

CRITERIA

AND

PROCEDURES

FOR ACCREDITATION

E|C|T|E

European
Council for
Theological
Education

(Formerly the
EEAA)

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INTRODUCTION

In 2019 the Council of the ECTE decided to discontinue the production of the ECTE Manual and to replace it with a series of documents corresponding to specific topics. The entire collection of these documents related to quality assurance standards, guidelines and procedures related to ECTE membership and evaluation services can be found under www.ecte.eu/ga/.

This document contains the *Criteria and Procedures* for ECTE Accreditation, providing the basic procedures that are used for ECTE accreditation (replacing section 3.1 of the Sixth Edition, 2018 of the ECTE Manual).¹

Since the Sixth Edition of the ECTE Manual in 2018, a number of changes have been implemented in ECTE accreditation procedures. In particular, changes have been introduced in the implementation of separate procedures related to institutional and programme accreditation. The following phases will be developed in this document.

Expressions of interest (optional). Institutions interested in ECTE accreditation are encouraged to write to the General Secretary. Institutions can request an Orientation Visit to gain advice on accreditation or quality assurance issue. In some cases, the ECTE will take the initiative and offer a Courtesy visit. These visits do not commit an institution to the accreditation process. Regular visitation fees apply for this kind of visit.

Phase 1. Obtaining Membership. ECTE accreditation begins with obtaining membership in the ECTE. Institutions apply for membership and subscribe to the ECTE core values.² This phase normally requires a few months to complete.

Phase 2. Institutional accreditation. The second phase of accreditation is meant to ensure that necessary institutional standards are in place to support the delivery of tertiary theological educational programmes.³ Institutions apply for institutional accreditation, produce a self-evaluation report and receive an onsite visit. Part A of the *Standards and Guidelines* for ECTE Accreditation will be used in this phase. This phase normally requires 6 months to one year to complete.

Phase 3. Programme accreditation. The third phase of accreditation is meant to ensure the quality of the programme(s) that the institution is delivering. Institutions will apply for (single or multiple) programme accreditation, produce a self-evaluation report and receive an onsite visit. Part B of the *Standards and Guidelines* for ECTE Accreditation will be used in this phase. This phase normally requires 6 months to one year to complete.

Phase 4. Maintaining accreditation. This consists in annual reporting procedures and a full review every 5 years.

We offer this major update as a tool in helping our stakeholders progress toward greater fitness for service, for God's greater glory in Europe.

ECTE Review committee

Dr Bernhard Ott, Chairman

Dr Hubert Jurgensen, Vice Chairman

Dr Marvin Oxenham, General Secretary

¹ This document should be read in conjunction with the *Standards and Guidelines* for ECTE Accreditation www.ecte.eu/ga/standards/.

² Institutions can also be members of the ECTE network without proceeding with accreditation procedures. See *Identity, Activities and Organisation* of the ECTE www.ecte.eu/about/ and *Criteria and Procedures for ECTE Membership* (www.ecte.eu/network/membership/).

³ This phase replaces the 'Candidacy' phase that was the second step in ECTE procedures until 2019.

PHASE 1. MEMBERSHIP PROCEDURES

Regular Membership in the ECTE is the first step toward accreditation. Procedures to become an ECTE member are outlined in the *Criteria and Procedures for Membership*⁴ document and repeated here for convenience.

Regular Membership in the ECTE network is available to all institutions of evangelical theological education operating formally at post-secondary level. Regular Membership is to be distinguished from Associate membership that is available to individuals, non-formal training organisations and other agencies.

1.1 – Regular Membership criteria

The fundamental criteria for regular Membership in the ECTE are:

1. The applicant is an institution of evangelical theological education operating formally at tertiary level;
2. The applicant adheres to the ECTE Core Values;⁵
3. The applicant is recognised as an evangelical organisation;
4. The applicant agrees to pay regular ECTE membership fees.⁶

1.2 – Membership Procedures

The following steps lead to achieving regular Membership in the ECTE:

1. Submission of an ECTE *Membership Application* form⁷ to the ECTE General Secretary together with the required supporting documentation;
2. The ECTE Council (meeting twice a year in spring and autumn) deliberates on applications;
3. The ECTE General Secretary notifies the applicant either of membership approval or of further steps that need to be taken;
4. The ECTE Treasurer invoices the yearly membership fees.
5. Member institutions may include the statement “Member of the European Council for Theological Education (ECTE)” or equivalent expression in their publications and use the ECTE logo. Care must be taken by the institution to make it clear that their membership in the ECTE does not equate accreditation of their institution nor of their programmes.

