



## External Evaluation Report (REE) for the Accreditation Procedure of a Doctoral Study Domain

Higher Education Institution/ Education Provider Organization:	Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj-Napoca
Doctoral School:	Doctoral School of Theology and Religious Studies
Doctoral Domain:	Theology
The objective of the external evaluation:	<b>Accreditation* (AC)</b> – without prior provisional authorisation

**Members of the ARACIS Evaluation Panel**

No.	Last Name and First Name	Team role	Signature
1.	TAUWINKL, Wilhelm	Expert evaluator	
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## I. Introduction

*Context of the report.* The present External Evaluation Report was drafted in the context of the external quality evaluation procedure conducted by ARACIS for the initial accreditation of doctoral studies in theology at the Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj / Kolozsvár. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the Romanian Higher Education Law and the ARACIS Methodology and Guidelines in force.

The evaluation covers the period specified in the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the institution and is based on the analysis of the self-evaluation documentation, supporting evidence provided by the Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj, and the findings of the on-site visit, which took place between 19 and 21 January 2026.

The external evaluation was performed by a panel of quality assurance experts appointed by ARACIS, comprising a national academic expert with doctoral supervision status (panel coordinator), an international academic expert, and a doctoral student evaluator: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Tauwinkl, Prof. Dr. Pásztori-Kupán István, and Mr. Andrei-Cristian Pătrașcu, doctoral student.

The panel conducted the evaluation independently, following ARACIS standards, indicators, and procedures, with the objective of assessing the extent to which the Doctoral Study Domain complies with the applicable quality requirements.

*Description of the Institution.* The Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj-Napoca (PTI) is a confessional higher education institution established in 1948 by four Protestant churches in Romania to provide academic training for ordained ministry and theological scholarship. Benefiting from recognized pre-1989 academic continuity, PTI has successfully completed all stages of institutional (re)legitimation within the Romanian higher education system.

The Institute currently offers one bachelor's programme in Protestant Pastoral Theology (240 ECTS) and one master's programme in Applied Protestant Pastoral Theology (120 ECTS), both fully accredited by ARACIS and delivered in Hungarian. PTI has undergone successive national and international external quality evaluations (including EUA), achieving accredited and "highly trusted" status, with the most recent accreditations completed in 2025.

Between 2020 and 2024, PTI experienced a phase of strategic consolidation marked by institutional reaccreditation, significant infrastructure investments, strengthening of human resources (including the habilitation of new professors), and increased research output involving both staff and students. In close consultation with the founding churches and following international benchmarking through Erasmus mobilities, PTI initiated the re-establishment of doctoral studies.

Governance is ensured by a Senate that includes representatives of the founding churches, with executive management provided by the rectorate and academic leadership exercised within the Faculty of Theology, the Institute's sole faculty. In February 2025, the Senate approved the establishment of the doctoral studies, initiating ARACIS authorization procedures. The doctoral structure is designed to combine a clear Protestant theological identity with academic openness, interdisciplinarity, and alignment with European standards, operating in full compliance with national legislation and external quality assurance frameworks.

*Description of the doctoral study domain.* Building on a long-standing academic tradition and on the institutional trust confirmed through successive external quality evaluations, Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj-Napoca (PTI) proposes the (re)establishment of doctoral studies in the field of Theology (Theology and Religious Studies). The initiative responds to a documented need for advanced academic training of specialists in theology and religious studies, with a particular focus on Protestant theology, at national and regional level. The proposal capitalises on more than 75 years of uninterrupted higher education activity and over 130 years of academic theological presence in the current location, as well as on the unique institutional profile created by the historical convergence of four major Protestant traditions, which provides a solid framework for comparative, interdisciplinary and cross-confessional doctoral research.

The opportunity to relaunch doctoral studies is further supported by PTI's previous doctoral experience (1948–2013), during which the Institute trained a significant number of doctors of theology now active in academic and ecclesial leadership positions, and by the systematic consolidation undertaken after 2013, including reaccreditation, staff development, modernisation of research infrastructure and increased scientific output. The capacity to offer programmes in Hungarian and the openness towards the broader Protestant spectrum strengthen PTI's regional and international relevance. Importantly, the establishment of the doctoral field directly responds to repeated recommendations from ARACIS external evaluators, who have consistently acknowledged the Institute's academic maturity and institutional capacity to organise doctoral studies.

## II. Methods used

The evaluation team analysed the Internal Evaluation Report and its annexes, together with additional documents and data submitted upon request before and during the evaluation process. A comprehensive list of the documents consulted is provided in the annexes to this report. Prior to the on-site visit, specific clarifications were requested and were duly provided by the institution's designated contact person via e-mail.

During the on-site visit, the evaluation team held meetings and discussions with the following categories of stakeholders: representatives of the Institute's management; the team responsible for the preparation of the Internal Evaluation Report; members of the University Ethics Committee; academic staff involved in activities within the doctoral field (DSUD); coordinators of research centres and laboratories relevant to the DSUD; representatives of the institutional quality assurance structures; and prospective employers of DSUD graduates, namely representatives of the founding Churches of the Institute.

The visit to the material resources included lecture and seminar rooms, meeting and conference rooms, the library and other research-dedicated facilities, offices and archives, as well as student facilities, such as accommodation spaces, the chapel, the canteen, and other student-related facilities.

## III. Judgement on the extent to which the standards and performance indicators are fulfilled

### DOMAIN A. Institutional capacity

#### Criterion A.1. Managerial and administrative structures and processes involving students and other stakeholders

**Standard S.A.1.1.** Organisational components and institutional processes. The HEI has organisational components in its structure, which function based on adequate competences, responsibilities, processes, and implementation procedures, and ensure an effective management system.

