

ECTE ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
(DECEMBER 2022)

ECTE

European
Council for
Theological
Education

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INTRODUCTION

The ECTE's Accreditation Commission is the independent accrediting department of the European Council for Theological Education.¹

It has been established to ensure compliance with standard 3.2 of the *European Standards and Guidelines* concerning the independence of quality assurance agencies and their decisions.

1. POLICIES

1.1 – FUNCTIONS OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

The functions of the ECTE Accreditation Commission include:

- Appointing Visiting Evaluation Team (VET) members for reviews.
- Making consistent and public accreditation decisions based on the final reports of VET's.
- Making consistent and public decisions relating to the fulfilment of requirements based on additional representation provided by the institution following an accreditation decision.
- Receiving reports from the General Secretary related to ECTE governance issues.
- Receiving reports from the Accreditation Director (AD) relating to visitation feedback and Annual Progress Reports (APR's).
- Receiving updates from the Review Secretaries related to upcoming reviews.

1.2 – EXPECTATIONS ON THE ACCREDITATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

The envisioned expected workload is approximately 10-15 days per year.

Accreditation Commission members commit to:

- Prepare for and participate in all Accreditation Commission sessions (barring emergencies). –
- Ongoing Professional Development, for example via
 - o participation in General Assemblies
 - o participation in regular VET-trainings/workshops

1.3 - COMPOSITION OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

Membership of the Accreditation Commission normally consists of:

1. An Accreditation Commission Chairperson (appointed among members).
2. An Accreditation Commission Vice-Chairperson (appointed among members).
3. Between 4 and 9 other members.

Staff members and VET leaders may be invited as guests by the chairperson.

ECTE Council members, VET members and ECTE staff members are not eligible for election to the ECTE Accreditation Commission.

1.4 – SELECTION CRITERIA FOR THE ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

The criteria for the selection of Accreditation Commission members are determined by the intention to have a broad representation from the following ECTE stakeholders.²

¹ See <http://ecte.eu/introducing/identity-and-mission/>

² See <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/stakeholders/>

- Higher Education Providers - accredited institutions and member institutions (includes both HEIs and alternative providers)
- Peer subject-specific agencies
- European QA authorities
- Global theological education networks
- Theology students
- Academic faculty
- Institutional leadership
- Administrative staff
- Governing boards
- Ecclesial entities
- Graduate employers
- Funders and fundraisers
- Other external partners

The Accreditation Commission selection criteria also include variety in regional and linguistic representations, gender representation, and variety in areas of expertise in theological education.

To be eligible, Accreditation Commission members must meet the following requirements.

- Commitment to ECTE's mission and core values.
- Substantial understanding of accreditation overall, ideally including experience with accreditation processes.
- Thorough knowledge of ECTE *Standards and Guidelines, Criteria and Procedures* and *Supplemental Guidelines* as they apply to the individual reviews. This is normally documented by successful completion of the following ICETE-Academy courses:
 - o *Considering Accreditation*³
 - o *ECTE-VET Training*⁴
- High proficiency in English (spoken and written).
- Ability to work collegially in a cross-cultural setting.

1.5 – NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENT OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

The Accreditation Commission nominates candidates and presents them to the ECTE Council who appoints Accreditation Commission members. The Accreditation Commission also appoints the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson who are then submitted for ratification to the Council.

Accreditation Commission members are appointed for terms of two to four years terms (renewable), ideally on a rotation basis to ensure continuity.

The Accreditation Commission Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons are appointed for a 2-year term (renewable).

Accreditation Commission members can be removed from appointment following a request from the Accreditation Commission and subsequent decision by the ECTE Council. This relates to situations where a Commission member no longer fulfils the nomination criteria or seeks to withdraw from the Commission for personal reasons.

1.6 – TRAINING AND ORIENTATION OF NEW ACCREDITATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Orientation and training normally include the following sequence:

³ <https://icete.academy/course/view.php?id=33>

⁴ <https://icete.academy/course/view.php?id=135>

- Opportunity to attend an AC-session as a guest prior to nomination.
- Individual orientation by AC-Chairperson and Accreditation Director prior to standing for nomination.
- Successful completion of the following ICETE Academy courses:
 - o *Considering Accreditation*⁵
 - o *ECTE-VET Training*⁶
- Normally, appointment as VET-member and one site visit with individual briefing by AD prior and post the site visit.
- Individual orientation by AC-Chairperson and Accreditation Director prior to first AC participation as a voting member.

