

DUAL AND JOINT ACCREDITATION



This document is part of a set of guidelines that relate to accreditation. In particular it contains the *Guidelines for Dual and Joint Accreditation* that provide criteria and procedures for institutions with more than one agency involved in the accreditation process.

Institutions that have already earned accreditation from their government, by a university or by another quality assurance agency may seek additional quality assurance for their institution and their programmes. There are many reasons for this common practice in European higher education, not least the added value of a subject specific professional accreditation that relates to the discipline of theology and speaks in particular to its stakeholders.

The ECTE reserves a special procedure for such *Dual Accreditation*¹ cases, both avoiding unnecessary duplication and ensuring compliance with its standards. The ECTE can provide accreditation of a programme by declaring equivalence to ECTE levels and nomenclature. The purpose of this is to ensure quality assurance of not only the academic and institutional aspects of a programme, but also the spiritual and ministerial aspects that are specific to theological education. For example, a state accredited BA in Theology may be deemed to be equivalent to an ECTE Academic Bachelor. This provides the student with an additional certificate relative to the international evangelical network of ICETE (International Council of Evangelical Theological education). This is additional ECTE accreditation of a programme that already has government accreditation or university validation.

The ECTE can also provide accreditation of a programme containing the externally accredited academic programme plus a component focusing on evangelical ministerial training. Institutions may want to value their evangelical ministerial programmes by gaining ECTE accreditation for such an integrated programme. An institution, for example, may want to update its state accredited academic Bachelor of 180 ECTS with a component of evangelical ministerial training comprising 60 ECTS and submit the entire package to the ECTE for accreditation as Vocational Bachelor equivalent (240 ECTS).

Similar criteria and procedures are outlined for *Joint Accreditation*, where an institution simultaneously seeks ECTE accreditation and the accreditation of another agency.

ECTE Review committee

Dr Bernhard Ott, Chairman

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¹ The term 'dual' is used here to indicate multiple accreditations and is not restricted to 'two'.

1. DUAL ACCREDITATION

1.1 - Dual accreditation criteria

To successfully obtain dual accreditation, an institution must satisfy the following criteria:

1. The applicant is an ECTE Member;
2. The applicant has successfully obtained accreditation by a competent quality assurance agency²; both institutional and programme accreditation are normally assumed in the dual accreditation process. Variations will be dealt with on a case by case basis;
3. The applicant demonstrates compliance to ECTE programme standards as laid out in the *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation*³. This is demonstrated through a simplified self-evaluation report and corroborated by an on-site visit;
4. The applicant pays the relevant programme accreditation fees⁴.

1.2 – Dual accreditation procedures

Here are the procedural steps for achieving dual accreditation.

1. If it is not yet an ECTE Member, the institution fills out the *Membership Application* form⁵ and waits approval by the Council⁶, Member schools may waive this step and proceed to step 2;
2. The institution fills out the *Dual Accreditation Application* form.⁷ This application includes a timeline for the submission of the *Dual Self-Evaluation Report* (D-SER) and the requested dates for a site visit.
3. The QAC either a) approves the application and authorises the site visit or b) provides alternative instructions (should the application be insufficient or unsuitable as a *bona fide* case for accreditation). In case of approval, the QAC instructs the institution to proceed with the production of an *Institutional Self-Evaluation Report* (I-SER) and authorises the Review Secretary to begin to assemble a Visitation Evaluation Team (VET) and arrange a date for the site visit.
4. The institution produces a *Dual Self-Evaluation Report* (D-SER)⁸ and sends it to the Review Secretary, the General Secretary and to the QAC at least two months before the site visit. The D-SER is a simplified report that responds to the ECTE standards as outlined in the *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation* allowing reference to existing documentation. Where no such documentation exists in relation to a particular standard, the institution is required to produce a full response.
5. As the institution prepares the D-SER, the Review Secretary (RS) begins to assemble a Visitation Evaluation Team (VET), nominates a VET Leader and establishes a mutually acceptable date for the

² The ECTE reserves the right to make a competency assessment of QA agencies by scrutinizing their recognition and reputation (e.g. QA recognition by national authorities or by an official registry like EQAR for the EHEA, or by an ICETE member agency, etc.).