<b>Indicator I.P.A.1.1.1</b>	For delivering the study programme/domain, the HEI has adequate organisational components and an adequate management system, which operate based on methodologies, regulations and procedures that are periodically reviewed as required by law.
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The Protestant Theological Institute (PTI) has developed a three-tier governance structure for its doctoral studies in Theology, as established by [Senate Decision](#) no. 3-1/14.02.2025: Strategic level: Senate, Rector, Vice-Rector, which oversees strategic decisions and supervision; Tactical level: The Council for Doctoral Studies (CSUD) manages specific responsibilities and includes doctoral student representation. Operational level: The Doctoral School of Theology and Religious Studies handles daily operations with leadership and administrative support. A structured regulatory framework guides all major doctoral processes, and a Strategic Development Plan is set for 2026–2030 ([Annex 004](#)). Administration and quality management are supported by integrated digital platforms for study administration, research, mobility, plagiarism detection, and governance, with a new doctoral platform under development.

*Analysis of the state of facts:* Evidence shows that PTI has set up effective organisational structures and management systems for doctoral studies, in line with legal standards. Responsibilities are clearly distributed across all levels, and procedures for internal audit, benchmarking, and quality monitoring enable ongoing review and improvement. The Indicator is thus fulfilled.

*Best practice examples:* Advanced digitalisation of academic and administrative processes; Strategic planning explicitly dedicated to doctoral studies.

**The indicator is: fulfilled.**

**Standard S.A.1.2.** Stakeholder engagement. The HEI proves that it engages the relevant stakeholders in developing methodologies and regulations, as well as implementation procedures.

<b>Indicator I.P.A.1.2.1</b>	The opinions of the faculty and department members, of the subsidiary or extension* and of other stakeholders are considered in the process of adopting and revising methodologies, regulations and implementation procedures.
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PTI employed a structured process to consult stakeholders about relaunching its Theology doctoral program. Founding church governing bodies were formally consulted on strategy and finances in five strategic meetings held between

\* The faculty, department, subsidiary, extension - hereinafter "organisational components"

2020 and 2025 ([2020](#), [2021](#), [2023](#), [2024](#)). Graduate surveys from 2019 and 2024 found 21% of recent respondents intend to enrol ([2019](#), [2024](#)). Academic staff used Erasmus+ exchanges to gather best practices from other institutions. Internal bodies, including the Senate, Board of Directors, and Faculty Council, were involved in decision-making. Supporting documentation was provided to evaluators via links in the Internal Evaluation Report.

*Analysis:* Stakeholder consultation for the doctoral programme involved external parties (founding churches, potential employers), internal participants (academic staff, governing bodies), and intended beneficiaries (graduates), and was carried out over a significant period linked to strategic decisions. Graduate surveys verified demand quantitatively, while academic staff gathered international best practices to ensure alignment with European standards. Institutional governance played an active role in integrating stakeholder input into official decisions. The evaluation panel confirms, based on documentation and site visits, that the performance indicator requirements are fully satisfied.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

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## Criterion A.2. The material resources and optimisation of the use of the material resources

**Standard S.A.2.1.** Material resources. The HEI owns adequate movable and immovable assets to enable it to carry out the study programme/domain.

<b>Indicator</b> I.P.A.2.1.1	The HEI legally owns venues for the related education, research and administrative processes, as well as for services for students, doctoral students and trainees, thus providing an enabling environment for living and studying, including for disabled persons. Optimal venues are also provided for activities of the staff. Such venues are adequately equipped.
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According to the Internal Evaluation Report, the Protestant Theological Institute carries out its activities in a listed historical monument building located at 13 Avram Iancu Square, Cluj-Napoca, with a total usable area of 5,007 m<sup>2</sup>. The building is used under a loan-for-use agreement concluded with the Reformed Diocese of Transylvania, the legal owner, valid for an indefinite duration ([Anexa 005](#)). The institution provides adequate facilities for teaching activities (one lecture hall, two large event halls, six seminar rooms, and a council room), for research activities (dedicated research spaces, including library reading rooms and specialized areas for old books and archival documents), as well as for administrative purposes ([Anexa 006](#)). Through cooperation agreements with nearby church archives, additional research spaces and offices are made available ([Anexa 007](#)). Doctoral students also benefit from accommodation and related services, including [dormitory facilities](#), a cafeteria, library access, sports facilities, a medical office, and other support services.

*Analysis:* During the on-site evaluation visit, the review panel confirmed that the facilities described in the Internal Evaluation Report are available, functional, and appropriate for their stated purposes. The existing equipment adequately supports teaching and research activities, while the spaces provided for doctoral students and staff ensure suitable conditions for study, research, and academic life. No significant discrepancies were identified between the information presented in the Internal Evaluation Report and the actual situation observed during the visit.

*Good practices include:* Adapting heritage buildings for modern academic use, collaborating with church archives to enhance research facilities, and offering extensive services that support doctoral students in their studies and research.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

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**Standard S.A.2.2.** Management of material resources. The organisational components manage the movable and immovable assets used for the evaluated study programme/domain in an optimal, sustainable manner.

<b>Indicator</b> I.P.A.2.2.1	The movable and immovable assets are properly maintained to ensure optimal conditions for studying, living and research, as well as for work.
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According to the Internal Evaluation Report, the material resources of the Protestant Theological Institute are managed and maintained by the founding and supporting churches. Between 2015 and 2020, the main building underwent a comprehensive renovation, with a total investment of approximately 15 million RON from church and European funds. In 2024, the cafeteria and kitchen were modernized (approx. 500,000 RON), and between 2024 and 2025 the technical infrastructure was upgraded through the acquisition of servers, IT equipment, and projectors (approx. 80,000

RON). The institutional development plan 2023–2028 foresees further investments, including the installation of photovoltaic panels, pending national or European funding ([Anexa 008](#)). The Institute employs specialized staff for the management and maintenance of its facilities, including technical, IT, maintenance, security, and support personnel.

