

# REVIEW REPORT

Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life  
Related to a visit for a Programme Review;  
November 27-28, 2023

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European Council for  
Theological Education

ECTE

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## A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report of a Programme Review of an EQF Level 7/Second Cycle programme named MTh Religion and Culture Studies seeking a first accreditation of this programme of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life ([OCRPL](#)), an alternative provider of higher education based in Oxford, UK.

This report relates to a process, including a desk analysis of the Programme Self-Evaluation Report (P-SER) plus supplemental documentation provided to the Visitation Evaluation Team (VET) and an on-site visit November 27th and 28th 2023, for the purpose of accrediting this programme based on the European Council for Theological Education (ECTE)'s *Standards and Guidelines* and relevant ECTE Supplemental Guidelines. The VET suggests to the ECTE Accreditation Commission (AC) five commendations of excellence, twelve recommendations and three requirements.

## B. INTRODUCTION TO THE REVIEW

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### Description of the review

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This is a Programme Review of OCRPL as an alternative provider of higher education, dedicated to the development of men and women for Christian ministry in both national and international contexts.

OCRPL obtained institutional and programme accreditation for EQF Level 5 (partial)/Short Cycle (partial), EQF Level 5/Short Cycle and EQF Level 6/First Cycle from ECTE as an alternative provider of higher education in April of 2023. Please refer to the [Accreditation Review Report](#) and the [Accreditation Commission decision](#) for further details on the institution and its programmes.

The documents guiding this review are the [Standards and Guidelines](#) of the ECTE, part B (programme standards B1-B6), the [Guidelines for Programme Design](#), the [Guidelines for Site Visits and VETS](#), the [Guidelines for Institutional Status and Qualification Nomenclature](#), and [Guidelines for Distance and on-line Education](#).

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### Programme

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Programme submitted for accreditation in 2023:

EQF/QF-EHEA	Name of qualification used by OCRPL-	ECTS	ISCED Level	ICETE Level	Delivery Mode
Level 7/Second Cycle	MTh Religion and Culture Studies	72	7	Master	Online: asynchronous syllabus and synchronous online tutorials

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## The Visitation Team

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The composition of the Visitation Evaluation Team (VET) to OCRPL was as follows:

Marcel Macelaru (Team Leader)  
Küllli Tõniste (VET member)  
Ciprian Gheorghe-Luca (Student Representative)  
Graham Cheesman (Review Secretary)

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## Visit Arrangements

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The Programme Self-Evaluation Report (P-SER) was written following the template set out in the ECTE protocol for writing an SER and was received, along with supporting documents, in time by the Accreditation Director (AD). The Review Secretary (RS) recommended the team to the Accreditation Commission (AC). The AC approved the team and the dates of the review visit, and these were communicated to OCRPL by the RS who also asked the institution if they had any reservations about the team members, but there were none.

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

- The RS provided access for the VET-members to the P-SER, supplemental documents, and all previous relevant correspondence with the institution via hyperlink.
- VET members recorded the results of their initial reading of the documents.
- The Internal Review Coordinator (IRC) of the institution was identified and received a copy of the visit protocol.
- A WhatsApp group was set up internally for the VET members and the IRC for fast communication.
- In conjunction with the VET leader, the IRC organised and agreed to a schedule for the visit.
- An initial pre-visit meeting of the VET took place via video-conferencing to discuss the P-SER and supporting documents.
- A shared working report document was set up for members of the team to access and modify throughout the visit. The document follows the structure of the interim report form pertaining to the current standards and protocol of ECTE. This was filled out and commented on by members of the VET, as the visit progressed in preparation for the interim report-writing on the last day of the visit.

The team was very warmly received by the leadership and the staff. The institution provided all online and on campus means needed for an effective evaluation of the academic work and communal life. From the team's point of view, the documentation submitted was well produced, and discussions held were transparent and sufficient for the purposes of the evaluation. The documentation provided a useful summary of the institution's current state, response to previous recommendations and the Level 7 programme submitted for accreditation. The review took place over two days plus travel. The on-campus visit began on November 27 to 28, 2023.

