE OUTLINE(S) FEE**

34 Member Institutions (available via the Program Director using ABFSE provided password) no charge.
35 Applicable use/distributions policies are described in Chapter XI. Policies, [Section B.5.d](#).

36
37 Non-Member Institutions (one hard copy, printed and mailed)

- 38 1. Affiliated with funeral service but not ABFSE member. Set of outlines \$10,000
39 2. Institutions seeking candidacy. Set of outlines \$10,000
40

41 **8. ADMINISTRATIVE PROBATION and ACCREDITATION - \$500.00**

- 42 a. Late and/or Incomplete Annual Report
43 b. Late payment of Annual Renewal Fee (due by September 1 of each year)
44 c. Failure to advertise a program ethically and accurately
45 (examples include but are not limited to references in [Chapter X.I.A.3](#) and [Chapter X.I.A.6](#)).
46 d. Late reports (i.e. response to stipulations, response to visits, etc.)
47 e. Late payment of expense reimbursements and other accreditation related fees
48 f. Failure to agree to a reasonable site visit date
49
50

APPENDIX E: DISTANCE EDUCATION - REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES

ABFSE policy stipulates that the Accreditation Standards apply regardless of the method of delivery. Distance education offerings must meet all ABFSE accreditation standards in addition to meeting requirements of the U. S. Department of Education and regional accreditor practices.

Ongoing evaluation of distance education is part of the accreditation renewal process.

ABFSE serves as a 'gatekeeper' Title IV eligibility for most single purpose institutions. All distance education courses offered by these 'gatekeeper' institutions are included in the ABFSE accreditation process.

ABFSE is not required to monitor general education courses offered by 'regionally' accredited institutions. However, all funeral specific courses are subject to the [Appendix E](#) Guidelines.

As a federally recognized accreditor, ABFE is required to provide initial approval of any program when distance offerings reach the level of fifty percent (50%) of the program.

When an accredited program adds distance education offerings and reaches the point where 50% or more of the program courses are available via distance education a Substantive Change application is required (including subsequent Focus Visit).

The Self Study discussion and the Substantive Change application for approval of distance education will assess the courses, the program, and the educational services offered in support of distance education. Evidence must demonstrate the presence of regular and substantive interaction in distance courses. Availability of admissions, registration, academic advising and counseling, tuition and fee payments, bookstore, library, tutoring and other academic and student support services for students enrolled in distance education courses and programs must be addressed. Technological support for faculty e.g., faculty training for distance education course development, access to computer equipment, distance education support systems, etc. must be evaluated.

ABFSE Distance Education Definitions

Distance education refers to instruction offered through online learning and/or other electronic means, where the student and faculty member are in separate physical locations.

A distance education program refers to an accredited program in which 50% or more of the courses are delivered, either synchronously or asynchronously, to students located in a physical location separate from the faculty member.

A distance education course refers to one in which instructional content is substantially delivered, either, synchronously or asynchronously, to students located in a physical location separate from the faculty member.

A hybrid course is subject to distance education requirements if 50% or more of the course is delivered via distance. Hybrid courses may be described in other terminology such as blended or web-enhanced, etc. Identity verification procedures must be in place if tests and exams are administered online.

A hybrid or hy-flex program (short for Hybrid-Flexible) offers students the opportunity to mix/match distance and classroom instruction, either synchronously or asynchronously for each class session according to institution policy.

Distance Education and Correspondence Education

Federal Regulation §602.3 describes distance education as education that uses one or more of the technologies such as the internet, open broadcast transmission, audioconferencing, etc. to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously.

1 This regulation defines a correspondence course as “a course provided by an institution under which the institution
2 provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to
3 students who are separated from the instructor. “Interaction between the instructor and student is limited, is not regular
4 and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced and not
5 considered distance education.

6
7 ABFSE does not accredit correspondence courses/programs.

8
9 The primary factor distinguishing distance education from correspondence education is the presence of “regular and
10 substantive” interaction in teaching, learning, and assessment between the faculty member and students.

11
12 Regular and substantive interaction is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the
13 content under discussion, and also includes at least two (2) of the following:

- 14 1. Providing direct instruction;
- 15 2. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
- 16 3. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
- 17 4. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
- 18 5. Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

19
20 An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's
21 completion of a course or competency:

- 22 1. Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis
23 commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and
- 24 2. (Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for
25 promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of
26 such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

27 28 **Federal regulations pertaining to ABFSE’s distance education responsibilities**

29
30 **Federal Regulation §602.17g** Requires institutions to have processes in place through which the institution
31 establishes that a student who registers in any course offered via distance education is the same student who
32 academically engages in, completes, and receives academic credit for the course or program; *and*

33
34 **Federal Regulation §602.17h** Requires institutions to use processes that protect student privacy and notify students
35 of any projected additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity. This notification is
36 required at the time of registration or enrollment.

37
38 **Federal Regulation §668.34** Each state has different standards for occupations that require professional licensure. It
39 is the responsibility of institutions offering distance education to make available the professional licensing information
40 for each state where their graduates typically seek a license or certification.

1 These Distance Education Guidelines will be addressed in the accredited program's Self study and for approval of a
2 Substantive Change to add Distance Education.

3 4 **Summary of Distance Education Guidelines**

5
6 Institutions planning to establish a distance education program must address the following:

- 7 1. Distance education is appropriate to the institution's and Funeral Service Program's mission and purposes.
- 8 2. Distance education is incorporated into the institution's systems of governance and academic oversight.
- 9 3. Curricula for the distance education offerings are coherent, cohesive, and comparable in academic rigor to
10 programs offered in traditional instructional formats.
- 11 4. Evaluation of distance education offerings using the same assessment measures as the on-ground offerings
12 includes the extent to which the distance education goals are achieved and uses the evaluation results to enhance
13 the program. Separate program outcomes (NBE Pass Rates, Graduation Rates and Employment Rates) are to be
14 evaluated for each program that the institution offers (distance education and on-ground).
- 15 5. Faculty responsible for distance education courses are appropriately qualified and effectively supported.
- 16 6. Effective student and academic support services are available to students enrolled in distance education offerings.
- 17 7. Sufficient resources are provided to support and, if appropriate, expand the distance education offerings for
18 Funeral Service.
- 19 8. The institution assures the integrity of its distance education offerings.
- 20 9. The program complies with regulations in states in which it operates (State Authorization & Professional
21 Licensing).
- 22
- 23
- 24
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- 31

Guidelines for Virtual Focus Visit

Addition of distance education as the method of delivery of a previously accredited program is a substantive change requiring a Virtual Site Visit as described in the ABFSE Accreditation and Policy Manual (Chapter X. A.1.e).

COA may authorize a Virtual Site Visit when programs initiate a Substantive Change application to add delivery of the accredited program via distance. When the addition of a distance program also involves approval of a new degree a site visit may be appropriate.

The Executive Director will assign a 2-person team for the Virtual Site Visit for evaluation of distance education. One of the *permanent* Team Chairs will lead the visit.

The Virtual Site Visit to review distance education will focus on [Appendix E](#), relevant ABFSE standards and federal requirements. If out of state students are enrolled in the distance program, evidence of authority to operate in those locations, usually state approval, and/or evidence of SARA membership, must be provided.

After being notified of a pending Virtual Site Visit, the institution must review the Substantive Change application and prepare updated evidence, where applicable.

These updates are to be submitted three (3) weeks prior to the anticipated start of the Virtual Site Visit.

The Team Chair and program director will establish a timeline for the Virtual Site Visit (start-finish and synchronized with the institution's term(s) schedules). Virtual Site Visit generally occur over a period of several weeks but will not commence until it has been established that all evidence is organized and available.

Elements of the Virtual Site Visit:

- There will be periodic conferences between the team chair and program director to identify evidence needed to inform the review, to address questions resulting from document review and to coordinate team member activity moving forward.
- Access to online courses:
 - Access should enable the team to see all faculty activity and student activity, including communication demonstrating interaction through such items as recorded lectures, discussion forums, course emails, syllabi, and evidence of learning assessment via assignments and exams, etc.
- Access to students and faculty for 1:1 or one to group interviews.
 - Access to include names and contact information.
- Evidence list to describe documents made available since the Substantive Change application was originally submitted.

All other elements of a site visit / focus visit apply with the exception that there will be no physical visit to the campus.

Upon completion of the Virtual Site Visit, the team will provide an 'exit interview' to review the content of their report.

The team report is then sent to the ABFSE office for processing and formatting.

The final version of the report is then shared with the institution's CEO and Program Director using the same process and timelines described in the Manual ([Chapter V.E.](#)).

APPENDIX F: STANDARDS FOR PARTICIPATION IN TITLE IV, HEA PROGRAMS

This excerpt from the Code of Federal Regulations is provided as reference material for those institutions for which ABFSE COA is recognized as ‘gatekeeper’.

In order to ensure compliance with the applicable regulations, those responsible for compliance must utilize the most current version of the Code of Federal Regulations.

This content is from the eCFR and is authoritative but unofficial.



Displaying title 34, up to date as of 12/01/2023. Title 34 was last amended 10/31/2023.



There are Federal Register documents that will modify this content. See the 'Cross Reference' blocks in the text of this content for more information.

Title 34 – Education

Subtitle B – Regulations of the Offices of the Department of Education

Chapter VI – Office of Postsecondary Education, Department of Education

Part 668 – Student Assistance General Provisions

Subpart B – Standards for Participation in Title IV, HEA Programs

§ 668.16 Standards of administrative capability.