*Analysis:* During the on-site visit, the evaluation panel observed that both movable and immovable assets are well maintained and fully functional. Renovated and modernized spaces provide optimal conditions for study, research, daily life, and work, while IT and logistical resources adequately meet the current needs of the doctoral school. The investments reported in the Internal Evaluation Report are visible and contribute to the quality of the infrastructure and services. No significant deficiencies in facility management were identified.

*Examples of good practice:* Strategic planning of infrastructure investments, combined with dedicated human resources for facility management. Continuous modernization, including measures for energy efficiency, reflects a responsible and sustainable approach to resource management.

The indicator is: fulfilled

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### Criterion A.3. Adequate human resources and transparent staff recruiting procedures developed according to the law

**Standard S.A.3.1.** Human resources. The HEI has the required human resources to organise and deliver the evaluated study programme/domain.

**Indicator I.P.A.3.1.1** The human resources of the organisational component are suitable to perform the activities pertaining to the evaluated study programme/domain. The teaching staff has the required qualifications and professional competences to teach the subject matters assigned to them in the job list.

The doctoral program in Theology is supported by [five qualified supervisors](#) covering Biblical, Systematic, Practical Theology, and Church History. Most hold doctoral or habilitation credentials from top universities abroad (the Netherlands and Hungary) and have significant research output—201 internationally indexed publications, 13 ISI/ERIH articles, 31 books, 31 edited/translated volumes, and a collective H-index of 21 with 479 citations. Supervisors bring extensive experience, having overseen 141 bachelor's and 89 master's theses, co-supervised doctoral candidates, and served on 51 doctoral committees. Student allocations (3–4 per supervisor initially, up to 6–8 as allowed) meet national standards. Additional staff support supervision, including habilitation candidates, ensuring sustainability. Institutional resources back professional development through funding for conferences, publications, database access, and software.

*Analysis:* The human resources fully meet indicator requirements, with enough qualified doctoral supervisors to support theology studies. Supervisors' expertise matches their research areas, and their academic output demonstrates strong national and international recognition. Their experience in thesis coordination and committee work confirms their ability to mentor doctoral candidates. The student–supervisor ratio is conservative, ensuring effective mentorship, and institutional support further enhances the quality and sustainability of the framework.

*Best practice examples:* All doctoral supervisors have strong international academic backgrounds, with foreign degrees and habilitations. Core theological subfields are well covered for disciplinary diversity. Supervisors possess substantial documented mentoring experience at all levels. Doctoral student allocation is planned in line with legal and quality standards. Institutional support includes funding for conferences, publication grants, and access to research databases and software.

*Recommendations:* To support the timely completion of habilitations in progress, in order to expand the pool of eligible doctoral supervisors in the medium term.

The indicator is: fulfilled

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**Standard S.A.3.2.** Recruitment procedures. Teaching staff recruitment procedures compliant with the provisions of the law.

**Indicator I.P.A.3.2.1** Recruitment procedures comply with the provisions of the law, and are established and carried out transparently.

PTI has adopted and applies a coherent set of [institutional methodologies](#) regulating the recruitment of teaching and research staff, including procedures for permanent positions, associated staff, and the automatic recognition of teaching functions, doctoral supervision and habilitation obtained abroad. All methodologies are updated in accordance with Higher Education Law no. 199/2023 and the applicable CNATDCU standards. Recruitment competitions are organised following the legally prescribed stages and are publicly announced in the Romanian Official Gazette, on the [institutional website](#) and on the national academic recruitment platform (jobs.edu.ro). At doctoral level, the institution currently relies on five doctoral supervisors with acquired rights, whose scientific output complies with CNATDCU standards. Planned developments include additional habilitations, training for doctoral supervision and the extension of co-supervision arrangements.

*Analysis.* The recruitment procedures are legally compliant, transparent and consistently implemented. The existence of differentiated procedures, including for international recognition, demonstrates an advanced and mature institutional framework. Public visibility of recruitment competitions and alignment with national standards confirm full compliance with the indicator requirements.

*Best practice examples.* Explicit procedures for recognition of qualifications obtained abroad. Transparent public dissemination of recruitment competitions through multiple official channels.

*Recommendations:* To further strengthen international visibility by providing concise English-language information on recruitment procedures relevant to doctoral supervision and to institutionalise the planned training programme for doctoral supervisors.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

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#### Criterion A.4. Digitalisation of institutional processes

**Standard S.A.4.1.** Digital transformation. The digital transformation process in the organisational component seeks to achieve administrative simplification and improve the quality of the services provided to the members of its own community, as well as to third parties.

**Indicator I.P.A.4.1.1** The organisational component uses IT tools in its own procedures, to improve access and provide good quality services for the members of its own community and the indirect beneficiaries of education.