The review was conducted in English.

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## Visit Schedule

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Meetings with the various stakeholders occurred as follows, at times including all the VET and other times the VET split up and attended different meetings. They included meetings with:

Principal

Leadership team

Programme leader

Administration and technical staff

Educational Staff (Mentors/Tutors) associated with the programme

Teaching Faculty associated with the programme

Persons responsible for mentoring, pastoral care, student formation and practical placements

Stakeholders

Students

The complete schedule is appended to this report.

## C. INTRODUCTION TO THE INSTITUTION AND PROGRAMME UNDER REVIEW

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### General Description of Institution

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OCRPL is a registered charitable organisation with the Charity Commission in the UK (Charity number: 113918). OCRPL is not a registered Higher Education Institution in the United Kingdom and cannot confer legal degrees but has been offering postgraduate degrees in partnership with accredited universities in South Africa, Cameroon, and India.

ECTE has granted institutional and programme accreditation as an alternate provider of higher education in Europe.

The OCRPL undergraduate The Shepherd Academy (TSA) programmes, namely one EQF Level 5 (partial), one EQF Level 5 and one EQF Level 6 were granted accreditation by ECTE in April 2023.

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### Mission and Vision Statement

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#### Vision

The Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life (OCRPL), founded in Oxford in the UK as a research institution in 2005, exists to advance a global understanding of religion in public life and to educate people through programmes at all levels for contextual Christian ministry and service.

#### Mission

OCRPL's mission is to provide training to Christian leaders and theologians in the Global South, particularly to those Christians who face marginalisation and persecution. OCRPL strives to fulfil its mission through various local indigenous institutions, academic programmes, partners, and publications.

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### History

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OCRPL was founded in 2010 by Dr. Vinay Samuel with Dr. Chris Sugden as a think tank, holding consultations and publishing studies with theological and mission leaders in the Global South. This eventually led to the development of a PhD programme and partnerships in South Africa: Stellenbosch University (SU) in 2017 and University of Pretoria (UP) in 2019.

In 2019 OCRPL expanded its vision to focus on developing theological educators in postgraduate studies in the area of Islam. Students are encouraged to understand Islam from an insider's

perspective rather than in confrontation or collaboration with it. The goal is to equip pastors to offer strategic leadership in their contexts and countries.

The period of 2019 to 2021 saw an expansion in programmes, student numbers and faculty. Since 2021, OCRPL has been consolidating and working to strengthen its partnerships, programmes, staff, and student body.

