

SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT

OF THE
EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR THEOLOGICAL
EDUCATION

SUBMITTED APRIL 2021

FOR AGENCY REVIEW



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1.1 - Introduction	3
1.2 – Self-assessment Outcomes	5
2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR)	6
2.1 – SAR Historical narrative	6
2.2 – SAR contributors	8
2.3 – SAR Key Documents	10
3. PROFILE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY	11
3.1 - Higher Education and Quality Assurance in the Context of the Agency	11
3.2 - Goals and objectives	12
3.3 – Activities and quality assurance	14
3.4 - ECTE’s organisation/structure	15
3.5 - ECTE’s functions, activities, procedures	16
3.6 - ECTE’s funding	19
4. ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES	20
4.1 - Activities, policy, and processes for quality assurance (ESG 3.1)	20
4.2 - Official status (ESG 3.2)	21
4.3 - Independence (ESG 3.3)	22
4.4 - Thematic analysis (ESG 3.4)	24
4.5 - Resources (ESG 3.5)	26
4.6 - Internal quality assurance and professional conduct (ESG 3.6)	28
4.7 - Cyclical external review of agencies (ESG 3.7)	31
5. ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QA FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION	32
5.1 - Consideration of internal QA (ESG 2.1)	32
5.2 - Designing methodologies fit for purpose (ESG 2.2)	35
5.3 - Implementing processes (ESG 2.3)	37
5.4 - Peer-review experts (ESG 2.4)	40
5.5 - Criteria for outcomes (ESG 2.5)	42
5.6 - Reporting (ESG 2.6)	44
5.7 - Complaints and appeals (ESG 2.7)	45
6. ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QA FOR PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION	46
6.1 - Consideration of internal QA (ESG 2.1)	46
6.2 - Designing methodologies fit for purpose (ESG 2.2)	48
6.3 - Implementing processes (ESG 2.3)	49
6.4 - Peer-review experts (ESG 2.4)	51
6.5 - Criteria for outcomes (ESG 2.5)	51
6.6 - Reporting (ESG 2.6)	52
6.7 - Complaints and appeals (ESG 2.7)	52
ANNEXES	53
ANNEX 1: GLOSSARY	53

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 - Introduction

This SAR describes the compliance of the European Council for Theological Education (ECTE) with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG). The SAR will be submitted for an external review by the *Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics* (ASIIN) in April of 2021 as part of the application process for inclusion on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

The European Council for Theological Education (ECTE) is a trans-national, independent, subject-specific quality assurance network related to the discipline of theology and to the practices of theological education and serving evangelical theological education and its stakeholders. To date, the ECTE is comprised of approximately 80 institutions from 29 countries, of which about half are subject to the ECTE accreditation processes. ECTE uses English as the official working language for all its activities.

The ECTE serves a pan-European constituency comprised mainly of European institutions of evangelical theology (together with a number of institutions from the Middle East). Each member institution reflects its own national culture, history, and ecclesiological affiliation and contributes to the wealth of experience and diversity in European theological education.

Founded in 1979 (before the EHEA was fully established), the ECTE¹ initially followed the model of North American accreditation agencies, but in 2006, as the Bologna-Process was developing and maturing, the ECTE began to model its accreditation standards to be Bologna 'compliant' and aligned with the ESG. After a long and detailed process described in this SAR, the ECTE is now seeking public recognition of its compliance to European quality assurance standards as outlined in the ESG.

The ECTE is registered in Germany. The main business office is located in Rome, Italy². Staff operate out of offices in Germany, Ireland, Lebanon and Switzerland.

The General Assembly, as the governing body of the ECTE, commissioned an external review process in 2017 to lend credibility to the agency and to the higher education institutions and programmes that are accredited by the agency. Accredited institutions and programmes hope thereby to enhance their public recognition and to increase their profile and status in their national settings and international contexts. Sustainable growth in membership and accreditation activities are envisioned and expected – both qualitatively and quantitatively as an outcome of this process.³ (see Strategic Plan under 3.2).

The executive body/senior management team of the ECTE is the ECTE Council, currently consisting of 7 members. Key positions in the Council and on staff are:

- Chairman of the Council: Dr. Bernhard Ott (Liestal, Switzerland)
- Treasurer and Vice-chairwoman: Silke Brohl (Burghausen, Germany). The Treasurer is responsible for ECTE finances including invoicing schools and reports to the Council and the General Assembly

¹ The agency was registered as the European Evangelical Accrediting Association (EAAA) until 2017, when it changed its name to the current European Council for Theological Education (ECTE). Vereinsregisterauszug see (see 4.2.2). Address: Hindenburgstr. 36, 70825 Korntal-Münchingen.

² ECTE Office, Via dei Lucumoni, 33 - 01015 SUTRI (VT)

³ See section 3.2 of ECTE Strategic Plan 2020-2026 in <http://ecte.eu/sar/> (password ASIIN)

- General Secretary: Dr. Marvin Oxenham (Sutri-Rome, Italy). Chief Executive Officer, he is also responsible for internal QM.
- Council Secretary, Rana Wazir (Beirut, Lebanon)
- Quality Assurance Coordinator, Dr. Hubert Jurgensen (Rudersberg, Germany). The Quality Assurance Coordinator oversees all accreditation activities and chairs the accreditation commission in the ECTE Council.
- Review Secretary, Dr. Graham Cheesman (Lisburn, Northern Ireland). The Review Secretary oversees all accreditation visits, coordinates the Visitation Evaluation Teams (VETs) and oversees the production and publication of accreditation review reports.
- External Review Manager, Carmen Crouse (Korntal, Germany).

The activities of the ECTE fall into three main areas.

- **Quality Assurance** (including activities of **Institutional** and **Programme Accreditation** falling within the scope of the *European Standards and Guidelines*). The ECTE seeks to nurture and certify a culture of quality assurance in theological education through institutional and programme accreditation. ECTE accreditation seeks both comparability to European and international sector-specific standards and coherence with the values of evangelical theology. Institutions that undergo quality assurance processes with the ECTE provide a witness to their stakeholders of the academic, vocational and formational values they wish to communicate to their graduates. To ensure compatibility with ECTE's focus and values by Higher Education Institutes (HEI) seeking accreditation, membership and subscription to ECTE's values is required for ECTE accreditation.
- **Networking** (these activities do not fall within the scope of the *European Standards and Guidelines*). The ECTE seeks to be a major voice of evangelical theological education in Europe connecting evangelical colleges and seminaries with each other and with theological institutions that have state accreditation or university validation to effectively serve one another by connecting their strategic resources in a common educational enterprise. The ECTE network also seeks to reinforce connections with the wider international world of theological education, with the broader church community, with non-tertiary providers of theological training and with the European and international academic higher education and vocational education context. Measures are in place to ensure independence between ECTE's networking and quality assurance activities (see more in 4.3 below).
- **Development** through research and training (these activities do not fall within the scope of the *European Standards and Guidelines*). The ECTE seeks to further serve theological education in Europe and beyond through publication, the creation and maintenance of key resources, organisation of events and facilitating the training of those involved in the delivery of theological education. The ECTE seeks to understand the present and future movements in evangelical theological education, in order to maintain relevance in delivering its services and to take part in developing a contemporary vision for theological education in Europe and beyond. This is done through international collaboration where appropriate. Measures are in place to ensure independence between ECTE's development and quality assurance activities (see more in 4.3 below).

The ECTE aligns its operations with European quality assurance standards, is sensitive to higher education issues in Europe and encourages institutions to adapt to national situations. The ECTE also cultivates a meaningful relationship with European and international stakeholders and participates actively in global networks in the sector of theological education.

1.2 – Self-assessment Outcomes

Although ECTE Council and staff members regularly reflect on their activities and on their intended and unintended effects, the current review process has contributed to a focused process of self-evaluation and improvement in light of the ESG. Feedback from other accrediting agencies and HEI representatives (see 2.2 SAR contributors) helped align ECTE's own understanding with the perceptions from these major stakeholders.

The process surrounding the external review and leading up to the present SAR has caused reflection and **improvement** in several significant areas in the ECTE. The most notable have been:

1. Aligning the internal quality assurance processes of accredited institutions to ESG1
2. Enhancing a culture of internal quality assurance within the agency
3. Independence policies and the separation of peer experts from decision-making processes
4. Separation of institutional and programme accreditation
5. Greater precision in designing and implementing processes
6. Greater clarity in the design of methodologies and their implementation processes
7. Publication of full and consistent final review reports together with decisions
8. Further definition of peer-expert recruitment, nomination and training
9. Consolidation of complaint and appeal process
10. First steps in thematic analysis
11. Production of plans and processes to ensure ongoing monitoring, improvement and accountability to external review
12. Revision of staff roles and resources to match ESG compliance

There are also areas where the ECTE is aware of the need for **further improvement**. In these areas policies and plans have been put in place, but there is a need to consolidate and evaluate them over time through implementation.

1. The involvement of stakeholders, especially external stakeholders and student stakeholders as outlined in *Stakeholder Involvement and Extension Policy*.
2. Internal quality assurance policies and procedures as outlined in the *Monitoring and Improvement Policy*.
3. Three pieces of thematic analysis have been produced and a *Thematic Analysis Strategic Plan* is in place, but feedback is needed to verify compliance to industry standards.
4. Systematic involvement and training of student peer-experts as laid out in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*.
5. The adequacy of current human resources and *Staff Policy* to sustain ESG compliance.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR)

2.1 – SAR Historical narrative

EARLY YEARS

The ECTE was officially founded by the delegates of 23 institutions on October 31, 1979, at St. Chrischona (Switzerland) as an early example of a peer-review, subject-specific, cross-border quality assurance agency in Europe. The initial standards were developed by drawing on the framework of the North American educational and accrediting system (especially the *Criteria of the Association of Theological Schools* in the United States and Canada, founded in 1918⁴). This was not only due to the lack of a European-wide system, but also to the fact that a considerable number of graduates from accredited institutions worked outside Europe after their studies. At the time, in most parts of the world the North American system of external peer-reviews was well-known and thus accepted (for better or worse), which explains the early success of the ECTE (formerly EEAA).

In 2005 the ECTE applied and was recognised as a member by *the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education* (INQA/AHE).

In 2006, as the Bologna-Process was developing and maturing, the ECTE began a major shift to align its accreditation standards to those of the EHEA and the newly introduced ESG.⁵

In 2007 the ECTE became an affiliate member of the *European Network for Quality Assurance* (ENQA). Since then, interaction has occurred with the ENQA office, with occasional participation in training seminars and regular attendance at the ENQA general assemblies where the first relationships with European peer agencies were established. When the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) was set up in 2008 to provide “reliable information on quality of European higher education and its assurance”, the ECTE realized the need for a better connection to other QA agencies and recognition by national authorities. This prompted further enhancement of QA processes measured by the ESG standards.

2010

The ECTE self-assessment process started in 2010 with an enquiry to ENQA to be reviewed for full member status and subsequently register on the EQAR. A self-study was initiated but was suspended over uncertainties at the time around ESG 3.2 and the official status of cross-border QA agencies in Europe.

2017-18

As further clarity emerged around ESG 3.2, deliberations were taken up internally, with ENQA and with EQAR. On 28 October 2017, the General Assembly held in Athens decided to re-initiate the process to be reviewed for inclusion in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). An initial budget was also approved for this purpose.

⁴ The [ATS](#) Commission is recognized by the [United States Secretary of Education](#) and by the [Council for Higher Education Accreditation](#).

⁵ The first *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) were adopted by the Ministers responsible for higher education in 2005.

The external review process thus became a standing item in Council meetings and a set of specific internal *SWOT Analyses* in relation to ESG1, ESG2 and ESG3 were conducted at the end of 2018 to identify necessary improvements regarding structures, tasks, processes, measures and resources.⁶ From this analysis a set of seventy-nine action points were identified resulting in a multi-dimensional *ESG Compliance Action Plan*⁷ that has been used to monitor their implementation.

Together with this general process, a detailed self-study of the *ECTE Manual* for accreditation (6th edition) began in Spring 2018 against the ESG (especially ESG1), culminating in a full revision. A committee of ECTE staff and Council members was set up and a set of documents was produced to align standards, guidelines and procedures with the ESG.

The main document representing these changes is the *Standards and Guidelines*⁸ for ECTE accreditation that was approved by the General Assembly in 2019 and that has now replaced the previous version of the *ECTE Manual*. In the *Standards and Guidelines*, new ESG-driven quality assurance standards are introduced, including for example, the development of internal QA policies, student-centred learning, teaching and assessment, issues around admission, progression, recognition and certification, enhancement of student services, collection and use of information for improvement, enforcement of public information and processes for monitoring and review.

Further documents, notably *Introducing the ECTE*⁹, *Criteria and Procedures*¹⁰ and the *Supplemental Guidelines*¹¹ series, were also written to reflect and summarise further areas of development and compliance to ESG2 and ESG3. These documents reflect progress in compliance toward the development of internal QA policies, greater involvement of stakeholders, implementing structures and policies to ensure independence, conducting thematic analyses and restructuring human resources.

The ECTE website was kept updated to reflect these changes.

The documents developed in this period represent the key sources to which this SAR makes reference.

2019

The General Assembly held on 30 November 2019 in Rome was a keystone event in the review process, involving the internal stakeholders of the ECTE. The bulk of the documents and related policies described above were approved, and the event explicitly engaged with the topic of ‘Quality’ and a detailed focus on the ESG. The EQAR Senior Policy Analyst, Melinda Szabo, was present during the event to further explain the processes required for external review and inclusion in the EQAR.

The General Assembly also approved a strategic plan including an external review, together with a timeline and a budget to empower the Council and staff to achieve full compliance with the ESG.¹²

2020-21

In 2020 and 2021, the ECTE Council and staff have continued to work through the *ESG Compliance Action Plan*,¹³ making further revisions and introducing new policies and documents. These have included, for example, designing specific criteria for online and distance education, elaborating procedures for online site visits (propelled by the Corona-Pandemic), refining independence policies, formulating stakeholder plans and thematic analysis strategies and developing policies for internal quality assurance, staff resources and monitoring and improvement policies. On 16 March 2021,

⁶ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/SWOT-Analysis-vis-ESG.pdf>

⁷ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ESG-Compliance-Action-Plan.pdf>

⁸ <http://ecte.eu/qa/standards/>

⁹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/>

¹⁰ <http://ecte.eu/qa/procedures/>

¹¹ <http://ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/>

¹² See General Assembly minutes <http://ecte.eu/sar/>

¹³ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ESG-Compliance-Action-Plan.pdf>

after approximately two years of work, the ECTE Council noted that all seventy-nine action points of the *ESG Compliance Action Plan* had been appropriately addressed.