The Institute implemented a comprehensive digital ecosystem including Google Workspace for Education (2016), Google Classroom (2020) for collaboration and e-learning, Google Meet for online meetings and consultations, Google Drive (1TB/user), MS Office 365 (1TB/user), MS Teams etc. See [Autoevaluation Report](#), p. 22. The official site of the Institute contains relevant up-to-date information about the institution, the courses offered, including a [special sublink](#) for the doctoral program. The verification of the originality of theses is done via [Sistemantiplagiat.ro](#), which, as it resulted from the personal consultations with the institution's representatives, is freely accessible to all students and future doctoral researchers. The administrative processes are facilitated by [Office](#) (used for meetings, registry minutes), [Mob](#) (for mobilities) and [Webform](#) (for opinion polls, registrations) platforms. Dedicated software include: SagaC (accounting), HMenu and HSalar (payroll). Further, there is an educational management system called [Nep-tune](#), and internship management platform called [Studium](#), as well as a continuous subscription to a specialised biblical research tool called [Logos](#).

*Analysis of the state of facts.* Based on the results of the onsite visit, meetings, discussions and the online verification of the relevant platforms, sites and software, the visiting team has found that the status quo corresponds with those enunciated by the institution in its Internal Evaluation Report.

*Best practice examples.* The Institutional digital repository [Repo](#) and [eCorvina](#) deserve special mention. The specialised Open Access theological journal [Reformatus Szemle](#) edited within PTI is also a good example of research results' dissemination.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

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### DOMAIN B. Educational efficacy

#### Criterion B.1. Content and relevance of study programmes

**Standard S.B.1.1.** Content of study programme/s\*. The study programme is based on a curriculum designed so that students can acquire the expected learning outcomes.

**Indicator I.P.B.1.1.1** The study programme is developed and structured according to the expected learning outcomes and organised based on transferable study credits. It includes all learning, teaching, practical training, research and evaluation experiences, which, together, lead to a higher education qualification.

The full-time doctoral program includes a training component based on advanced studies and an individual scientific research program. 4 compulsory subjects (including research ethics) and two optional/elective disciplines constitute the min. 240 compulsory credits over 8 semesters. The details are specified in the relevant Regulations: [institutional regulation](#) and the [DS Regulation](#).

*Analysis of the state of facts.* The [Individual PhD Research Plan](#) provides a good and detailed framework for the composition and correct delimitation of the candidate's scientific interests and plans. The schedule of doctoral studies presented on p. 25 of the Internal Evaluation Report as well as of the complementary activities correspond to the current legislation concerning academic education and research (including ECTS), being simultaneously compatible with similar schedules followed by well-respected international universities.

*Recommendations.* The possibility of the inclusion of external supervisors e.g. in joint supervision is recommended.

**The indicator is: fulfilled.**

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\* The term "programmes" concerns the external quality evaluation for the study programmes contained in a master/doctoral domain. The term "programme" shall be used hereinafter.

## Criterion B.2. Alignment of the curriculum with the qualification

**Standard S.B.2.1.** Alignment with the qualification level and the intended competences. In the curriculum design and development process, the organisational component seeks to ensure the qualification level, as well as correlation with the envisaged occupations.

**Indicator I.P.B.2.1.2** The expected learning outcomes are correlated with the competences required by those occupations, according to the occupational standards and/or the European Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO).

The doctoral study program develops knowledge at the most advanced level, specialised research and innovation skills, in addition to complete academic responsibility and autonomy. The [standards of the acquired knowledge](#) proposed (p. 30) include development interdisciplinary competences, familiarity with the results of related domains of research and critical understanding of contemporary theological debates.

*Analysis of the state of facts.* The curriculum ensures the progressive development from reproduced knowledge to generative and applicative skills, from fundamental training to academic autonomy, including the correlation with relevant ESCO occupations and competences. This aspect of the proposed programme has been reinforced during the consultations both by the prospective doctoral supervisors and the representatives of the employees, i.e. This aspect of the proposed programme has been reinforced during the onsite consultations both by the prospective doctoral supervisors and the representatives of the employees, i.e. the dignitaries of the founding churches.

**The indicator is: fulfilled.**

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## Criterion B.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and evaluation

**Standard S.B.3.1** Principles.

The organisational component implements the principles of student-centred learning.

**Indicator I.P.B.3.1.1** The organisational component ensures implementation of the student-centred learning in the curriculum and through the teaching strategies used in the learning and teaching activities and experiences.

According to the Internal Evaluation Report, the organizational component of the PTI ensures the implementation of student-centered learning principles through the individualization of the doctoral pathway, progressive development of academic autonomy, and the use of research-oriented teaching strategies. Each doctoral student follows a personalized trajectory, tailored to their research subfield and topic, with specific bibliographies, methodologies, and research activities. The curriculum supports research-based learning, mandatory academic mobility, flexible doctoral pathways, and active student involvement in program evaluation. During the on-site evaluation, the panel confirmed that student-centered learning principles are coherently integrated into the curriculum and teaching strategies. Individualized pathways, mentoring relationships, organizational flexibility, and assessment mechanisms foster autonomy, responsibility, and the development of students' research competencies.

*Analysis:* Based on the evidence presented in the Internal Evaluation Report and confirmed during the on-site visit, the indicator is fulfilled. Student-centred learning is systematically implemented through individualized doctoral pathways, customised bibliographies and research methodologies, and a structured, gradual development of academic autonomy across the four years of study. Teaching and learning strategies are predominantly research-based, integrating original research activities directly connected to each doctoral student's topic. Mandatory international mobility and flexible organisational arrangements further support experiential learning and individual research trajectories. Doctoral students shall be also involved in programme evaluation through structured progress reporting mechanisms, which function as learning and feedback tools.

*Examples of good practice:* Advanced personalization of the doctoral trajectory, the staged development of student autonomy, and the integration of international mobility as a learning experience.

**The indicator is: fulfilled.**

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## Criterion B.4. Accessibility and efficiency of the resources and support services, adequate for learning

**Standard S.B.4.1.** Access to resources and services. The organisational component provides access to adequate resources and support services, according to the needs of the students.

