REVIEW REPORT

PARS Theological Centre
Related to a visit for Institutional and Programme
Accreditation; 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th February 2022

ECTE

European
Council for
Theological
Education

INDEX

A. Executive summary

A hybrid learning programme of 120 ECTS with a "first year" (60 ECTS) and "second year" (60 ECTS) leading to certifications which are equivalent to Certificate and Diploma in Theology.

This report relates to a process, including an on-line visit 7th 8th 9th and 10th February 2022, for the purpose of accrediting the institution and programmes of the Pars Theological Centre on the basis of the European Council for Theological Education (ECTE)'s 6th edition, pre 2019 *Standards and Guidelines*. It finds the school generally excellent in achieving its intentions in theological education, suggests to the ECTE Accreditation Commission, 3 commendations, 6 recommendations and 4 requirements.

B. Introduction to the review

Pars was founded in 2010 as a hub for holistic and contextual leadership training for the Iranian church in its various theological and denominational expressions. In accordance with ECTE procedures then in force, Pars Theological Centre was the object of a previous ECTE candidacy visit in May 2019, led by Dr Carmen Crouse. This visit resulted in the communication to Pars of 7 recommendations and 3 requirements. The centre worked diligently on these various areas and has now sought ECTE accreditation for its Certificate and Diploma programmes. In view of the accreditation process commencing while the pre 2019 standards and procedures were active, this accreditation visit was conducted under these standards.

The centre's planned BTh will likely be submitted for accreditation in 2023 and will come under the current post-2019 standards.

The process of review undertaken by the school in order to write the SER was careful and well structured. A committee was created consisting of the Executive director, the Associate Director, the Director of Studies and the Curriculum Development Officer and also involved other staff of the college as required. The Centre describes the process as a team effort and a rich process.

The visit was conducted on-line in the light of travel difficulties for the team relating to the Covid pandemic.

The team was very warmly received virtually by the leadership and the staff and the school provided all means needed for an effective evaluation of the institution, academic work and communal life of the institution. The programme of visitation and meetings was agreed upon in advance and carried out effectively. Among other activities, members of the team were involved in meeting students, course delivery. Discussions with board, leadership, faculty, staff and students were carried out in a collegial and friendly manner. From the team's point of view, the documentation submitted and discussions held were highly transparent. The SER was submitted to the ECTE with hyperlinks to supporting documentation. A number of other documents were submitted to the VET on request in the days leading up to and during the

visit. The SER and other documents provide a good summary of the school's current state and reflect very positive development in all areas, particularly since the candidacy visit in May 2019.

The review was authorised by Dr Hubert Jurgensen as the ECTE Quality Assurance Co-ordinator (QAC). It was conducted by a Visitation Evaluation Team (VET) put together by the Review Secretary of ECTE. The team consisted of peer experts, a student VET member and the review secretary, viz:

- Dr Paul Sanders, France (team leader)
- Prof Nadia Tarasenko, Russia
- Prof Grace Al-Zoughbi, Palestine, (student VET member)
- Dr Graham Cheesman, UK, (Review Secretary)

and assisted by Carmen Crouse (Germany) Accreditation Director.

Dr Graham Cheesman, ECTE Review Secretary, was involved in the initial preparation for the visit on behalf of ECTE, as well as the report writing based on the VET members' findings.

The standards and procedures which form the basis of this report are those applying pre-December 2019 and can be found at http://ecte.eu/qa/pre2019/. The protocol for the visit made virtually can be found at http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Online-Site-Visit-Protocol.pdf.

Since delivery of the programmes was partially online before Covid-19 and fully online in an emergency situation during the pandemic, the ECTE document on Guidelines for Distance and Online Education was also helpful for the visit although, since this document forms part of the new standards and procedures, it was not taken as a standard that needs to be entirely met by the school.

Logistical and administrative arrangements prior to the visit were set up as follows:

1. The review secretary sent the SER, accompanying documents, and all previous correspondence with the school to all VET members using Dropbox links.
2. Each VET member communicated the results of their initial reading of the documents to the team leader and RS via email.
3. A Zoom meeting room was set up for the VET.
4. The Internal Review Co-ordinator (IRC) of the school was identified. She received a copy of the online visit protocol and set up a Zoom room for the main meetings.
5. WhatsApp groups were set up for fast communication; one including only the team members for private communication and another including the IRC, the VET members, the Accreditation Director and the General Secretary of ECTE,.
6. In conjunction with the VET leader, the IRC organised and agreed a programme for the visit.
7. A summary of issues arising from the initial reading of the SER and other documents was sent to the IRC with requests for video footage which was received.
8. An initial pre-visit meeting of the VET took place via Zoom.

9. A working report document was set up using Google Docs for members of the team to access and modify, which followed the structure of the interim report form pertaining to the pre-December standards and protocol. This was filled out and commented on by all members of the VET as the visit progressed, in preparation for the interim report-writing on the last day of the visit.