All documents and forms are to be sent digitally, in English⁸, 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.

⁴ See *Criteria and Procedures for ECTE Membership* www.ecte.eu/network/membership/

⁵ See *Criteria and Procedures for ECTE Membership* www.ecte.eu/network/membership/ and *Introducing the ECTE*, Section 1.5

⁶ See <http://ecte.eu/about/fees>

⁷ Download at <http://ecte.eu/forms>

⁸ Translation provisions can be discussed for institutions whose main language of delivery is not English.

1.3 – Summary of membership phase

TIMELINE

| Phase | What | Who |
|---------------|---|---|
| 1. Membership | ↓ Courtesy Visit (optional, suggested by the ECTE at any point) | ECTE offers consultancy |
| | ↓ Orientation Visit (optional, requested by the institution at any point) | Institution requests consultancy |
| | ↓ Institution sends Membership Application | Institution to General Secretary |
| | ↓ Council deliberates on Membership | ECTE Council |
| | ↓ Institution is informed of outcome | General Secretary to Institution |
| | ↓ Institution pays membership fees | Treasurer invoices Institution annually |

FORMS AND GUIDELINES

- *Membership Application* form (form used by the institution for membership application);⁹
- *Introducing the ECTE* (document describing membership rights and advantages, statutes and bylaws, ECTE core values);¹⁰

RESPONSIBILITIES

- **The institution:** submits the Membership Application form required documentation; subscribes to ECTE core values; pays membership fees.
- **The ECTE General Secretary (GS):** receives the Membership Application form and presents it to the ECTE Council; notifies institution of application outcome; in case of positive outcome, provides institution with logo and includes institution in the ECTE directory; in case of negative outcome, provides further guidance and receives appeals.
- **The ECTE Council:** makes decisions on membership.
- **The ECTE Treasurer:** invoices member schools yearly.

⁹ Download at <http://ecte.eu/forms>

¹⁰ See <http://ecte.eu/about>

PHASE 2 – INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

Institutional accreditation is the second phase in the accreditation process. This phase normally takes 6 months – 1 year to complete.

2.1 - Institutional accreditation criteria

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

1. The applicant is a regular member of the ECTE (see Phase 1 above);
2. The institution has normally been in operation for at least three years and has graduated at least one cohort of students (in any one of its programme). This criterion is in place to ensure the stability of new institutions before entering the accreditation process. It also allows institutions the necessary time to generate evidence of the required standards;
3. The applicant meets the institutional standards as laid out in the *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation*, Part A. This is demonstrated through a self-evaluation report and corroborated by an on-site visit;
4. If the institution delivers programmes by distance or online education, the additional *Guidelines for Distance and Online Education* are also met.
5. The applicant pays the relevant institutional accreditation fees.¹¹

2.2 - Institutional accreditation procedures

Here are the procedures for achieving institutional accreditation.¹²

1. The institution fills out the *Institutional Accreditation Application*¹³ and sends it to the ECTE QA Coordinator (QAC).
2. The QAC either a) authorises the application and instructs the institution to proceed with the production of an *Institutional Self-Evaluation Report* (I-SER) or b) provides alternative instructions (should the application be insufficient or unsuitable as a *bona fide* case for accreditation).
3. The institution produces an *Institutional Self Evaluation Report* (I-SER)¹⁴ and sends it to the QAC.¹⁵ This is a major quality assurance exercise whereby the institution evaluates its operations in light of the ECTE institutional standards (part A of the *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation*).¹⁶ It

¹¹ See www.ecte.eu/about/fees

¹² Special provisions are made for schools with other accreditation, see *Guidelines for Dual and Joint Accreditation* www.ecte.eu/qa/guidelines

¹³ Download at www.ecte.eu/qa/forms/

¹⁴ An I-SER template is available in section 3 of the *Guidelines for Producing a SER* www.ecte.eu/guidelines

¹⁵ See *Guidelines for Producing a SER* www.ecte.eu/guidelines

¹⁶ If the institution delivers programmes by distance or online education, Part A of the additional *Guidelines for Distance and Online Education* must also be considered.

is important that the institution understands this as an opportunity for honest and thorough reflection that will often require change, innovation, revision and improvement of its institutional quality. The result of this exercise, which normally takes several months and involves all the stakeholders of the institution, is a lengthy document that responds to each the six institutional standards and provides written evidence of compliance.