The application for registration in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) along with the final terms of reference was submitted on 11 September 2020. The ECTE asked ASIIN to coordinate the review. The definition of the terms of reference between ASIIN, EQAR and ECTE was completed on 23 November 2020 when EQAR confirmed the eligibility of ECTE's application for inclusion in the register.

2.2 – SAR contributors

The internal editorial group for the current SAR included Dr. Bernhard Ott (Chairman), Dr. Marvin Oxenham (General Secretary) and Carmen Crouse (External Review Manager).

- A first draft was written by the External Review Manager by mid-February 2021 and edited by the General Secretary by late February.
- The Chairman of the Council, the Quality Assurance Coordinator, and Review Secretary thoroughly checked this draft and commented on it by the first week in March.
- The revised version of the SAR was sent to the Council members for comments and revision prior to the March 2021 Council Meeting. The Council discussed the third version of the SAR in its meeting on 16 March 2021 and approved it for completion.
- Late March: revision after feedback
 - from other subject-specific accreditation agencies: the *Association of Theological Schools* (USA), the *Asia Theological Association* (Asia) and the *Middle East and North Africa Association for Theological Education* (Middle East and North Africa)
 - ECTE accredited HEI's – from Austria, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Lebanon, Netherlands.
- Final revision by the External Review manager was proofread by the Review Secretary and General Secretary and prepared for submission to ASIIN by April 2021.

This SAR is the result of a collaborative effort of the ECTE staff and Council Members, compiled of representatives from a variety of direct and indirect stakeholders, including¹⁴:

- Higher education institutions (HEIs),
- Peer agencies
- Global theological education networks
- ECTE staff
- Peer experts
- Theology students
- Academic faculty
- Institutional leadership
- Administrative staff
- Governing boards
- Ecclesial entities
- Funders and fundraisers

Several other stakeholders have been involved at different points in the process.

- The **HEIs** comprising the General Assembly (direct stakeholders) have been involved in the key passages of the review and decision-making points, as illustrated in the narrative above. In

¹⁴ Current Council members and stakeholder representation can be seen here <http://ecte.eu/about/organisation/governance-and-leadership/>. A full listing of ECTE's stakeholders can be found here <http://ecte.eu/about/identity-and-mission/affiliations-and-stakeholders/>

addition, during the winter of 2021 a survey among institutions accredited by ECTE was conducted on ESG part 2 and 3 with a special focus on ECTE'S work and methodology.¹⁵ The results of this survey were discussed during the *Annual Internal Review, Improvement and Monitoring Reporting* session of the March 2021 Council meeting.¹⁶ Formal and informal dialogue occurred at ECTE biennial general assemblies with participants from member HEIs, including academic faculty, institutional leaders, administrative staff, members of governing boards and representatives of ecclesial entities. The draft SAR was also circulated to a selection of ECTE accredited HEIs representing various countries and perspectives.¹⁷

- European **QA authorities** have been consulted at different points during the review process, both in correspondence and personal dialogue with EQAR and ENQA personnel and during relevant ENQA events.¹⁸
- Conversations with delegates of **EU QA agencies** at ENQA meetings and dialogue with them on the agency-level took place and contributed to ECTE developments, especially conversations with colleagues at AHPGS, Freiburg (Germany) in 2011 and MusiQue, Brussels (Belgium) in 2018. One ECTE Council member, Dr Constantineanu, contributed to discussions from his experience as peer evaluator with ARACIS (Romania).
- Involvement of **global networks** of theological education (direct stakeholders), are especially pertinent given the nature of the ECTE as a cross-border, subject specific QA agency. In 2017, the ECTE hosted a systematic consultation of 8 accreditation agencies from the *International Council for Theological Education*¹⁹ leading to the approval of a set of shared *Standards and Guidelines for Global Evangelical Theological Education*²⁰ that have become the second key source of the ECTE's own *Standards and Guidelines* (in addition to the ESG).
- In 2020-21 **peer experts** (VET Members) provided feedback on ECTE'S work and methodologies related to the new ESG-compliant standards and procedures reflected in this SAR.²¹
- In March of 2021, a draft of the SAR was circulated for feedback to **subject-specific peer QA agencies** from other regions of the world. These included the *Association of Theological Schools* (USA), the *Asia Theological Association* (Asia) and the *Middle East and North Africa Association for Theological Education* (Middle East and North Africa).²²
- **Student** input came through the student representative on the Council.
- A survey in relation to the standards reflected in ESG1 involving **external stakeholders** (in particular ecclesial representatives) was conducted in Spring of 2018 and discussed in the General Assembly in 2019.²³ This survey produced input regarding the strengths and opportunities of ECTE, but also raised concerns that were duly responded to. These included, for example, issues of identity, qualifications of teaching and non-teaching staff, concerns over digital literacy, contextual collaboration in practical training, broadening of curricula and delivery approaches that include innovation, patterns of continued learning, greater flexibility, more accessibility and lowered costs.

¹⁵The survey can be seen here <http://ecte.eu/development/surveys/ecte-stakeholder-survey-2020-21/>. Results of the survey are presented and discussed in section 5.6.1 of *Introducing the ECTE*, <http://ecte.eu/introducing/>

¹⁶ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/airim/>

¹⁷ Austria, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Lebanon, Netherlands. Responses can be seen in *ECTE SAR Stakeholders Responses* here <http://ecte.eu/sar/>

¹⁸ For example, the General Secretary and the Quality Assurance Coordinator attended the ENQA seminar on External Reviews in Latvia 27-28 September 2018. ECTE staff also regularly attend ENQA General Assemblies (ECTE is an Affiliate) and other key events and webinars.

¹⁹ <https://icete.info/> representing Africa, Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe, North America, Caribbean and the Middle East.

²⁰ <https://icete.info/resources/sggete/>

²¹ Results of the survey are presented and discussed in section 5.6.5 of *Introducing the ECTE*, <http://ecte.eu/introducing/>

²² Responses can be seen in *ECTE SAR Stakeholders Responses* here <http://ecte.eu/sar/>

²³ <http://ecte.eu/development/surveys/external-stakeholder-survey-2018/>

2.3 – SAR Key Documents

This SAR represents a concise overview of ECTE’s compliance to the ESG. A bullet-point style has been adopted for ease of consultation. A footnote apparatus is used throughout the SAR to refer to the key documents that provide further details and evidence of compliance. The following documents should be considered as an integral support of this SAR.

Primary documents:

- *Introducing the ECTE*, featuring the identity, activities, organisation, internal QA management and fact sheets of the ECTE.
- *Standards and Guidelines* for ECTE accreditation, featuring ECTE’s accreditation standards related to ESG1 and ESG 2.1.
- *Criteria and Procedures* for ECTE accreditation, featuring the procedures for QA.

Quality assurance documents:

- *Supplemental Guidelines* series, featuring a set of documents on specific QA guidelines.
- *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*, featuring site visit procedures, matters concerning peer-experts (VET members) and the production of review reports.

Policy documents - over a dozen policy and strategy documents will be referred to in the SAR, including: appeals and complaints, consistency guarantee, data protection policy, independence, conflict of interest and intolerance prevention, ongoing review and monitoring policy, staff policy (including professional codes and ethical requirements), stakeholder involvement and development policy, student council member policy, thematic analysis strategic plan, VET development policy and visitation feedback policy.

Forms. Online forms represent a source of evidence in the kind of information that is being collected or the commitments that are being requested. Examples include no conflict-of-interest declaration forms, the annual staff review forms, accreditation application forms and review worksheets for VETs.

Surveys

- ECTE SAR stakeholder responses
- Stakeholder survey 2020-21
- Student satisfaction survey 2020-21
- Stakeholder consultation 2018

Additional documents

- ECTE Strategic Plan 2021-2027
- Annual Internal Review and Improvement Monitoring Report (2020)
- ESG Compliance Action Plan
- SWOT analysis
- Staff job descriptions
- Council Minutes
- General Assembly Minutes

Finances, including: Approved Budget 2020-2021, 2020 Fiscal Year Results, Development of Funds 2014-2020, Fee development overview 2014 – 2026, Audited financial reports, Treasurer Report to General Assembly 2019

Direct links to the documents on the ECTE website are provided in the footnotes, and a password protected area has been created on the ECTE website with a complete list of linked documents; see <http://ecte.eu/sar/> - password ASIIN.

3. PROFILE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY

3.1 - Higher Education and Quality Assurance in the Context of the Agency

The ECTE operates in the field of accreditation within the overall context of European higher learning where the progressive enlargement of the European Union has generated a process of profound change and the realization of a common European Higher Education Area (the EHEA). In this process, a major role is being played by the “Bologna Process” which has united over 47 European Ministers of Education and numerous educational and governmental agencies around the project of creating a common framework of reference for European tertiary education.²⁴

As a pan-European agency, the ECTE serves institutions in 29 countries across Europe and the Middle East and is particularly well-positioned to operate in the context of the diversity of Europe, combining standardised approaches to quality assurance (that enhance reciprocal trust) with the contextualisation of education in each country, culture and tradition. So, for example, while the ECTE requires its accredited institutions to comply with national laws and regulations, its standards focus on a meta-level of compliance that is irrespective of geographical location.

In representing a multiplicity of political systems, higher education systems, socio-cultural and educational traditions, languages, aspirations and expectations, the ECTE stakeholders, governance, peer-experts, leadership and staff represent a genuine model of European accreditation in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

In recognising the value of the EHEA educational framework and desiring to better contextualise to the European situation, the ECTE has integrated into its own standards and procedures the major EHEA tools for fostering the mobility of students and staff in Higher Education.

As illustrated by this SAR, the *European Standards and Guidelines* (ESG) are a fundamental point of reference for the ECTE, but other tools have been used as well, such as the *European Qualifications Framework* (EQF) that has been used to define ECTE’s certification framework and levels.²⁵

The ECTE also requires the use of the ECTS credit system and the Diploma Supplement and asks HEIs to implement educational strategies such as learning-outcome based programmes, the use of the Dublin Descriptors in programme design, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and a student-centred approach to the learning process.

The ECTE can be characterised as a cross-border, professional, independent accreditation agency. It is also a discipline-specific agency, focusing on the discipline of theology and theological education. Through its activities, the ECTE contributes to the continuous enhancement of the quality of higher theological education in Europe and the Middle East. Accreditation by the ECTE involves external reviews of institutions and programmes of theological education by independent, international peer

²⁴ For a description the Bologna Process see the Council of Europe Higher Education and Research website at http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/HigherEducation/EHEA2010/BolognaPedestrians_en.asp

²⁵ See Appendix A of *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation* <http://ecte.eu/ga/standards/>

experts, provides statements of comparability to published standards and certifies levels within a nomenclature framework.

The ECTE conducts autonomous, voluntary reviews that include self-evaluation reports and site visits by panels of experts. In addition, a regular process of reporting on quality enhancements by HEIs takes place within a cycle of five-year reviews.

The ECTE can also conduct reviews in cooperation with national QA requirements and, at the request of an ECTE member institution, a joint procedure with a national agency may be put in place. For instance, there is provisional agreement for this to take place with the NVAO of the Netherlands in November 2021, using an agreed joint set of standards and a joint visitation team in relation to the Tyndale Theological Seminary, Amsterdam.

3.2 - Goals and objectives

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of ECTE is to assist evangelical theological education in Europe to become and to be 'fit for purpose' so that it equips the church for God's mission.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following is a summary of the objectives expressed in ECTE's mission statement.

1. *Excellence and fitness for purpose.* The ECTE's entire network of people and services should strive for excellence, aiming at fitness for purpose.
2. *Evangelical.* The ECTE serves the entire evangelical church, respecting particularities, traditions and commonalities.
3. *Contextual and Relevant.* The ECTE network, located in Europe with its own particular history and context, should serve its constituency in light of the uniqueness and needs of today's European peoples and cultures, while meeting the highest European educational standards.
4. *Missional.* The ECTE believes that theological education must not only produce knowledge and understanding in the minds of students, but also a deep spiritual, life-changing impact.
5. *Flexible and Developing.* The ECTE is committed to assisting its member institutions in adapting to innovations within higher and vocational education in Europe and to changing needs.
6. *Accountable.* The ECTE also seeks to remain accountable to the standards and guidelines for quality in higher and vocational education in Europe and to the stakeholders it serves.

The ECTE's vision statement and strategic focus build on these goals and objectives.²⁶

²⁶ See section 1.3 of *Introducing the ECTE* and <http://ecte.eu/introducing/identity-and-mission/goals-and-objectives/>

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2026

The ECTE Council has drafted a *Strategic Plan 2022-2027*,²⁷ which is dependent on the outcome of this review process and subject to approval by the General Assembly in November 2021.²⁸

Phase 1: 2022-2023 – Consolidation & Capacity building

CONSOLIDATION - Focus: quality before quantity

1. Consolidation of everything that has been introduced in the EQAR process.
2. Making sure all accredited institutions and programmes reach the requirements of the post-2019 *Standards and Guidelines* (this will be ongoing until all institutions and programmes have gone through their re-accreditation cycle which will be complete by 2025).

CAPACITY BUILDING - Focus: preparing foundations for growth and development

1. Further training of VET members and broadening perspectives of VET members.
2. Identifying new personnel for key staff positions and enhancement of roles to prepare for next phase.
3. Succession planning for Chairman²⁹ and potentially other roles.
4. Offering new levels and guidelines for new types of programmes in an expanded certification framework to include vocational training and micro-credentials.

Phase 2: 2024-2025 – Retention and Recruiting

RETENTION - Focus: clarifying the value of ECTE accreditation to current clients

1. Making sure all accredited member institutions understand the internal and external benefits of an accreditation process with ECTE.
2. Increasing satisfaction with ‘value for money’ of ECTE services based on 2021 Stakeholder survey.

RECRUITING - Focus: selling to our “closer audiences” and expanding membership

1. Reaching out to 30+ member-only institutions to illustrate the benefits of ECTE accreditation, aiming at an additional 2 accredited institutions and programmes every year.
2. Reaching out to current accredited institutions to encourage accreditation of new programmes, aiming at an additional 2 accredited programmes every year.
3. Reaching out to new institutions and university departments to invite to become members of ECTE, aiming to increase our membership by 3 institutions every year.

Phase 3: 2026-2027 – Influence and Increase

INFLUENCE - Focus: enhancing our footprint in the EHEA and globally

1. Further growth in quality and quantity in all areas of ECTE in conjunction with the 5-year external cyclical review leading to greater influence as a European EQAR listed accrediting agency.
2. Improve cooperation with EQAR agencies in joint reviews and in conducting reviews on behalf of national accreditation authorities, aiming at 1 additional joint programme accreditation review per year.
3. Obtain ICETE recognition in the global network.
4. Increase the number of associate members by 2 every year.