³ See <http://ecte.eu/qa/standards/>

⁴ See <http://ecte.eu/about/fees>

⁵ See <http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/>

⁶ See *Criteria and Procedures for ECTE Membership* <http://ecte.eu/network/membership/>

⁷ This is an online form that is automatically sent to the General Secretary and to the QAC. See www.ecte.eu/qa/forms/

⁸ See <http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/>

site visit with the institution and the VET panel. Once the D-SER is submitted, the RS provides the VET panel with copies of the D-SER to be evaluated on-site in light of the *Standards and Guidelines* for ECTE Accreditation, and gives access to the historical archive of the institution (these documents are normally be sent at least two months before the site visit). The VET team will look in particular at ECTE standards to which the institution is responding in an original fashion, although it may also enquire about any of the other standards. Detailed arrangements of the site visit are coordinated between the institution and the VET panel by the VET Leader.⁹

6. The dual accreditation visit takes place.
7. After the dual accreditation visit, the VET panel and the RS produce an *Dual Review Report*¹⁰ that is signed off by the institution for factual accuracy and sent to the QAC. At this point, the institution is invoiced for visitation fees.
8. The QAC submits the *Dual Review Report* to the ECTE Council for a final decision concerning institutional accreditation. In line with best practice in quality assurance, the integral *Dual Review Report* will be published on the ECTE website together with the accreditation decision (appeals and their outcomes will also be published should they arise).¹¹
9. The ECTE Council, meeting every year in Spring and Autumn, will consider each programme being submitted for accreditation and either:
 - a. Grant programme accreditation;
 - b. Grant programme accreditation with recommendations. *Recommendations* indicate areas of further improvement and development and progression must be reported in the APRs and checked during review visits); programme accreditation is granted even if recommendations are not met.
 - c. Grant programme accreditation subject to requirements. *Requirements* indicate conditions which call for action in order to receive (or maintain) accreditation. For requirements, a due date is be specified in the *Dual Review Report* or in the follow-up correspondence with the QAC. Prolonged failure to implement requirements will result in the termination of the accreditation process. In this case, institutions will need to apply again.
 - d. Not grant programme accreditation and provide further instructions to the institution if it wishes to re-apply.

In all cases, the decisions of the ECTE Council will be communicated and explained in writing by the QAC to the institution.
10. Institutions have the right to appeal the decisions of the ECTE Council as outlined in the ECTE Appeals provisions (see
11. For each accredited programme, institutions may include the claim “Accredited by the ECTE” on their publications. It is important that institutional accreditation is not mistaken for programme accreditation, and *only* programmes that have been individually accredited by the ECTE can be labelled as such. If an accredited institution offers programmes that are not accredited by the ECTE, they should clearly marked as ‘not accredited by the ECTE’ in publicity materials.
12. In addition to institutional accreditation fees, institutions begin paying programme accreditation fees for each accredited programme.

⁹ See also *Guidelines for Site Visits* www.ecte.eu/guidelines

¹⁰ Download at www.ecte.eu/qa/forms/

¹¹ See www.ecte.eu/qa/reports/

13. Once accreditation is granted, institutions must follow the regular reporting and review procedures¹².

All documents and forms are to be sent digitally, in English¹³, by email to the ECTE addresses that are provided. Official communication from the ECTE will also occur by email. It is the responsibility of the institution to inform the ECTE of the email addresses that will be used in the accreditation process.

¹² See *Criteria and Procedures for ECTE Accreditation*

¹³ Translation provisions can be discussed for institutions whose main language of delivery is not English.

2. JOINT ACCREDITATION

2.1 - Joint accreditation criteria

To successfully engage in joint accreditation, an institution must satisfy the following criteria:

1. The applicant is an ECTE Member;
2. The applicant is simultaneously seeking accreditation by the ECTE and by another competent international quality assurance agency or by a recognised national agency;
3. The applicant demonstrates compliance to ECTE institutional and programme standards as laid out in the *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation*.¹⁴ This is demonstrated self-evaluation reports and corroborated by on-site visits;
4. The applicant pays the relevant programme accreditation fees.¹⁵

2.1 – Joint accreditation procedures

The procedural steps for achieving joint accreditation are generally the same as those outlined in the *Criteria and Procedures* for ECTE Accreditation.

In the case of joint accreditation, however, the ECTE normally commits to the following:

1. Where the accreditation standards and guidelines of the agencies involved are similar, the ECTE will encourage a 'cut and paste' approach. In any case, the documentation submitted to the ECTE such as the various application forms or the Self Evaluation Report must remain distinct, self-standing documents.
2. Where possible, the ECTE will seek to coordinate onsite visits with other accrediting agencies in order to reduce costs and the logistical burden on the institution.
3. Although the ECTE visitation team will consult with colleagues from the other agency involved, it will produce distinct and independent review reports.

Alternative procedures in cooperation with other quality assurance agencies will be considered by the ECTE Council on a case by case basis.

¹⁴ See <http://ecte.eu/ga/standards/>

¹⁵ See <http://ecte.eu/about/fees>

These Guidelines have been approved by the ECTE Council, 28 November 2019 and are valid until their revision.

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