4. The QAC examines the *Institutional Self Evaluation Report* (I-SER) and, in consultation with the Accreditation Commission of the ECTE Council, either a) authorises the ECTE Review Secretary (RS) to organise the on-site visit or b) provides alternative instructions should the SER be insufficient or unsuitable.
5. The Review Secretary (RS) assembles an ECTE Visitation Evaluation Team (VET) provides them with copies of the Institutional SER to be evaluated on-site in light of the *Standards and Guidelines* for ECTE Accreditation (Part A) and provides access to the historical archive of the institution (these documents must normally be sent to the VET panel at least two months before the site visit). The RS facilitates arrangements between the institution and the VET for an onsite visit (dates, logistics, etc). Institutions prepare the visit¹⁷ and contribute a visitation fee. The institutional accreditation visit takes place.
6. After the institutional accreditation visit, the VET and RS will produce an *Institutional Review Report*¹⁸ that is signed off by the institution and sent to the QAC. The QAC submits the *Institutional Review Report* to the ECTE Council for a final decision concerning institutional accreditation. In line with best practice in quality assurance, the integral *Institutional Review Report* will be published on the ECTE website.¹⁹
7. The ECTE Council, meeting every year in Spring and Autumn, will either:
 - a. Grant institutional accreditation.
 - b. Grant institutional accreditation with recommendations. *Recommendations* indicate areas of further improvement and development and progression must be reported in the APRs and checked during review visits); institutional accreditation is granted even if recommendations are not met.
 - c. Grant institutional accreditation subject to meeting requirements. *Requirements* indicate conditions which call for action in order to receive (or maintain) accreditation. A due date is specified in the *Institutional 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 institutional 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.

The decision is also published on the ECTE website.

8. Institutions have the right to appeal the decisions of the ECTE Council.²⁰
9. Once institutional accreditation is granted, institutions may include the claim “ECTE Institutional Accreditation” 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

¹⁷ See *Guidelines for Site Visits* www.ecte.eu/guidelines

¹⁸ Download at www.ecte.eu/qa/forms/

¹⁹ See www.ecte.eu/qa/reports/

²⁰ See <http://ecte.eu/about/organisation/policies/>

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.

10. At this point the institution begins paying the yearly institutional accreditation fee.

All documents and forms are to be sent digitally, in English,²¹ by email to the ECTE addresses that are provided.²² 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.

It is good practice for schools engaging accreditation procedures to nominate an internal review and accreditation coordinator who will be the main interface with the ECTE throughout the process.

2.3 – Summary of institutional accreditation phase

TIMELINE

| Phase | What | Who |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| 2. Institutional accreditation | ↓ Institution sends in Institutional Accreditation Application | Institution to QAC |
| | ↓ QAC authorises application and SER | QAC to Institution |
| | ↓ Institution produces Institutional SER and sends it to QAC | Institution to QAC |
| | ↓ Authorization of Institutional visit | QAC to Institution and RS |
| | ↓ Institutional Accreditation Visit | RS, VET performs; Institution hosts |
| | ↓ Production of Institutional Review Report | RS and VET; Institution signs off |
| | ↓ Council deliberates on Institutional Accreditation | ECTE Council |
| | ↓ Institution is informed of outcome | QAC to Institution |
| | ↓ Institution pays institutional accreditation fees | Treasurer invoices Institution annually |

FORMS²³

- *Institutional Accreditation Application*
- *Institutional Self Evaluation Report (I-SER) - a template*
- *Institutional Review Report*

²¹ Translation provisions can be discussed for institutions whose main language of delivery is not English.