**Indicator  
I.P.B.4.1.1**

The organisational component provides students, including those with special educational needs/disabilities, with access to resources and services designed to support the learning process, adequate for the individual learning needs, the study domain, the study cycle, and the form of organisation of the study programme.

According to the Internal Evaluation Report, the Protestant Theological Institute ensures that students, including those with special educational needs, have access to resources and services that adequately support the learning process. The Institute maintains a well-developed [library](#) with over [100,000 specialized volumes](#), valuable historical collections, and access to [international databases](#) relevant for theological research. Students have free access to print and electronic resources, specialized research software, and external archival materials through institutional partnerships ([Anexa 007](#)).

PTI offers structured mentoring programs for talented students, financial support for research, publication, and academic mobility, as well as opportunities to disseminate research outcomes through its journals and [publishing house](#). Access to international mobility is ensured through Erasmus+ and Makovecz programs, as well as scholarships provided within academic and ecclesiastical networks. Support for students with special educational needs is provided through individualized arrangements within the general support framework (flexible access, personalized mentoring, adapted research paths), rather than through separate structures.

During the on-site evaluation, the panel confirmed that the resources and services described in the Internal Evaluation Report are available, functional, and accessible to students, adequately supporting the doctoral program in Theology. Access to resources is flexible and tailored to individual learning and research needs.

*Analysis:* The evidence provided in the Internal Evaluation Report and confirmed during the on-site visit demonstrates that PTI ensures systematic, equitable, and flexible access to learning and research resources adapted to the specific needs of doctoral students and to the particularities of the Theology domain. The combination of extensive print and electronic library holdings, access to specialised international databases and research software, structured mentoring and talent-support schemes, as well as diversified funding and mobility opportunities, ensures an integrated support environment for the doctoral learning process. Access modalities are adaptable to individual research profiles and, where necessary, extended beyond standard schedules, which is particularly relevant for students with differentiated learning needs. Consequently, the indicator is considered fulfilled.

*Good practice example:* The extensive access to, and mandatory participation in, international mobility programs, together with the provision of grants and scholarships by the church.

**The indicator is: fulfilled**

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## Criterion B.5. Learning outcomes

**Standard S.B.5.1.** Definition and evaluation. Learning outcomes are adequately defined and evaluated.

**Indicator  
I.P.B.5.1.1**

Learning outcomes are adequately described, and they support understanding of the students' and teachers' expectations regarding the content of the subject matters in the curriculum.

The learning outcomes are clearly defined both at the level of the doctoral study program and at the level of individual courses. The program-level learning outcomes are structured in five coherent categories (research and original contribution; methodological and digital competences; communication and dissemination; autonomy and professional development; intercultural competences) and are explicitly aligned with the competences defined under Criterion B.1.

Course learning outcomes and assessment criteria are detailed in the [course sheets](#), while the achievement of transversal outcomes is supported through structured research activities and academic participation (DC 0100–0900). The correspondence between competences and learning outcomes is documented in [Anexa 010](#).

*Analysis.* The defined learning outcomes are specific, measurable, and appropriate to the EQF level 8 requirements for doctoral studies. The documented mapping between competences and learning outcomes demonstrates internal coherence and supports a clear understanding of expectations for both doctoral students and supervisors. Evidence from the course sheets, individual research plans, and periodic progress reporting confirms that learning outcomes

are systematically monitored and assessed throughout the program. The panel considers that the requirements of the indicator are fully met.

*Best practice examples:* Clear structuring of learning outcomes into thematic clusters covering research excellence, ethics, autonomy, and internationalisation; explicit competence–learning outcome mapping, enhancing transparency and coherence of the curriculum; integration of learning outcomes monitoring into individual research plans and half-yearly progress reports.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

**Indicator I.P.B.5.1.2** Achievement of the learning outcomes is checked in ongoing examinations and study completion exams.

The detailed [methodology for evaluating the progress](#) outlines a comprehensive assessment system that integrates ongoing evaluations and final exams, closely aligned with learning outcomes. Key features include a structured, regulated framework documented in institutional procedures; formative and summative assessments such as seminar feedback, progress presentations, final projects, and exams; and progressive evaluation models with staged assessments. The report covers assessment of complementary doctoral activities and semester-based progress reports combining student self-evaluation and supervisor feedback. The graduation process involves a pre-defence evaluation and a public defence, both mapped explicitly to programme-level learning outcomes. Assessment methods and outcomes are detailed in a concordance table and comply with national doctoral standards and EQF level 8 requirements.

*Analysis.* The evaluation system assesses all stages of the doctoral lifecycle, with explicitly defined learning outcomes monitored by various assessment tools. These assessments align closely with programme objectives and are both progressive and cumulative, enabling early identification of weaknesses and adaptive responses. Final evaluations confirm achievement of all learning outcomes, showing a systematic and coherent verification process consistent with the indicator's definition.

*Best practice examples:* Integration of external evaluation mechanisms, such as: peer review of publications; feedback from host institutions during mobilities; Use of pre-defence as a formal, measurable mid-term evaluation, with concrete outcomes; Combination of self-assessment and supervisor assessment, fostering reflective learning and autonomy; Recognition of intercultural competences as a distinct and assessable learning outcome.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

## Criterion B.7. Procedures and practices regarding the admission competition, the journey, recognition and equivalence of studies, and result certification

**Standard S.B.7.1.** Admission. The admission procedures and principles ensure access to higher education.

**Indicator I.P.B.7.1.1** The organisational component applies the admission procedures.

The Doctoral School will follow a formal admission framework that includes: A [methodology](#) aligned with national and institutional regulations, an operational procedure (PO-CSUD-301) outlining activities, responsibilities, timelines, and workflows, ten standardised forms used throughout the process.