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## Facilities

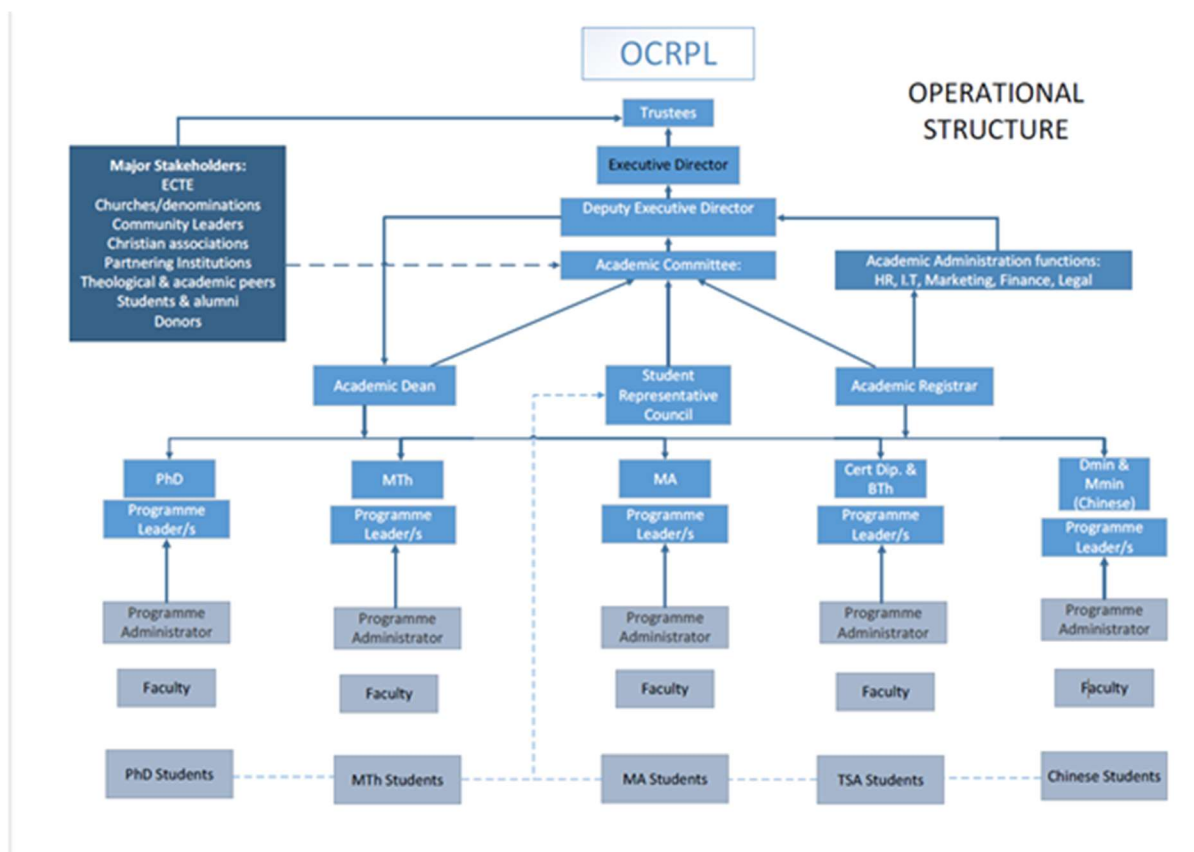
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The OCRPL offices are situated in Pewsey, England and consist of an office block, library, and various rooms for accommodation of guests and visiting students.



## Governance

There is a clear, solid, and working governance structure as shown below in the organisational chart.



## Educational and non-educational Staff

Staff provision is adequate for the delivery of the programme under review as to number and academic level.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Full time faculty	3	6	9	18	20	27
Staff	1	3	4	4	7	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>30</b>
TSA Tutors (Part – Time)	-	-	-	11	18	30
MA Tutors (Part – Time)	-	-	-	-	5	8
PhD/ MTh Adjunct Faculty or Supervisors (Part-time)	3	5	7	7	5	12
<b>Total Part Time Faculty</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>50</b>



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## Student Numbers

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Being an institution that provides online education, student retention is inherently challenging, but OCRPL has been able to encourage students to make significant progress despite the personal and ministerial challenges they constantly face. This was further challenged during the COVID Pandemic as many students could not pay their fees. However, a number of them were provided with scholarships, enabling them to focus on their studies and timely submissions.

These are the active students according to OCRPL’s records:

	EQF Level 7/Second Cycle named “MTh Religion and Culture”		
	Entering Headcount/(MX/FX)	Total number Headcount (MX/FX)	Graduating Headcount (MX/FX)
2019	27 (M:26/F: 1)-	27 (M:26/F: 1)-	-
2020		27 (M:26/F: 1)	-
2021	13 (M:2/ F:1)	33 (M:31/ F:2)	M 1
2022	13 (M:11/ F:2)	22 (M 20/F:2)	M 8/F 1
2023	0	7 (M5/ F:2)	M 3

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## How the institution prepared for the review

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OCRPL currently has ECTE institutional accreditation and accreditation for its programmes as listed in the introduction. It is a natural step forward now to seek accreditation for the EQF Level 7/Second Cycle programme named “MTh Religion and Culture”. This programme has proved to be popular, and it has been running successfully for four years in a row. The programme has also been well-attested, as it is run in partnership with some accredited universities, namely, the University of Pretoria (UP) in South Africa and the Institut Universitaire de Développement International (IUDI) in Cameroon. By accrediting the programme with ECTE, OCRPL aims to further improve the programme and make it even more accessible to the Christian leaders serving or wanting to serve in churches and Christian institutions. The institution has expressed that working on the P-SER proved to be an excellent self-evaluation of how OCRPL has been running this Level 7 programme and helped to identify areas for improvement and revision.