²² See www.ecte.eu/contact/

²³ All the forms below can be downloaded at <http://ecte.eu/forms>

GUIDELINES

- *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation – Part A*²⁴
- *Guidelines for Producing a SER*²⁵
- *Guidelines for Site Visits*²⁶
- *Fee schedule*²⁷
- *Guidelines for Dual and Joint Accreditation*²⁸
- *Guidelines for Distance and Online Education*²⁹

RESPONSIBILITIES

- **The institution:** applies for institutional accreditation; produces an Institutional SER; hosts an onsite visit; signs off the *Institutional Review Report*; pays one-off visitation fees; begins paying yearly institutional accreditation fees.
- **The ECTE QA Coordinator (QAC):** reviews the institutional application and authorises production of the I-SER; reviews the I-SER and authorises the visitation; receives the *Institutional Review Report* and presents it to the ECTE Council; informs the institution of the outcomes of the accreditation deliberation by the ECTE Council; provides guidance to the institution for recommendations, requirements or re-application; monitors the institution through the annual progress reports.
- **The ECTE Review Secretary (RS):** assembles the Visitation Evaluation Team; facilitates the visitation; oversees the production of the *Institutional Review Report* and publishes it to the ECTE website.
- **The ECTE Visitation Evaluation Team (VET):** receives and studies the I-SER; conducts the onsite visit considering only section A of the *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation*; produces the *Institutional Review Report*.
- **The ECTE Council:** makes the final decision regarding accreditation.
- **The ECTE Treasurer:** invoices for visit and yearly fees.

²⁴ See <http://ecte.eu/qa/standards/>

²⁵ See www.ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/

²⁶ See www.ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/

²⁷ See www.ecte.eu/about/fees

²⁸ See www.ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/

²⁹ See www.ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/

PHASE 3 – PROGRAMME

ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

Programme accreditation is the third phase in the accreditation process after having obtained membership. The procedures are very similar to institutional accreditation (Phase 2) but concern the *programme(s)* of theological education that are being delivered by the institution. This phase normally takes 6 months – 1 year to complete.

3.1 - Programme accreditation criteria

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

1. The applicant has successfully obtained either ECTE institutional accreditation (see Phase 2 above); institutions with more than one study programme will only need to undergo institutional accreditation once and can then apply for the accreditation of multiple programmes;
2. The applicant meets the programme standards as laid out in the *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation, Part B*. This is demonstrated through a self-evaluation report and corroborated by an on-site visit;
3. If the institution delivers programmes by distance or online education, the additional *Guidelines for Distance and Online Education* are also met.
4. The applicant pays the relevant programme accreditation fees.³⁰

3.2 - Programme accreditation procedures

Here are the procedural steps for achieving programme accreditation.³¹

1. The institution fills out the *Programme Accreditation Application*³² and sends it to the ECTE QA Coordinator (QAC). It is possible to apply for programme accreditation of more than one programme at a time, but each application must remain distinct.
2. The QAC either a) authorises the application and instructs the institution to proceed with the production of a *Programme Self-Evaluation Report (P-SER)*³³ for each programme being submitted for accreditation or b) provides alternative instructions should the application be insufficient or unsuitable as a *bona fide* case for accreditation.
3. The institution produces a *Programme Self Evaluation Report (P-SER)* for each programme being submitted for accreditation and sends it/them to the QAC.³⁴ This is a major quality assurance exercise whereby the institution evaluates its operations in light of the *ECTE* programme standards

³⁰ See www.ecte.eu/about/fees

³¹ Special provisions are made for schools with other accreditation, see *Guidelines for Dual and Joint Accreditation* www.ecte.eu/qa/guidelines

³² Download at www.ecte.eu/qa/forms/

³³ A P-SER template is available in section 3 of the *Guidelines for Producing a SER* www.ecte.eu/guidelines

³⁴ See *Guidelines for Producing a SER* www.ecte.eu/guidelines

(part B of the *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation*).³⁵ It is important that the institution understands this procedure as an opportunity for honest and thorough reflection that will often require change, innovation, revision and improvement of the quality of the programmes it is delivering. The result of this exercise, which normally takes several months and involves all the stakeholders of the institution, is a lengthy document that responds to each of the five programme standards and provides written evidence of compliance.