CROSS REFERENCE

[Link to an amendment published at 88 FR 74698, Oct. 31, 2023.](#)

To begin and to continue to participate in any Title IV, HEA program, an institution shall demonstrate to the Secretary that the institution is capable of adequately administering that program under each of the standards established in this section. The Secretary considers an institution to have that administrative capability if the institution—

- (a) Administers the Title IV, HEA programs in accordance with all statutory provisions of or applicable to Title IV of the HEA, all applicable regulatory provisions prescribed under that statutory authority, and all applicable special arrangements, agreements, and limitations entered into under the authority of statutes applicable to Title IV of the HEA;
- (b)
 - (1) Designates a capable individual to be responsible for administering all the Title IV, HEA programs in which it participates and for coordinating those programs with the institution's other Federal and non-Federal programs of student financial assistance. The Secretary considers an individual to be “capable” under this paragraph if the individual is certified by the State in which the institution is located, if the State requires certification of financial aid administrators. The Secretary may consider other factors in determining whether an individual is capable, including, but not limited to, the individual's successful completion of Title IV, HEA program training provided or approved by the Secretary, and previous experience and documented success in administering the Title IV, HEA programs properly;
 - (2) Uses an adequate number of qualified persons to administer the Title IV, HEA programs in which the institution participates. The Secretary considers the following factors to determine whether an institution uses an adequate number of qualified persons—
 - (i) The number and types of programs in which the institution participates;
 - (ii) The number of applications evaluated;
 - (iii) The number of students who receive any student financial assistance at the institution and the amount of funds administered;
 - (iv) The financial aid delivery system used by the institution;
 - (v) The degree of office automation used by the institution in the administration of the Title IV, HEA programs;
 - (vi) The number and distribution of financial aid staff; and
 - (vii) The use of third-party servicers to aid in the administration of the Title IV, HEA programs;

- (3) Communicates to the individual designated to be responsible for administering Title IV, HEA programs, all the information received by any institutional office that bears on a student's eligibility for Title IV, HEA program assistance; and
 - (4) Has written procedures for or written information indicating the responsibilities of the various offices with respect to the approval, disbursement, and delivery of Title IV, HEA program assistance and the preparation and submission of reports to the Secretary;
- (c)
- (1) Administers Title IV, HEA programs with adequate checks and balances in its system of internal controls; and
 - (2) Divides the functions of authorizing payments and disbursing or delivering funds so that no office has responsibility for both functions with respect to any particular student aided under the programs. For example, the functions of authorizing payments and disbursing or delivering funds must be divided so that for any particular student aided under the programs, the two functions are carried out by at least two organizationally independent individuals who are not members of the same family, as defined in § 668.15, or who do not together exercise substantial control, as defined in § 668.15, over the institution;
- (d)
- (1) Establishes and maintains records required under this part and the individual Title IV, HEA program regulations; and
 - (2)
 - (i) Reports annually to the Secretary on any reasonable reimbursements paid or provided by a private education lender or group of lenders as described under section 140(d) of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1631(d)) to any employee who is employed in the financial aid office of the institution or who otherwise has responsibilities with respect to education loans, including responsibilities involving the selection of lenders, or other financial aid of the institution, including—
 - (A) The amount for each specific instance of reasonable expenses paid or provided;
 - (B) The name of the financial aid official, other employee, or agent to whom the expenses were paid or provided;
 - (C) The dates of the activity for which the expenses were paid or provided; and
 - (D) A brief description of the activity for which the expenses were paid or provided.
 - (ii) Expenses are considered to be reasonable if the expenses—
 - (A) Meet the standards of and are paid in accordance with a State government reimbursement policy applicable to the entity; or
 - (B) Meet the standards of and are paid in accordance with the applicable Federal cost principles for reimbursement, if no State policy that is applicable to the entity exists.
 - (iii) The policy must be consistently applied to an institution's employees reimbursed under this paragraph;
- (e) For purposes of determining student eligibility for assistance under a title IV, HEA program, establishes, publishes, and applies reasonable standards for measuring whether an otherwise eligible student is maintaining satisfactory academic progress in his or her educational program. The Secretary considers an institution's standards to be reasonable if the standards are in accordance with the provisions specified in § 668.34.
- (f) Develops and applies an adequate system to identify and resolve discrepancies in the information that the institution receives from different sources with respect to a student's application for financial aid under Title IV, HEA programs. In determining whether the institution's system is adequate, the Secretary considers whether the institution obtains and reviews—
- (1) All student aid applications, need analysis documents, Statements of Educational Purpose, Statements of Registration Status, and eligibility notification documents presented by or on behalf of each applicant;

- (2) Any documents, including any copies of State and Federal income tax returns, that are normally collected by the institution to verify information received from the student or other sources; and
- (3) Any other information normally available to the institution regarding a student's citizenship, previous educational experience, documentation of the student's social security number, or other factors relating to the student's eligibility for funds under the Title IV, HEA programs;
- (g) Refers to the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Education for investigation—
 - (1) After conducting the review of an application provided for under paragraph (f) of this section, any credible information indicating that an applicant for Title IV, HEA program assistance may have engaged in fraud or other criminal misconduct in connection with his or her application. The type of information that an institution must refer is that which is relevant to the eligibility of the applicant for Title IV, HEA program assistance, or the amount of the assistance. Examples of this type of information are—
 - (i) False claims of independent student status;
 - (ii) False claims of citizenship;
 - (iii) Use of false identities;
 - (iv) Forgery of signatures or certifications; and
 - (v) False statements of income; and
 - (2) Any credible information indicating that any employee, third-party servicer, or other agent of the institution that acts in a capacity that involves the administration of the Title IV, HEA programs, or the receipt of funds under those programs, may have engaged in fraud, misrepresentation, conversion or breach of fiduciary responsibility, or other illegal conduct involving the Title IV, HEA programs. The type of information that an institution must refer is that which is relevant to the eligibility and funding of the institution and its students through the Title IV, HEA programs;
- (h) Provides adequate financial aid counseling to eligible students who apply for Title IV, HEA program assistance. In determining whether an institution provides adequate counseling, the Secretary considers whether its counseling includes information regarding—
 - (1) The source and amount of each type of aid offered;
 - (2) The method by which aid is determined and disbursed, delivered, or applied to a student's account; and
 - (3) The rights and responsibilities of the student with respect to enrollment at the institution and receipt of financial aid. This information includes the institution's refund policy, the requirements for the treatment of title IV, HEA program funds when a student withdraws under § 668.22, its standards of satisfactory progress, and other conditions that may alter the student's aid package;
- (i) Has provided all program and fiscal reports and financial statements required for compliance with the provisions of this part and the individual program regulations in a timely manner;
- (j) Shows no evidence of significant problems that affect, as determined by the Secretary, the institution's ability to administer a Title IV, HEA program and that are identified in—
 - (1) Reviews of the institution conducted by the Secretary, the Department of Education's Office of Inspector General, nationally recognized accrediting agencies, guaranty agencies as defined in 34 CFR part 682, the State agency or official by whose authority the institution is legally authorized to provide postsecondary education, or any other law enforcement agency; or
 - (2) Any findings made in any criminal, civil, or administrative proceeding;
- (k) Is not, and does not have any principal or affiliate of the institution (as those terms are defined in 2 CFR parts 180 and 3485) that is—
 - (1) Debarred or suspended under Executive Order 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) or the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR), 48 CFR part 9, subpart 9.4; or
 - (2) Engaging in any activity that is a cause under 2 CFR 180.700 or 180.800, as adopted at 2 CFR 3485.12, for debarment or suspension under E.O. 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) or the FAR, 48 CFR part 9, subpart 9.4;

- (l) For an institution that seeks initial participation in a Title IV, HEA program, does not have more than 33 percent of its undergraduate regular students withdraw from the institution during the institution's latest completed award year. The institution must count all regular students who are enrolled during the latest completed award year, except those students who, during that period—
 - (1) Withdrew from, dropped out of, or were expelled from the institution;
 - (2) Were entitled to and actually received in a timely manner, a refund of 100 percent of their tuition and fees;
- (m)
 - (1) Has a cohort default rate—
 - (i) That is less than 25 percent for each of the three most recent fiscal years during which rates have been issued, to the extent those rates are calculated under subpart M of this part;
 - (ii) On or after 2014, that is less than 30 percent for at least two of the three most recent fiscal years during which the Secretary has issued rates for the institution under subpart N of this part; and
 - (iii) As defined in 34 CFR 674.5, on loans made under the Federal Perkins Loan Program to students for attendance at that institution that does not exceed 15 percent.
 - (2)
 - (i) However, if the Secretary determines that an institution's administrative capability is impaired solely because the institution fails to comply with paragraph (m)(1) of this section, and the institution is not subject to a loss of eligibility under §§ 668.187(a) or 668.206(a), the Secretary allows the institution to continue to participate in the Title IV, HEA programs. In such a case, the Secretary may provisionally certify the institution in accordance with § 668.13(c) except as provided in paragraphs (m)(2)(ii), (m)(2)(iii), (m)(2)(iv), and (m)(2)(v) of this section.
 - (ii) An institution that fails to meet the standard of administrative capability under paragraph (m)(1)(ii) based on two cohort default rates that are greater than or equal to 30 percent but less than or equal to 40 percent is not placed on provisional certification under paragraph (m)(2)(i) of this section—
 - (A) If it has timely filed a request for adjustment or appeal under §§ 668.209, 668.210, or 668.212 with respect to the second such rate, and the request for adjustment or appeal is either pending or succeeds in reducing the rate below 30 percent; or
 - (B) If it has timely filed an appeal under § 668.213 after receiving the second such rate, and the appeal is either pending or successful; or
 - (C)
 - (1) If it has timely filed a participation rate index challenge or appeal under § 668.204(c) or § 668.214 from either or both of the two rates, and the challenge or appeal is either pending or successful; or
 - (2) If the second rate is the most recent draft rate, and the institution has timely filed a participation rate challenge to that draft rate that is either pending or successful.
 - (iii) The institution may appeal the loss of full participation in a Title IV, HEA program under paragraph (m)(2)(i) of this section by submitting an erroneous data appeal in writing to the Secretary in accordance with and on the grounds specified in §§ 668.192 or 668.211 as applicable;
 - (iv) If the institution has 30 or fewer borrowers in the three most recent cohorts of borrowers used to calculate its cohort default rate under subpart N of this part, we will not provisionally certify it solely based on cohort default rates;
 - (v) If a rate that would otherwise potentially subject the institution to provisional certification under paragraphs (m)(1)(ii) and (m)(2)(i) of this section is calculated as an average rate, we will not provisionally certify it solely based on cohort default rates;
 - (n) Does not otherwise appear to lack the ability to administer the Title IV, HEA programs competently;

- (o) Participates in the electronic processes that the Secretary—
 - (1) Provides at no substantial charge to the institution; and
 - (2) Identifies through a notice published in the *FEDERAL REGISTER*; and
- (p) Develops and follows procedures to evaluate the validity of a student's high school completion if the institution or the Secretary has reason to believe that the high school diploma is not valid or was not obtained from an entity that provides secondary school education.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1845–0022)

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1082, 1085, 1092, 1094, and 1099c)

[59 FR 22431, Apr. 29, 1994, as amended at 59 FR 34964, July 7, 1994; 59 FR 61180, Nov. 29, 1994; 60 FR 34431, June 30, 1995; 60 FR 42408, Aug. 15, 1995; 61 FR 60603, Nov. 29, 1996; 62 FR 27128, May 16, 1997; 63 FR 40624, July 29, 1998; 64 FR 59038, Nov. 1, 1999; 65 FR 65637, Nov. 1, 2000; 74 FR 55648, Oct. 28, 2009; 75 FR 66951, Oct. 29, 2010; 76 FR 52272, Aug. 22, 2011; 77 FR 18679, Mar. 28, 2012; 80 FR 67235, Oct. 30, 2015]

1 **APPENDIX G: CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

2

3 **Confidentiality Statement**

4 **Conflict of Interest Statement**

5

6

7 To be completed by all members of the Committee on Accreditation,

8 Staff Members, Permanent Team Chairs and Site Visitors

9

10 As a member of the Committee on Accreditation, ABFSE Staff, Permanent Team Chair or Site Visitor, I have access

11 to information that is, and must remain, confidential. I agree to respect and protect the confidentiality of all

12 accreditation materials and of all other information discussed during Executive Sessions. I pledge to uphold this

13 confidentiality agreement at all times and abide by the ABFSE Document Retention and Destruction policy.