Visit Schedule

	Time/length	Purpose	Who is involved
Day 1 - 7 Feb	08:00	VET Briefing	VET
	08.30 (15m) - *(9.30 CET, 10.30 St Pet.)*	Saying hello	VET and everyone in the institution IRC
	09.00 (1h) - *(10.00/11.00)*	Introductorymeeting	VET, institutionalleaders, IRC
	10.30 (1h) - (11.30/12.30)	Organisational issues	VET, IRC, institutional leaders, board members, employers, finance IRC
	13.30 - (14.30/15.30)	VET coffee	VET
	14.00 (1h) - (15.00/16.00)	Tour of facilities	VET, IRC or designated person.
	15.30 (30m) - (16.30/17.30)	Debrief	VET
Day 2 - 8th Feb	09:00 - (10:00/11:00)	Formation and community	VET, IRC, other appropriate personnel
	10.30 (1h) - (11.30/12.30)	Meet staff and administration.	VET, staff, administrators, etc. IRC
	14.00 (1h) - (15.00/16.00)	Meet faculty	VET, faculty, IRC
	15.30 (1h) - (16.30/17.30)	Meet students	VET, staff, administrators,IRC
Day 3 - 9th Feb.	08.30 (30 mins)	Briefing	VET
	09.00 (1 hr)	Investigation of course delivery	Student vet and VET 1
	10.30 (1 hr)	Curriculum design/delivery	VET 2 and 3, facilitators and students
	14.00 (1 hr)	Teaching, learning and assessment	VET, Ac Dean, selection of faculty
	15.30 (1 hr)	Vet report writing	VET
Day 4 10th Feb	08.30 (30m) - (09.30/10.30)	Briefing	VET
	09.00 (1h) - (10.00/11.00)	Training and placements, mentoring & counselling	VET, placementand internship leaders, employers, IRC
	10.30 (1h) - (11.30/12.30)	Finance and Fundraising	VET, IRC, Exec.Dir and appropriate personnel
	14.00 (1h) - (15.00/16.00)	Report preparation	VET
	15.00 (1.5h) - (16.00/17.00)	Report drafting	VET, RS
	17.00 (30m) - (18.00/19.00)	Final meeting	VET, institutionalleaders, RS, IRC

C. Introduction to the institution and programmes

History

Pars was founded in 2010 by an interdenominational group of Iranian theologians, pastors and counsellors who were dreaming of a hub for deep, holistic and contextual leadership training for the Iranian church in all its various theological and denominational expressions.

The need for such a hub had intensified throughout the late 90s and early 2000s given the exponential growth of the church in Iran. This interdenominational group - comprising the core of Pars at the time - consisted of friends and colleagues who were involved in teaching the Bible and developing leaders for the Iranian church (both inside Iran and out) over the years. However, their efforts were mostly ad hoc and disintegrated.

Due to the rich friendships that were growing between them and the years devoted to patient prayer, seeking the Spirit's guidance, and conducting research in how to do theological education at its best, they came together under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Mehrdad Fatehi in Spring of 2010 to make their dream a reality. And, thus, Pars Theological Centre was born with the publication of its founding Manifesto written in 2010.

Starting out in a tiny rented office in North-West London with only 2 voluntary staff members, Pars devoted its first couple of years to curriculum design and course production. In 2012, Pars held its first Formation Conference. In January 2013, the first small group of students matriculated at Pars, and in 2014, several new key staff were added to the fold and Pars' first book was published. 2015 saw Pars holding its first Iranian Leaders Forum and marked the launch of the Shagerd Magazine. 2018 marked the birth of the Counselling Centre and in 2020, the Shagerd website went live.

Today, Pars is home to a blended Persian-language *School of Theology and Leadership* with over 500 students and nearly 30 full-time and part-time staff, the *Iranian Leaders Forum*, *Pars Counselling Centre*, a *Publishing House* and multiple online platforms devoted to discipleship and leadership formation.

In 2020, Pars celebrated its 10-year anniversary. Throughout these 10 years, they have been committed to cultivating a community of learning devoted to training faithful and effective servant-leaders who would bring the light of God's presence to Iran and beyond.

Facilities

The majority of the theological education done through the centre is on-line. There is a small administrative centre comprising of nine rooms in Farnborough in UK, but staff and faculty work from several different countries and students are scattered through 15 different countries.

The students within Iran do not have dedicated facilities for their theological education. A customised Moodle platform provides a tutoring format, while other arrangements such as SD cards are also made for students within Iran.

Governance

Pars Theological Centre's legal name is Multimedia Theological Training Limited (MTT). MTT is registered with Companies House (number: 07693753) and the Charity Commission of England and Wales (number: 1144746). The company is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England.

The leadership structure includes 3 main boards that together run Pars and deal with different levels and types of decision-making:

a) Board of Directors/Governors: this board, which is also Pars' UK Board of Trustees, constitutes the governing board of the school. It provides the highest level of organisational authority in decision-making, dealing mainly with policies and plans. It meets three times a year. There is also a US board, recently constituted, mainly for the purposes of partnership development and public relations in North America.

b) Academic Board: this board consists of most of the full-time and part-time faculty, and provides leadership and supervision over all academic and educational matters. It gathers once every month.

c) The Senior Leadership Team (SLT): this executive board consists of the Executive Director/Principal, Associate Director, Director of Studies, Head of Formation and the Board of Directors/Governors' Advisor/Representative. Together they provide leadership over all executive, managerial and administrative matters, as well as the day-to-day running of the school. They meet once a week.