INCREASE - Focus: expanding our reach to other theological institutions and programmes

1. Marketing initiative to evangelical theological institutions in Europe and the MENA region which are not yet affiliated with the ECTE, aiming at additional 3 members every year.
2. Contacting theology departments in universities, aiming at additional 1 accredited institution and programme every year.

²⁷ See *ECTE Strategic Plan 2022-2027* – <http://ecte.eu/sar/>

²⁸ The plan includes detailed financial, and personnel projections. After approval by the General Assembly a detailed action plan with S.M.A.R.T. goals will be developed (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Bound).

²⁹ The designated next chairman regrettably passed away from Covid-19 on March 17, 2021. Discussions relating to this succession will be taken up in the May 2021 Council meetings.

3.3 – Activities and quality assurance

The ECTE performs three main sets of activities.

1. Membership for networking (non ESG-activity)
2. Development through research and training (non ESG-activity)
3. Quality assurance (ESG activity)

Of these, only quality assurance, and specifically institutional accreditation and programme accreditation, falls under the scope of the ESG and is subject to external review. Networking and development do not fall under the scope of the ESG and are not subject to external review. Measures are in place to ensure independence between ECTE's quality assurance activities and other activities (see more in 4.3 below).

The historical mission of the ECTE has been the accreditation of formal tertiary theological education in Europe through a peer-evaluation approach to cross-border recognition and certification, contributing to accountability and enhancement.³⁰ ECTE quality assurance activities fall within the scope of the *European Standards and Guidelines* and include:

1. Institutional accreditation
2. Programme accreditation

ECTE membership is a prerequisite for ECTE accreditation as it ensures compatibility in focus and values of the HEI and ECTE.

The ECTE currently provides accreditation and certification of comparability within the following framework of levels:

- Certificate in Theology
- Diploma in Theology
- Bachelor of Theology
- Postgraduate Certificate in Theology
- Master of Theology

These levels are designed to be compatible and comparable in length, credits and outcomes with levels 5-7 in the *European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education* (EQF) and aligned with the *International Standard Classification of Education* (ISCED 2011). Programmes may be oriented toward fields of work and/or of study.³¹

The ECTE is careful to observe and respond to new developments in the EHEA and to the needs of its stakeholders and is currently evaluating an integration of microcredentials and of research doctoral programmes into its certification framework.

³⁰ At the heart of all quality assurance activities are the twin purposes of accountability and enhancement. Taken together, these create trust in the higher education institution's performance' *Context, scope, purposes and principles of the ESG* (p.2) <https://revisionesg.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/context-scope-purposes-esg-february-2013.pdf>

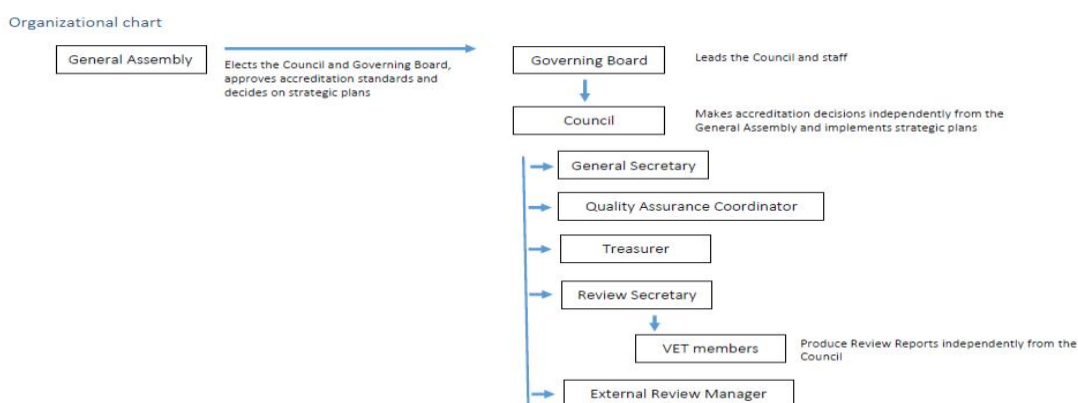
³¹ See the *ECTE Certification Framework* in Appendix A of *Standards and Guidelines*, <http://ecte.eu/ga/standards/>

3.4 - ECTE's organisation/structure

Organizational bodies of the Association according to the Statutes §4 are:

The General Assembly	= Supervisory Board : Composed of ECTE members: regular and associate (voice but no vote) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elects the Council as well as its Governing Board • Approves the budget • Accepts the report of the Council • Commissions independent expert to audit the accounting and to report his/her findings to the General Assembly • Discharges the treasurer, Council and governing board (Entlastung erteilen) • Approves accreditation standards • Discusses and decides on future activities of the association
The Governing Board	= Legal Representation & Human Resources : Composed of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents and leads the association • Leads the staff
The Council	= Senior Management Team : Composed of Governing Board, core staff and elected members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulates, monitors and implements the association's strategic plan • Makes quality assurance decisions • Gives instructions to the employees • Decides on the admission of new members to the association • Prepares the General Assembly and elections • Monitors the handling of finances of the association and elects the treasurer • Selects staff, such as a General Secretary. • Approves and appoints expert visitors and occasional student VET members
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Secretary (Council member with voice but no vote) • Treasurer (Council member) • Quality Assurance Coordinator (Council member) • Review Secretary • External Review Manager • Administrative Assistant • VET members

A full description of ECTE's organisation, including the statutes, bylaws, detailed description of the roles of the governance board and Council and detailed staff profiles can be found in *Introducing the ECTE*.³²The following chart depicts ECTE's organisation:



³² Section 3 of *Introducing the ECTE*, <http://ecte.eu/introducing/>

3.5 - ECTE's functions, activities, procedures

3.5.1 – QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

This section outlines the procedures related to accreditation and quality assurance activities of the agency. These are outlined fully in the document *Criteria and Procedures* for ECTE accreditation.³³

The following are the main **phases** in ECTE quality assurance procedures.

1. Phase 1. Obtaining Membership. ECTE accreditation begins with obtaining membership in the ECTE. This phase assures, for example, that institutions formally operate in the delivery of theological education at tertiary level and that they adhere to the ECTE Core Values.³⁴
2. Phase 2. Institutional accreditation. The second phase of accreditation ensures that necessary institutional standards are in place to support the delivery of tertiary theological educational programmes. Institutions apply for institutional accreditation, produce a self-evaluation report, receive an onsite visit and are given a formal outcome. Part A of the *Standards and Guidelines* for ECTE Accreditation are used in this phase.
3. Phase 3. Programme accreditation. The third phase of accreditation ensures the quality of the programme(s) that the institution is delivering. Institutions apply for (single or multiple) programme accreditation, produce a self-evaluation report, receive an onsite visit and are given a formal outcome. Part B of the *Standards and Guidelines* for ECTE Accreditation are used in this phase.
4. Phase 4. Maintaining accreditation. This consists in annual reporting procedures (Annual Progress Report) and in a full cyclical review every 5 years.

The **criteria** for accreditation require meeting the standards outlined in the relevant parts of *Standards and Guidelines* for ECTE accreditation as demonstrated through a self-evaluation report and corroborated by an on-site visit. The fairness of “Standards and Guidelines” is ensured by the process of peer-discussion and approval by the General Assembly of all direct stakeholders (member institutions). If the institution delivers programmes by distance or online education, additional *Guidelines for Distance and Online Education* are in place.³⁵

Typical accreditation **procedures** entail:

- Application for accreditation (HEI) and approval of application (ECTE)
- Production of a Self Evaluation Report (HEI)
- Assembling of independent VET panel, site visit arranged, and VET Leader nominated (ECTE)
- Accreditation site visit (peer experts – VET members)
- Production of Review Report (Review Secretary and peer experts – VET members)
- Decision by ECTE Council on accreditation, with requirements and recommendations (ECTE)
- Information given to the institution of outcomes and publication of Review Report and decision³⁶ (ECTE)
- Follow up procedures on recommendations and requirements (ECTE)
- Payment of accreditation fees (HEI)
- Feedback and evaluation of visit (HEI)
- Annual reporting procedures and 5-year cyclical review

³³ *Criteria and Procedures*, <http://ecte.eu/qa/procedures/>

³⁴ *Criteria and Procedures for ECTE Membership* <http://ecte/network/membership>

³⁵ *Guidelines for Distance and Online Education* <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Guidelines-for-Distance-and-Online-Education.pdf>

³⁶ <http://ecte.eu/qa/reports/>

In November 2019, the ECTE implemented a **major transition** in its accreditation standards and procedures, distinguishing institutional and programme accreditation as distinct phases and activities. Previously, ECTE accreditation entailed a candidacy and an accreditation phase, blending together institutional and programme standards. In 2019, accredited HEIs were given the option of undertaking their cyclical review under the old or new standards and procedures. This explains why most of the ECTE accredited institutions are currently listed in the ECTE directory under ‘Accredited Institutions and Programmes (pre-2019)’.³⁷ The distinction of institutional and programme accreditation is incrementally being implemented as ECTE institutions come up for cyclical review and in all new accreditation procedures.³⁸ The transition will be complete by 2025.

3.5.2 - DAILY WORK OF THE AGENCY

The following list of activities describe the daily work of all activities of the agency, including those subject to the ESG (quality assurance) and those that are not (networking and development). The list is not comprehensive and illustrates the clear separation of the ESG activity of Quality Assurance and Networking/Developing.

Quality assurance

- Development of standards and guidelines for quality in theological education
- Development of procedures and criteria and response to change with appropriate procedures
- Training of peer experts (VET members)
- Staff training
- Organisation of site visits
- Production and publication of review reports
- Accreditation decisions and publication
- Council meetings and staff meetings
- Maintenance of database and institutional quality assurance records

Networking

- Membership expansion
- Organisation of networking events, mainly the biennial General Assembly
- Information on global items of interest and innovation in the sector
- Project management and fundraising for development
- Communication with international HEIs and other accrediting bodies on recognition
- Participation in the global board of the ICETE and membership in the INQAAHE
- Participation in higher education networks in Europe (ENQA)
- Participation in stakeholder networks

Development

- Production and sharing of research and trends in journals, thematic analysis, scholarship.
- Ongoing research into developments in the EHEA and the professional sector of global theological education
- Corporate training during the biennial General Assembly
- Partnership with the ICETE Academy
- Surveys and data collection
- Thematic analysis (since 2020)

³⁷ The ECTE public Directory accordingly makes the distinction ‘Institutional Accreditation’, ‘Programme Accreditation’, ‘Candidate Institutions and Programmes (pre-2019)’ and ‘Accredited Institutions and Programmes (pre-2019)’. See <http://ecte.eu/directory/>

³⁸ Specific guidance on this transition stage is provided here <http://ecte.eu/qa/pre2019/>

3.5.3 - INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY

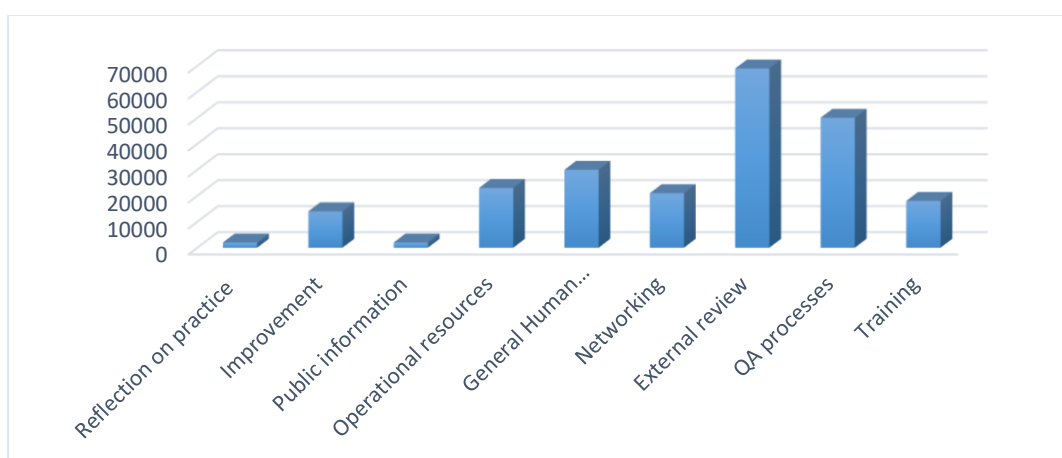
- **ENQA.** The ECTE values the importance of international educational QA contexts in Europe and is an Affiliate of the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (ENQA). Participation by ECTE Council members in the annual General Assembly, Members' Forum and training seminars and webinars.
- **INQAHEE.** The ECTE values the importance of worldwide higher educational quality standards and, since 2005, has been a full member of the *International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education* (INQAAHE).
- **ICETE.** The ECTE is a founding member of the *International Council for Evangelical Theological Education* (ICETE) through which it is linked to nine evangelical quality assurance agencies across the world representing over 1200 institutions delivering theological education (<http://icete.info>). The ECTE's involvement with the ICETE is intense and long standing, and includes participation in the governing board, strategic planning, global consultations, establishment of the *ICETE Academy*, leadership in the *Global Consultation on Doctoral Study*, consultation leading to the *Standards and Guidelines for Global Evangelical Theological Education* and revision of global recognition processes.
- **EEA.** The ECTE cultivates a meaningful international relationship with external stakeholders that are based in Europe through affiliation with the *European Evangelical Alliance* (EEA).
- **FEET.** As a subject-specific network and quality assurance agency dealing with the discipline of theology, the ECTE is a full member of the *Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians* (FEET) and participates in the biennial symposium.

3.6 - ECTE's funding

The ECTE **business model** is based on a non-profit, private charter status, receiving no government subsidies or public funding and with **income** generated mostly through fees. Over the years, ECTE has also received occasional grants from international organizations for specific projects. An approximate breakdown of revenue in the last two years is as follows:³⁹

- 20% from non-accredited member HEIs
- 80% from HEI accreditation fees (including per-student fee and site visit fees)

In terms of **expenses**, the ECTE operated for many years as a volunteer organization with low operational costs. Over the past 10 years, the development of the agency has led to increasing staff compensation that currently amounts to approximately 70% of overall expenses. The following chart provides a rough cross-analysis of year expenses over the last two years.⁴⁰



Yearly budgets are established, approved by the General Assembly and monitored to support ECTE's strategic plan and all activities. Budgets are regularly balanced and a healthy surplus guarantees the financial stability of the agency. Savings over the years and an incremental rise in fees since 2019 have provided the financial basis to pursue the strategic goal of ESG compliance, external review and inclusion in the EQAR.

FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS

- Audited financial reports⁴¹
- *Treasurer Report to General Assembly 2019*⁴²
- Current Fee Schedule on ECTE website⁴³
- *Development of Funds 2024-2020* in <http://ecte.eu/sar/>
- *Approved Budget 2020-2021 and 2020 Fiscal Year Results* in <http://ecte.eu/sar/>
- *Fee development overview 2014-2026* in <http://ecte.eu/sar/>

³⁹ Projections from the *ECTE Strategic Plan 2022-27* indicate 10% of income from membership fees and 90% from accreditation activities.