14

15 In addition, I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the Conflict of Interest prohibitions which appear in

16 [Chapter XI, Section A.2](#), of the *ABFSE Accreditation and Policy Manual*. (initial)

17

18

19 _____

20 Signature

21

22 _____

23 Printed Name

24 I am participating as (please circle appropriate capacity):

25 ☐ COA member ☐ ABFSE Staff ☐ Permanent Team Chair ☐ Site Visitor

26

27 _____

28 Date(s)

29

30 _____

31 Location

32 or

33 _____

34 Site Visit

35 _____

School

Conflict of Interest

All members of the Committee on Accreditation, the Permanent Team Chairs, all site Visit Team Members, and employees of the ABFSE/COA must review the ABFSE Conflict of Interest Policy.

The Conflict of Interest prohibitions appear in [Chapter XI, Section A.2](#) of the *Accreditation and Policy Manual*. The section is restated below.

C. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: Real as well as perceived conflicts will be avoided.

1. Selection of Site Visitors:

- a. No individual who has served as consultant to a program may serve as a site visitor to that program.
- b. No personnel from programs potentially in direct competition with the program being evaluated may serve on the site visit team.
- c. No recent (within 5 years) graduate nor recent faculty member (within 5 years) of the program being evaluated may serve on the site visit team.
- d. No faculty members or practitioners from within the same state in which the evaluated program is located may serve on the site visit team.
- e. No faculty member from within institutions in the same systems as the program being evaluated may serve on the visiting committee.
- f. Except for focused visits, no member of the Committee on Accreditation or the ABFSE chairperson may serve on the site visit team.

2. Site Visit Behavior: Site visitors are prohibited from using the site visit as either an employment opportunity for themselves or to hire faculty away from the program being evaluated.

3. Voting by Committee on Accreditation Members: Members must abstain from voting and from the discussion if they have a real or perceived Conflict of Interest. Committee members from within the state of the program being evaluated may not make motions, participate in the discussion, or vote concerning that program. Committee members employed by the program being evaluated or any other program within the same educational system must absent themselves during the executive session and voting concerning that program.

4. Persons serving as consultants, administrative staff, or in any other way serving the committee shall avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest and shall follow all policies listed in #1-3 above. Members of the Committee on Accreditation, visiting committees and employees of the ABFSE will be expected to sign a Conflict of Interest statement. (See [Appendix G](#))

APPENDIX H: FORMAL REVIEW OF STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

(See Also [Chapter XI, Section B.1](#) of the *Accreditation and Policy Manual*)

Although the Committee on Accreditation may review the Standards, either in their totality or individually more frequently, a full review of all Standards will occur every five years. The full review will follow the process indicated below:

1. Every five years (beginning in 2007) at its spring meeting the COA will formally initiate the review process. (It will continue at intervals of five years thereafter [i.e., 2012, 2017, 2022, etc.]).
2. Following the spring meeting, the Executive Director will send letters (in electronic format) to the groups/agencies/individuals indicated in numbers 3 and 4 below along with a copy of this Appendix, the timeline noted herein, and a copy of the Standards along with the web address for the Accreditation and Policy Manual. The letters will include a request that each addressee and appropriate constituencies of the addressee formally review each Standard and advise the COA, through the Executive Director, whether the Standards appear appropriate as written, whether changes appear to be in order, or whether Standard should be deleted. In addition, each respondent will be asked to propose any new Standards.
3. Letters, in electronic format, will go to each president or chief executive of an institution which offers an ABFSE accredited funeral service program, each funeral service program director at those institutions, the president (or other appropriate leadership position) of the student funeral service association, the funeral service/mortuary science faculty association president or appropriate leadership position, and the funeral service/mortuary science staff senate president (or other appropriate staff officer). Each recipient will be asked to widely share and publicize to his/her constituency the request for broad participation in the review of the Standards.
4. In addition, the Executive Director will send a similar letter and related materials to the Executive Directors of NFDA, NFD&MA, CANA, and the ICFSEB asking for similarly broad dissemination, including publication in their newsletters or magazines.
5. A notice with comparable information will be placed on the ABFSE web site.
6. All such notices will request that responses be received in the ABFSE office no later than the following September 1 and note a strong preference that all responses be in electronic format.
7. All responses will be distributed to members of the COA prior to their fall meeting.
8. The COA will consider all responses and draft proposed changes which will be distributed to those recipients noted above with a request for any secondary comments. The proposed changes will also be posted on the ABFSE web site with a request for further comment. Such notices will advise all recipients that the COA will take formal action in regard to the items at its following spring meeting. Any responses received as a result of this item will be distributed to COA members prior to the spring meeting.
9. Any changes to the Standards which occur at the referenced spring meeting will be distributed to all recipients noted above within 30 days after adoption by the COA. Changes will also be published on the ABFSE web site.

APPENDIX I: ADVERTISING AND STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Accreditation Standards 3 and 9 require that programs/institutions have statements to show that they follow ethical practices in student admission and other student-related matters. Programs/institutions must publish either their own statement regarding such practices or specifically refer in program materials to their adherence to recognized documents on ethical practice such as those available from the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Offices (AACRAO) or from one of the regional accrediting agencies. In order to provide examples, ABFSE has reprinted below the policy statements from AACRAO and SACS COC. Programs and institutions seeking to develop an appropriate policy dealing with student admissions and related matters may find these to be a useful resource.

Ethics and Practice

The purpose of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) is to serve and advance higher education by providing leadership in academic and enrollment services. In the practice of their professions, AACRAO members carry responsibilities for conduct that balance societal, institutional, individual, and professional interests.

To guide its members, AACRAO has adopted the following principles of professional ethics and practice in academic and enrollment services. AACRAO members shall:

- Conduct themselves with integrity, fairness, honesty, and respect for others;
- Avoid conflicts between personal interests and professional responsibilities, and resolve perceived conflicts through full disclosure and independent review;
- Dispense complete, accurate, understandable, and truthful information and advice at all times.

In light of these ethical principles, AACRAO has adopted the following standards of professional practice. AACRAO members shall:

- Serve and advance higher education by safeguarding the academic integrity of their institutions;
- Protect the legitimate privacy interests of all individuals and maintain appropriate confidentiality of institutional and student education records;
- Advance institutional interests through the competent practice of the profession;
- Act as stewards and objective enforcers of institutional policies and practices;
- Promote institutional policies and practices that conform with this statement, especially when existing policies or practices are in conflict with it;
- Promote broad and equal access to higher education for qualified students;
- Adhere to principles of nondiscrimination and equality within the framework of institutional mission and prevailing law ;
- Assist students to develop their talents and interests and become responsible citizens;
- Provide to prospective students and their families accurate interpretations of institutional admissions criteria, transfer credit policies, costs, financial aid availability, and educational offerings;
- Recruit distinct student populations (international students, students with learning disabilities, etc.) only when appropriate institutional resources and commitment to serve those populations are in place;
- Avoid practices in the recruitment and enrollment of international students that would not be ethical in the recruitment or enrollment of domestic students;
- Ensure that information management systems protect and maintain the integrity, confidentiality, and security of institutional records;

- Provide accurate interpretations of institutional records;
- Exercise sound management principles, using institutional resources effectively and efficiently;
- Remain knowledgeable of current principles and practices of the profession;
- Contribute to the continuing advancement of the professions;
- Encourage the professional development of individuals at all levels of academic and enrollment services;
- Ensure that contractors and other third-parties involved in the delivery of academic and enrollment services adhere to the principles articulated in this statement;
- Adhere to the principles articulated in this statement.

- *Reviewed by the Board of Directors Governance Committee, no changes - Winter 2016*
- *Adopted by the AACRAO Board of Directors—December 3, 2009*
- *Amended by the AACRAO Board of Directors—March 31, 2010*
- *Ratified by AACRAO Members—April 23, 2010*



Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

ADVERTISING AND STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Policy Statement

All accredited higher education institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, must exhibit integrity and responsibility in student advertising and recruitment. Responsible self-regulation requires rigorous attention to principles of good practice.

Advertising, Publications, Promotional Literature

1. Educational programs and services offered by the institution are the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature, and recruitment activities.
2. All statements and representations are clear, factually accurate, and current. Supporting information is kept on file and readily available for review. In the case of programs that are awaiting SACSCOC's approval and inclusion in the institution's accreditation, the institution's communication with both external and internal constituencies clearly and consistently represent the program(s) as "pending approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges."
3. Official publications are readily available and, where appropriate, accurately depict:
 - institutional purposes and goals
 - admission and enrollment requirements and procedures for all types of students (e.g., first-year, transfer students, dual enrollment, transient, etc.) and basic information on programs and courses, with required sequences and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated
 - general education requirements
 - special programs, including international study, credit by examination or advanced placement
 - institutional facilities readily available for educational use
 - rules and regulations for conduct
 - tuition, fees, and other program costs, including any fees associated with verification of student identity related to distance or correspondence education
 - opportunities and requirements for financial aid
 - policies and procedures for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw
 - current academic calendars and grading policies

4. In official publications describing career opportunities, clear and accurate information is provided on any unique requirements for career paths, or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described.