The organisational chart of the centre is as follows:
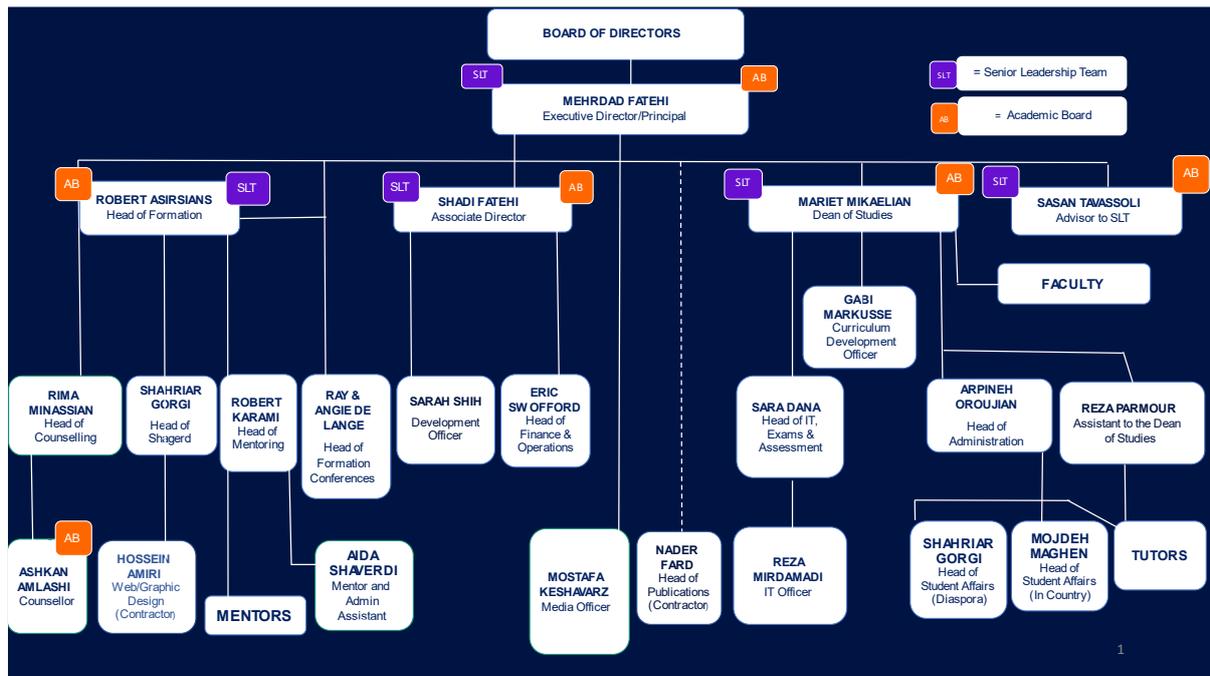
Student numbers

Enrolment figures Past 1.5 Years Inside Country	T1 2020/21 Total no Enrolled 188 Male: 76 Female: 141	T2 2020/21 Total no Enrolled 233 Male: 92 Female: 112	T1 2021/22 Total no Enrolled 220 Male: 79 Female: 141	

Enrolment figures Past 1.5 Years Diaspora	T1 and T2 2020/21 Total no enrolled 306 Male 143 Female 163 Av age 42	T1 2021/22 (current semester) Total no enrolled 244 Male 112 Female 132 Av age 50	

The above figures are for less than three years although the centre is working on these statistics, but numbers over the last 3.5 years have also been presented for diaspora only which show similar numbers for each year.

Educational and non-educational staff

	Name	Nationality	Role	Academic qualifications	Subjects taugfht	PT/ FT, hours
1	Rev. Dr. Mehrdad Fatehi	Iranian	Lecturer/Module Director	PhD , MA BSc	Doctrine, Bible,Christian life and ministry	FT
2	Rev. Robert Asirsians	Iranian	Lecturer/Module Director	BA, MA	Ch His, counselling, spiritual formation	FT
3	Dr. Mariet Mikaelian	Iranian	Lecturer/Module Director	BA, MDiv, PhD	Principles of teaching	FT
4	Rev. Dr. Sasan Tavassoli	Iranian	Lecturer/Module Director	BA, MA, M.Th, PhD	Formation, Islam, ethics, leadership, Christian life and ministry	PT 12 hrs
5	Rev. Sargez Benyamin	Iranian	Lecturer/Module Director	BA, Mdiv, PhD Cand.	History of church in Iran, Christian life and ministry	PT 12 hrs
6	Ms. Shadi Fatehi	Iranian	Conference instructor	MA, Mlitt cand.	Renovation of the heart	PT 1 hr
7	Ms. Rima Minassian	Iranian	Lecturer/Module Director	BA, MA	Counselling for adiction and abuse	FT
8	Dr. Ashkan Amlashi	Iranian	Lecturer/Module Director	AA, BA, MA, MA, PsyD	Counselling for adiction and abuse and Christian life and ministry	PT 15 hrs
9	Rev. Saro Khachikian	Iranian	Associate lecturer	BA, MA	Biblical surveys and exegesis	PT 2 hrs
10	Rev. Edward Hovsepian	Iranian	Associate Lecturer	BA	Pastoral Ministries, Christian Marriage and Family	PT 2 hrs
11	Fr. Dr. Keyvan Cyrus	Iranian	Associate Lecturer	BSc, MA, PhD	Church history	1 hr