4. The QAC examines the *Programme Self Evaluation Report(s)* (P-SER) and, in consultation with the Accreditation Commission of the ECTE Council, either a) authorises the ECTE Review Secretary (RS) to organise the on-site visit or b) provides alternative instructions should the SER be insufficient or unsuitable.
5. The Review Secretary (RS) assembles an ECTE Visitation Evaluation Team (VET) provides them with copies of the P-SER to be evaluated on site in light of the *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation (Part B)*, and provides access to the historical archive of the institution that includes the *Institutional Review Report* from the previous visit and a list of recommendations (if any) that were made (these documents must normally be sent to the VET panel at least two months before the site visit). The RS facilitates arrangements between the institution and the VET for an onsite visit (dates, logistics, etc). Institutions receive instructions to prepare for the visit³⁶ and contribute a visitation fee. The programme accreditation visit takes place.
6. After the programme accreditation visit, the VET and RS will produce a *Programme Review Report*³⁷ that is signed off by the institution and sent to the QAC. The QAC, in turn, submit the *Programme Review Report* to the ECTE Council for a final decision concerning programme accreditation. In line with best practice in quality assurance, the integral *Programme Review Report* will be signed off by the institution to be published on the ECTE website.³⁸
7. 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. 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 meeting requirements. *Requirements* indicate conditions which call for action in order to receive (or maintain) accreditation. For requirements, a due date is to be specified in the *Programme 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.

The decision is also published on the ECTE website.

³⁵ If the institution delivers programmes by distance or online education, Part B of the additional *Guidelines for Distance and Online Education* must also be considered.

³⁶ See *Guidelines for Site Visits* www.ecte.eu/guidelines

³⁷ Download at www.ecte.eu/qa/forms/

³⁸ See www.ecte.eu/qa/reports/

8. Institutions have the right to appeal the decisions of the ECTE Council.³⁹
9. 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.
10. A graduation certificate from the ECTE with a statement of comparability to the ECTE levels as described in this Manual is available on request to all ECTE students graduating from ECTE accredited institutions. To obtain certificates, institutions must email an *ECTE Certificate Order Form*, at least two months before graduation.⁴⁰
11. In addition to institutional accreditation fees, institutions begin paying programme accreditation fees for each accredited programme.

All documents and forms are to be sent digitally, in English,⁴¹ by email to the ECTE addresses that are provided.⁴² 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.

3.3 – Summary of programme accreditation phase

TIMELINE

| Phase | What | Who |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 2. Institutional accreditation | ↓ Institution sends in Programme Accreditation Application | Institution to QAC |
| | ↓ QAC authorises application and SER | QAC to Institution |
| | ↓ Institution produces Programme SER and sends it to QAC | Institution to QAC |
| | ↓ Authorization of Programme visit | QAC to Institution and RS |
| | ↓ Programme Accreditation Visit | RS, VET performs; Institution hosts |
| | ↓ Production of Programme Review Report | RS and VET; Institution signs off |
| | ↓ Council deliberates on Programme Accreditation | ECTE Council |
| | ↓ Institution is informed of outcome | QAC to Institution |

³⁹ See <http://ecte.eu/about/organisation/policies/>

⁴⁰ Download at www.ecte.eu/qa/forms/

⁴¹ Translation provisions can be discussed for institutions whose main language of delivery is not English.

⁴² See www.ecte.eu/contact/

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | ↓ Institution pays Programme accreditation fees | Treasurer invoices Institution annually |
|--|---|---|

FORMS⁴³

- *Programme Accreditation Application*;
- *Programme Self Evaluation Report (P-SER)* - a template;
- *Programme Review Report*

GUIDELINES

- *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation – Part A and Appendix A: ECTE Certification Framework*⁴⁴
- *Guidelines for Producing a SER*⁴⁵
- *Guidelines for Site Visits*⁴⁶
- *Fee schedule*⁴⁷
- *Guidelines for Dual and Joint Accreditation*⁴⁸
- *Guidelines for Distance and Online Education*⁴⁹