Admissions are held twice a year (summer and autumn), each with a specific calendar and defined roles for responsible bodies. The competition has three required components: academic portfolio evaluation (20%), a written exam (50%), and a research-oriented interview (30%), each with set thresholds and detailed evaluation criteria to ensure fairness. Depending on the sub-field, additional eliminatory tests may be required. Admission processes are managed through a [digital platform](#), and further digital integration is underway.

*Analysis:* Documentation and evaluation confirm these procedures are clearly formalised at the institutional level, align with regulations, and are operationalised through clear responsibilities and records. They are implemented in practice, evidenced by structured timelines, active committees, and standardised tools. The admission process is balanced, using academic achievements, subject knowledge, and research potential, with transparent evaluation criteria. However, there is a partial misalignment: admission conditions are not announced at least six months in advance as required. Overall, the indicator is met, since procedures are coherent and functional. The issue with announcement timing is a procedural vulnerability that does not affect overall operation but should be corrected for full compliance.

*Good practices include:* using standardised evaluation grids for all admission components; combining portfolio review, written exams, and research interviews for a well-rounded assessment; and adopting a digital platform to enhance accessibility, communication, and transparency.

*Recommendations:* In order to ensure full compliance with the [Specific quality standards](#) (§ III): it is recommended to amend Article 48 (3) of the [Regulation on the organisation and conduct of doctoral studies](#) of the PTI, so that the admission conditions are made public at least six months prior to the admission examination.

**The indicator is: fulfilled.**

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**Indicator  
I.P.B.7.1.2**

Admission in higher education study programmes complies with the principles of fairness and equal opportunities, and with the establishing of support measures to ensure access of vulnerable groups at social and educational risk, including candidates with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

PTI implements admission procedures based on the principles of equity and equal opportunities, with explicit support measures for vulnerable groups. Vulnerable candidates are defined as individuals with disabilities, those facing socio-economic difficulties, and students from families without an academic tradition. The institutional regulations provide financial facilitation for admission and tuition, while the Institute offers [social scholarships](#) and targeted financial support. The institution has experience in working with students with special educational needs and provides additional support through mobility programs and educational partnerships. During the on-site evaluation, the existence and application of these support measures were confirmed. Admission procedures are transparent and non-discriminatory, and the existing framework allows for the adaptation of support measures, including for future doctoral students, according to individual needs.

*Analysis:* On the basis of the documented regulatory framework, the concrete financial and institutional support measures in place, and the demonstrated institutional experience in working with vulnerable groups at bachelor's and master's levels, the principles of fairness and equal opportunities in admission are effectively implemented. These measures are applicable and adaptable to doctoral studies, ensuring non-discriminatory access and adequate support for vulnerable candidates. Therefore, the indicator is considered fulfilled.

**The indicator is: fulfilled**

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**Standard S.B.7.2.** Academic journey of students. The organisational component carries out actions supporting the students' academic journey.

**Indicator  
I.P.B.7.2.1**

The organisational component applies the regulations concerning the students' professional activity.

The existence and application of a comprehensive regulatory framework governing the academic journey of doctoral students is documented. This framework includes: the institutional [Regulation](#), the [Regulation of the Doctoral School](#), the [Methodology for evaluating doctoral students' academic progress](#) (with annexed [procedures](#) and templates), and the doctoral studies contract. The [Methodology](#) defines a structured evaluation system covering the entire doctoral cycle, based on four complementary levels of assessment (formative, summative, ongoing and final), with clearly formulated performance milestones for each year of study. Monitoring tools include semester progress reports, mandatory annual presentations before the Steering Committee, and an electronic academic portfolio. Support and remedial measures (academic counselling, mentoring, adjustment of the individual research plan) are explicitly regulated. Responsibilities are clearly assigned to all actors involved (doctoral student, supervisor, steering committee, doctoral school), in line with the institutional Regulation.

*Analysis.* The regulatory framework provides a structured process for supporting and monitoring doctoral students' progress. Its evaluation methods are transparent, align with national standards, and ensure ongoing oversight from research planning to thesis assessment. Standardized tools and formal support show active application of regulations concerning students' academic activities, fully meeting the requirements.

*Best practice examples:* The multi-level evaluation system integrating formative, summative and ongoing assessments across the doctoral cycle. The use of standardised monitoring tools (progress reports, annual presentations, electronic academic portfolio) ensuring traceability and consistency. The explicit linkage between individual research plans,



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ECTS structure and annual performance indicators. Clearly regulated support and remedial measures, embedded in formal procedures rather than applied ad hoc.

**The indicator is: fulfilled.**

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**DOMAIN C. Quality management**

**Criterion C.3.** Procedures for the initiation, monitoring and periodic review of the study programmes and domains and of the performed activities, involving students, employers and other stakeholders

**Standard S.C.3.1.** Procedures and implementation of procedures. The HEI has procedures for initiating, monitoring, and periodically reviewing the study programmes and domains and the performed activities and applies them systematically.

**Indicator I.P.C.3.1.1** The organisational component consistently applies the procedures and proves their impact on quality assurance.

PTI is in possession of all necessary and relevant regulations and procedures to ensure quality management.

*Analysis of the state of facts.* The website of the institution contains the [Regulation quality assessment and assurance](#), together with a host of relevant [operational procedures](#), containing over 240 pages, which are freely accessible online. It has also been established by the site visit team that these regulations and procedures are consistently implemented. One of the relevant proofs of this practice is the online publication of the [results of anonymous student evaluations](#) concerning [courses and teachers](#).