	Name	Nationality	Role	Academic qualifications	Subjects taugfht	PT/ FT, hours
12	Dr. Afshin Latifzadeh	Iranian	Associate Lecturer	BA, MA, PhD	Torah, Revelation, Psalms	1 hr
13	Malcolm Steer	British	Associate conference instructor	BA	Christ in the scriptures, Hebrews	2 hrs
14	Rafi Shaverdi	Iranian	Associate conference instructor	BA	Inner healing	2 hrs
15	Roy Oksnevad	Norwegian	Associate conference instructor	BA, MA, PhD	Christian life, mission, Islam	2 hrs

In addition, the centre employs local tutors

Tutors
a. Nasser V. 30
b. Babgen M. FT
c. Melina M. FT
d. Reza P. FT
e. Edik B. FT
f. Farzaneh M. FT

There is a large team of 35 mentors for the students and two counsellors, one full time and one part time.

In all the ratio of teaching staff to students based on hours worked as a proportion of full time teaching, is 1/35 counting all types of students (550) and is 1/12 for full time students.

Non-educational staff include:

Head of finance and operations
Assistant for legal and other operations,
Head of administration,
Assistant director of studies,
Heads of diaspora student affairs,
Head of in-country student affairs
Formation conference coordinators (two)
Head of mentoring and ministry practice
Head of counselling.

The HR arrangements are professionally arranged and practiced.

Budget

Audited accounts were presented for the last five years and the latest, for 2020, show the centre to be in good financial health. The centre is without debt and is well sustainable through a large donor base, much of which is in the USA.

Programmes and delivery modes

Programme	Delivery mode
Two year program leading to certification which is equivalent to certificate and diploma awards in European nomenclature	Hybrid, heavily weighted to on-line or electronically supported learning and including a smaller component of local guidance; full-time and part-time

Functions, activities and mission statement

In addition to the ECTE accredited course, the centre conducts the *Iranian Leaders Forum*, *Pars Counselling Centre*, a *Publishing House* and multiple online platforms, including the Shagerd website, devoted to discipleship and leadership formation. There is a translation programme enabling the availability of texts for study in the Farsi.

The centre has an extensive, well developed "manifesto" developed in 2010. It includes the following:

"Training Iranian Christians for leadership and ministry is one of the most strategic activities in missions these days. Though some work has been going on in the last ten years or so to meet this great need, what is still lacking are serious attempts to combine in-depth Biblical and theological study with spiritual formation programs and practical training for ministry. To meet this strategic need, we have united to lay a foundation for serious theological and ministerial education among Iranian Christians in Iran and the Diaspora.

"Our model of theological education will be as follows:

Theology = Knowing God, which in biblical understanding involves
Loving God
       Relationship with God – Spiritual formation
       Conforming to God's image – Personal/Moral formation
and **Loving our neighbour**
       Relationship with the Church – Community/Social formation
       Reaching out to the World – Missional formation: Calling/Vision/Passion

Our theological education collage (rather than curriculum) will be organised around these four tracks under the unifying vision of knowing God.

In order to implement the above we plan to bring together

1) Church based training principles,
2) distance learning methods and facilities especially internet,
3) serious Biblical and theological study and
4) the best of Iranian teachers, leaders and pastors."

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF INSTITUTION AND PROGRAMMES

The PARS theological centre is a provider of tertiary level biblical and theological education, training individuals in the interpretation of the holy scriptures, the understanding of theological thought and in the wisdom and skills of Christian ministry.

It operates in a difficult environment with 45% of its students in Iran, using a hybrid learning approach and serves a variety of churches and denominations. It is supported by a good number of agencies and churches and staffed mainly by pastors and Christian workers from Iran, in Iran or conversant with the situation in Iran.

There is one programme included in the request for accreditation, consisting in a two "year" course. A further year is presently being constructed and will be the subject of a further accreditation.

The program leads to certification which is equivalent in ECTE terms to a practice-oriented certificate (first year) and diploma (first and second year) in theology.

D. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

Description of the extent of the review

This report relates to a Review of the institution and one course with a view to accreditation:

> Two-year program leading to certification which is equivalent to certificate and diploma awards in European nomenclature of a practice orientation.

Therefore, standards relating to the institution and standards relating to the programme are both examined. The visit was conducted on the basis of the older pre-2019 (6th edition) standards of ECTE because the accreditation process was commenced while these were the active standards of ECTE. The responses and discussion below are therefore structured according to these standards.