RESPONSIBILITIES

- **The institution:** applies for programme accreditation for each programme being submitted for accreditation; produces a Programme SER; hosts an onsite visit; signs off the *Programme Review Report*; pays one-off visitation fees; pays yearly institutional and programme accreditation fees.
- **The ECTE QA Coordinator (QAC):** reviews the application for each programme and authorises production of the P-SER(s); reviews the P-SER(s) and authorises the visitation; receives the *Programme Review Report(s)* and presents it/them to the ECTE Council; informs the institution of the outcomes of the accreditation application(s); provides guidance to the institution for recommendations, requirements or re-application; monitors the institution through the annual progress reports.
- **The ECTE Review Secretary (RS):** assembles the Visitation Evaluation Team; facilitates the visitation; oversees the production of the *Programme Review Report(s)* and publishes it(them) to the ECTE website.
- **The ECTE Visitation Evaluation Team (VET):** receives and studies the P-SER(s); conducts the onsite visit considering only section B of the *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation*; produces the *Programme Review Report(s)*.
- **The ECTE Council:** makes the final decision regarding accreditation of each programme.
- **The ECTE Treasurer:** invoices for visit and yearly fees.

⁴³ All the forms below can be downloaded at <http://ecte.eu/forms>

⁴⁴ See <http://ecte.eu/qa/standards/>

⁴⁵ See www.ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/

⁴⁶ See www.ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/

⁴⁷ See www.ecte.eu/about/fees

⁴⁸ See www.ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/

⁴⁹ See www.ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/

PHASE 4 – MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION

All ECTE institutions must undergo cyclical external quality assurance, both at the institutional and programme level. To maintain accreditation, institutions must a) submit yearly reports and b) undergo a full accreditation review every 5 years.

4.1 – Annual reporting

Accredited institutions report every year on areas of institutional and programme quality through an *Annual Progress Report (APR)*. If an institution has more than one programme accredited with the ECTE, the APR should provide a distinct report for each programme.

Here are the procedural steps for maintaining accreditation through the submission of a yearly report called the *Annual Progress Report (APR)*:

1. Institutions submit an *Annual Progress Report (APR)*⁵⁰ to the QA Coordinator. The APR should also be copied to the General Secretary for archiving purposes and to the ECTE Treasurer for invoicing purposes.⁵¹ APRs are submitted every year before the month of August relative to the previous year (e.g. the APR for the academic year 2018-19 are submitted by August 2019).
2. The QAC submits all APRs to the Autumn ECTE Council meeting for revision. The QAC then sends an evaluation letter to the institution that will include commendations, recommendations and requirements. Whereas recommendations represent advice in good practice, requirements must be met for continued accreditation.
3. In order to maintain accreditation, institutions need to be in line with their fees. Institutions which are two years or more behind with their payments of fees will receive a formal notice. If, six months following the formal notice, schools have still not settled their fees, their membership and accreditation will be suspended.⁵² If, after being suspended for two years, institutions have still not settled their arrear payments, their membership and accreditation will be revoked, and they will need to apply again. It should be noted that suspension involves suspension of membership and both institutional and programme accreditation. When an institution is suspended, the name of the institution will be removed from the directories on the ECTE website.

In addition to the required APR, all significant institutional changes are to be reported to the ECTE within one month and major programme reforms are to be discussed with the QA Coordinator (QAC) before implementation. Whenever an institution adds a new specialization/concentration or a new delivery method to an existing accredited programme, that institution must also inform the ECTE before implementing it.

⁵⁰ Download at www.ecte.eu/qa/forms/

⁵¹ See www.ecte.eu/contact/

⁵² See www.ecte.eu/about/fees. Schools which have a strong case for reduction of fees due to un-usual financial constraints should appeal to council for this with supporting documentation and these will be considered on a case by case basis.

Similarly, whenever a new programme is developed, the institution should notify the Council, indicate its plans for programme accreditation and specify in its publications whether the programme is accredited by the ECTE or not.

All documents and forms are to be sent digitally, in English,⁵³ by email to the ECTE addresses that are provided.⁵⁴ 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.

TIMELINE

| Phase | What | Who |
|---|---|--|
| 4a. Yearly maintenance of accreditation | ↓ Institution sends in Annual Progress Report (APR) | Institution to QAC |
| | ↓ Council reviews APR | ECTE Council |
| | ↓ QAC communicates commendations, recommendations or requirements | QAC to Institution; Institution follows up |
| | ↓ Institution pays fees | Treasurer invoices Institution annually |

FORMS

- *Annual Progress Report (APR)*⁵⁵

GUIDELINES

- *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation*⁵⁶
- *Fee schedule*⁵⁷

RESPONSIBILITIES

- **The institution:** sends in an APR every year before the month of August for the previous academic year; pays yearly institutional and programme accreditation fees; responds to recommendations or requirements.
- **The ECTE QA Coordinator (QAC):** receives the APR and presents it to the ECTE Council; provides guidance to the institution for recommendations, requirements or re-application.
- **The ECTE Council:** reviews APR and makes commendations, recommendations and/or requirements;
- **The ECTE Treasurer:** invoices member schools yearly.