**The indicator is: fulfilled.**

**Indicator I.P.C.3.1.2** Members of its own community and other stakeholders are involved in the procedure implementation process.

PTI has a Commission for Quality Evaluation and Assurance (CEAC), which includes members of the teaching staff, students, administrative staff and representatives of the supporting churches.

*Analysis of the state of facts.* As it became evident from the onsite discussions, the representatives of the supporting churches are also familiar with educational and research quality insurance standards and are very much committed to assist PTI in becoming an institution of reference concerning academic integrity, honesty and scientific performance (see the Minutes of 20 January about the meeting with the representatives of prospective employers).

*Best practice examples.* The prospective employers (i.e. primarily the supporting churches) have presented a clear vision of how the newly trained doctors of PTI may contribute to the life and social, interconfessional, ecumenical and international engagement of these churches, moreover, they promised to provide further, more detailed ideas and even research areas of interest to be pursued by the new doctoral candidates, supporting at the same time their academic freedom.

**The indicator is: fulfilled.**

**Criterion C.8. Participation in external evaluation processes, according to the law**

**Standard S.C.8.1.** Compliance with the external evaluation obligation

The HEI undergoes external quality evaluation as required by the law.

**Indicator I.P.C.8.1.1** The organisational component carries out the procedures pertaining to the external quality evaluation process, aiming to organise the evaluated study programme as provided by the law.

A few years after the discontinuation of its previous Doctoral School, in accordance with the laws and regulations in force, the PTI submitted its self-evaluation report for the accreditation of its new doctoral study programme.

*Analysis of the state of facts.* By submitting its Internal Evaluation Report, the reception of the visiting team, as well as the open and clear answers provided both before and during the onsite visit, the Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj-Napoca has carried out all legally required procedures pertaining to the external quality evaluation process with academic integrity and institutional transparency.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

#### IV. SWOT Analysis

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The doctoral field of Theology is institutionally well-established, operating within a coherent framework that ensures regulatory compliance and academic stability.</li> <li>• The field benefits from adequate and qualified doctoral supervisors, covering the main theological subfields (Biblical, Systematic, Practical Theology and Church History), with international academic training and research experience.</li> <li>• The doctoral curriculum is clearly structured and aligned with EQF level 8, with explicitly defined learning outcomes focused on advanced research competence, academic autonomy, and original scholarly contribution.</li> <li>• Student-centred learning principles are consistently implemented, through individualized research paths, close supervision, formative and summative evaluation, and mandatory research progress monitoring.</li> <li>• Doctoral candidates have appropriate access to research resources and academic support services, including specialized library collections, international databases, research dissemination opportunities, and academic mobility schemes.</li> <li>• The integration of research activities into doctoral training supports the development of research-based learning and early academic socialization within the theological field.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The doctoral field relies on a relatively limited number of doctoral supervisors, which may constrain supervisory capacity and thematic diversification in the medium term.</li> <li>• International visibility of the doctoral field, particularly in terms of joint supervision arrangements and international recruitment, remains limited and could be further strengthened.</li> <li>• While support measures for vulnerable or special-needs candidates exist, their formalization and external visibility could be improved to enhance transparency and accessibility.</li> <li>• Certain administrative and procedural aspects (e.g. admission timelines) require full alignment with the most recent national standards applicable to doctoral studies.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The existing international academic networks and partnerships provide a solid basis for expanding international co-supervision, joint research projects, and doctoral mobility.</li> <li>• The field has the potential to strengthen its research profile and visibility through increased publication output, international conferences, and participation in competitive research funding schemes.</li> <li>• Ongoing habilitation processes and academic development pathways may contribute to broadening the pool of doctoral supervisors, enhancing sustainability and institutional resilience.</li> <li>• Digital research infrastructures and open-access dissemination channels can be further leveraged to increase the international reach and impact of doctoral research outcomes.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence on a small supervisory core may pose a risk to long-term continuity if staff availability or accreditation status changes.</li> <li>• Increasing national and international quality assurance requirements may lead to additional administrative pressure, potentially affecting academic flexibility.</li> <li>• Competition from larger or more internationally visible doctoral schools may limit the field's ability to attract a diverse and international doctoral cohort.</li> <li>• External regulatory changes affecting doctoral education could necessitate rapid procedural adaptations, with implications for planning and resource allocation.</li> </ul>

V. Extent to which the standards and performance indicators are fulfilled, and recommendations

No.	Performance Indicator	Extent to which it was fulfilled (F/PF/UF)	Recommendations
<b>DOMAIN A. Institutional capacity</b>			
1.	<b>I.P.A.1.1.1</b> For delivering the study programme/domain, the HEI has adequate organisational components and an adequate management system, which operate based on methodologies, regulations and procedures that are periodically reviewed as required by law.	F	
2.	<b>I.P.A.1.2.1</b> The opinions of the faculty and department members, of the subsidiary or extension and of other stakeholders are considered in the process of adopting and revising methodologies, regulations and implementation procedures.	F	
3.	<b>I.P.A.2.1.1</b> The HEI legally owns venues for the related education, research and administrative processes, as well as for services for students, doctoral students and trainees, thus providing an enabling environment for living and studying, including for disabled persons. Optimal venues are also provided for activities of the staff. Such venues are adequately equipped.	F	
4.	<b>I.P.A.2.2.1</b> The movable and immovable assets are properly maintained to ensure optimal conditions for studying, living and research, as well as for work.	F	
5.	<b>I.P.A.3.1.1</b> The human resources of the organisational component are suitable to perform the activities pertaining to the evaluated study programme/domain. The teaching staff has the required qualifications and professional competences to teach the subject matters assigned to them in the job list.	F	To support the timely completion of habilitations in progress, in order to expand the pool of eligible doctoral supervisors in the medium term.
6.	<b>I.P.A.3.2.1</b> Recruitment procedures comply with the provisions of the law and are established and carried out transparently.	F	To further strengthen international visibility by providing concise English-language information on recruitment procedures relevant to doctoral supervision and to institutionalise the planned training programme for doctoral supervisors.
7.	<b>I.P.A.4.1.1</b> The organisational component uses IT tools in its own procedures, to improve access	F	