PARS Theological Centre was the object of a previous ECTE candidacy visit in May 2019, led by Mrs Carmen Crouse. This visit resulted in the communication to PARS of 7 recommendations and 3 requirements which are listed in the appropriate sections below.

The school is examined against standards in the following way:

1. Standards relating to the institution
2. Standards relating to the programme

Of the 14 standards in the 6th edition (pre-2019) standards of the ECTE, it is appropriate to regard the following standards as relating to the institution: 1,2,7,9,12,13,14.

The remaining standards will be dealt with under the section for the programme: 3,4,5,6,8,10,11.

Standards relating to the institution

STANDARD 1: THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL INTEGRATES AND IMPLEMENTS ITS CORE VALUES AND STATEMENT OF FAITH INTO ALL THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SCHOOL (3.2.1)

This is to be attested in the following ways:

Faithfulness to doctrine
Trusted by the church
Excellent in academics
Operating as community
Integrated in approach
Aimed at service
Focused on outcomes
Evaluated with integrity
Governed with competency
Managed efficiently
Effective within context
The statement of faith is integrated into all activities

Previous requirements from 2019:

1. "Apart from course evaluations there is no quality assurance/evaluation system in place (and for course evaluations the assessment loop must be closed). This must be a document which explains how all stakeholders' feedback is collected, evaluated and used to improve PARS (learning institution) and document the improvement initiatives (ideally per academic year). Include any goals you set per year/5-year-cycle and document to what level you have reached your goals (enrolment, fundraising, translation of materials, etc.).
Develop (annual) faculty/tutor/mentor evaluations and include process as part of your assessment. The VET's advice is to keep it simple, but intentional (define key elements which help you understand how you are doing as an institution overall and which help you make wise decisions as a learning institution)."
2. "Provide documentation on governance structure including by-laws etc. Explain UK legalities in this context (board of trustees vs. supervisory board)"

Previous recommendations from 2019:

1. "Close assessment loop on course evaluations - formalise, structure and document feedback from Leadership Team/Dean to lecturers and tutors. Document changes to courses which are/were made over the years. For next SER include one example of changes to a course based on feedback/evaluation.

2. Due to the significant roles of mentors/tutors an evaluation system should be developed and implemented for them also.
3. Develop comprehensive (annual) student survey which covers all areas (orientation, admission, moodle/IT support, access to resources, impact of various aspects of the programme to students' lives and ministries, workload, grading)."

PARS has done solid work in transformational theological education and has a well thought out and articulated mission and vision. In adopting a hybrid approach: online classes, live classes (encouraged wherever possible), formation conferences, mentoring, ministerial reflective practice and counselling, PARS creatively seeks to reach out to a diverse body of students in a variety of ways, securing the balance between academic quality, spiritual formation and ministry effectiveness. Every aspect of the ethos and work of PARS is linked to a strong sense of contextual relevance.

Commendable efforts have been done by the school to encourage regular communal interaction among faculty, staff, students. PARS is a very relational institution, valuing and modelling servant leadership, promoting evaluated ministry and offering vocational and ministerial guidance to its graduates. However, the challenge of connecting the different student groups (local and diaspora) is apparent given circumstances and issues round security. The conception and process of evaluation at PARS is thorough and well documented.

The VET wishes to commend the leadership of PARS for their efficient management. PARS has developed healthy connections with the Iranian underground and diaspora churches and regular communication structures with leadership (Leaders Forum, Leaders Network) along with strategic partnerships (i.e. Sat7 PARS). Further, PARS has a good diversity of partner and donor churches and ministries in the West which promises financial stability for the school.

Committed to the ongoing development of academic rigour through its programmes, PARS acknowledges the need to employ educational methods to further develop the critical skills of the students coming from an educational context based on memory. The interface of the three governing boards is carried out in an appropriate manner. The Board of directors is a governing body while the academic board and the SLT are management functions., All three entities show a clear understanding of the distinctive nature of evangelical theological education and share the particular mission and vision of PARS.

Recommendation: The VET recommends the use of 'Academic committee' in place of Academic Board.

STANDARD 2: THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL HAS AN OVERALL STRATEGIC PLAN THAT IS APPROVED BY THE APPROPRIATE GOVERNING BODY AND THAT RELATES TO THE INSTITUTION'S OPERATION AS A WHOLE (3.2.2).

This is to be attested in the following ways:

Appropriate written mission statement
Appropriate short- and long-term development plans
Clearly formulated learning outcomes
Clear programme profile
Clear academic/vocational distinction

Previous recommendation from 2019:

> "Compile all future plans in one document as THE Strategy Plan (student numbers, facilities, fundraising, translation work, etc.)"

PARS' Programmes are clearly vocational with a solid academic base. PARS has qualified faculty in the area of instruction and a well-structured course syllabus. PARS' curriculum is designed in such a way as to cater for the needs of their 'scattered' students, hence the need for tutors to cope with the fast-growing Iranian church. In this light, the human resources are needed and multiplied through the work of tutors which is of significant importance.