2. PROCEDURES

2.1 - RULES OF PROCEDURE

All Accreditation Commission members have equal rights, privileges, and obligations.

2.2 – MEETING SCHEDULE

Regular monthly Business Sessions as needed. Goal: Timely consultation and decision making in all areas. Includes quick response items like documentation of VET-Member appointments for site visits.

Annual Main Sessions (1-2/year). Goal: In addition to items from regular business sessions, these main sessions include strategic and structural topics and ideally a joint session with the ECTE Council.

2.3 - AGENDA

The agenda for each session is prepared by the Accreditation Commission Chairperson, assisted by the Accreditation Commission Director.

The agenda and supporting documentation will be made available to Accreditation Commission members no later than one week before the session.

2.4 - DECISION MAKING

All decisions are made by simple majority of those present at a regularly convened meeting. A quorum of 50%+1 of members is necessary for a valid decision. Participation, discussion, and decision-making can occur in person, in video-conference-sessions or by e-vote.

Decisions are made based on:

- the ECTE *Standards and Guidelines* along with the *Criteria & Procedures* and any *Supplemental Guidelines* which apply to the respective review;
- the findings and evaluations of the Visiting Evaluation Team as documented in the Final Review Report. This Review Report is approved by the VET and accepted by the school as factually correct before submission to the AC.

Decisions on compliance related to requirements are based on additional representation submitted by the institution. The AC does not evaluate secondary evidence (e.g. student papers).

In case of a draw the Accreditation Commission Chairperson

⁵ <https://icete.academy/course/view.php?id=33>

⁶ <https://icete.academy/course/view.php?id=135>

- establishes what further information may help in the decision making and takes appropriate steps to ensure a decision can be reached at the next business session or by e-vote OR
- postpones the decision to the next session, expecting more members of the Accreditation Commission to be present OR
- presents the situation to Accreditation Commission members not present and request their vote by e-mail.

2.5 - CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All Accreditation Commission members sign a *No Conflict-of-Interest* declaration. This prescribes that, in case of competition or personal or professional involvement within 5 years with the provider under review, Accreditation Commission members will absent themselves from discussions and voting sessions involving decisions concerning said provider.

2.6 - MINUTES, DOCUMENTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Decisions by the Accreditation Commission in a regularly convened meeting are minuted and distributed in writing to all parties involved.

Decision reached via e-voting are documented in the minutes of the next regularly convened session in writing and communicated to all parties involved.

Communication of decisions from the Accreditation Commission are reflected in the ECTE database, on the ECTE public website and are communicated to the ECTE Council in bi-annual reports.

Communication of decisions by the Accreditation Commission are made to the respective provider in writing.

2.7 – INITIATING REVISION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ACCREDITATION POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

As the Accreditation Commission identifies areas of development in terms of policies, procedures and/or guidelines, it will delegate staff to draft initial documents. These are then returned to the Accreditation Commission for approval or further edits followed by approval.

The following documents fall under the purview of the ECTE Council:

- *Standards and Guidelines*
- *Criteria and Procedures*
- *Accreditation Commission Policies & Procedures*

2.8 - ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE COMMISSION

- **Policy Accountability:** Annual reporting of the AC to the Council in its spring meeting based on compliance with the ESG (AIRIM-report).
- **Procedures:** Regular reports in each Council meeting and each General Assembly cover procedural accountability aspects.
- **Reporting:** Reports on Commission decisions are a standing item on the agenda for ECTE Council meetings. Minutes of the Commission are shared with the Council for information.

This document has been approved by the ECTE Council, 6 December 2022 and is valid until
its revision.

For additional information about the ECTE, contact:
Dr Marvin Oxenham – General Secretary, ECTE
Via dei Lucumoni 33 1015 Sutri (VT) Italy
Email: office@ecte.eu Website: www.ecte.eu