Student Recruitment for Admissions

1. Student recruitment is conducted by well-qualified admissions officers and trained volunteers whose credentials, purposes, and position or affiliation with the institution is clearly specified.
2. Independent contractors or agents used by the institution for recruiting purposes are governed by the same principles as institutional employees.
3. Institutions are required to follow federal guidelines regarding compensation for student recruitment and admission activities.
4. Institutions avoid the following recruitment practices in order to comply with the *Principles of Accreditation* and U.S. Department of Education regulations:
 - a. assuring employment unless employment arrangements have been made and can be verified,
 - b. misrepresenting job placement and employment opportunities for graduates,
 - c. misrepresenting program costs,
 - d. disparaging comparisons of secondary or postsecondary institutions,
 - e. misrepresenting abilities required to complete intended program, and
 - f. offering money or inducements other than educational services of the institution in exchange for student enrollment. (Except for awards of privately endowed restricted funds, grants or scholarships are to be offered only on the basis of specific criteria related to merit or financial need.)

Document History

Approved as a Guideline: Executive Council, June 1985
Edited in accordance with the Principles of Accreditation: June 2004
Updated in accord with the revised Principles: December 2006
Approved Revision as a Policy: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, June 2014
Revised: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, June 2017
Reformatted: August 2018

APPENDIX J: CONSIDERATION FOR CALCULATION OF NBE PASS RATE, GRADUATION RATE, JOB PLACEMENT RATE

NBE Pass Rate Calculations

The Committee on Accreditation recognizes that students who take the NBE 12 months or more after completion of formal instruction may have a diminished capacity for success on the NBE and may fail the test. Such failures may reflect the delay in taking the test rather than the current instructional success of the program. In order to obtain accurate outcomes assessment for current program evaluation, the COA will consider exemptions to the NBE pass rate for failures in the following situation:

When a student graduates but does not take the NBE within one year of completing the graduation requirements, the program director may request an exemption of that student's NBE results from the current year's NBE Pass Rate Calculation. The written exemption request must include:

1. Printed on school letterhead
Signed by Program Director
Identify the student(s) by name and ID number.
2. Verify date that NBE Arts & Sciences were taken
3. An official transcript* with graduation posted. This transcript must demonstrate that no **funeral program** course work (with the exception of an *optional* NBE review course) was completed during a twelve (12) month period prior to taking the first section of the NBE.
4. A college catalog to establish the graduation requirements pertaining to the student

The ABFSE office will establish due dates for submission of documentation. Based on current procedures for receipt of NBE results, documentation must be **received by March 1** in order to be considered.

*Due to the constraints regarding release of official transcripts, the Executive Director has the discretion to accept an unofficial copy of the transcript, signed and dated by the Program Director, as long as such copy demonstrates the semester(s) during which courses were taken.

The Executive Director will determine the accuracy of the requests to adjust NBE pass rates. Questionable requests will be referred to the COA for action. There will be no retroactive adjustments after the due date and no adjustments will be made to previous year statistics.

The revised NBE Pass Rates are to be used by the institution in all public presentations of data involving NBE pass rates, including the program website. Revised NBE Pass Rates will be utilized when calculating 3 year average NBE pass rates posted in the Directory of Programs on the ABFSE website.

Providing Exemption Request info in a format similar to the example below is helpful.

[illegible]

NOTE:

- Only 1 college catalog is necessary per graduation year.
- Catalog is to verify graduation requirements that apply to the named student(s) in the exemption request.
- *For example*, if the exemption request covers 3 students from 2018, then only 1 catalog excerpt is necessary. But, if there are 3 exemption requests and each student graduated in a different year, verification of applicable graduation requirements is necessary.

Graduation Rate Calculations

The Committee on Accreditation recognizes that students complete their education at different paces. (i.e. full-time v. part-time)

ABFSE accreditation standards regarding graduation rates are written with the full-time student in mind. As a result, the following will be considered in reporting graduation rates:

- Part-time students will be identified in the cohort tracking process
- The program will identify the part-time option(s) that are available and the projected amount of time for on-time completion as a part-time student.
- Students completing the part-time program in 1 ½ times projected program length will be identified as on-time graduates.

Program director will document the part-time program completion in the following manner:

- Identify graduates completing the program on part-time basis
- Notification on school letterhead
- Signed by Program Director

- Copy of an official college publication (excerpts) to establish the graduation requirements pertaining to part-time students
Documentation must be **received by March 1.**

Employment Rate Calculation

The Committee on Accreditation recognizes that students have multiple career options available upon graduation.

Standard 10.3.3 identifies the manner in which the job placement rate is to be calculated. The ABFSE Directory will identify total job placement and funeral service related job placement.

10.3.3 Employment rates: Graduate employment data must be provided on *the* Annual *Report*. Job placement is to be calculated within six months of each student's graduation. *A survey done at graduation will be accepted as 'within 6 months.'* *Students for whom no data is available will be considered not employed.* Funeral service-related employment, active military duty, or enrollment in further higher education count as employment for this calculation.

All graduates will be considered in the total job placement rate.

Total job placement and funeral service related placement rates will be the same only when all graduates have Funeral Service employment.

Job placement data may be updated one time during the next calendar year upon written notification to the ABFSE office, if a survey six (6) months following graduation provides significant updates.

- Written notification will be considered a letter
Printed on school letterhead
Signed by Program Director

Requests to adjust job placement rate must be **received by March 1 or August 1.**

**APPENDIX K: SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE – SCHEDULE OF FEES
IN AN ACCREDITED INSTITUTION OR PROGRAM**

SCHEDULE OF FEES	
CHANGE 1: PROGRAM DIRECTOR	n/a
CHANGE 2: TEACHING FACULTY (60% in same year)	n/a
CHANGE 3: PRESIDENT or CEO	n/a
CHANGE 4: MISSION / PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES	n/a
CHANGE 5: INITIAL APPROVAL of DISTANCE EDUCATION DELIVERY*	n/a
CHANGE 6: ADDITION OF PROGRAMS/DEGREES SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FROM EXISTING OFFERINGS	\$500 per location plus cost of the visit, if applicable
CHANGE 7: CHANGE IN NUMBER OF CREDIT HOURS AWARDED; Increase or Decrease GREATER THAN 25%	\$150
CHANGE 8: RELOCATION OF PERMANENT INSTRUCTIONAL SITE*	\$500 plus cost of the visit
CHANGE 9: LEGAL NAME	\$150
CHANGE 10: OWNERSHIP/CONTROL (includes acquisition)*	\$300 plus cost of the visit
CHANGE 11: MERGER	
CHANGE 12: APPLICATION of APPROVAL of BRANCH CAMPUS*	
CHANGE 13: APPLICATION for APPROVAL of ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS *	\$300 per location plus cost of the visit
CHANGE 14: ACCREDITOR/ACCREDITATION STATUS	n/a unless accreditation status change requires site visit
CHANGE 15: PROGRAM CLOSING	n/a
CHANGE 16: SPECIAL CONTRACT	

* These Substantive Changes require a site visit.
Institution will be billed for the cost of the visit in accordance with [Appendix D](#).

APPENDIX K: SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE - APPLICATION
ABFSE/COA

COVER SHEET AND APPLICATION FOR SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE
IN AN ACCREDITED INSTITUTION OR PROGRAM

(This page must accompany all Substantive Change Forms)

Director's Name: _____ Telephone: _____
Institution/Program Name: _____ Email: _____
Site Address: Street _____ City, State, Zip: _____
Mailing Address (if different) _____

A request for Substantive Change must be submitted to and approved by the COA before the change is included in the scope of accreditation of the institution/program.

DATE OF THIS REPORT

EFFECTIVE DATE OF CHANGE

INSTRUCTIONS: Indicate the type of Substantive Change proposed and answer the questions at the bottom of this page. Then complete the appropriate form (see following pages) and supply required documentation. Submit applicable fees ([Appendix K: Substantive Change-Schedule of Fees](#)). When a site visit is required, the program/institution will be responsible for all expenses incurred. A separate change form is required for each.

Change in (check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ 1. Program Director | ☐ 9. Legal Name |
| ☐ 2. Teaching Faculty (60% in same (1) calendar year) | ☐ 10. Ownership/Control (includes acquisition) |
| ☐ 3. President or CEO | ☐ 11. Merger |
| ☐ 4. Mission/Program Learning Outcomes | ☐ 12. Application for Approval of Branch Campus |
| ☐ 5. Initial Approval of DE Delivery | ☐ 13. Application for Approval of Additional Locations |
| ☐ 6. Addition of Programs/Degrees significantly different from existing offerings | ☐ 14. Change of Accreditor/Accreditation Status |
| ☐ 7. Change in number of credit hours awarded (increase/decrease greater than 25%) | ☐ 15. Program Closing |
| ☐ 8. Relocation of Permanent Instructional Site* | ☐ 16. Special Contract |

QUESTIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

Reason(s) for the change _____

Who participated in the decision to make the change and/or request approval for it?

By what process was the decision accomplished?

Other comments:

DIRECTOR & ADMINISTRATOR STATEMENT

Submission of the Request for Approval of Substantive Change is in partial fulfillment of the COA's requirements for true and accurate description of the change. Supporting documentation is attached.

Program Director Signature

Date

Includes: Manual Update approved October 2025
Manual update proposals Summer 2025
Language Corrections December 2023
Fee Revisions approved April 2022

ABFSE and COA Accreditation and Policy Manual

Revised Standards effective January 1, 2020
Revised Standards effective January 1, 2025

CHANGE 1: PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and the information required by this section (see [Chapter X.A.1.a](#)).

Institution/Program Name: _____

☐ **Change in Director:**

Name of Former Director: _____

New Director: _____

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Mailing Address

Describe the impact on operations and the ability to continue to deliver a quality educational program:

*NOTE: The COA must be informed within thirty (30) days of **any** change in program director, even if it is temporary.*

ATTACHMENTS:

- ☐ Resume
- ☐ Copy of license
- ☐ Copies of transcripts
- ☐ Current job description

CHANGE 2: FACULTY

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and the information required by this section (see [Chapter X.A.1.b](#)).

Institution/Program Name: _____

Change of sixty percent (60%) or more within one year to the faculty who report directly to the program director.

Which degree program(s) is affected? _____

NEW FACULTY NAME(S)

JOB TITLE(S)

PERSON(S) REPLACED

Faculty information must be updated in the Faculty Database.

Provide the date that this information was updated in the Faculty Database _____

Describe the impact on operations and the ability to continue to deliver a quality educational program:

CHANGE 3: PRESIDENT/CEO

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and the information required by this section. (see [Chapter X.A.1.c](#)).