⁴⁰ Breakdown: Reflection on practice: including the costs of annual monitoring meeting. Improvement: including the Implementation of ESG Strategic Action Plan and related staff time. Public information: including the cost of website, GS time in publishing documents and website content. Operational resources: including office costs, IT, scholarships. General human resources: including GS, T, AA General Business. Networking: including memberships in stakeholder associations, GA. External review: including review costs, ERM. QA processes: including Council meetings, QAC, GS, RS. Training: including VET member Training, IA courses.

⁴¹ Audited reports for years 2017 and 2018 available at <http://ecte.eu/sar/>

⁴² Available at <http://ecte.eu/sar/>

⁴³ See <http://ecte.eu/introducing/fees/>

4. ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

4.1 - Activities, policy, and processes for quality assurance (ESG 3.1)

4.1.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 3.1)

The ECTE undertakes QA activities on a regular basis in coherence with explicit goals and objectives that are made public and that translate into its daily work. Stakeholders are involved in the governance of the ECTE through the General Assembly. Clear distinctions are made between ECTE activities of accreditation and activities of networking and development (the latter two are not regulated by the ESG).

4.1.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 3.1)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **4.1.2.1** - The ECTE has a public **mission statement**, a set of **goals** and **objectives**, a vision statement and a **strategic plan** and focus.⁴⁴ These serve as the basis of its activities.
- **4.1.2.2** - The ECTE has three **areas of work**: 1) networking, 2) development and 3) quality assurance. Quality assurance activities are clearly identified as the only ones that are regulated by the ESG.
- **4.1.2.3** - The **activities**, scope and daily work of the ECTE are defined and **published**.⁴⁵ The ECTE carries out regular QA activities, entailing an average of 7-8 accreditation procedures each year. The ECTE currently accredits 38 institutions and 78 programmes in 21 different countries.⁴⁶
- **4.1.2.4** - The activities of the ECTE are **monitored** every year to evaluate the levels of achievement of stated goals and strategic plans, the ongoing accuracy of descriptions of daily work and the strategic involvement of stakeholders.
- **4.1.2.5** - Internal and external **stakeholders**, including HEIs, are identified and involved in the governance and work of the ECTE through a carefully monitored plan. This includes, for example, participation in the design, development and revision of programmes, representation of a variety of stakeholders in the ECTE Council,⁴⁷ and involvement in the design and continuous improvement of the ECTE's methodologies. In 2020-21 a stakeholder satisfaction survey was conducted among ECTE's internal stakeholders (HEIs), resulting in a high overall satisfaction rate in ECTE's work and methodologies (4,57/5,00). A similar survey was

⁴⁴ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/identity-and-mission/goals-and-objectives/>

⁴⁵ See list of currently represented stakeholders here: <http://ecte.eu/introducing/organisation/governance-and-leadership/>

⁴⁶ See list of accredited institutions here: <http://ecte.eu/directory/>

⁴⁷ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/identity-and-mission/goals-and-objectives/>

conducted among peer evaluators working with the ECTE, resulting in a similar satisfaction rate (4,70/5,00).

4.1.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 3.1)

- ‘Goals and Objectives’ in *Introducing the ECTE*⁴⁸
- ‘Activities, Scope and Daily Work’ in *Introducing the ECTE*⁴⁹
- *Monitoring and Improvement Policy*⁵⁰
- *Stakeholder Involvement and Extension Policy*⁵¹
- ‘Stakeholder satisfaction with ECTE’s work and methodologies’ in *Introducing the ECTE*⁵²
- ‘Peer expert satisfaction with ECTE’s work and methodologies’ in *Introducing the ECTE*⁵³
- ‘ECTE Statutes’ in *Introducing the ECTE*⁵⁴
- *ECTE Strategic Plan 2022-2027 (draft)*⁵⁵

4.2 - Official status (ESG 3.2)

4.2.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 3.2)

The ECTE is formally recognised by German public authorities as a registered non-profit association whose purpose includes quality assurance. Its statutes indicate that ‘The purpose of the association is the promotion of religion and education’. Although registered in Germany, the ECTE is by its membership, governing board, council, staff and mission an international agency that is involved in professional cross-border accreditation. This is achieved both at home and abroad, in particular by promoting and securing the quality of the theological training of the member institutions based on uniform standards’ (ECTE Statutes, 2.1)

The ECTE operates as a cross-border agency in 26 countries across the EHEA and in the Middle East, hence national recognition in each country is neither feasible nor available.

4.2.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 3.2)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **4.2.2.1** - The ECTE is a **registered** non-profit association whose purposes include the ‘promotion and securing of the quality of theological training of the member institutes based on uniform standards’. The organisation is **legally headquartered** at Hindenburgstraße 36, 70825 Korntal-Münchingen, Germany and registered with its current name in Baden-Württemberg, Germany since 14.10.2018 (Registration Number: VR 201286).
- **4.2.2.2** - The ECTE **publishes** a description of its official status and identification as a cross-border QA agency on its website.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 1.3).

⁴⁹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 2)

⁵⁰ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/monitoring/>

⁵¹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/stakeholders/>

⁵² <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 5.6.1)

⁵³ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 5.6.5)

⁵⁴ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 3.1)

⁵⁵ See *ECTE Strategic Plan 2022-2027* – <http://ecte.eu/sar/>

⁵⁶ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/identity-and-mission/history-and-official-status/>

4.2.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 3.2)

- 'ECTE Statutes' in *Introducing the ECTE*⁵⁷
- Formal registration *Vereinsregisterauszug*⁵⁸

4.3 - Independence (ESG 3.3)

4.3.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 3.3)

The ECTE operates independently in full autonomy and responsibility for its operations and outcomes without third party influence. The ECTE was founded at a time when external peer-accreditation was not available within European national educational systems. Establishing commonly agreed standards within a peer-accreditation scheme allowed member institutions to reflect critically on their policies and practices, thus providing a basis for comparability and improvement measures. The good practice of HEIs agreeing on common standards has remained in the ECTE, together with provisions to keep the review and decision-making processes independent.

Although governed through a General Assembly of member schools (as is good practice with many peer-accreditation agencies), the nomination of external experts, the production of reports and accreditation decisions are performed independently by the ECTE Council with no influence or interference from the General Assembly. The experts' review activities (VETs) are also regulated by independence provisions.

Processes are in place to safeguard independence in relation to the ECTE's quality assurance and other activities.

4.3.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 3.3)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **4.3.2.1** - The ECTE **publishes** its operational independence in terms of full autonomy from other bodies and takes full responsibility for its operations and outcomes without external influence or interference from institutions that are the beneficiaries of accreditation or from other stakeholders.⁵⁹
- **4.3.2.2** - The ECTE Statutes make a careful **governance distinction** between the General Assembly of member institutions and the ECTE Council, assuring that the former does not interfere with the accreditation decisions of the latter.
- **4.3.2.3** - In **Council meetings** two working groups prepare the rationales for decisions by the entire council. One working group focuses on general business items. It consists of the General Secretary, the Treasurer/Vice-chairwoman, Secretary and one other Council member. The other working group deals exclusively with accreditation decisions. It consists of the Quality Assurance Coordinator, the Chairman, the student representative and one other Council member. If a council member served as an expert in an accreditation process, he/she abstains from the decision-making process and vote in the Council.

⁵⁷ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 3.1)

⁵⁸ See *Vereinsregisterauszug* in <http://ecte.eu/sar/>

⁵⁹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/policies/independence-coj/>

The following grid summarises different areas of independence and who is involved:

	Organizational independence	Operational independence	Independence in formal outcomes
<i>Approving statutes, budget, accreditation standards, strategic plan, electing Governing Board and Council.</i>	General Assembly		
<i>Engaging procedures and methods</i>		General Assembly and Council	
<i>Nomination and appointment of external experts</i>		Council	
<i>Accreditation decisions</i>			Council

- **4.3.2.4** - Peer experts (VET members) are selected, recruited, nominated and deployed by the ECTE Council independently from third parties such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholders. Institutions being evaluated have no direct influence on the **evaluators** and VET members involved in a substantial way with an institution will be excluded from site visits to that institution for at least 5 years following their involvement.
- **4.3.2.5** - VETs make recommendations to the ECTE Council by means of written Review Reports following on-site visits, but do not participate in the accreditation decision-making processes. ECTE Council members participating in a site visit will refrain from discussion and not participate in the accreditation decision related to the interested institution. Both the **independence of the reviewers** and the **independence of decisions** are thus safeguarded.
- **4.3.2.6**- Anyone contributing to external quality assurance activities of ECTE (e.g. as expert) is informed that they are acting in a personal capacity and are not representing their constituent organisations when working for ECTE. All ECTE Council members, staff and VET members commit to independence by signing the **no conflict of interest and intolerance prevention statement**.⁶⁰ These forms are monitored annually.
- **4.3.2.7** - In 2020, in order to avoid possible issues of independence, the ECTE suspended occasional consultancy activities. However, as indicated in section 3.3 above, the ECTE still has **other activities** beyond quality assurance and that include networking and development. Specific policies in the *Independence and Conflict of Interest Policy* are in place to safeguard independence between the ECTE's quality assurance activities and these other activities.

4.3.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 3.3)

- *Independence and Conflict of Interest Policy*⁶¹
- *No-conflict of interest declaration*⁶²
- 'ECTE Statutes 5.6 and 6.3' in *Introducing the ECTE*⁶³
- *Monitoring and Improvement Policy*⁶⁴
- 'VET Independence' in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*⁶⁵
- 'Institutional accreditation procedures', 'Programme accreditation procedures' and 'Cyclical accreditation procedures' in *Criteria and Procedures*⁶⁶

⁶⁰ <http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/no-conflict-of-interest-declaration/>

⁶¹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/policies/independence-coi/>

⁶² <http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/no-conflict-of-interest-declaration/>

⁶³ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 3.1)

⁶⁴ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/monitoring/>

⁶⁵ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (section 2.4)

⁶⁶ <http://ecte.eu/qa/procedures/> (sections 2.2, 3.2 and 4.2)

4.4 - Thematic analysis (ESG 3.4)

4.4.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 3.4)

Although the ECTE is new to thematic analysis as such, it has a tradition of identifying common themes arising from accreditation processes and addressing them through expert input. The ECTE has recently adopted a strategic plan for thematic analysis and begun to report on general findings of its external QA activities.

4.4.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 3.4)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **4.4.2.1** - In 2020 the ECTE produced and began to implement a **strategic plan** for thematic analysis. This plan includes a commitment to systematically analyse outputs of QA activities, produce summaries and findings from reports, publish results and identify action points that contribute to new or existing QA processes.
- **4.4.2.2** - The ECTE has developed **guidelines** for good practice that include focusing on good practice and trends in the sector, recognising contextual factors, partnering with other national and international bodies, outsourcing research and using a standard template.
- **4.4.2.3** - The ECTE plans for a **systematic implementation** of thematic analysis that includes selection and approval of topics, production of at least one thematic analysis per year, and collection of data through Annual Progress Reports. Human resources have been allocated to support the implementation plans that are monitored annually.
- **4.4.2.4** - The first three pieces of thematic analysis were **produced and published** in 2020.⁶⁷ The topics dealt with the development of teaching staff, gender distribution and peer expert perspectives. The following grid summarises these three pieces of thematic analysis.

	Reflection on	Improvement of	QA policies	QA processes	Institutional context	National context	International contexts	Shows developments	Shows trends	Shows areas of good practice	Shows areas of persistent difficulty	How the outcomes will be used
<i>Development of Teaching Staff</i>		X		X	X					X	X	To enhance professional development of teaching staff and encourage scholarly activity
<i>Gender Distribution in Theological Education</i>		X					X		X	X	X	To encourage higher gender distribution in faculty
<i>Peer Expert Perspectives</i>			X					X				To broaden the available perspectives of ECTE peer-experts

The topic of thematic analysis in 2021 will be student satisfaction trends in theological education.

⁶⁷ <http://ecte.eu/development/thematic-analysis/>

- **4.4.2.5** - Even before its recent approach to thematic analysis, the ECTE can point to a tradition of analysing themes arising from accreditation processes. This can be seen, for example, in the following **topics and seminars** delivered in conjunction with ECTE General Assemblies:
 - 2005: *Theological Education in a Changing Europe*
 - 2007: *The Practices of Spiritual Formation*
 - 2009: *European Governments and Theological Education; Where is the Bologna Process Going?; Developing an Alumni Programme*
 - 2011: *The Challenges of Quality in Theological Education; The Challenges of Change and the Future of Theological Education in Europe; The Challenges of Educational Technology*
 - 2015: *Theological Education in Liquid Modernity; The De-Residentialisation of Theological Education; The Global South and Implications for Europe; Migrant Realities in Europe and Theological Education; Designing Curricula for Impact*
 - 2017: *Character Education*
 - 2019: *Quality in the EHEA; Quality in Global Contexts, Quality in the ESG*
 - Research into the sector is also being conducted by stakeholders. The 2019 PhD-Dissertation of Deborah Kramlich, submitted to an ECTE member institution, provided substantial research and development opportunities for ECTE-Member Institutions: *“Teachers that Transform: Setting the Stage for Transformative Learning within the EEAA (ECTE)”*.

4.3.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 3.3)

- *Thematic Analysis Strategic Plan*⁶⁸
- *Monitoring and Improvement Policy*⁶⁹
- ‘Thematic Analysis’ in *Introducing the ECTE*⁷⁰
- *Thematic Analysis Project Application Form*⁷¹
- *Annual Progress Report 2021* form with data collection points⁷²
- *Thematic Analysis* page on the ECTE website⁷³

⁶⁸ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/policies/thematic-analysis-strategic-plan-2020-2025/>

⁶⁹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/monitoring/>

⁷⁰ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 5.5)

⁷¹ <http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/thematic-analysis-project-application-form/>

⁷² <http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/apr/>

⁷³ <http://ecte.eu/development/thematic-analysis/>

4.5 - Resources (ESG 3.5)

4.5.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 3.5)

The ECTE ensures adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial. Fee structures are in place to support its staff and operations.