For ECTE accreditation, Dr. Prasad Phillips, alongside Dr. Gerhard van Emmenes and Dr. Anna Bekele, took on the primary responsibility for producing and presenting this report to the SER Reviewing Group (Professor Daniel Jeyaraj and Dr. Daniel Thejus), and the OCRPL Academic Committee for final approval. The production team has made an effort to ensure that this Programme Self-Evaluation Report (P-SER) remains consistent with the previously submitted Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (I-SER) for OCRPL and P-SER for TSA Level 6 programmes. The entire leadership actively participated in this process, and the team sought additional assistance, as indicated below, whenever it was required.

Four groups therefore were formally involved in the production of the P-SER, The OCRPL academic committee, the SER drafting group, the SER reviewing group and the SER supporting group. Work on the P-SER continued by the drafting group until 22 September 2023, after which

the review group started the process of review. The final P-SER was submitted on 2 October 2023.

## D. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

This report concerns a review of one EQF Level 7/Second Cycle programme with 72 ECTS delivered in a blended online format with asynchronous and synchronous elements.

### PROGRAMME STANDARDS

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#### Standard B.1 - Holistic Integration

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INSTITUTIONS FORM THEIR STUDENTS WITHIN A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION, CAREFULLY INTEGRATING SPIRITUAL FORMATION, CHARACTER EDUCATION, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND PRACTICAL TRAINING

**Standards examined:** B.1.1 Holistic Integration; B.1.2 Spiritual Formation; B.1.3 Character Education; B.1.4 Academic Achievement; B.1.5 Practical training; B.1.6 Mentoring.

#### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Leaders
- Faculty
- Stakeholders
- Staff and students of the institution

P-SER. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- 2022\_Final Review Report
- ECTE\_SER\_MTh\_OCRPL\_Final\_011023
- F26 MTh Student Handbook (2023)
- F11 MTh Graduate Profile and F18 MTh
- F18 Mth Programme Curriculum Map
- F30 MTh Syllabus (2023)
- F45 PPT Academic Writing on Critical Thinking (Sample)
- F46 PPT History of Islam on Pre-Islamic Arabia (Sample)
- F6 MTh Essay Checklist (Sample)
- F8 MTh Essay Writing Guidelines
- F23 MTh Seminar Recordings (Sample)
- F12 MTh Dissertation (= Thesis Sample)
- F37 OCRPL Guidelines for MTh students and supervisors (2021)
- MTh Tutor Handbook Nov. 2023

#### Analysis and Assessment:

This is an academically rigorous online programme focusing on Christian-Muslim relations.

OCRPL forms its students within a holistic approach to theological education, carefully integrating spiritual formation, character education, academic achievement, and practical training.

The recommendations given below refer to the formal recording of practices already in place.

## Holistic Integration

The OCRPL programme under review aims at holistic education, which transforms the learner's ministry to Muslims. Because the institution believes that "this requires not merely a rigorous academic standard, but also character formation in each student", the programme design has the whole learner in view. Thus, contextual theological reflection is encouraged throughout the programme, both during the coursework and as they are working on their capstone project (dissertation; OCRPL follows UK terminology in which the major research paper is called "dissertation". In this report, the European term of "thesis" is applied to differentiate this EQF Level 7 major research paper from doctoral level research papers). OCRPL offered the VET examples of specific theological reflection and practices that students engage with during the programme, and which are linked to the programme learning outcomes and intended competencies as seen in the graduate profile and curriculum map.

OCRPL recognises the importance of integrating academically focused and competence-oriented learning activities with spiritual formation and character education. Informally, there are integration components present. Programme components are linked to programme learning outcomes and learning activities, but activities that nourish spiritual formation, character building and practical competences should be incorporated.