Institution/Program Name: _____

☐ Change in President or CEO

Name of Former President/CEO: _____

New President/CEO: _____

Name

Email

Institution

Telephone

Mailing Address

Fax

*NOTE: The COA must be informed within thirty (30) days of **any** change in President or CEO, even if it is temporary.*

In certain situations, ABFSE must be able to communicate directly with the CEO of the institution.

Evaluation of impact of the change in the context of the ABFSE Accreditation Standards.
(This is for reporting purposes only.)

CHANGE 4: MISSION AND/OR LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and the information required by this section (see [Chapter X.A.1.d](#)).

Institution/Program Name: _____

Provide a detailed narrative evaluating the impact of this change (in relation to the ABFSE Standards) and the impact on the ability to continue to deliver a quality educational program.

ATTACHMENTS (Identified by number as follows):

1. ☐ COPIES OF BOTH THE PREVIOUS AND REVISED VERSIONS OF THE MISSION STATEMENT AND/OR LEARNING OBJECTIVES
2. ☐ REVISED MATERIALS IN WHICH MISSION STATEMENT AND/OR LEARNING OBJECTIVES APPEAR (e.g., brochure, student handbook, etc.)

CHANGE 5: INITIAL APPROVAL TO ADD DISTANCE EDUCATION* (50% OR MORE)

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and information required by this section (see [Chapter X.A.1.e](#)).

Institution/Program Name: _____

Briefly describe the proposed changes:

What is the proposed timeline to offer 50% or more of the program via distance education?

DISTANCE EDUCATION approval requires [Appendix E](#) to be completed in Weave. COA must review and accept the Weave submission at a regularly scheduled meeting. Following acceptance of the Weave submission a site visit team is scheduled.

Date of anticipated presentation of Weave application/submission to COA:

☐ March 1 for April

☐ September 1 for October

Describe the impact on operations and the ability to continue to deliver a quality educational program that will result from addition of distance education delivery of the program.

ATTACHMENTS: THERE ARE NO EXPRESS ATTACHMENTS NEEDED FOR THIS FORM. ALL ATTACHMENTS WILL BE SUBMITTED THROUGH [APPENDIX E](#) SUBMISSION IN WEAVE.

***NOTE:** For approval to add distance education, a virtual site visit is required within six (6) months of the effective change date. (when distance courses are populated with students.)

**CHANGE 6: ADDITION OF PROGRAMS/DEGREES SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FROM
EXISTING OFFERINGS**

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and information required by this section (see [Chapter X.A.1.e](#) and [Chapter X.A.1.f](#)).

Institution/Program Name: _____

Type of Change:

- ☐ Change between semester hour or quarter-credit hour
 - ☐ Approval of credit for prior learning (See [Appendix O](#))
 - ☐ New program or degree
 - ☐ Addition of accredited program at different degree or credential level
 - ☐ Other
- _____
- _____
- _____

Briefly describe the proposed changes:

Describe the impact on operations and the ability to continue to deliver a quality educational program:

Attachments: The nature of the proposed change will determine the kind of attachments are required to document the change. (Example: additions to the budget, additional faculty, software/hardware needs, new curriculum distribution form, etc.)

CHANGE 7: CHANGE IN NUMBER OF CREDIT HOURS AWARDED; INCREASE OR
DECREASE GREATER THAN 25%

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and information required by this section (see [Chapter X.A.1.g](#)).

Institution/Program Name: _____

List degree programs affected: _____

☐ Increase

☐ Decrease

Briefly describe the reason(s) for the proposed change: _____

Describe the impact on operations and the ability to continue to deliver a quality educational program:

ATTACHMENTS (identified by number as follows):

1. ☐ **CALENDARS** relative to when the changes will take place (previous and revised, showing credit hours, content, instruction and total)
2. ☐ **PUBLICATIONS** (explaining the change(s))
3. ☐ **LETTER OF VERIFICATION** from an institution administrator (Department Chair, Dean, etc.)

Additional comments/explanations:

CHANGE 8: RELOCATION OF PERMANENT INSTRUCTIONAL SITE*

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and information required by this section (see [Chapter X.A.1.h](#))

Institution/Program Name: _____

Effective date of change: _____

Old Address: _____

New Address: _____

Brief explanation/description of change: _____

Describe the impact on operations and the ability to continue to deliver a quality educational program:

ATTACHMENTS (identified by number as follows):

1. ☐ **LICENSING/AUTHORIZATIONS (covering new address)**
2. ☐ **PUBLICATIONS (revised to reflect change)**
3. ☐ **RENT/LEASE/USE AGREEMENT OR PROOF OF OWNERSHIP FOR NEW FACILITY, if applicable**
4. ☐ **FLOOR DIAGRAMS FOR OLD AND NEW FACILITIES (include scale drawing; dimensions)**

NOTE: A one-day site visit is required within six (6) months of the effective date of change.

* This substantive change applies to instructional site relocation only. If only the institution's/program's office is relocating, the COA and all enrolled students must be informed by mail within fifteen (15) days of the change.

CHANGE 9: LEGAL NAME

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and the information required by this section (see [Chapter X.A.1.i](#)).

Original Name of Institution/Program: _____

New Name of Institution/Program: _____

Briefly explain the reason for change:

Describe the impact on operations and the ability to continue to deliver a quality educational program:

List licenses required for operation in your state and affected by the name change:

If other aspects of the institution/program are affected by the name change, describe briefly:

ATTACHMENTS (Identified by number as follows):

1. ☐ COPY OF LEGAL AUTHORIZATION FOR THE CHANGE OF NAME

2. ☐ COPIES OF REVISED GOVERNMENTAL LICENSES IN THE NEW NAME

3. ☐ PUBLICITY MATERIALS (revised to show name change)

CHANGE 10: OWNERSHIP/CONTROL (INCLUDES ACQUISITION)*

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and information required by this section (see [Chapter X.A.1.j](#) and [Chapter X.A.1.k](#)).

Institution/Program Name: _____

Organization/Control currently: ☐ Non-profit ☐ For-profit

Date by which the change is expected to be complete: _____

Type of change:

- ☐ Change in legal status only: ☐ form of organization ☐ authorization to operate
- ☐ Change in control (ownership/controlling interest) through
- ☐ Sale of institution
 - ☐ Acquisition of another institution or program/location of another institution (See Chpt X.A.1.k.)
 - ☐ Transfer of controlling interest of stock of the institution or its parent corporation
 - ☐ Division/conversion of one institution into two or more institutions (Candidacy Application and/or Initial Accreditation application will apply)
 - ☐ Transfer of assets that comprise a substantial portion of the educational business of the institution
 - ☐ Change to/from non-profit to for-profit

Excluded transactions: Upon the retirement or death of the owner:

- ☐ Transfer to a member of the owner's family
- ☐ Transfer to a person with ownership interest who has been involved in the management of the institution for at least two (2) years preceding the transfer.

Briefly describe the change (from/to, names of parties involved, ownership stake (%) transferred, etc.): *This information will be used to determine the need for a Self study/comprehensive review*

Describe the impact on operations and the ability to continue to deliver a quality educational program:

ATTACHMENTS (identified by number as follows):

1. ☐ **LEGAL REGISTRATION (STATE) FOR NEW STRUCTURE OR OWNERSHIP**
2. ☐ **STATE POSTSECONDARY AUTHORIZATION or date of application:**
3. ☐ **VERIFICATION OF FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR NEW OWNERSHIP**

NOTE: *A one-day site visit is required within six (6) months of the effective date of change and the COA must be informed at least thirty (30) days prior to the pending change in ownership.*

CHANGE 11: MERGER

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and information required by this section (see [Chapter X.A.1.1](#)).

Type of change: ☐ Merger of two or more institutions

The institution resulting from a merger must meet the accreditation requirements as a new institution. Candidacy status for the new institution may be waived at the option of the Committee on Accreditation. Accreditation shall be based upon "Initial Accreditation" procedures and criteria.

Curriculum will be a primary emphasis for the new program (B-6 or B-6B)

COA has discretion regarding the formal Self study document, site visit, and payment of associated fees.

Names of the Institutions/Programs involved in merger:

Institution 1 _____

Organization/Control currently: ☐ Non-profit ☐ For-profit

Institution 2 _____

Organization/Control currently: ☐ Non-profit ☐ For-profit

Date by which the merger is expected to be complete: _____

Name of new Institution/Program _____

Organization/Control following merger: ☐ Non-profit ☐ For-profit

Briefly describe the change (from/to; names of parties involved, reasons behind the change, etc.):

The impact on operations and the ability to deliver a quality educational program will be determined through the Self-Study process.

ATTACHMENTS: THERE ARE NO EXPRESS ATTACHMENTS NEEDED FOR THIS FORM. ALL ATTACHMENTS WILL BE SUBMITTED THROUGH THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS FOR THE MERGED INSTITUTION

CHANGE 12: APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF BRANCH CAMPUS*

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and information required by this section (see [Chapter X.A.1.m](#)).

Institution Name: _____

Proposed date to open Branch campus: _____

Degree(s) to be offered at Branch campus: _____

If this is a contract site, beginning and ending dates of the contract are as follows:

_____ through _____

Are other branch campuses of the institution currently approved? Yes / No : (if yes, name/address)

1. _____ 2. _____

Branch campus for which approval is requested:

Name of Branch campus: _____

Chief Administrative officer _____ Site Phone: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State Zip: _____ Email: _____

Program director for branch: _____

If less than 100% of content will be offered, list components to be offered:

List state and local licenses required for the new site: _____

If licensing is required but not completed:

Date you applied _____ Date by which completion is expected: _____

The impact on operations and the ability to deliver a quality educational program will be determined through the Self-Study process. Site visit is necessary.

Parent institution must notify ABFSE of intent to establish Branch Campus ninety (90) days in advance of planned opening in order to establish access to Weave for the necessary Self study.

ATTACHMENTS: VARIOUS OTHER ATTACHMENTS WILL BE SUBMITTED THROUGH THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS FOR THE BRANCH CAMPUS

☐ **STATE AND LOCAL LICENSES FOR NEW SITE**

☐ Evidence of approval by the Secretary of USDE as a branch campus. Date _____

☐ **CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART (show where new site fits into structure)**

☐ **PROMOTIONAL LITERATURE FOR NEW BRANCH CAMPUS (include date(s) released)**

CHANGE 13: APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and information required by this section (see [Chapter X.A.1.n](#)).

Institution/Program Name: _____

Type of site: ☐ Additional Location ☐ Contract Site

☐ The addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.