4.5.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 3.5)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **4.5.2.1** - In over 40 years of operation, the ECTE has demonstrated that it possesses adequate and appropriate **human resources** to carry out its work. Current human resources include: 1) a staff team, 2) a pool of peer experts (VET members) and 3) the ECTE Council.
 - The ECTE **staff team** is composed of 6 members, including a General Secretary, a Quality Assurance Coordinator, a Review Secretary, an External Review Manager, a Treasurer and an Administrative Assistant.⁷⁴ The tasks of remunerated staff are specifically structured to support ESG standards with a full list of detailed tasks matching staff roles, estimated hours of work and compensation. The current estimated total **1,1 FTE** of remunerated staff has been sufficient to carry out the workload of less than 10 reviews per year.⁷⁵ The ECTE anticipates new tasks emerging as it complies with the ESG and plans are in place to revise workloads and increase staff capacity. Staff resources and their adequacy in supporting ESG tasks are monitored through annual staff reviews. Staff cooperate remotely from different countries in Europe and different offices, with effective email communication and online conferencing calls (thirteen staff conference calls were noted in 2020).
 - The ECTE draws on a **pool of experts** (VET members) to carry out accreditation visits. There are currently 25 VET members listed, including a variety of perspectives.⁷⁶ Peer experts are remunerated for their services.⁷⁷ See more on ECTE peer experts under 5.4 below.
 - The ECTE **Council**, including the Governing Board, is comprised of 7 members representing a variety of stakeholders and language groups.⁷⁸ One Council member, Professor Costantineanu, has recently succumbed to COVID and two new members are due for election in November 2021. The ECTE Council convenes at least twice a year to carry out the business of the ECTE and make accreditation decisions. The current estimated work of non-remunerated Council members is **0,35 FTE**.
- **4.5.2.2 - Operational resources** are in place and monitored to support all activities. Given its nature as a cross-border agency, the ECTE does not have a dedicated office but operates out of the offices of each staff member in different countries of Europe. This entails a substantial investment in IT resources, digital communication tools, cloud storage and data security provision, database, hardware and software provision, a highly functional website and access to a Moodle-based virtual learning environment.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ See listing of current staff here: <http://ecte.eu/introducing/organisation/governance-and-leadership/>

⁷⁵ See section 5.2.3 of *Introducing the ECTE* for visitation statistics <http://ecte.eu/introducing/>

⁷⁶ See listing of current peer experts (VETs) here: <http://ecte.eu/introducing/organisation/vet-listing/>

⁷⁷ See remuneration schedule here: <http://ecte.eu/development/vet-peer-expert-area/> (password ECTEVET)

⁷⁸ See listing of current ECTE Council members here: <http://ecte.eu/introducing/organisation/governance-and-leadership/>

⁷⁹ Outsourced to the ICETE Academy www.icete.academy

- **4.5.2.3 - Financial resources** (for details see 3.6) are in place to support the work of the ECTE. Balanced budgets and financial reports have been submitted to and approved by the General Assembly for every year since 1976 and an external financial audit is conducted for every budget period (two years). The budget is monitored every year to ensure support of strategic plans and internal QA activities, including the provision of public information and provision for improvement and reflection on practice. Fees are approved by the General Assembly, published and part of the budgeting process.⁸⁰

4.5.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 3.5)

- *Staff Policy*⁸¹
- 'Human Resources' in *Introducing the ECTE*⁸²
- 'Staff Roster: Council and Staff' in *Introducing the ECTE*⁸³
- 'Staff Roster: VET members' in *Introducing the ECTE*⁸⁴
- 'Operational Resources' in *Introducing the ECTE*⁸⁵
- 'Governing Board and Council' in *Introducing the ECTE*⁸⁶
- *Annual Staff Review Form*⁸⁷
- *Finances and Fees*⁸⁸ page on ECTE website
- *Monitoring and Improvement Policy*⁸⁹ and *Annual Internal Review, Improvement and Monitoring Report 2020*⁹⁰
- 'Two-year budget analysis' in *Introducing the ECTE*⁹¹
- 'Staff development policy' in *Staff Policy*⁹²
- 'Meetings of staff and governance' in *Introducing the ECTE*⁹³
- Minutes of Council and General Assembly meetings⁹⁴
- Job descriptions⁹⁵
- Treasurer Report to 2019 General Assembly 2019⁹⁶

⁸⁰ Until 2013 income consisted solely of membership fees, along with occasional donations. Fees for site visits were introduced in 2013 and provided financial resources for hiring much needed staff. A reserve accrued over the years provides the financial basis for the work towards the current external review process. See current fees here: <http://ecte.eu/introducing/fees/>

⁸¹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/staff-policy-2/>

⁸² <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 3.4)

⁸³ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 5.3.1)

⁸⁴ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 5.3.2)

⁸⁵ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 3.5)

⁸⁶ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 3.3.3 and 3.4.4)

⁸⁷ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/organisation/governance-and-leadership/annual-staff-review/> (password ECTE)

⁸⁸ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/fees/>

⁸⁹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/monitoring/>

⁹⁰ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/airim/>

⁹¹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 5.4.2)

⁹² <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/staff-policy-2/> (section 4)

⁹³ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 5.6.4)

⁹⁴ <http://ecte.eu/sar/> (password ASIIN)

⁹⁵ See *Staff job descriptions* in <http://ecte.eu/sar/>

⁹⁶ See *Treasurer Report to General Assembly 2019* in <http://ecte.eu/sar/>

4.6 - Internal quality assurance and professional conduct (ESG 3.6)

4.6.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 3.6)

The ECTE has internal QA processes that define, assure and enhance the quality of its operations. These processes are regularly implemented, monitored for improvement and developed.

4.6.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 3.6)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **4.6.2.1** - The ECTE's published **definition** of quality in professional accreditation is: 'A set of well-regulated activities that take place in line with published standards, policies and processes for the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and enhancement of educational institutions and programmes.'⁹⁷ In addition, the ECTE possesses a set of core values defining its underlying commitment to quality assurance and integrity.
- **4.6.2.2** - The ECTE has a culture of **ongoing revision** of its processes and activities. The standards, guidelines and procedures have been, for example, periodically revised over the years. See the *EEAA Manual 4th Edition* (2006), *EEAA Manual 5th Edition* (2012), *ECTE Manual 6th Edition* (2018) and now the current *Standards and Guidelines and Criteria and Procedures for accreditation* (2019).
- **4.6.2.3** - The ECTE has recently thoroughly revised and expanded its internal quality assurance processes to assure **ESG compliance**. These have been published in section 4 of *Introducing the ECTE* document and represent the backbone of ECTE operations. This section addresses each standard in ESG 2 and ESG 3, and lays out where the ECTE stands and what provisions are in place and monitored to enhance ongoing compliance.

By way of example, in the last two years, developments in the ECTE's culture of internal quality have included:

- A complete revision of key documents, including *Standards and Guidelines, Criteria and Procedures, Introducing the ECTE* and the *Supplemental Guidelines* series.
- Production of a revised set of policy documents, including policies for appeals and complaints, consistency guarantee, data protection policy, independence, conflict of interest and intolerance prevention policy, ongoing review and improvement monitoring policy, definition of professional codes and ethical requirements, staff policy, stakeholder involvement and extension policy, student council member policy, thematic analysis policy, VET development policy and visitation feedback policy.
- Definition of internal and external feedback mechanisms with follow-up mechanisms.
- Independence policies and the separation of peer experts from decision-making processes.
- Production of staff rosters and implementation of staff reviews relating to performance, workloads, professional codes, ethical requirements, development plans and ESG-related tasks.
- Referencing ESG labels in ECTE accreditation standards.
- Explicit publication of the aims of the accreditation process⁹⁸

⁹⁷ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/>

⁹⁸ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/identity-and-mission/aims-of-ecte-accreditation/>

- **4.6.2.4** - The ECTE **monitors** its internal quality assurance through the *Monitoring and Improvement Policy*. The policy entails data and feedback collection and monitoring through the *Annual Internal Review, Improvement and Monitoring Council session (AIRIM)* and cyclical external monitoring. The policy lays out specific monitoring questions that correspond to ESG 2 and 3, including for example:
 - a general review of compliance to QA policies
 - compliance to stated goals and objectives, strategic plans and progress, activities, scope and daily work
 - staff reviews
 - stakeholder involvement
 - visitation feedback
 - VET composition and improvement
 - external review outcome and plans
 - operational and human resources
 - revision of key facts
 - report on thematic analysis
 - budget analysis
 - appeals and complaints statistics
 - independence, no conflict of interest and intolerance prevention

A yearly *Annual Internal Review, Improvement and Monitoring Report* is published⁹⁹ with indications of areas of weakness and improvement and corresponding action points. The action points are followed up during the year and reported on in the successive AIRIM exercise.

The AIRIM was conducted for the first time to monitor the year 2020. The overall compliance score was 3,75/4,00, with lower compliance in the areas of peer review experts and resources (some deficiencies were due to the introduction of QA processes during the year). Improvement strategies were discussed and approved by the ECTE Council in the March 2021 meeting.

- **4.6.2.5 - Integrity** is safeguarded in the ECTE by transparent publication and distribution of the following information.
 - Criteria for accreditation decisions ¹⁰⁰
 - Full review reports, accreditation decisions and appeals ¹⁰¹
 - Internal QA policies and commitments ¹⁰²
 - Annual Internal Review, Improvement and Monitoring Report (AIRIM) ¹⁰³
 - Minutes of meetings (Council and General Assembly), which are sent to all members after each meeting and subjected to approval at the next meeting. Council and staff members have access to the archives through a password protected area on the ECTE website ¹⁰⁴

4.6.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 3.6)

- 'Internal QA policy' in *Introducing the ECTE*¹⁰⁵
- 'ECTE Core Values' in *Introducing the ECTE*¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/airim/>

¹⁰⁰ <http://ecte.eu/qa/>

¹⁰¹ <http://ecte.eu/qa/reports/>

¹⁰² <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/>

¹⁰³ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/airim/>

¹⁰⁴ Forms available here: <http://ecte.eu/development/council-staff-area/> (use 'ECTE' to enter password protected area)

¹⁰⁵ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 4)

¹⁰⁶ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 1.5)

- ‘Internal QA monitoring’ in *Introducing the ECTE*¹⁰⁷. This section summaries the AIRIM 2020 report with charts, compliance summaries with areas of weakness and strength and improvement strategies.
- *Monitoring and Improvement Policy*¹⁰⁸ and *Annual Internal Review, Improvement and Monitoring Report 2020*¹⁰⁹
- ‘Professional codes and ethical requirements’ in *Staff Policy*¹¹⁰
- *Standards and Guidelines*¹¹¹
- *VET Development Policy*¹¹²
- *Consistency Guarantee* statement¹¹³ and ‘Guiding Principles’ in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 5.6.5)

¹⁰⁸ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/monitoring/>

¹⁰⁹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/airim/>

¹¹⁰ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/staff-policy-2/> (section 3)

¹¹¹ <http://ecte.eu/qa/standards/>

¹¹² <http://ecte.eu/introducing/policies/vet-development/>

¹¹³ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/policies/consistency-guarantee/>

¹¹⁴ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (section 3.1)

4.7 - Cyclical external review of agencies (ESG 3.7)

4.7.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 3.7)

The ECTE considered its first external review in 2010 with an enquiry to ENQA for full member status in EQAR. The intended review was planned as a joint review from ENQA and the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education that had also developed a ‘recognition’ process. A self-study was initiated but was then suspended over uncertainties at the time around ESG 3.2 and the official status of cross-border QA agencies in Europe.

The present review to demonstrate compliance to the ESG for listing in the EQAR is therefore ECTE’s first external review.

4.7.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 3.7)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **4.7.2.1** - As illustrated in the SAR historical narrative section above (2.1), a series of formal decisions were made by the ECTE to **undergo external review** to comply for listing in the EQAR. These decisions were followed by a timeline, the allocation of resources, a SWOT analysis and the establishment of an ESG compliance action plan.
- **4.7.2.2** - Policy **documents** are in place to regulate external review activities, most clearly in the *Internal QA policy* and in the *Monitoring and Improvement Policy*.
- **4.7.2.3** - **Human resources** have been put in place in 2020 through the hiring of Carmen Crouse to act as External Review Manager and lead ECTE’s external review processes.

4.7.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 3.7)

- Council minutes and General Assembly minutes¹¹⁵
- ‘Cyclical external monitoring’ in *Monitoring and Improvement Policy*¹¹⁶
- ‘Cyclical external review of agencies’ in the ECTE Internal QA policy in *Introducing the ECTE*¹¹⁷
- *ECTE SWOT Analysis vis ESG*¹¹⁸
- *ESG Compliance Action Plan*¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ <http://ecte.eu/sar/> (password ASIIN)

¹¹⁶ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/monitoring/> (section 1.2)

¹¹⁷ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 4.14)

¹¹⁸ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/SWOT-Analysis-vis-ESG.pdf> (password ASIIN)

¹¹⁹ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ESG-Compliance-Action-Plan.pdf>

5. ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QA FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

5.1 - Consideration of internal QA (ESG 2.1)

5.1.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.1)

The ECTE accreditation standards and processes for **institutional** accreditation are found in Part A of the key document *Standards and Guidelines* for ECTE accreditation.¹²⁰ The standards address the effectiveness of internal quality assurance processes of institutions in relation to two sources: the *European Standards and Guidelines* (ESG 1) and the sector-specific ICETE *Standards and Guidelines for Global Evangelical Theological Education* (SG-GETE).¹²¹ This section will focus on ESG 1. In complying with the ECTE *Standards and Guidelines*, institutions accredited by the ECTE align their internal quality assurance processes to part 1 of the ESG.

5.1.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 2.1)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **5.1.2.1** - The ECTE *Standards and Guidelines* 'Part A: Institutional Standards' (A1-A6) contains 6 standards and 29 explicatory guidelines. Although several standards reflect sector-specific quality issues that relate in particular theological education, care has been taken to ensure that **standards from ESG 1 are included**.¹²² The following table evidences the location of ESG 1 standards in the ECTE *Standards and Guidelines*:

ESG 1.

	ESG 1.1	ESG 1.2	ESG 1.3	ESG 1.4	ESG 1.5	ESG 1.6	ESG 1.7	ESG 1.8	ESG 1.9	ESG 1.10
A1 – Identity and purpose								X		
A2 – Governance and QA	X									X
A3 – Human resources					X					
A4 – Community and context										
A5 – Educational resources						X	X			
A6 - Finances and sustainability						X				

¹²⁰ <http://ecte.eu/qa/standards/>

¹²¹ <https://icete.info/resources/sggete/> The SG-GETE represents integrative sector-specific standards for the discipline of theology that in no way contradict ESG 1.

¹²² Other ESG 1 standards are included in programme accreditation activities, see section 6 below.

In detail, ECTE accredited institutions are required to make provisions for internal quality assurance according to the standards of ESG 1 as follows:

ESG 1.1 – Policy for quality assurance. The ECTE requires institutions to have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders. This can be seen in *Standards and Guidelines*, section A.2.

ESG 1.5 – Teaching staff. The ECTE requires institutions to assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff. This can be seen in *Standards and Guidelines*, section A.3.

ESG 1.6 – Learning resources and student support. The ECTE requires institutions to have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided. This can be seen in *Standards and Guidelines*, sections A.5, A.6.