Requirement: Whilst short term development plans are in place, the VET suggests that the accreditation commission requires that PARS identify within their strategic plan their response to the need to provide adequate provision for tutor and faculty instructional development, enrichment of qualifications and provision for faculty research.

Requirement: The VET suggests that the accreditation commission requires that PARS identify within their strategic plan response to their own recognition of the need to have long term development plans in relation to leadership succession.

STANDARD 7: THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL FOSTERS AND MODELS THE LIFE OF A HEALTHY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY (3.2.7)

This is to be attested in the following ways:

Spiritual activities are organized.
Provision is made for access to physical activities.
Student organizations operate appropriately.
Written code of ethics
Disciplinary procedures outlined.
Accountability to local churches.

Previous requirements from 2019:

> "Explore ways of suitable student representation/advocacy/influence. Include this aspect in the Student Handbook."

The school was found to be fully compliant in all areas specified by the standard. The standard as it relates to physical activities is not relevant in this case.

Commendation: The VET commends the inclusion of student representation in the different programmes.

STANDARD 9: THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL HAS A BOARD OF CONTROL AND A CLEAR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE (3.2.9)

This is to be attested in the following ways:

Legal status is appropriate for national context.
Appropriate governance.
Appropriate management and organization.
Adequate record-keeping procedures.
Adequate administration and secretarial provisions
Internal quality assurance procedures are in place and operating
Faculty and learning activities are continually evaluated.

Governance and management structures and practices are appropriate. The fourfold goals deeply inform the learning outcomes and the syllabi. The school hopes to include these in every lecture, every assignment and is constantly pushing themselves in this direction. Impact is measured through stakeholder surveys, annual reviews and other evaluation such as mentors and Peer review is done informally.

Recommendation: The VET recommends implementation of quality assurance to ensure up to date preparation and delivery of lectures, in particular by using peer review and peer enrichment.

STANDARD 12: THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL HAS FACILITIES THAT ARE ADEQUATE FOR MEETING ITS EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES (3.2.12)

This is to be attested in the following ways:

Campus is suitable.
Housing and student services are adequate.
Library is adequate for the levels of study.
Library keeping procedures are adequate.
Development plan for the library
Sufficient and qualified staff for library maintenance and development
IT provision for students.

Previous requirements from 2019:

> "Include into the strategic plan the translation and production of resources into Farsi (takes the place of a library development plan)."

PARS is fundamentally a non-campus school; however, facilities are generally adequate for the delivery mode chosen.

Commendation: The VET commends ongoing efforts for translation and original text-book writing to provide sufficient Farsi resources for students.

Commendation: The VET commends the use of Moodle software to help facilitate the process of learning.

Recommendation: The VET points out for BTh accreditation, a comprehensive development plan will need to be put in place for learning resources and directed by a professional.

STANDARD 13: THE FINANCIAL POLICIES, PROCEDURES, RECORDS AND CONDITIONS OF THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL ARE DEMONSTRABLY SOUND. THE SCHOOL SHOWS A SATISFACTORY DEGREE OF GENERAL STABILITY (3.2.13)

This is to be attested in the following ways:

Sound financial status
Adequate development fund and planning
Appropriate and clearly communicated student fees.
Adequate compensation for staff and faculty
Stability in leadership
Stability in staff and faculty
Stability in enrolment

With the exception of development fund planning, the school was found to be fully compliant.

Recommendation: The VET recommends the continued diversifying of funding resources and building partnerships and friendships with individuals, institutional donors, churches and other partners, in accordance with the PARS plan for 2025.

STANDARD 14: THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL HAS HEALTHY PUBLIC RELATIONS AND CLEAR AND TRUTHFUL PUBLIC INFORMATION PACKAGES (3.2.14)

This is to be attested in the following ways:

Appropriate Information Package and Course Catalogue
Truthful publicity and appropriate usage of academic nomenclatures
Good relationships with national and local community
Good relationships with wider Christian community
Contact with potential student employers
Publicity tools for potential students
Alumni programme

Previous requirements from 2019:

1. "Make sure every student receives the student handbook and all staff knows its contents. It is THE strategic place to collect all relevant policies and procedures that students MUST have access to (e-mails at various intervals do not suffice) Handbook is basis for "learning contract""

2. "Delete any text that can possibly be interpreted as if you are offering a BTh programme. You are not! You do not have BTh students at this time. You may express that offering a BTh is a goal, but you MUST make clear that you are NOT offering it currently."

The school was found to be fully compliant in all areas specified by the standard except relating to the Alumni programme, the requirement for contact with potential student employers being not applicable in the circumstances.

Requirement: The VET suggests that the accreditation commission requires that the school develop an organised alumni programme.

Standards relating to the programme

STANDARD 3: THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL HAS A PROGRAMME THAT REFLECTS A SET OF WELL-DEFINED LEARNING OUTCOMES IN ITS CURRICULUM AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES (3.2.3)

This is to be attested in the following ways:

Appropriate understanding of learning outcomes
Appropriate procedure used in setting learning outcomes
Learning outcomes are used appropriately to build curriculum
Appropriate course syllabi
Variety of appropriate learning activities
Balanced curriculum
Curriculum reflects learning outcomes

The programme was found to be fully compliant in all areas specified by the standard.