Note: *this change is likely to require multiple applications. (e.g. new ownership, branch campus, etc.)*

Degree(s) to be offered at new site: _____

If this is a contract site, beginning and ending dates of the contract are as follows:

_____ through _____

Other additional locations of the institution/program currently approved: (Use an additional page if necessary):

1. _____ 2. _____

Additional (new) location for which approval is requested:

Name of Site: _____

Site Administrator _____

Site Phone: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State Zip: _____

Email: _____

Program director for new site: _____

Percentage of content to be offered at new site: _____

If less than 100% of content, list components to be offered:

ATTACHMENTS (identified by number as follows):

1. ☐ CONTRACT WITH HOST SCHOOL OR AGENCY

☐ Check here if facility is institution-owned

2. ☐ STATE AND LOCAL LICENSES FOR NEW SITE

If licensing is required but not completed:

Date you applied _____

Date by which completion is expected: _____

3. ☐ SCHEDULE FOR ALL CURRENT Accredited PROGRAM(S) AND ADDITIONAL SITES

(include: name of site, degree program(s), and director)

4. ☐ CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART (show where new site fits into structure)

5. ☐ PROMOTIONAL LITERATURE FOR NEW SITE (include date(s) released)

6. ☐ FLOOR DIAGRAM FOR SPACE TO BE USED AT NEW SITE (to scale, with dimensions)

7. ☐ Schedule/Calendar FOR PROGRAM(S) OFFERED AT NEW SITE (component title [and number, if appropriate], hours, inclusive dates,)

8. ☐ SYLLABUS (if different than what is offered at the primary location)

NOTE: Approval by the COA is required PRIOR TO THE SITE'S OPENING and a site visit is required within six (6) months of the effective date of change.

CHANGE 14: ACCREDITOR/ ACCREDITATION STATUS

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and the information required by this section. (see [Chapter X.A.1.q](#)).

Institution/Program Name: _____

☐ Change of accreditor.

☐ Change of accreditation status.

(any adverse/negative action cited by the institution's regional (or other) accreditor, including the Department of Education or CHEA, must be reported to COA)

1. Name of original accrediting agency _____

2. Name of new accrediting agency _____

3. Effective date of change _____

4. Briefly explain reason(s) for the change _____

5. *If applicable*, briefly describe any adverse/negative action cited by the agency(s). _____

5a. Evaluation of the impact of the adverse action noted above on the potential to comply with ABFSE Accreditation Standards:

a. Indicate which ABFSE standards have the potential to be affected by the adverse action.

b. Attach a detailed narrative explanation for each, with supporting documentation, as appropriate.

Check all that apply:

☐ Structure, Organization, and Administration

☐ Program Learning Outcomes

☐ Administrative Practices and Ethical Standards

☐ Finance

☐ Curriculum

☐ Faculty

☐ Facilities

☐ Library/Learning Resources

☐ Students

☐ Program Planning and Evaluation/Assessment

☐ Default Rates in Student Loan Programs under Title IV and Compliance with Title IV Program Responsibilities

☐ Program Length, Credit Hours, Tuition

5b. Briefly describe the institution's response to the cited adverse action(s). _____

ATTACHMENTS (

☐ Supporting documents to identify the adverse action, if applicable.

☐ Letter/document to describe the impact of the change and/or the institutional response.)

CHANGE 15: PROGRAM CLOSING

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and information required by this section (see [Chapter X.A.1.p](#) and [Appendix P](#)).

Institution/Program Name: _____

List degree programs affected: _____

Proposed date of closure: _____

Describe how students and members of the public are notified of the closure event:

Where/how will student records be preserved?

ATTACHMENTS (identified by number as follows):

1. ☐ **CALENDAR** (Specific timeline for teach-out plan)

2. ☐ **TEACH-OUT PLAN** (See [Appendix P](#))

3. ☐ **PUBLICATIONS** (showing appropriate closure information)

4. ☐ **LETTER OF VERIFICATION** from an ABFSE accredited institution (Department Chair, Dean, etc.)
if the teach-out is to be completed by another accredited institution.

Additional comments/explanations:

CHANGE 16: SPECIAL CHANGE

Instructions: Complete the Substantive Change Cover Sheet and information required by this section (See [Chapter X.A.2](#)).

This substantive change applies to institutions whose recognition by the COA allows them to seek eligibility to participate in Title IV, HEA programs (i.e. ABFSE serves as gatekeeper).

When an institution enters into a contract under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in the Title IV, HEA programs offers more than twenty-five percent (25%), but less than fifty percent (50%) of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs this is a substantive change

Institution/Program Name: _____

Institution/organization to offer instruction under this category _____

Name of program offered (within the accredited program): _____

Percent of program: _____

Length of program (describe in weeks, credits, classroom hours, etc. as applies): _____

Beginning and ending dates of the contract are as follows:

_____ through _____

Briefly describe the reasons for entering into the contract:

Describe the impact on operations and the ability to continue to deliver a quality educational program:

Note: Such change must be accreditor approved and reported to USDE due to the impact on financial aid eligibility.

APPENDIX L: DOCUMENT RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION POLICY

Approved October 2015

The American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation engaged in accreditation of educational programs maintains traditional business records and documents relative to the accreditation function. This policy is intended to comply with relevant law, including the IRS, and ABFSE accreditation policies as defined in the ABFSE Accreditation and Policy Manual. The policy ensures that valuable documents are available when needed and the proper disposal of documents that are no longer necessary. Policy also complies with Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Policies as defined by ARMA (Association of Records Managers and Administrators)

Procedures

- **Business Income Tax Returns and Supporting Documents.** A final copy of business income tax returns and related correspondence with the IRS will be maintained permanently. Supportive tax records will be maintained for seven (7) years.
- **Employment Tax Records.** Employment tax records will be maintained for four (4) years after the date taxes were due or were paid, whichever is later. These employment tax records include employer identification number, amounts and dates of wage and retirement payments and tax deposits, the names, addresses, social security numbers, dates of employment and occupations of employees and records of allocated tips and fringe benefits.
- **Business Asset Records.** Business asset records will be maintained in a safe deposit box until the property is sold or otherwise properly disposed.
- **Business Ledgers and Other Key Documents.** Major business documents, i.e. annual reports, corporate by-laws and amendments, Board of Director information, annual meeting minutes and business formation documents, will be retained on a permanent basis. Profit and loss and other financial statements will be retained on a permanent basis. Journal entries check registers; general business ledgers including accounts payable/receivable ledgers will be retained for seven (7) years. Invoices and expense reports will be retained for seven (7) years unless site visit/accreditation policy supersedes.
- **Human Resources Files.** Excluding employment tax records, files relating to current employees should be retained while they are working and for seven (7) years after a current or former employee has left or been terminated. This includes records of employee benefits, i.e. Simple IRA.
 - For job applicants, who were not hired, keep files for three (3) years.
 - If an employee suffers an accident on the job, retain pertinent documentation for seven (7) years after that matter is resolved or ten (10) years after which any workers compensation benefits are paid or as mandated by OSHA.
 - If an employee lodges a discrimination claim, retain records for four (4) years after the case is finally concluded.
- **Cancelled Checks.** Destroy paper copies after seven (7) years.
- **Bank Account and Credit Card Statements.** Retained detailed annual statements for seven (7) years. Dispose of underlying monthly statements after twenty-four (24) months.
- **ABFSE File Maintenance.** For each accredited program the ABFSE office shall maintain on file at least the last two full accreditation and/or Candidacy reviews. This shall include the last two committee reports, periodic review reports, if any, institutional responses to reports, special reviews, if any, responses to stipulations, if any, and committee final actions. The file shall also contain the most recent Self study Report. In addition, the written record of all decisions made throughout an institution's or program's affiliation with the COA regarding its candidacy, accreditation, and any substantive changes -- including all correspondence that is significantly related to those decisions -- will be maintained in the ABFSE office.
- ABFSE is not the repository of any current student files. However, ABFSE is responsible for academic records from certain closed institutions (for which ABFSE became repository of documents under Standard 10.5.3) and thus subject to FERPA guidelines. FERPA does not provide specific requirements for educational agencies and institutions regarding disposition or destruction of the data they collect or maintain themselves, other than requiring safeguard of FERPA-protected data from unauthorized disclosure, and not to destroy any education records if there is an outstanding request to inspect or review them.
- Student Scholarship applications and faculty credentials may contain personally identifiable information. Self study Reports, Team reports, COA notes and minutes contain sensitive data. This data will be purged and/or destroyed at the conclusion of the useful life.

APPENDIX M: STEPS FOR CANDIDACY AND SAMPLE TIMELINE

Steps for Candidacy

- Step 1: Interested institution contacts ABFSE office for info.
Provides specific contact information (at minimum, name of contact person, institution, location, phone and email).
Institutions may find it desirable to hire a consultant familiar with ABFSE accreditation to assist with the Candidacy process.
- Step 2: Visit to school by Executive Director (and team chair or COA member) prior to the submission of an application for Candidacy.
- Step 3: At least ninety (90) days prior to a scheduled COA meeting (April and October), notify the ABFSE office of intent to submit a Candidacy application for review at the next scheduled meeting to ensure inclusion on the agenda.
- Step 4: At least sixty (60) days prior to a scheduled COA meeting (April and October)
- a. Submit Application ([Appendix B Form B-1](#) in Manual)
 - b. Submit Self study (feasibility) document
 - c. Submit Candidacy fee
- After the Self study document is reviewed and is determined to be complete, a 3-person site visit team is assigned.
- Step 5: Site visit
- Step 6: Candidacy Application, Feasibility Self Study document, Site visit team report and school response to site visit are viewed at a regular meeting of COA.
School representatives are expected to be present to answer questions.
- Note: Purchase ABFSE Curriculum Outlines is part of the Candidacy fees. Many schools do this in a 2-step process:
- a. Purchase outlines
 - b. Remainder of fee with Candidacy application.
- (There is no prescribed point in the process where acquisition of outlines must be done. However, the self study does require completion of a curriculum distribution form which will be difficult to accomplish without the curriculum outlines.)

Sample Timeline:

Year 1

Fall - Contact ABFSE office and Executive Director

January - March - Executive Director Visit

Assumes institution has done necessary investigation of demand for program, industry support and state licensing expectations.