## Spiritual Formation

OCRPL staff and faculty are intentional about their spiritual formation goals, but when it comes to the particular programme this component is currently less visible there. Given the recommendations of the previous institutional review (2022, Final Review Report, p. 24-26) further formalisation of that component is needed. The institution acknowledges that the spiritual formation goals of the curriculum are difficult to achieve using Online learning. These are also hard to assess without a system in place.

OCRPL is looking to implement a system of accountability into their programme, where students regularly meet with a mentor to review their spiritual and character formation during the coursework, especially as areas of conflict between Muslims and Christians are considered in the students' local contexts. To aid spiritual and character formation, each student is required to have a mentor separate from their assigned tutor. The mentor's role focuses on spiritual aspects of the learner's journey through the programme whereas the tutor's focus is on the academic progress of the learner. However, evidence of the effectiveness of the arrangements so far, from the students, is mixed. When asked about spiritual/ministerial mentoring, students participating in the interview answered that this was lacking, that their mentor did ask about their spiritual life and prayed with them, but they would like more.

Students are encouraged to maintain a reflective journal on how each course and the process of academic learning is helping to grow their ministry and themselves spiritually throughout the programme. These reflections will be integrated in the records. The course tutor or ministry supervisor (course tutor refers to the person teaching the module, the ministry supervisor refers to the person supervising the ministry placement) at the end of every section reviews the journal and reflects with the students. The VET noticed that the programme under review is Islam focused and the connection with Christianity is limited. However, there is a Christian-Muslim Encounters and Dialogue module which is really well developed. The programme therefore requires participants to have completed previous studies on Christianity and the programme by itself does not offer much content for Christian spiritual formation or biblical

studies. When formal interactions with other students in the programme are limited, the institution is encouraged to be creative in using regular online encounters for students to have conversations on Christian spirituality, reflections on Scripture and prayer with each other.

OCRPL indirectly monitors outcomes and learning activities in their programmes related to spiritual formation and provides community contexts where spiritual formation is nourished and practised. This is done through the admission process as candidates are required to be connected with a ministry and be involved with a local church.

Ultimately, spiritual formation components are not part of the **formal** learning plan or mapped into the curriculum. They are not appropriately assessed, given credit, or included in the total calculation of ECTS credits.

### Character Formation

The students are given regular opportunities to reflect on their personal development through tutorials and one-to-one meetings with their mentors, and that “the role of mentors is crucial as it helps to provide guidance, support and constructive feedback that can help students to grow personally and academically” (P-SER, p. 12-13). Since character and virtue education is not a solitary exercise, the online delivery mode makes implementation and assessment of character education aspects in these programmes challenging. However, further conscious curricular development in this regard is necessary.

At the moment these character reflections of students are not specifically designed as part of the learning activities and thus are not assessed. Ways that mentors could develop such learning activities geared towards specific character formation assessment in the learner’s ministry to Muslims should be considered. Character education components are part of the formal learning plan, and they are mapped onto the curriculum, but are not appropriately assessed, given credit, or included in the total calculation of ECTS credits.

### Academic Achievement

This is a research-oriented programme at the appropriate academic level. It is in line with the relevant frameworks of higher education: EQF (European Qualifications Framework) Level 7 and ISCED Level 7. The learning outcomes and credit allocation for each of the modules correspond to learning outcomes and meet the minimum credit allocation of an EQF Level 7 qualification. The curriculum has five key modules in the coursework (36 ECTS credits) and a (36 ECTS credits) as a capstone project. The programme currently amounts to 72 ECTE credits (proposed 80 ECTE credits). Detailed programme learning outcomes and module descriptors are outlined in F30 MTh Syllabus (2023). The programme culminates with a thesis (36 ECTE credits), and students are given nine to twelve months to submit their work for internal and external examination. Relating to the research orientation of the programme, students are expected to regularly conduct research and write. Throughout the programme they submit five essays (10 pages, 1.5 spacing; 40-50 pages combined) and a thesis (60-62 pages). The support is provided in the form of regular tutorials, a module on Academic Writing and Study Skills, online resources, and most importantly mentoring and supervision.