PARS' curriculum is carefully and creatively designed. The fourfold goals and objectives are clearly understood, formulated and educationally sound. The goals are traced through the different modules and variety of learning activities and module descriptors reflect the learning outcomes explored in each module. Consultation with stakeholders in curriculum design is evident and a holistic approach is evident throughout the Curriculum.

STANDARD 4: THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL UNDERSTANDS AND USES THE EUROPEAN CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEM AND AWARDS DEGREES THAT CORRESPOND TO THE REQUIRED CREDIT AND DURATION SCHEME FOR EACH LEVEL OF STUDY (3.2.4)

This is to be attested in the following ways:

ECTS are understood and used properly
Correct number ECTS for level of study
Correct duration for level of study
Duration and ECTS correspond to national situation
ECTS are awarded for all learning activities

Previous recommendations:

1. "Clarify the PARS definition of 1ECTS-Point = ? hours in all documents (in some areas you mention 25-30 hours). The final transcript (Diploma Supplement) will need to include information on how you define a credit hour across all elements of the curriculum."

The programme was found to be fully compliant in all areas specified by the standard. ECTS are appropriately implemented throughout the curriculum

STANDARD 5: THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL PROVIDES TEACHING AND LEARNING TO A HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY AND CONSISTENT, TRANSPARENT, ON-GOING AND APPROPRIATE EVALUATION OF ALL STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITIES (3.2.5)

This is to be attested in the following ways:

Teaching and learning, classroom organisation and pedagogical practices in the school occur in harmony with principles of effective adult teaching
Teaching and learning is at appropriate level and academic depth for the programme.
Teaching and learning are fitting to the discipline of theology
Teaching and learning aim at integration between academic instruction, ministerial training, spiritual formation, character education and theological reflection
Appropriate Student Progress Files.
Written assessment policy in place.
Written right of appeal procedure.
Assessment policy is clearly understood by students for all learning activities.
Assessment is differentiated and adequate for different learning activities.
Assessment is sensitive to the level of study.
Where operating, final assessment is adequate.

The school was found to be fully compliant in all areas specified in the standard.

The VET wishes to commend the detailed and thorough work that is done in terms of keeping and updating the students' records. Assessment and evaluation systems are well designed, thought out, and implemented. Faculty and tutors carry out documented different forms of self and peer evaluation. PARS stimulates students' self-reflection and engagement during the learning process thus providing adequate guidance and input of tutors for deeper comprehension and practical application employing a plethora of evaluating modes. The VET would encourage the school to incorporate more live sessions with the students as part of the curriculum.

The VET **encourages** more detailed work to be done in the area of student attrition rate (i.e. reasons, numbers, follow up).

STANDARD 6: THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL HAS CLEAR AND CONSISTENT GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS AND PROVIDES GRADUATES WITH THE NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION (3.2.6)

This is to be attested in the following ways:

Graduation requirements are clear.
Graduation requirements are binding.
Graduates are given a Transcript.
Graduates are given an academic award from the school.
Graduates are given a Diploma Supplement.
Graduates are given an ECTE Certificate (for schools that are already accredited)

Previous requirement from 2019:

> "Develop written graduation requirements and include them in the student handbook. This must include a definition of what qualifies as "successful completion of courses". Consider if other requirements should apply (i.e. all fees paid, personal/ethical requirements)."

Apart from the issue of the diploma supplement, the school was found to be fully compliant in all areas specified in the standard.

Requirement: The VET suggests that the accreditation commission requires that diploma supplements are implemented and given to graduates.

STANDARD 8: THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL INCLUDES MENTORING PROGRAMMES, MINISTRY EXPERIENCE AND CULTURAL AWARENESS ACTIVITIES IN ITS CURRICULA (3.2.8)

This is to be attested in the following ways:

Organized and efficient mentoring programme.
Organized and efficient ministry experience programme.
Written evaluations carried out for mentoring programmes and ECTS credits awarded.
Written evaluations carried out for ministry experience programmes and ECTS credits awarded.
Students are exposed to their particular culture.
Students are exposed to multicultural dimensions.

The programme was found to be fully compliant in all areas specified by the standard.

The VET commends the intentional work PARS has done in the area of mentoring and counselling and the clear distinction between these. In seeking a holistic educational perspective, PARS invests heavily in the work of their mentors and has a separate department with a full-time departmental Head. The components of the mentoring programmes are solid and much emphasis is placed on inner personal transformation that impacts students emotionally, spiritually and cognitively. This is achieved by in-depth conversations with the students, reporting, following up, counselling, mentoring and seminars.

Given the emphasis on mentoring and the strong needs along with existential challenges of being an Iranian Christian, the VET **encourages** the development of a counselling track for the building of capacity to serve the wider constituency of PARS graduates.