July - notify ABFSE office that Candidacy application is forthcoming and request consideration on next COA meeting agenda

August 1 - submit Candidacy Self study/Feasibility Study

Includes: COA Revisions approved October 2017 & October 2019
Fee Revisions approved April 2022
Language Corrections December 2023
Manual update proposals Summer 2025

ABFSE and COA Accreditation and Policy Manual
Revised Standards effective January 1, 2020
Revised Standards effective January 1, 2025

1
2 October meeting - COA review and accepts SS
3

4 Year 2
5

6 Fall - schedule site visit team for winter site visit
7

8 April - COA reviews site visit team report, school response and meets with school representatives.
9

10 Potential for Candidacy to be approved.
11

12 Year 3
13

14 During Candidacy, Program prepares Initial Accreditation SS by updating the feasibility SS to reflect current
15 operations and prepares for Initial Accreditation site visit.
16

17 Initial Accreditation site visit is typically one year after Candidacy site visit. (students must be enrolled in
18 practical embalming course)
19

20 April - Initial Accreditation site visit report, etc. evaluated by COA and COA meets school representatives.
21

22 Potential for Initial Accreditation to be approved.
23
24

APPENDIX N: JOB DESCRIPTION – COA CHAIRPERSON & VICE-CHAIR

Position Title: Chair, Committee on Accreditation (COA)

Reports To: Executive Director, American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE)

Position Summary:

The Chair of the Committee on Accreditation (COA) leads the committee responsible for overseeing the accreditation of funeral service education programs across the United States. This role involves ensuring that accredited institutions adhere to established standards, guiding the accreditation review process, and supporting the mission of the ABFSE to advance funeral service education through high standards. The Chair acts as a key leader, facilitator, and advocate for maintaining quality education in the funeral service profession. The Chair will be selected from the voting members of the COA who are Funeral Service Educators.

Key Responsibilities:

- **Leadership and Oversight:**
 - Serve as the primary leader of the COA, responsible for assisting to facilitate the coordination and execution of accreditation reviews and processes.
 - Lead the COA in developing, revising, and approving accreditation standards in accordance with the policies set forth by the ABFSE.
 - Assist Executive Director when needed to facilitate continuous improvement in funeral service education by guiding institutions through Self study, site visits, and accreditation actions.
 - Ensure the COA operates autonomously while maintaining alignment with the ABFSE's goals and the U.S. Department of Education's recognition requirements.
- **Accreditation Process Management:**
 - Review the accreditation cycle, submission of Self study reports, and organization of site visits as provided by the Executive Director
 - Lead COA meetings, helping ensure that decisions are made in a transparent, fair, and consistent manner.
 - Help ensure that programs seeking accreditation or re-accreditation meet the defined standards for educational quality, administration, and ethical practices.
 - Guide the COA members through complex accreditation decisions, including granting candidacy, accreditation, probationary status, or withdrawal of accreditation.
- **Committee Administration:**
 - Schedule and preside over COA meetings, held twice annually, with additional special meetings as needed (in-person, virtual, or via conference call).
 - Regularly and consistently communicate with the Executive Director.
 - Attend meetings and conferences as necessary to assist the Executive Director and ABFSE.
 - Oversee the election of the COA Vice-Chair, ensuring continuity of leadership within the committee.
 - Work with the Executive Director of ABFSE as needed to select site visit teams and appoint qualified chairs for site visits, ensuring adherence to COA guidelines.
 - Ensure the COA's autonomy in its budget and financial expenditures, while maintaining collaboration with the ABFSE on broader fiscal planning.
- **Communication and Reporting:**
 - Provide timely and clear communication to the Executive Director, the Executive Committee and the overall ABFSE.
 - Regularly report the committee's actions to the ABFSE and ensure that accreditation decisions are publicly communicated as required.
 - When needed act as the liaison between the COA and external stakeholders, including educational institutions, government agencies, and funeral service industry professionals.
 - Facilitate communication between the COA and the Accreditation Liaison Committee to foster transparency and understanding of accreditation standards.
 - Actively participate in the broader funeral service education community to promote the ABFSE's mission and support the continued advancement of the profession.

- Policy Development and Revision:
 - Lead the COA in the periodic review and revision of accreditation standards and the Accreditation and Policy Manual, ensuring relevance and alignment with current educational needs and regulatory requirements.
 - Ensure that the COA meets all obligations for formal reviews of accreditation standards every five years, or as needed, based on changes in the educational landscape.
- Compliance and Accountability:
 - Help ensure that all COA actions comply with the ABFSE policies and U.S. Department of Education recognition criteria.
 - Help guide programs in resolving deficiencies identified during the accreditation process, ensuring programs are given appropriate guidance and opportunities for improvement.
 - Lead the COA in addressing appeals of accreditation decisions, working within the established appellate procedures.

Term of Service:

The Chair of the COA serves a three-year term, with eligibility for one additional consecutive term. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair takes place at the COA's spring meeting.

The COA Chair and Vice Chair should not represent the same constituency.

Position Title: Vice Chair, Committee on Accreditation (COA)

Reports To: Executive Director, American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE)

Position Summary:

- The Vice Chair of the Committee on Accreditation (COA) takes on the responsibilities of the COA Chair when the Chair is temporarily unable or unavailable or must recuse.
- The Vice Chair will preside when the Chair is absent from a scheduled meeting.
- Should the absence of the COA Chair be deemed permanent, the Vice Chair will oversee the election of a new COA Chair.
- The Vice Chair does not automatically assume the role of the COA Chair without being elected.
- During a temporary absence of the COA Chair the Vice Chair responsibilities will include the same obligations attributed to the Chair: Leadership and Oversight, Accreditation Process Management, Committee Administration, Communication and Reporting, Policy Development and Revision, Compliance and Accountability.
- The Vice Chair will be selected from the voting membership of the COA.

Term of Service:

The Vice Chair of the COA serves a three-year term, with eligibility for one additional consecutive term. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair takes place at the COA's spring meeting.

The Vice Chair and COA Chair should not represent the same constituency.

APPENDIX O: CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING GUIDELINES

Definitions

Credit for prior learning (CPL) means the awarding of academic credit in a semester or quarter hour-measured course based on evaluation of learning that took place outside of a traditional higher education institution.

Credit for prior learning course means any course in which credit may be awarded based on evaluation of learning that took place outside of a traditional higher education institution. A credit for prior learning course may be the same course for which traditional academic-based credit is awarded.

Direct Assessment Program means a program that, in lieu of using credit hours or clock hours as a measure of student learning, utilizes direct assessment of student learning, or recognizes the direct assessment of student learning by others.

Current Standards

9.2.5 If credit for prior learning is offered:

9.2.5.a Policies for obtaining credit for prior learning must be clearly stated in the program's catalog and informational materials.

9.2.5.b No more than 20% of the total number of credits for the program may be awarded through credit for prior learning. All of the curriculum requirements contained in Standard 5 are incorporated in awarding credit for prior learning. A substantive change application must be submitted and approved by COA before the program initially offers credit for prior learning. Does a program have to choose which courses to offer for CPL or may it offer every course for CPL, but no student can earn more than 20% of their credits through CPL?

9.2.5.c Credit earned for prior learning must be documented, evaluated, and appropriate for the level of degree awarded. The evaluation must be carried out by persons academically qualified to make the necessary judgments.

9.2.5.d Achievement of student learning outcomes must be measured for courses in which credit for prior learning is offered. Methods to determine achievement of outcomes may include standardized tests, prior learning portfolios, technical skill demonstrations, and written or oral exams.

Requirements for Credit for Prior Learning Programs (CPL)

1. Offering credit for prior learning must align with the mission of the program and institution (1.7, 2.1).
2. No student may receive credit for more than 20% of their accredited program through CPL. There are no restrictions on the number of courses a program may offer through credit for prior learning (9.2.5).
3. Programs must provide evidence of CPL institutional approval and published processes (1.1)
4. Prior to the start of academic courses, students must be informed about the availability of CPL and their eligibility to earn credit for prior learning (3.13; 9.11)
5. The program must provide clear and accurate information to students about the use of CPL (3.13), including:
 - a. The courses in which CPL is offered
 - b. The maximum number of credits a student may earn through CPL
 - c. The procedures for students electing to use CPL in each course for which it is offered
 - d. CPL requirements for each course in which it is offered
 - e. Tuition and other costs associated with CPL
 - f. Outcomes when students are not successful in fulfilling CPL requirements
6. When CPL is used for clinical courses, evidence of completion of clinical requirements, including embalming reports (5.5.6.d) and records of funeral directing tasks (5.5.8.i) must be provided.
 - a. If credit is given for prior embalming cases, embalming reports must be provided, but do not need to comply with the standard embalming report requirement.
 - b. If credit is given for prior embalming cases, there must be evidence that the student was legally authorized to perform embalming when the cases were completed.
 - c. If credit is given for prior funeral directing tasks, there must be evidence that the student was legally authorized to perform the funeral directing tasks when the tasks were completed.
7. Embalming competency must be certified according to Standard 5.5.6.e. Technical competence may not be certified through any other means, including prior embalming cases.
8. The program must detail how work, assessments, and competencies in CPL courses are equivalent to courses and credit hours in traditional courses, including:

- a. How student work accepted in CPL courses (e.g. summative examinations, technical competence assessments, documented clinical experiences), are equivalent to student work performed in traditional courses (e.g. tests, assignments, projects).
 - b. Learning outcomes for students completing a course by CPL must be identical to learning outcomes for students completing a course by traditional academic means.
 - c. Learning assessments for students completing a course by CPL must be equivalent to the assessments that are used in traditional courses.
9. Credit for prior learning must be incorporated in the program's assessment plan (10.1.2) including comparison of student outcomes related to NBE pass rate, graduation, rate, and job placement rates between students who were awarded CPL and students who were not.
 10. Credit for prior learning must be awarded in semester or quarter credit hours.
 11. When credit for prior learning is accepted to fulfill the requirements of Standards 5.5.6 and 5.5.8 in a course, the evaluation for credit must include:
 - a. a written examination
 - b. an objective review of verifiable evidence that the student completed the required tasks
 - c. a clinical skills competency assessment administered by a qualified faculty member
 12. When credit for prior learning is accepted to fulfill the requirements of other funeral service courses, the evaluation for credit must include:
 - a. a written examination
 - b. an objective review of verifiable evidence that the student achieved each course learning objective.
 13. Other means of evaluating prior learning, such as Joint Services Transcripts, student-created portfolios, industry-recognized credential documentation (American Council on Education/ACE), and standardized exams (AP, IB, CLEP) may be included in addition to those listed above.
 14. Credit earned through CPL must be notated on the student's transcript and include the means by which the credit was earned, such as Advanced Placement credit, credit by examination, industry credential, joint services transcript, or others.