ESG 1.7 – Information management. The ECTE requires institutions to ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities. This can be seen in *Standards and Guidelines*, section A.5.

ESG 1.8 – Public information. The ECTE requires institutions to publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible. This can be seen in *Standards and Guidelines*, section A.1.

ESG 1.10 – Cyclical external quality assurance. The ECTE requires institutions to undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis. This can be seen in *Standards and Guidelines*, section A.2.

- **5.1.2.2** - The ECTE sees itself as a partner of institutions, not as a supervisory authority, hence the ECTE *Standards and Guidelines* explicitly require institutions to have **internal quality assurance** policies and procedures and to promote internal cultures of integrity, self-assessment, self-improvement and quality development (Standard A.2.5). These policies should include, for example, the organisation of quality assurance systems, the involvement of departments, institutional leadership, staff members and students, the guarding against intolerance and discrimination, the involvement of external stakeholders, the evaluation of subcontracting activities, the relationship between research, learning and teaching and the creation of systems for student feedback. To this end, the ECTE has produced *Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance Policies*. Based on a perception of quality that is oriented towards dialogue and enhancement, the ECTE intends to support institutions to strengthen their self-monitoring ability and to promote their inner quality cultures.
- **5.1.2.3** - A crucial component of ECTE's QA processes is to lead institutions in critical reflection around the quality of their institutions through the production of **self-evaluation reports**. To this end the ECTE has written a specific section on producing an Institutional Self Evaluation Report (I-SER) and has provided an I-SER template in the *Guidelines for Producing Self-Evaluation Reports*. This helps institutions engage in the process of self-evaluation of their institutional quality and produce reports that are critical, formative, self-inquiring, corrective, comprehensive, analytical, constructive and realistic in evaluating both weaknesses and strengths.
- **5.1.2.3** - The effectiveness of institutional quality assurance policies vis. the ESG is evaluated by **peer experts** (VET members) as they perform site visits and compile review reports following a site visit. The peer experts are trained to be familiar with the institutional-related standards in the ECTE *Standards and Guidelines* and are provided with worksheets and review report templates with specific sections on institutional compliance that ensure a complete external evaluation of compliance to all the institutional-related accreditation standards. Review report templates clearly indicate the classification of the institutional review.

5.1.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 2.1)

- *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation*¹²³
- *Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance Policies*¹²⁴
- ‘Self-evaluation and internal quality assurance’ in *Guidelines for Producing Self-Evaluation Reports*¹²⁵
- ‘Review Report Template’ in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*¹²⁶
- ‘I-SER – Institutional Accreditation’ in *Guidelines for Producing Self-Evaluation Reports*¹²⁷
- ‘I-SER Template in *Guidelines for Producing Self-Evaluation Reports*¹²⁸
- Review Report Worksheets for institutional accreditation A1-A6 in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*¹²⁹

¹²³ <http://ecte.eu/qa/standards/>

¹²⁴ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Guidelines-for-Internal-Quality-Assurance-Policies.pdf>

¹²⁵ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidelines-for-Producing-Self-evaluation-Reports.pdf> (section 1.1)

¹²⁶ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (section 3.3)

¹²⁷ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidelines-for-Producing-Self-evaluation-Reports.pdf> (section 1.2)

¹²⁸ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidelines-for-Producing-Self-evaluation-Reports.pdf> (section 2.1))

¹²⁹ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (pp 29-42)

5.2 - Designing methodologies fit for purpose (ESG 2.2)

5.2.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.2)

The ECTE standards, procedures and methodologies for institutional accreditation are designed to fit the purposes of higher theological education in Europe and operate within the relevant regulations and frameworks that pertain to cross-border professional accreditation in the European Higher Education Area. ECTE's internal stakeholders are involved in the design and improvement of the ECTE's standards and methodologies.¹³⁰

5.2.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 2.2)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **5.2.2.1** - The ECTE has published aims and objectives for quality assurance, related to **institutional** accreditation.¹³¹
- **5.2.2.2** - The main document outlining the ECTE's **methodologies** is *Criteria and Procedures for ECTE accreditation*. This document lays out the criteria for institutional accreditation and details the necessary procedures to obtain accreditation, including descriptions of the methodologies, roles, necessary documentation, timelines and ongoing review processes. The document references more detailed methodologies and procedures as found in the document *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*.
- **5.2.2.3** - In addition to the main procedural documents (see *Criteria and Procedures*), the ECTE produces a variety of supplemental **guidelines** that relate to institutional accreditation. Guidelines are revised as necessary and new guidelines are developed according to need. Supplemental guidelines related to institutional accreditation include:
 - Guidelines for internal QA policies,
 - Guidelines for dual and joint accreditation
 - Guidelines for information packages
 - Guidelines for special access
 - Guidelines for the production of the Diploma Supplement
 - Guidelines for recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning
 - Guidelines for distance and online education
- **5.2.2.4** - All ECTE methodologies are designed in consideration of the **regulations** in European higher education. As a cross-border QA agency, this can be challenging as different countries implement different regulations and at times there are no clear regulations but only indication of good practices. The ECTE responds to this challenge carefully, trying to identify common EU methodologies, and leaving room for discretion and observation of national regulations where appropriate. Areas of common methodologies related to institutional accreditation have been investigated by the ECTE and include, for example, the introduction of the Diploma Supplement, the distinction between formal, non-formal and informal learning and the use of common qualification frameworks. Areas of difference in national regulations have been identified, for example, in issues around qualification nomenclatures. In these cases, the ECTE normally requires its institutions to consult and adhere to specific national legislation.
- **5.2.2.5** - The ECTE carefully defines its **stakeholders**, with distinctions made between direct stakeholders, indirect internal stakeholders and indirect external stakeholders and with a

¹³⁰ See ECTE Statutes (section 5.6 in Introducing the ECTE)

¹³¹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/identity-and-mission/aims-of-ecte-accreditation/>

strategic plan in place for their involvement. ECTE stakeholders are involved in the design and improvement of ECTE's methodologies at different levels.

- Direct stakeholders of the ECTE include HEIs, and their feedback following site visits is used to identify areas of peer-expert training. In 2019, HEIs were consulted during the General Assembly concerning the new methodologies in *Criteria and Procedures* and in 2020 they were surveyed, indicating an average of 4,57/5,00 in their satisfaction rating of ECTE's work and methodologies.¹³²
 - Direct stakeholders also include peer experts (VET members). They provide ongoing constructive and critical feedback following site visits and were surveyed in 2021, indicating an average of 4,7/5,00 in their satisfaction rating of ECTE's work and methodologies.
 - Indirect internal stakeholders include, for example, theology students. They are involved in continual input into ECTE's work and methodologies through the presence of a student member on the ECTE Council and on all peer expert panels.
 - Implementation of stakeholder involvement is monitored yearly during the *Annual Internal Review and Internal Monitoring Council* session.
- **5.2.2.6** - An example of designing methodologies that are fit for purpose can be found in ECTE's **reponse** to the **COVID-19** pandemic in 2020. The response included publishing specific guidance on QA which included policies allowing temporary emergency changes in delivery, innovation, assessment and practicums,¹³³ providing a guidance request form,¹³⁴ designing a specific COVID-19 APR¹³⁵ and pointing to specific emergency-response educational resources that were being developed in the ICETE Academy. In light of the impossibility of conducting physical site visits due to the COVID pandemic, the ECTE also gathered information on good practice from other EU QA agencies and produced specific guidelines and protocols for online site visits.¹³⁶ In addition to published resources and policies, the ECTE also arranged an all-member Zoom session to explore questions and offer guidance.

5.2.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 2.2)

- *Criteria and Procedures* for ECTE accreditation¹³⁷
- *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*¹³⁸
- 'Goals and objectives' and 'Quality assurance' in *Introducing the ECTE*¹³⁹
- 'ECTE Certification Framework' based on the *European Qualifications Framework* (EQF) and the *International Standards Classification of Education* (ISCED 2011), see *Standards and Guidelines*¹⁴⁰
- *Stakeholder Involvement and Extension Policy*¹⁴¹
- *Supplemental Guidelines series*¹⁴²
- 'Protocol for Online Site Visits' in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*¹⁴³

¹³² <http://ecte.eu/development/surveys/ecte-stakeholder-survey-2020-21/>. The survey was examined in the Annual Internal Review and Internal Monitoring session by the ECTE Council in March 2021 with a resulting action plan.

¹³³ <http://ecte.eu/covid-19/qacovid19/>

¹³⁴ <http://ecte.eu/covid-19/covid-19-ecte-queries/>

¹³⁵ <http://ecte.eu/covid-19/covid-19-apr/>

¹³⁶ <http://ecte.eu/covid-19/online-site-visits/>

¹³⁷ <http://ecte.eu/qa/procedures/>

¹³⁸ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf>

¹³⁹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (sections 1.3 and 2.3.1)

¹⁴⁰ <http://ecte.eu/qa/standards/> (Appendix A)

¹⁴¹ <http://ecte.eu/about/policies/stakeholders/>

¹⁴² <http://ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/>

¹⁴³ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (see Appendix B)

- Concerning feedback on ECTE’s methodologies following site visits, see *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*¹⁴⁴ and *Visitation Feedback* forms¹⁴⁵
- ‘Stakeholder satisfaction with ECTE’s work and methodologies’ in *Introducing the ECTE*¹⁴⁶
- ‘Peer expert satisfaction with ECTE’s work and methodologies’ in *Introducing the ECTE*¹⁴⁷
- *Monitoring and Improvement Policy*¹⁴⁸
- *Student Council Member Policy*¹⁴⁹

5.3 - Implementing processes (ESG 2.3)

5.3.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.3)

The ECTE carries out its procedures professionally, consistently and transparently and ensures their acceptance and impact. The ECTE applies processes that are reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. The ECTE’s institutional accreditation procedures include self- assessment with the written documentation complemented by extended interviews with stakeholders during a site visit, on site expert verification and observation, production of reports from external assessment and consistent follow up with recommendations and requirements. The ECTE collects feedback of its processes. A Review Secretary and external experts act independently from the deciding body and full final reports are published on the ECTE website. Institutions report annually and undergo a full cyclical review every 5 years.

5.3.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 2.3)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **5.3.2.1** - The ECTE’s external quality processes for institutional accreditation are **published** on the ECTE website. They are mainly found in the documents *Criteria and Procedures* (section 2: ‘Institutional Accreditation Procedures’),¹⁵⁰ and *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs* (section 1.2: ‘Institutional Accreditation Site Visits’).¹⁵¹ A number of topic-specific, supplemental guidelines also relate to institutional accreditation processes.¹⁵²
- **5.3.2.2** - The **number of accreditation reviews** performed by the ECTE averages about 8 per year.¹⁵³ In 2019-20 accreditation visits have been carried out in the Netherlands, Wales, UK, Israel, Portugal, Switzerland, Lebanon, Italy, Germany, Egypt. In 2021 visits are planned for Germany, Croatia, Jordan, Netherlands, UK, Austria, Ukraine, Greece.
- **5.3.2.3** - In 2020 the **total** number of **accredited institutions** was 36.
- **5.3.2.4** - The ECTE’s QA **processes** include distinct phases for institutional accreditation and programme accreditation. Institutions initially apply for institutional accreditation and normally then apply for accreditation of one or more programmes. The process of institutional

¹⁴⁴ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf>

¹⁴⁵ <http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/visitation-feedback/>

¹⁴⁶ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 5.6.1)

¹⁴⁷ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 5.6.5)

¹⁴⁸ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/monitoring/>

¹⁴⁹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/policies/student-council/>

¹⁵⁰ <http://ecte.eu/qa/procedures/>

¹⁵¹ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf>

¹⁵² <http://ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/>

¹⁵³ As noted in 3.5.1 above, the ECTE introduced the distinction between institutional and programme accreditation in 2019, hence these figures relate to the previous processes of accreditation that blended institutional and programme aspects together.

accreditation normally takes about 1 year to complete. Procedures are aligned with general good practice in the EHEA and typically include:

- Application (institution)
 - Production of an Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (institution)
 - Site visit (ECTE peer-experts)
 - Production of review report for institutional accreditation (ECTE peer-experts)
 - Formal published accreditation decision and listing in Institutional Accreditation Directory (ECTE Council)
 - Appeal procedure
 - Follow-up (ECTE Council)
 - Annual reporting (institution)
 - 5-year cyclical review
- **5.3.2.5** - Institutions receive guidance on producing consistent **institutional self-evaluation reports** (I-SERs) that emphasise internal quality assurance processes and respond to ECTE institutional accreditation standards.¹⁵⁴ These guidelines include indications of good practice in I-SER production (e.g. establishing a committee, setting a timetable, collecting and analysing data, producing a final document), and an institutional SER template.
 - **5.3.2.6** - Peer experts (and institutions) receive guidance relative to the procedures for institutional **site visits** employed for external assessment. These guidelines include specific guidance for institutional accreditation visits, and provide procedures and guidance that are organised chronologically as ‘before’, ‘during’ and ‘after’ the site visit. The guidelines also define the role of the Review Secretary in the process and the specific contribution of student reviewers. During 2020, a section was added to provide a protocol for **online site visits**, including notions of general good practice, definition of roles, Zoom conferencing instructions, additional pre-visit documentation and overall scheduling suggestions.
 - **5.3.2.7** - Each site visit is followed by the production of a **review report**, that summarises the compliance of the institution to the ECTE standards part A and includes commendations, recommendations and requirements. The ECTE facilitates the implementation of this process by providing guiding principles, procedures, a review report template and review report worksheets relative to institutional standards for peer-experts (VET members). The *ECTE VET Training* course also provides training in the production of review reports.¹⁵⁵ Procedures for production of full reports involve:
 - the use of *Review Report Worksheets* by the VET during the visit
 - a final panel meeting to discuss conclusions and findings
 - completion of a first draft of the Review Report by the VET panel
 - production of a second draft by the Review Secretary with approval or amendment by the VET panel
 - sending of final draft to the institution for comment on factual accuracy and grave misunderstandings (if the report is amended in this phase, it is sent to the VET panel again for approval or amendment)
 - sending of final Review Report to the ECTE office and to the Quality Assurance Coordinator (QAC) for presentation to the ECTE Council and decision
 - publication of the Review Report
 - **5.3.2.8 - Consistency** in the implementation of ECTE processes is guaranteed by ECTE staff, and in particular by the General Secretary, the Review Secretary and the Quality Assurance Coordinator. A published Consistency *Guarantee* statement includes procedural assurances as

¹⁵⁴ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidelines-for-Producing-Self-evaluation-Reports.pdf>

¹⁵⁵ <https://icete.academy/course/view.php?id=135>

well.¹⁵⁶ Published procedures serve as a reference point for all accreditation activities,¹⁵⁷ and both staff and peer experts (VET members) are trained in these procedures.