STANDARD 10: THE FACULTY MEMBERS OF THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL POSSESS SUITABLE QUALIFICATIONS AND CARRY REALISTIC WORKLOAD (3.2.10)

This is to be attested in the following ways:

Faculty possess adequate academic and professional qualifications for level of study.
Faculty are up-to-date in their field of specialization both in terms of contemporary teaching methods and theory
There are adequate plans for faculty instructional development, enrichment of qualifications and provision for on-going faculty research
Faculty use suitable teaching methodologies
Faculty members actively participate in the life and worship of the theological school and show personal involvement in the physical and spiritual welfare of the students
Faculty possess fitting spiritual and character qualities.
Faculty is sufficient in number and carries realistic workload.
Full-time faculty carry the majority of the teaching load.
Faculty is adapted to the cultural and linguistic context of the school.
Plans are implemented for faculty development and research

PARS has a total of 21 teaching faculty members, 12 of them are ordained pastors and ministers deeply involved in church ministry alongside their academics. PARS faculty are Christ-centred, undergird their work with prayer and are spiritually mature. Tutors are vital to the process of learning and to the institution itself.

However, the team found that there was room for improvement in faculty development in the areas of teaching methods and theory and the opportunity to develop through research.

Recommendation: The VET recommends a more intentional investment for faculty development particularly with regard to any possible transition from tutorship to faculty status. This is particularly important as the school has plans for the BTh programme to be accredited.

See also **Requirement 2 in 3.2.2. above.**

STANDARD 11: THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL IMPLEMENTS SUITABLE STUDENT ACCESS STANDARDS (3.2.11)

This is to be attested in the following ways:

Access is appropriately regulated by the standards for each level of study.
Policy is established and implemented for special access cases.
Procedures are in place to evaluate commitment to Christian truth, values and ethics.

PARS has appropriate measures in place to ensure that Christian character and virtue are exhibited in visible and appropriate manners relating to access.

Recommendation: The VET recommends that PARS implement ECTE special access policies.

E. CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

PARS is a fine institution, with many strengths, doing a very difficult job in a very well thought out manner and is outstanding in achieving its objectives in students and for the church. The SER was well organized and clearly formulated. The school responded (where relevant) to the recommendations and requirements made by the previous accreditation visits. We would like specially to mention the following:

Commendation 1: The VET commends the inclusion of student representation in the different programmes.

Commendation 2: The VET commends ongoing efforts for translation and original text-book writing to provide sufficient Farsi resources for students.

Commendation 3: The VET commends the use of Moodle software to help facilitate the process of learning.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The VET recommends the use of 'Academic committee' in place of Academic Board.

Recommendation 2: The VET recommends implementation of quality assurance to ensure up to date preparation and delivery of lectures, in particular by using peer review and peer enrichment.

Recommendation 3: The VET recommends a more intentional investment for faculty development particularly with regard to any possible transition from tutorship to faculty status. This is particularly important as the school has plans for the BTh programme to be accredited.

Recommendation 4: The VET recommends that PARS implement ECTE special access policies.

Recommendation 5: The VET points out that for BTH accreditation, a comprehensive development plan will need to be in place for learning resources and directed by a professional.

Recommendation 6: The VET recommends the continued diversification of funding resources and building partnerships and friendships with individuals, institutional donors, churches and other partners, in accordance with the PARS plan for 2025.

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

Requirement 1: Whilst short term development plans are in place, the VET suggests that the accreditation commission requires that PARS identify within their strategic plan their response to the need of adequate provision for tutor and faculty instructional development, enrichment of qualifications and provision for faculty research. (See standard 3.2.2 pre-2019.)

Requirement 2: The VET suggests that the accreditation commission requires that PARS identify within their strategic plan response to their own recognition of the need to have long term development plans in relation to leadership succession. (See standard 3.2.2 pre-2019.)

Requirement 3: The VET suggests that the accreditation commission requires that diploma supplements are implemented and given to graduates. (See standard 3.2.6 pre-2019.)

Requirement 4: The VET suggests that the accreditation commission requires that the school develop an organised alumni programme. (See standard 3.2.14 pre-2019.)

IN CONCLUSION

The visitation team recommends to the ECTE Accreditation Commission that PARS be judged to be in compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines* of the ECTE in both institutional and programme areas, with the exception of the four requirements listed above.

The team recommends granting of accreditation for the Certificate and Diploma levels with the relevant recommendations listed above, monitored through the annual reporting processes of ECTE, once the requirements have been substantially met.

The team also notes that the school is preparing for accreditation at the BTh level under the ECTE post 2019 standards.

The visitation team would like to record their gratitude to PARS for a warm welcome and constantly helpful interaction with the team throughout the process. It was truly a meeting of colleagues in the process from which we in the team learnt much and greatly appreciated the staff and leadership of PARS for their excellence and commitment in following their calling.

In producing this report, all those involved as peer experts have been free from undue influence or stakeholders on the findings, analysis, conclusions, commendations, recommendations and requirements.

The visitation team.

Signed:

Dr Paul Sanders, (team leader)

Prof Nadia Tarasenko,

Prof Grace Al-Zoughbi, (student representative)

Dr Graham Cheesman, UK, (Review Secretary)

February 2022