Direct Assessment Programs

The ABFSE does not accredit direct assessment programs.

Institutions wishing to offer direct assessment must obtain approval from the Secretary of the US Department of Education.

APPENDIX P: TEACH-OUT PLAN DETAILS

A **teach-out plan** is required from an institution/program when the program enters Probation and/or Show Cause status and/or any adverse action.

Approval of Candidacy status also requires the institution/program to have a teach-out plan in the event the institution fails to attain Initial Accreditation.

A teach-out plan outlines how the institution will assist students in completing their education if the institution closes or if the program will no longer operate. The teach-out plan will be presented to the COA for approval. Approval of teach-out by COA will include establishing a reasonable time to complete the activities in a teach-out plan or to fulfill the obligations of any teach-out agreement.

A teach-out plan must include:

1. Names of the accredited (and unaccredited) programs offered by the institution,
2. list of currently enrolled students,
3. timeline during which teach-out is to be accomplished, and
4. names of other institutions offering similar programs and that could potentially enter into a teach-out agreement, if necessary.

The teach-out plan may be implemented and accomplished by the program itself. In the event the plan cannot be accomplished in a timely manner, then a **teach-out agreement** is necessary.

When is a teach-out agreement necessary?

- An unsuccessful response to Probation results in Show Cause and also triggers the requirement to submit a teach-out agreement.
- When COA takes action to withdraw or deny accreditation these adverse actions require submission of a teach-out agreement.
- A teach-out agreement is required when the teach-out obligations are to be completed by another institution.

The closing institution/program must provide COA with copies of all notifications related to the closure or teach-out options to ensure the information accurately represents equitable treatment of students and to ensure the information accurately represents students' ability to transfer credits. The approval process may require corrections to the information.

When the teach-out agreement involves a program or institution that is also accredited by another recognized accrediting agency, the COA must notify that accrediting agency of its approval.

A teach-out agreement is required when the teach-out obligations are to be completed by another institution. Teach-out agreements are intended to protect the rights and interests of the affected students.

A **teach-out agreement** must be comprehensive, transparent, and include the following information:

1. A complete list of students currently enrolled in each program at the institution and the program requirements each student has completed.
2. Program and Course Offerings: Specify the programs and courses offered by the teach-out institution (institution receiving students).
3. Transfer of Credits: Outline the process for transferring credits from the closing institution to the teach-out institution including information on the number and types of credits the teach-out institution is willing to accept prior to the student's enrollment.
4. Tuition and Fees: A clear statement describing the tuition and fees that students will be required to pay at the teach-out institution.
5. Student Support Services: Detail the student support services that will be provided by the teach-out institution.
6. A plan to provide all potentially eligible students with information about how to obtain a closed school discharge and, if applicable, information on State refund policies.

7. Faculty and Staff: Faculty at a teach-out institution must possess the faculty qualifications as described in the ABFSE standards.
8. Teach-Out Timeline: Specify the timeline covered by the teach-out (i.e. teach-out period).
9. Accreditation and Regulatory Compliance: Provide accurate information on the ABFSE accreditation status of the teach-out institution and its compliance with state regulatory requirements and NBE eligibility.
10. A record retention plan to be provided to all enrolled students that delineates the final disposition of teach-out records (e.g., student transcripts, billing, financial aid records).
11. Student Notification: Describe the process for notifying affected students about the teach-out agreement.
12. Dispute Resolution: Include provisions for resolving any disputes that may arise.

To be approved for teach-out an institution must:

- have the necessary experience, resources, and support services to provide an educational program that is of acceptable quality and reasonably similar in content, delivery modality, and scheduling to that provided by the institution that is ceasing operations either entirely or at one of its locations;
An alternate method of delivery may be made available to students, only if the same method of delivery as the original educational program is also provided;
- have the capacity to carry out its mission and meet all obligations to existing students; and
- demonstrate that it
 - can provide students with access to the program and services without requiring them to move or travel for substantial distances or durations; and
 - will provide students with information about additional charges, if any.

COA will not permit an institution to serve as a teach-out institution under the following conditions:

- The institution is subject to the conditions in [Chapter X.F.1](#) [CFR 602.24(c)(1) or (2)]
- The institution is under investigation, subject to an action, or being prosecuted for an issue related to academic quality, misrepresentation, fraud, or other severe matters by a law enforcement agency.

COA will not be involved regarding the percentage of credits that must be earned by a student at the institution awarding the educational credential through a written teach-out agreement or transfer.

APPENDIX Q: COMMUNICATION POLICY

Communication from Member Institutions

Member institutions may notify the ABFSE office of workshops, professional development opportunities, or other items of interest. The notifications may be disseminated to all member institutions.

If a member institution's communication offers a service or workshop of apart that is not a member of the ABSE and another member institution(s) offers a similar service or workshop, notification shall be reasonably delayed to the full directory of member institutions until member institutions who offer those similar workshops or services have a chance to voice concerns. The Executive Committee shall review comments/concerns and then notify the ABFSE office to distribute or withhold notification accordingly.

Individual or parties who may be affiliated with a member institution in some capacity (I>E> instructor, contracted third party vendor) who are soliciting their own services or workshops are not considered member institutions.

All notifications of member institutions should be clearly identified within the title or body in the notification that the ABFSE does not endorse or sponsor the event.

Job notifications are excluded from this policy as employment opportunities are to be considered of interest to all member institutions.

Requests regarding academic research are excluded from this policy as they are to be considered of interest to all member institutions.

Communication from Vendors:

Vendors may notify the ABFSE office of workshop, professional development opportunities, or other items of interest. The notifications will be disseminated to all member institutions.

A vendor for the purpose of communication is defined as any party who has purchased space at the ABFSE exhibits/trade show for the meeting immediately preceding the notification or has purchased space at an upcoming ABFSE annual meeting.

All notifications of Vendors should be clearly identified within the title or body in the notification that the ABFSE does not endorse or sponsor the event.

Requests regarding vendor research are excluded from this policy as they are to be considered of interest to all member institutions.

Communication from Guests:

Guests may notify the ABFSE office of workshop, professional development opportunities, or other items of interest. The notifications will be disseminated to all member institutions.

If a guest offers a service or workshop and a member institution(s) offers a similar service or workshop, notification shall be reasonably delayed to the full directory of member institutions until member institutions who offer those similar workshops or services have a chance to voice concerns. The Executive Committee shall review comments/concerns and then notify the ABFSE office to distribute or withhold notification accordingly.

The administrative staff of the ABFSE may refer any guest notification to the Executive Committee for review even if there are no member institutions who offer similar services or workshops.

Requests regarding academic research are excluded from this policy as they are to be considered of interest to all member institutions.

All notifications of guests should be clearly identified within the title or body in the notification that the ABFSE does not endorse or sponsor the notification.

APPENDIX R: ARBITRATION POLICY

American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) Committee on Accreditation (COA) Arbitration Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines the process for initial and non-binding arbitration following a final adverse accreditation action by the Committee on Accreditation (COA) of the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), pursuant to 20 U.S.C. § 1099b(e).

1. Applicability

This policy applies to institutions that are subject to an adverse accreditation decision by the COA. Adverse actions include, but are not limited to:

- a. Denial of accreditation
- b. Withdrawal of accreditation

2. Right to Arbitration

Following the completion of the appeal process, institutions may request initial and non-binding arbitration, as outlined in 20 U.S.C. § 1099b(e).

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the institution must submit a written request for arbitration within ten (10) calendar days of receiving notification of the final decision of the Appeals Panel or the COA in the case of remand from the Appeals Panel. Arbitration must be initiated before pursuing any legal action related to the decision.

3. Arbitration Process

- a. Arbitration will be conducted by a single neutral arbiter selected through services provided by the Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services (JAMS) or the American Arbitration Association (AAA).
- b. The COA, through the ABFSE Executive Director, will obtain and share a list of qualified arbiters and their resumes from the selected arbitration service.
- c. Both the institution and the COA will have the opportunity to accept or reject candidates for arbiter.
- d. The ABFSE Conflict of Interest Policy will apply in the selection of the arbiter to ensure fairness and neutrality.

4. Scope and Authority of the Arbiter

- a. The arbiter will conduct initial and non-binding arbitration.
- b. The arbiter's role is not to render a binding decision but to assist both parties in seeking mutual understanding and resolution.
- c. The arbiter will rely solely on the documentation and information that was available to the COA at the time of its decision.
- d. The COA will make reasonable efforts to follow the time frames and procedural guidelines recommended by the arbiter to support a timely process.
- e. Following arbitration, the COA will implement the arbiter's findings.

4. Costs

The cost of arbitration will be divided equally between the ABFSE and the institution requesting arbitration.

5. Legal Action

Institutions must complete the arbitration process described in this policy prior to initiating any legal proceedings related to the COA's adverse accreditation action.

APPENDIX S: FEDERAL DEFINITION OF CREDIT HOUR

ABFSE accredited programs/institutions must demonstrate that the program is defined in standard credit hour terms (either semester hour or quarter hour) following the current Department of Education definition of credit hours.

The Federal Definition of Credit Hour is found in 34 CFR 600.2 and 34 CFR 668.8(k) and (l); see also DCL ID: GEN-11-06:

Credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than:

- One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
- At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

Reminder: This content was originally part of Standard 13. However, it applies to all accredited programs and was moved to the Appendix section in order to facilitate future revisions without requiring a change to the standards.

APPENDIX T: GUEST POLICY

Annual Conference: Guests are defined as individuals not affiliated with a member institution and not registered as exhibitors.

- Past officers of the ABFSE, for attendance purposes, are considered members of the ABFSE.
- The Executive Committee of the ABFSE may permit attendance of individuals who have a recognized history of service with the ABFSE or member institutions as guests and waive the cost of guest attendance.

Guests are permitted to attend the annual meeting, professional development sessions (for informational purposes, no CEUs), and exhibits/trade show.

Committee attendance: Guest attendance at committees.

Attendance at committee meetings (other than the Scholarship or Committee on Accreditation) of the ABFSE shall be open to:

- Members of the committee.
- Members of the ABFSE.
- Members of institutions who have a bona fide academic or business interest in the work of the committee.
 - Anyone attending a committee meeting, who is not a member of the committee, may be asked to leave at the discretion of the chair of the committee.

Town Hall/Professional Development: Sessions designated as Town Hall or Professional Development are presented for the benefit of ABFSE members (schools and affiliated associations).

Registration requires use of member school .edu email or other recognized email address or equivalent. Equivalent is for phone-in participants.