- **5.3.2.9** - Published procedures are also in place for consistent **follow-up** of site visits, including the distinction between follow-up with recommendations and requirements, the provisions for annual review and monitoring and for institutions ‘under review’.
- **5.3.2.10** - Online **forms** are provided on the ECTE website to support, standardise and simplify processes. These include institutional accreditation application forms, annual progress reports (APRs), templates for peer-reviewers, visitation feedback forms, and honoraria and reimbursement request forms.¹⁵⁸
- **5.3.2.11** – Institutional accreditation is **monitored yearly** through an Annual Progress Report (APRs), through which institutions report on major changes, communicate planned changes and respond to recommendations and requirements from their last review. All APRs are revised annually by the ECTE Council and the Quality Assurance Coordinator responds to institutions with an evaluation letter.
- **5.3.2.12** – Institutional accreditation is also **monitored cyclically** through a full Cyclical Review every 5 years. This review follows the full procedures of an accreditation review, including the production of a Cyclical Self Evaluation Report (C-SER), a site visit and a decision from the ECTE Council with possible recommendations and requirements.

5.3.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 2.3)

- ‘Review Report’ and ‘Review Report Worksheets’ in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*¹⁵⁹
- ‘Statistical information’ in *Introducing the ECTE*¹⁶⁰
- *Consistency Guarantee*¹⁶¹
- ‘Site visit procedures’ and ‘Protocol for online visits’ in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*¹⁶²
- ‘Annual Reporting’ and ‘Cyclical review’ in *Criteria and Procedures*¹⁶³
- ‘C-SER – Cyclical Accreditation and ‘C-SER Template’ in *Guidelines for Producing Self-Evaluation Reports*¹⁶⁴
- ‘Institutional accreditation procedures’, in *Criteria and Procedures*¹⁶⁵
- ‘Institutional Accreditation Site Visit’ in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*¹⁶⁶
- Institutional Accreditation Directory¹⁶⁷
- ‘I-SER – Institutional Accreditation’ and ‘I-SER Template’ in *Guidelines for Producing Self-Evaluation Reports*¹⁶⁸
- *Institutional Accreditation Application* form¹⁶⁹
- *Annual Progress Report* form¹⁷⁰

¹⁵⁶ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/policies/consistency-guarantee/>

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, the consistency in the production of review reports as regulated in the Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (section 3.1).

¹⁵⁸ <http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/>

¹⁵⁹ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (section 3 and appendix B)

¹⁶⁰ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 5.2)

¹⁶¹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/policies/consistency-guarantee/>

¹⁶² <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (section 1 and appendix A)

¹⁶³ <http://ecte.eu/qa/procedures/> (section 4.1 and 4.2)

¹⁶⁴ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidelines-for-Producing-Self-evaluation-Reports.pdf> (p.4 and section 2.3)

¹⁶⁵ <http://ecte.eu/qa/procedures/> (section 2)

¹⁶⁶ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (section 1.2)

¹⁶⁷ <http://ecte.eu/directory/institutional-accreditation/>

¹⁶⁸ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidelines-for-Producing-Self-evaluation-Reports.pdf> (p.4 and section 2.1)

¹⁶⁹ <http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/institutional-accreditation-application/>

¹⁷⁰ <http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/apr/>

5.4 - Peer-review experts (ESG 2.4)

5.4.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.4)

The ECTE avails itself of external peer experts to create teams for institutional accreditation site visits that include a variety of stakeholders including student members. ECTE's groups of external experts are called 'visitation evaluation teams' (VETs). VET members are selected, trained, and cleared for conflict-of-interest. As most experts come from member institutions, close attention is paid in recruiting, selecting and training to ensure they understand and are capable of clearly separating their role in accreditation from their role at their own HEI.

The ECTE has VET member recruiting policies and criteria, provides ongoing VET training, considers a range of stakeholder expertise and distinguishes the roles of external experts from the deciding body.

5.4.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 2.4)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **5.4.2.1** - The main ECTE **policies and guidelines** for ECTE peer experts are published in section 2 of *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*. This document includes guidelines for perspectives and composition (section 2.1), selection, recruitment and nomination (section 2.2), briefing, training and development (section 2.3), independence (section 2.4) and for student VET members (section 2.5). The Review Secretary on the ECTE staff provides general oversight and leadership to the ECTE VETs.
- **5.4.2.2** - The ECTE is careful to provide a variety of **perspectives** in its VETs. These include academic faculty members, theology students, academic leadership, governing boards, employers, administrators, fundraisers, HEIs, peer agencies, EU authorities, global networks and ECTE staff. As a cross-border agency, the ECTE is careful to assemble panels with international diversity and national representation.¹⁷¹
- **5.4.2.3** - VET member **selection criteria** include subscription to ECTE goals and core values, established experience and reputation, commitment to quality assurance, fluency in English, completion of training, appreciation of diversity, professional demeanour, availability and cooperation with ECTE staff. VETs must also submit an initial self-assessment of competence, including teamwork, attention to detail, ability to engage with documents, educational expertise, communication skills, appreciation of perspectives, empathy, organisational capacity and attention to detail. Provisions are in place to deal with VETs who no longer comply with selection criteria.
- **5.4.2.4** - ECTE VET members are **recruited** within the broad network of ECTE institutions and stakeholders. Individuals can either volunteer to be considered or be invited by the ECTE Council to submit an application. During the *Annual Internal Review, Improvement and Monitoring* (AIRIM) session each Spring Council meeting, the Review Secretary leads the ECTE Council in reviewing the composition and perspectives of its VET panel members and in suggesting further recruitment strategies. If necessary, the ECTE Council can issue a call for peer experts. VET member **nomination** includes a process of initial contact, application, decision by the ECTE Council, signing of the *No Conflict of Interest Declaration*, nomination and public listing.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ See current listing of VETs here <http://ecte.eu/introducing/organisation/vet-listing/>

¹⁷² See current listing of VETs and their perspectives here <http://ecte.eu/introducing/organisation/vet-listing/>

- **5.4.2.5** - Provisions are in place for VET briefing, training and ongoing development. VETs are **briefed** before each visit by the General Secretary and by Review Secretary with reminders on issues regarding policy and procedures, reception of all documents necessary for the visit (mainly the I-SER and access to ECTE historical archive on the institution) and an initial visitation briefing (normally by video conference call).

VET members receive initial **training** which provides familiarity with main ECTE documents, ensures knowledge of institutional standards and procedures, gives understanding of procedures for site visits and of the role of peer experts and provides an induction to the process of consistent reporting. A major face-to-face training took place in 2008 and another one was planned for 2020 but was then replaced by an online course due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently two online training courses are available: one is a 10-hour *ECTE VET Training* course and the other is a 2-hour *Occasional Student VET* course available for student panel members. Currently 22 VET members have been successfully trained through these courses.

A 5-year strategy for ongoing **development** of VET members includes further online courses, training workshops, refresher courses, extended face-to-face VET training events and post-visitation feedback. VETs are **evaluated** following each visit and their ongoing professional development is addressed with the Review Secretary. A dedicated area for VET members is provided on the ECTE website.¹⁷³

- **5.4.2.6** - VET members are external to the decision-making body and undersign declarations of no conflict of interest and **independence**. Also, VET members may not be involved at the same time in an advisory and certifying function at a higher education institution. See further under section 4.3 of this report.
- **5.4.2.7 - Student VET members** are recruited, trained and engaged as full VET members on all site visits and special attention is given to their perspectives and role in a site visit. Given the particular nature of students and the limitations on their ongoing availability, special provisions are in place for ‘occasional student VET members both in terms of training and frequency of deployment.
- **5.4.2.8** - The ECTE **Review Secretary** plays a crucial role in the management of ECTE VETs, acting as liaison and coordinator, overseeing the quality of institutional accreditation site visits and feedback, providing all necessary information and documentation before a visit, coordinating preparatory meetings, determining the team leadership and monitoring the production of review reports. The Review Secretary also oversees the quality and composition of VETs and the breadth of their perspectives.

5.4.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 2.4)

- ‘Visitation Evaluation Teams’ in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*¹⁷⁴
- *VET Application form*¹⁷⁵
- *VET Development Strategy*¹⁷⁶
- *ECTE VET Training course*¹⁷⁷ and *Occasional Student VET Training course*¹⁷⁸
- ‘Review Secretary’ in *Staff Policy*¹⁷⁹ and ‘Review Secretary’ in *Introducing the ECTE*¹⁸⁰

¹⁷³ <http://ecte.eu/development/vet-peer-expert-area/>

¹⁷⁴ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (section 2)

¹⁷⁵ <http://ecte.eu/ga/forms/vet-application-form/>

¹⁷⁶ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/policies/vet-development/>

¹⁷⁷ <https://icete.academy/course/view.php?id=135>

¹⁷⁸ <https://icete.academy/course/view.php?id=138>

¹⁷⁹ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/staff-policy-2/>

¹⁸⁰ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 3.4.3)

5.5 - Criteria for outcomes (ESG 2.5)

5.5.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.5)

The ECTE makes institutional accreditation judgments on the basis of explicit and published criteria. These are applied consistently in connection with both documentary and visitation evidence. In terms of outcomes, ECTE makes a distinction between requirements and recommendations. External experts are trained to ensure the consistency of interpretation of ECTE criteria. Consistency in application is ensured through the decision-making process in the Council, where a working group prepares the decision, and the entire Council then votes on the final accreditation decision. Any Council member who served as an expert in the case at hand, abstains from voting.

5.5.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 2.5)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **5.5.2.1** - In the document *Criteria and Procedures*, the ECTE **publishes** criteria for institutional accreditation.¹⁸¹ The criteria include meeting relevant institutional standards through a self-evaluation report and a site visit.
- **5.5.2.2** - ECTE criteria for outcomes in *Standards and Guidelines* make an **explicit distinction** between standards for institutional and programme accreditation. Institutional accreditation entails six meta standards and twenty-nine guidelines.
 1. Identity and Purpose
 2. Governance and Quality Assurance
 3. Human Resources
 4. Community and Context
 5. Educational Resources
 6. Finances and Sustainability
- **5.5.2.3** - The ECTE Council, meeting at least twice every year, makes institutional accreditation **decisions** on the basis of external review reports and on the basis of compliance with the document *Standards and Guidelines*. Through a vote by simple majority, the ECTE Council will either:
 - grant accreditation
 - grant accreditation with recommendations
 - grant accreditation subject to requirements (in this case, institutions are listed as 'under review' until the requirements are met)
 - not grant accreditation and provide further instructions to the institution

The following table summarises the outcomes of the review decisions in the last 5 years (2016-2020).

Decision	Total decisions	Av. # recommendations and requirements
Accreditation granted	0	
Accreditation granted with recommendations	35	5,9
Accreditation granted subject to requirements	10	5,2 ¹⁸²
Accreditation not granted	1	1

¹⁸¹ <http://ecte.eu/qa/procedures/>

¹⁸² This figure is relatively high as two institutions received more than 15 requirements. The average otherwise is about 2,5 requirements.

Note, some double counting is involved as schools with requirements usually also have recommendations.

- **5.5.2.4** - The ECTE has policies & procedures to ensure **consistency** in writing institutional review reports and in decision-making. Consistency in review reports is facilitated by VET training, the use of standard templates and the input of the Review Secretary who ensures coherence and comparability of reports (including issues of style, format and language). Consistency in decision-making is facilitated by reference to published *Standards and Guidelines*, the ongoing moderation of the Quality Assurance Coordinator and the possibility of appeals.

5.5.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 2.5)

- ECTE Council minutes
- *Criteria and Procedures*¹⁸³
- *Standards and Guidelines*¹⁸⁴
- *Consistency Guarantee*¹⁸⁵
- *Appeals and Complaints Policy*¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ <http://ecte.eu/qa/procedures/>

¹⁸⁴ <http://ecte.eu/qa/standards/>

¹⁸⁵ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/policies/consistency-guarantee/>

¹⁸⁶ <http://ecte.eu/qa/appeals/>

5.6 - Reporting (ESG 2.6)

5.6.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.6)

The ECTE has an approved reporting policy. Full institutional accreditation reports by its external experts and related formal decisions by the council are published.

5.6.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 2.6)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **5.6.2.1** - All experts are involved in producing the institutional accreditation report based on the Review Report Template and supported by the Review Secretary.
- **5.6.2.2** – Institutional accreditation reports are **full and complete**, and oversight is in place through the Review Secretary to guarantee their quality and consistency. The new, full version of Review Reports according to the *Review Report Template* has been in use since 2021. It has been designed to make the documents clear and accessible regarding the reports’s structure, content, style and language. Previously, a more summative approach to reports was in use.
- **5.6.2.3** - Procedures are in place for institutions and VETs to **sign off** reports and point out factual errors.
- **5.6.2.4** - Reports, accreditation decisions and appeals are **published** from 2016 to present and work is in progress to publish previous reports. These can be seen on the ECTE website *Review Reports* page.¹⁸⁷

5.6.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 2.6)

- *Review Reports* website page¹⁸⁸
- ‘Review Report Template’ in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*¹⁸⁹
- ‘Review Report Procedures’ in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ <http://ecte.eu/qa/reports/>

¹⁸⁸ <http://ecte.eu/qa/reports/>

¹⁸⁹ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (section 3.3)

<http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (section 3.2)

5.7 - Complaints and appeals (ESG 2.7)

5.7.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.7)

The ECTE has published complaints and appeals processes. This is supported by VET evaluation procedures that are regularly employed.

5.7.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 2.7)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- The ECTE has **published procedures** for first, second and third level appeals. The right to appeal decisions of the Council applies to both institutions and organizations applying for membership and to institutions whose programmes are being accredited. Third level appeals involve an external committee.
 - First Level appeals must be made in written form to the General Secretary at office@ecte.eu. The General Secretary will discuss the appeal with the Review Secretary and the Quality Assurance Coordinator and reply in written form to the institution.
 - Second Level appeals must be made in written form to the Council itself through the General Secretary at office@ecte.eu. The Council will discuss the appeal and reply in written form to the institution.
 - Third Level appeals should be sent in writing to the General Secretary at office@ecte.eu, who passes it on to the External Appeals/Complaints Committee. The External Appeals/Complaints Committee consists of one representative from a member school with national accreditation but NOT ECTE accreditation, one representative from another ICETE institution with good knowledge of our constituency and one student in the field of theological education with international experience.
- The **outcomes** of appeals are published. No formal appeals have been registered to date.¹⁹¹ Appeals and complaints are monitored in the *Annual Internal Review Improvement Monitoring* session and the resulting report is published.¹⁹²
- The ECTE makes a distinction between **appeals** and **complaints**. Appeals question formal outcomes (the decision of a process). A formal complaint allows an institution to state its dissatisfaction with the conduct or the consistency of the process or those carrying it out. Separate procedures are laid out for appeals and complaints. Informal complaints related in particular to site visits are also collected through the *Visitation Feedback* forms.
- In 2020, HEIs were **surveyed** on their satisfaction with appeals and complaints procedures, resulting in 88% indicating they were 'very satisfied' with the procedures.