⁵³ Translation provisions can be discussed for institutions whose main language of delivery is not English.

⁵⁴ See www.ecte.eu/contact/

⁵⁵ All the forms below can be downloaded at <http://ecte.eu/forms>

⁵⁶ See <http://ecte.eu/qa/standards/>

⁵⁷ See www.ecte.eu/about/fees

4.2 – Cyclical review

Accredited institutions undergo a cyclical review every 5 years on areas of institutional and programme quality through a *Cyclical Self Evaluation Report (C-SER)*. If an institution has more than one programme accredited with the ECTE, the C-SER will require a distinct section for each programme.

Here are the procedural steps for maintaining accreditation through the cyclical accreditation review.

1. On the eve of the conclusion of the 5-year cycle, an initial contact is made between the General Secretary or the QAC with the institution to initiate the cyclical review. The institution fills out the *Cyclical Review Request*⁵⁸ and an general time frame is agreed on.
2. Institutions complete and submit a *Cyclical Self Evaluation Report (C-SER)*⁵⁹ covering both institutional and programme standards outlined in the *Standards and Guidelines* to the QA Coordinator (also copied to the Review Secretary and to the General Secretary for archiving purposes).⁶⁰ A C-SER must normally be submitted in the month of August after 5 years of full operations of an institution or of a programme (in the year that a C-SER is submitted no APR is due). Given that the dates of the initial institutional accreditation and the successive accreditation of programmes are unlikely to align, some flexibility will be allowed concerning the 5-year deadline, which may mean extending the cycle of an institutional or programme accreditation by one or two years. In any case, the review cycle of either institutional or programme accreditation will not exceed 8 years.
3. The QAC examines the C-SER and either a) authorises the ECTE Review Secretary (RS) to organise the on-site visit or b) provides alternative instructions should the C-SER be insufficient or unsuitable.
4. The Review Secretary (RS) assembles an ECTE Visitation Evaluation Team (VET), provides them with copies of the C-SER to be evaluated on site in light of the *Standards and Guidelines* for ECTE Accreditation (Parts A and B), and provides access to the historical archive of the institution that includes the *Institutional and Programme Review Reports* from the previous visits and instructs them concerning recommendations from the previous accreditation and APRs that should be followed through on (these documents must normally be sent to the VET panel at least two months before the site visit). The RS facilitates arrangements between the institution and the VET for an onsite review visit (dates, logistics, etc). Institutions prepare for the visit⁶¹ and contribute a visitation fee.
5. After the cyclical review visit, the VET and RS produce a *Cyclical Review Report*⁶² that is signed off by the institution and sent to the QAC. The QAC submits the *Cyclical Review Report* to the ECTE Council for a final decision concerning the continuation of the accreditation of the institution and its programmes. In line with best practice in quality assurance, the integral *Cyclical Review Report* will be signed off by the institution to be published on the ECTE website.⁶³
6. The ECTE Council, meeting every year in Spring and Autumn, will consider each *Cyclical Review* and either:
 - a. Renews both institutional and programme accreditation (for all programmes);
 - e. Renews either/or institutional and programme accreditation (for all programmes) with recommendations. *Recommendations* indicate areas of further improvement and

⁵⁸ Complete online at www.ecte.eu/qa/forms/

⁵⁹ A C-SER template is available in section 3 of the *Guidelines for Producing a SER* www.ecte.eu/guidelines

⁶⁰ If the institution delivers programmes by distance or online education, Part A and B of the additional *Guidelines for Distance and Online Education* must also be considered.

⁶¹ See *Guidelines for Site Visits* www.ecte.eu/guidelines

⁶² Download at www.ecte.eu/qa/forms/

⁶³ See www.ecte.eu/qa/reports/

development and progression must be reported in the APRs. Continuation of accreditation is granted even if recommendations are not met.