No.	Performance Indicator	Extent to which it was fulfilled (F/PF/UF)	Recommendations
	and provide good quality services for the members of its own community and the indirect beneficiaries of education.		
<b>DOMAIN B. Educational efficacy</b>			
8.	<b>I.P.B.1.1.1</b> The study programme is developed and structured according to the expected learning outcomes and organised based on transferable study credits. It includes all learning, teaching, practical training, research and evaluation experiences, which, together, lead to a higher education qualification.	F	The possibility of the inclusion of external supervisors e.g. in joint supervision is recommended.
9.	<b>I.P.B.2.1.2</b> The expected learning outcomes are correlated with the competences required by those occupations, according to the occupational standards and/or the European Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO).	F	
10.	<b>I.P.B.3.1.1</b> The organisational component ensures implementation of the student-centred learning in the curriculum and through the teaching strategies used in the learning and teaching activities and experiences.	F	
11.	<b>I.P.B.4.1.1</b> The organisational component provides students, including those with special educational needs/disabilities, with access to resources and services designed to support the learning process, adequate for the individual learning needs, the study domain, the study cycle, and the form of organisation of the study programme.	F	
12.	<b>I.P.B.5.1.1</b> Learning outcomes are adequately described and they support understanding of the students' and teachers' expectations regarding the content of the subject matters in the curriculum.	F	
13.	<b>I.P.B.5.1.2</b> Achievement of the learning outcomes is checked in ongoing examinations and study completion exams.	F	
14.	<b>I.P.B.7.1.1</b> The organisational component applies the admission procedures.	F	In order to ensure full compliance with the <a href="#">Specific quality standards</a> (§ III): it is recommended to amend Article 48 (3) of the <a href="#">Regulation on the organisation and conduct of doctoral studies</a> of the PTI, so that the admission conditions are

No.	Performance Indicator	Extent to which it was fulfilled (F/PF/UF)	Recommendations
			made public at least six months prior to the admission examination.
15.	<b>I.P.B.7.1.2</b> Admission in higher education study programmes complies with the principles of fairness and equal opportunities, and with the establishing of support measures to ensure access of vulnerable groups at social and educational risk, including candidates with special educational needs and/or disabilities.	F	
16.	<b>I.P.B.7.2.1</b> The organisational component applies the regulations concerning the students' professional activity.	F	
<b>DOMAIN C. Quality management</b>			
17.	<b>I.P.C.3.1.1</b> The organisational component consistently applies the procedures and proves their impact on quality assurance.	F	
18.	<b>I.P.C.3.1.2</b> Members of its own community and other stakeholders are involved in the procedure implementation process.	F	
19.	<b>I.P.C.8.1.1</b> The organisational component carries out the procedures pertaining to the external quality evaluation process, aiming to organise the evaluated study programme as provided by the law.	F	

Summary Table of Performance Indicators – Degree of Fulfilment

Evaluation Domain	Number of Performance Indicators		
	Fulfilled	Partially fulfilled	Unfulfilled
Domain A. Institutional capacity	7	—	—
Domain B. Educational efficacy	9	—	—
Domain C. Quality management	3	—	—
<b>Total (19)</b>	<b>19</b>	—	—

### Other general recommendations

- to further strengthen the international profile of the doctoral domain by systematically developing joint supervision (co-tutelle) arrangements, increasing the visibility of doctoral opportunities in international academic networks, and encouraging the recruitment of international doctoral candidates.
- while the current supervisory framework is adequate, it is advisable to continue strategic planning for staff development, including the timely completion of habilitations and the gradual expansion of the pool of doctoral supervisors, in order to ensure sustainability and thematic diversification in the medium term.
- further improving the accessibility and coherence of English-language information related to doctoral studies (admission, supervision, research environment, support services), in order to strengthen external communication and international attractiveness.
- to develop structured mechanisms for monitoring doctoral graduates' academic and professional trajectories, which may support future strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and evidence-based quality assurance.
- to maintain its proactive approach to regulatory updates and quality assurance, ensuring that internal procedures remain fully aligned with national legislation and European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), particularly in the context of ongoing reforms in doctoral education.

The external evaluation covered a total of 19 performance indicators, distributed across the three evaluation domains.

Fulfilled: 19      Partially fulfilled: 0      Unfulfilled: 0

## VI. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the documentation submitted, the evidence examined, and the findings of the on-site evaluation visit, the evaluation panel concludes that the doctoral study domain in Theology at the Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj-Napoca / Kolozsvár complies with the applicable national and European quality standards for doctoral education.

All evaluated performance indicators were assessed as fulfilled. The institutional framework, human and material resources, curriculum structure, and quality assurance mechanisms adequately support high-quality, research-oriented doctoral training. The recommendations formulated by the panel aim at further consolidation and development and do not affect the overall positive assessment.

### Proposed decision

In light of the above, the evaluation panel proposes accreditation (AC) of the doctoral study domain in Theology at the Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj-Napoca / Kolozsvár.

## VII. Annexes

- Schedule of the on-site visit.
- List of documents reviewed.