5.7.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 2.7)

- *Criteria and Procedures*¹⁹³
- *Appeals and Complaints policy*¹⁹⁴
- 'Stakeholder satisfaction with ECTE's work and methodology' in *Introducing the ECTE*¹⁹⁵
- *Visitation Feedback forms*¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ <http://ecte.eu/qa/appeals/>

¹⁹² <http://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/airim/>

¹⁹³ <http://ecte.eu/qa/procedures/> (sections 2.2, 3.2 and 4.2)

¹⁹⁴ <http://ecte.eu/qa/appeals/>

¹⁹⁵ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/> (section 5.6.1)

¹⁹⁶ <http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/visitation-feedback/>

6. ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QA FOR PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

Note: for sake of brevity, selections that are identical to what has been reported in section 5 under ‘Institutional Accreditation’ will not be repeated but only referenced.

6.1 - Consideration of internal QA (ESG 2.1)

6.1.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.1)

The ECTE accreditation standards and processes for **programme** accreditation are found in Part B of the key document *Standards and Guidelines* for ECTE accreditation.¹⁹⁷ The standards address the effectiveness of internal quality assurance processes of programmes in relation to two sources: the *European Standards and Guidelines* (ESG 1) and the sector-specific ICETE *Standards and Guidelines for Global Evangelical Theological Education* (SG-GETE).¹⁹⁸ This section will focus on ESG 1. In complying with the ECTE *Standards and Guidelines*, programmes accredited by the ECTE align their internal quality assurance processes to part 1 of the ESG.

6.1.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 2.1)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **6.1.2.1** - The ECTE *Standards and Guidelines* ‘Part B: Programme Standards’ (B1-B5) contains 5 standards and 26 explicatory guidelines. Although several standards reflect sector-specific quality issues that relate in particular theological education, care has been taken to ensure that **standards from ESG 1 are included**.¹⁹⁹ The following table evidences the location of each ESG 1 standard in the ECTE *Standards and Guidelines*:

ESG 1.

	ESG 1.1	ESG 1.2	ESG 1.3	ESG 1.4	ESG 1.5	ESG 1.6	ESG 1.7	ESG 1.8	ESG 1.9	ESG 1.10
B1 – Holistic integration										
B2 – Curriculum development		X							X	
B3 – Learning, teaching and assessment			X							
B4 – Student admission, progression, recognition and certification				X						
B5 – Qualification nomenclature and credits		X								

¹⁹⁷ <http://ecte.eu/qa/standards/>

¹⁹⁸ <https://icete.info/resources/sggete/> The SG-GETE represents integrative sector-specific standards for the discipline of theology that in no way contradict ESG 1.

¹⁹⁹ Other ESG 1 standards are included in institutional accreditation activities, see section 5 above.

In detail, ECTE accredited programmes are required to make provisions for internal quality assurance according to the standards of ESG 1 as follows:

ESG 1.2 – Design and approval of programmes. The ECTE requires institutions to have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualifications resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications (EQF) of the European Higher Education Area. This can be seen in *Standards and Guidelines*, sections B.2 and B.5.

ESG 1.3 – Student-centred learning. The ECTE requires institutions to ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that their assessment of learning reflects this approach. This can be seen in *Standards and Guidelines*, section B.3.

ESG 1.4 – Student admission, progression, recognition and certification. The ECTE requires institutions to consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g., student admission, progression, recognition and certification. This can be seen in *Standards and Guidelines*, section B.4.

ESG 1.9 – On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes. The ECTE requires institutions to monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned. This can be seen in *Standards and Guidelines*, section B.2.

- **6.1.2.2** - A crucial component of ECTE’s QA processes is to lead institutions in critical reflection around the quality of their programmes through the production of **self-evaluation reports**. To this end the ECTE has written a specific section on producing a Programme Self Evaluation Report (P-SER) and a P-SER template in the *Guidelines for Producing Self-Evaluation Reports* (see more in 5.1.2.3 above).
- **6.1.2.3** - The effectiveness of programme quality assurance policies vis. the ESG are evaluated by **peer experts** who are trained to be familiar with the programme-related standards in the ECTE *Standards and Guidelines* and are provided with worksheets and review report templates with specific sections on programme compliance that ensure a complete external evaluation of compliance to all the programme-related accreditation standards. Review report templates clearly indicate the classification of the programme review.

6.1.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 2.1)

- See 5.1.3 above for documents supporting both institutional and programme accreditation
- ‘P-SER – Institutional Accreditation’ in in *Guidelines for Producing Self-Evaluation Reports*²⁰⁰
- ‘P-SER Template in in *Guidelines for Producing Self-Evaluation Reports*²⁰¹
- Review Report Worksheets for programme accreditation B1-B5 in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*²⁰²

²⁰⁰ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidelines-for-Producing-Self-evaluation-Reports.pdf> (section 1.2)

²⁰¹ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidelines-for-Producing-Self-evaluation-Reports.pdf> (section 2.2)

²⁰² <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (pp 43-52)

6.2 - Designing methodologies fit for purpose (ESG 2.2)

6.2.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.2)

The ECTE standards, procedures and methodologies for programme accreditation are designed to fit the purposes of higher theological education in Europe (see more in 5.2.1 above).

6.2.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 2.2)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **6.2.2.1** - The ECTE has published aims and objectives for quality assurance, related to **programme** accreditation.²⁰³
- **6.2.2.2** - The main document outlining the ECTE's **methodologies** is *Criteria and Procedures* for ECTE accreditation. This document lays out the criteria for programme accreditation and details the necessary procedures (see more in 5.2.2.2 above).
- **6.2.2.3** - In addition to the main procedural documents (see *Criteria and Procedures*), the ECTE produces a variety of supplemental **guidelines** that relate to programme accreditation. Supplemental guidelines related to programme accreditation include:
 - Guidelines for programme design and using ECTS
 - Guidelines for distinguishing research and practice-oriented programmes
 - Guidelines for distance and online education
- **6.2.2.3** - All ECTE methodologies are designed in consideration of the **regulations** in European higher education (see more in 5.2.2.4 above). Areas of common methodologies related to programme accreditation have been investigated by the ECTE and include, for example, the use of learning outcomes and use of ECTS. Areas of difference in national regulations have been identified, for example, in different access qualifications to learning cycles or in the slightly different ways that European countries count ECTS. In these cases, the ECTE normally requires its institutions to consult and adhere to specific national legislation.
- **6.2.2.4** - The ECTE carefully defines and involves its **stakeholders** (see more in 5.2.2.5 above).

6.2.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 2.2)

- See 5.2.3 above for documents supporting both institutional and programme accreditation

²⁰³ <http://ecte.eu/introducing/identity-and-mission/aims-of-ecte-accreditation/>

6.3 - Implementing processes (ESG 2.3)

6.3.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.3)

The ECTE's programme accreditation procedures include self- assessment with the written documentation complemented by extended interviews with stakeholders during a site visit, on site expert verification and observation, production of reports from external assessment and consistent follow up with recommendations and requirements (see more in section 5.3.1 above).

6.3.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 2.3)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **6.3.2.1** - The ECTE's external quality assurance processes for programme accreditation are **published** on the ECTE website. They are mainly found in the documents *Criteria and Procedures* (section 3: 'Programme Accreditation Procedures'),²⁰⁴ and *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs* (section 1.3: 'Programme Accreditation Site Visits').²⁰⁵ A number of topic-specific, supplemental guidelines also relate to programme accreditation processes.²⁰⁶
- **6.3.2.2** - The **number of accreditation reviews** performed by the ECTE averages about 8 per year.²⁰⁷ In 2019-20 accreditation visits included a total of 15 programmes. In 2021 visits are planned for a total of 12 programmes (see more in 5.3.2.2 above).
- **6.3.2.3** - In 2020 the **total** number of students in ECTE **accredited programmes** was 1579, representing 60 programmes (from short cycle to second cycle).
- **6.3.2.4** - The ECTE's QA **processes** include distinct phases for institutional accreditation and programme accreditation. Institutions normally apply for accreditation of one or more programmes after they have achieved institutional accreditation. The process of programme accreditation normally takes about 1 year to complete. Procedures are aligned with general good practice in the EHEA and typically include:
 - Application (institution)
 - Production of Programme Self-Evaluation Report (institution)
 - Site visit (ECTE peer-experts)
 - Production of review report for programme accreditation (ECTE peer-experts)
 - Formal published accreditation decision (ECTE Council)
 - Appeal procedure
 - Follow-up (ECTE Council)
 - Annual reporting (institution)
 - 5-year cyclical review
- **6.3.2.5** - Institutions receive guidance on producing consistent **programme self-evaluation reports** (P-SERs) that emphasise internal quality assurance processes and respond to ECTE programme accreditation standards²⁰⁸ (see more in 5.3.2.5 above).
- **6.3.2.6** - Peer experts (and institutions) receive guidance relative to the procedures for programme **site visits** employed for external assessment (see more in 5.3.2.6 above).

²⁰⁴ <http://ecte.eu/qa/procedures/>

²⁰⁵ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf>

²⁰⁶ <http://ecte.eu/qa/guidelines/>

²⁰⁷ As noted in 3.5.1 above, the ECTE introduced the distinction between institutional and programme accreditation in 2019, hence these figures relate to the previous processes of accreditation that blended institutional and programme aspects together.

²⁰⁸ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidelines-for-Producing-Self-evaluation-Reports.pdf>

- **6.3.2.7** - Each site visit is followed by the production of a **review report**, that summarises the compliance of the programme to the ECTE standards part B and includes commendations, recommendations and requirements (see more in 5.3.2.7 above).
- **6.3.2.8 - Consistency** in is guaranteed in the implementation of ECTE processes relative to programme accreditation (see more in 5.3.2.8 above).
- **6.3.2.9** - Published procedures are also in place for consistent **follow up** of site visits (see more in 5.3.2.9 above).
- **6.3.2.10** - Online **forms** are provided on the ECTE website to support, standardise and simplify processes (see more in 5.3.2.10 above).
- **5.3.2.11** – Programme accreditation is **monitored yearly** through an Annual Progress Report (APRs) (see more in 5.3.2.11 above).
- **5.3.2.12** – Programme accreditation is also **monitored cyclically** through a full Cyclical Review every 5 years (see more in 5.3.2.12 above).

6.3.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 2.3)

- See 5.3.3 above for documents supporting both institutional and programme accreditation
- ‘Programme accreditation procedures’ in *Criteria and Procedures*²⁰⁹
- ‘Programme Accreditation Site Visit’ in *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*²¹⁰
- Programme Accreditation Directory²¹¹
- ‘P-SER – Programme Accreditation’ and ‘P-SER Template’ in *Guidelines for Producing Self-Evaluation Reports*²¹²
- *Programme Accreditation Application* form²¹³

²⁰⁹ <http://ecte.eu/qa/procedures/> (section 3)

²¹⁰ <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs-1.pdf> (section 1.3)

²¹¹ <http://ecte.eu/directory/programme-accreditation/>

²¹² <http://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidelines-for-Producing-Self-evaluation-Reports.pdf> (p.4 and section 2.2)

²¹³ <http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/programme-accreditation-application/>

6.4 - Peer-review experts (ESG 2.4)

6.4.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.4)

See section 5.4 above. The response of this section of the SAR for programme accreditation is identical to the response for institutional accreditation.

6.5 - Criteria for outcomes (ESG 2.5)

6.5.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.5)

The ECTE makes programme accreditation judgments on the basis of explicit and published criteria (see more in section 5.5.1 above).

6.5.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 2.5)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **6.5.2.1** - In the document *Criteria and Procedures*, the ECTE **publishes** criteria for programme accreditation.²¹⁴ The criteria include meeting relevant programme standards through a self-evaluation report and a site visit.
- **6.5.2.2** - ECTE criteria for outcomes in *Standards and Guidelines* make an **explicit distinction** between standards for institutional and programme accreditation. Programme accreditation entails five meta standards and twenty-six guidelines.
 1. Holistic Integration
 2. Curriculum Development
 3. Teaching, Learning and Assessment
 4. Student Admission, Progression
 5. Recognition and Certification; Qualification Nomenclature and Credits
- **6.5.2.3** - The ECTE Council, meeting at least twice every year, makes programme accreditation **decisions** on the basis of external review reports on the basis of compliance with the document *Standards and Guidelines* (see more in 5.5.2.3 above).
- **6.5.2.4** - The ECTE has policies and procedures to ensure **consistency** in writing programme review reports and in decision-making (see more in 5.5.2.4 above).

6.5.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 2.5)

- See 5.5.3 above for documents supporting both institutional and programme accreditation

²¹⁴ <http://ecte.eu/qa/procedures/>

6.6 - Reporting (ESG 2.6)

6.6.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.6)

The ECTE has an approved reporting policy. Full programme accreditation reports by its external experts and related formal decisions by the council are published.

6.6.2 – EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE (ESG 2.6)

Compliance with this standard can be seen through the following examples of evidence.

- **6.6.2.1** - All experts in the VET are involved in producing the programme accreditation report based on the Review Report Template and supported by the Review Secretary.
- **6.6.2.2** – Programme accreditation reports are **full and complete**, and oversight is in place through the Review Secretary to guarantee their quality and consistency (see more in 5.6.2.2 above).
- **6.6.2.3** - Procedures are in place for institutions and VET to **sign off** reports and point out factual errors.
- **6.6.2.4** - Reports, accreditation decisions and appeals are **published** from 2016 to present and work is in progress to publish previous reports. These can be seen on the ECTE website *Review Reports* page.²¹⁵

6.6.3 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ESG 2.6)

- See 5.6.3 above for documents supporting both institutional and programme accreditation

6.7 - Complaints and appeals (ESG 2.7)

6.7.1 – SYNOPSIS (ESG 2.7)

See section 5.7 above. The response of this section of the SAR for programme accreditation is identical to the response for institutional accreditation.

²¹⁵ <http://ecte.eu/qa/reports/>

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: GLOSSARY

ATS	The Association of Theological Schools in the US and Canada
EEA	European Evangelical Alliance
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF	The European Qualifications Framework (in the EHEA)
ESG	<i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015</i>
FEET	Fellowship of Evangelical Theologians
GA	General Assembly
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICETE	The International Council for Theological Education
INQAAHE	The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
ISCED	The International Standard Classification of Education (Unesco)
ItE	<i>Introducing the ECTE</i>
QA	Quality Assurance
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (matrix)
VET	Visiting Evaluation Team (ECTE)