- b. Renew institutional accreditation subject to meeting requirements. Since programme accreditation depends on institutional accreditation, no programme will be granted accreditation until institutional standards are met.
- c. Renew institutional accreditation but set forth requirements for one or more programmes. Programmes that are subject to requirements will not be granted accreditation until the requirements are met.
- d. Not grant institutional or programme accreditation confirmation and provide further instructions to the institution should a re-submission be needed.

In all cases, the decisions of the ECTE Council will be communicated and explained in writing by the QAC to the institution.

The decision is also published on the ECTE website.

Concerning institutional or programme requirements, a due date is specified in the *Cyclical Review Report* or in the follow-up correspondence with the QAC. Pending the meeting of the requirements, the institution may undergo a period of probation during which accreditation is provisionally maintained. Prolonged failure to implement requirements (normally, no more than 2 years) will result in the withdrawal of accreditation.

7. Institutions have the right to appeal the decisions of the ECTE Council.⁶⁴
8. The Cyclical Review also takes into consideration the regular payment of accreditation fees (both institutional and programme related). No visits will be authorized for institutions which are two years or more behind with their payments of fees. This means that institutions will not be allowed to apply for a cyclical review until their fees are paid and risk losing their accreditation.

All documents and forms are to be sent digitally, in English⁶⁵, by email to the ECTE addresses that are provided.⁶⁶ 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.

TIMELINE

| Phase | What | Who |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| 4c. Cyclical 5 year maintenance of accreditation | ↓ Institution sends in Cyclical Self Evaluation Report (C-SER) | Institution to QAC |
| | ↓ Authorization of Cyclical Review visit | QAC to Institution and RS |
| | ↓ Cyclical Review visit | RS, VET performs; Institution hosts |
| | ↓ Production of Cyclical Review Report | RS and VET; Institution signs off |
| | ↓ Council deliberates on Programme Accreditation | ECTE Council |
| | ↓ Institution is informed of outcome | QAC to Institution |

⁶⁴ See <http://ecte.eu/about/organisation/policies/>

⁶⁵ Translation provisions can be discussed for institutions whose main language of delivery is not English.

⁶⁶ See www.ecte.eu/contact/

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | ↓ Institution pays Programme accreditation fees | Treasurer invoices Institution annually |
|--|---|---|

FORMS⁶⁷

- *Cyclical Self-Evaluation Report (C-SER)* – a template
- *Cyclical Review Report*

GUIDELINES

- *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation – Part A and B and Appendix A: ECTE Certification Framework*⁶⁸
- *Guidelines for Producing a SER*⁶⁹
- *Guidelines for Site Visits*⁷⁰
- *Fee schedule*⁷¹
- *Guidelines for Distance and Online Education*⁷²

RESPONSIBILITIES

- **The institution:** sends in a C-SER every 5 years before the month of August; hosts an onsite visit; signs off the *Cyclical Review Report*; pays one-off visitation fees; pays yearly institutional and programme accreditation fees; responds to recommendations or requirements.
- **The ECTE QA Coordinator (QAC):** receives and reviews the C-SER; authorises the cyclical review visit; receives the *Cyclical Review Report* and presents it to the ECTE Council; provides guidance to the institution for recommendations, requirements or re-application.
- **The ECTE Review Secretary (RS):** assembles the Visitation Evaluation Team; facilitates the visitation; oversees the production of the *Cyclical Review Report* and publishes it(them) to the ECTE website.
- **The ECTE Visitation Evaluation Team (VET):** receives and studies the C-SER; conducts the onsite visit considering the *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation* and lists of previous recommendations; produces the *Cyclical Review Report*.
- **The ECTE Council:** reviews C-SER and makes commendations, recommendations and/or requirements;
- **The ECTE Treasurer:** invoices for visit and yearly fees.

⁶⁷ All the forms below can be downloaded at <http://ecte.eu/forms>

⁶⁸ See <http://ecte.eu/qa/standards/>

⁶⁹ See www.ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/

⁷⁰ See www.ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/

⁷¹ See www.ecte.eu/about/fees

⁷² See www.ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/

These Criteria and Procedures for ECTE Accreditation have been approved by the ECTE Council, 28 November 2019 and are valid until their revision.

The European Council for Theological Education
has its legal address in Korntal-Münchingen (DE)
and is registered in the registry of non-profit organisations (*Vereinsregister*)

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