Academic rigour is evident in this programme. The programme is seeking to develop in students a mature understanding of complexities of ministry in cross-cultural settings, e.g. there is a very thorough History of Islam module. The programme is designed to “Develop spiritual discernment to navigate the sensitive dynamics of cross-cultural ministry to Muslims” (P-SER, page 4).

“The purpose of this course<sup>1</sup> is to help students to understand diverse traditions, cultures and interpretations that constitute various Islamic traditions. By the conclusion of the course, students will be able to critically engage with religious and cultural dimensions of the Islamic world and evaluate its implications for the church and Christian mission today.”

The programme and its strong research component also serve as preparation for those students who are considering further research and study at doctoral level. At present, one of the OCRPL graduates from this programme is successfully enrolled in the PhD programme at the UP, and three more graduates are planning to apply for admission and are working on their PhD proposal. The academic level of the programme is attested to by the fact that successful graduates from the programme have been granted admission to PhD level programmes at accredited universities. Students receive additional support with research, critical reading and writing, and other vital academic skills.

As to academic structure, OCRPL includes and monitors outcomes and learning activities in this programme related to the study of academic theology. It operates at the academic level that is expected for the degrees it offers. Students’ experience of academic training in theology is in line with the level descriptors of the QF/EHEA. In addition to subject knowledge and understanding, students develop intellectual virtues and abilities such as critical thinking, ability to find information and ability to apply knowledge. Academic components that are part of the formal learning plan and are mapped onto the curriculum, are appropriately assessed, given credit, and included in the total calculation of ECTS. OCRPL is in the process of moving the programme to a Learning Management System (LMS) platform and it is essential to prioritise this process and to ensure an improved learning experience for the student.

### Practical Training

The students are substantially involved in ministry work while they engage in theological study and theoretical reflection.

OCRPL emphasises the importance of the programme in the context of students’ church and ministry. Students are expected to be actively involved in their church or institution (1) before joining OCRPL, (2) while doing the programme, and (3) after graduating. OCRPL employs three strategies which aim at monitoring the student’s practical training: (1) Partnership between OCRPL and the student’s respective institution; (2) Student involvement in teaching and leading; (3) Follow up on recent graduates. OCRPL is also keen to develop students’ transferable skills such as researching, critical thinking, communication and writing, digital literacy, and time management. OCRPL makes a particular effort not only to teach these skills but also to reinforce them during the coursework stage, thesis writing stage and mentoring/supervising. OCRPL also encourages its students to use their education and skills in public life. OCRPL’s monthly Public Lectures showcase how this can be done, with prominent theologians and Christian scholars featuring in this series.

OCRPL includes and monitors learning activities related to developing specific competences that are required of theology graduates in their contexts and fields of work. OCRPL provides opportunities for practical learning through activities such as work-based learning, experiential learning, and reflective practice. Students are motivated and equipped to contribute to faith communities and society in a variety of contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> The word “course” relates to the programme, reflecting British higher education terminology.

## Mentoring

The VET saw considerable improvement in the practices of mentoring components since the last review (2022, Final Review Report, p. 26, B.1.5-6).

Mentoring is a significant component of the overall programme learning outcomes. Upon enrolment, students are assigned a tutor who acts as a mentor and helps them both academically, spiritually, and administratively. The tutor motivates them in their academic and ministry journey. The mentor provides academic support, especially with writing and revising essays. The mentor also serves as the first point of contact and assistance for a student and helps students in the context of isolation that is part of the online learning reality. They pray with and for their students and try to encourage and motivate them in their academic and ministry journey. Students are informed periodically on their progress and there are bi-annual conversations with the students to monitor their academic progress, check in with their circumstances, and offer encouragement. The role and responsibilities of a tutor are clearly laid out in the Tutor Handbook.

The programme is a virtual learning programme which relies on self-motivation. Students view pre-recorded lectures online and complete readings and independent learning activities.

“Every week students will participate in a Zoom discussion session based on the relevant lecture and attend additional enrichment sessions. Apart from regular weekly seminars and scheduled meetings with tutor and supervisor, students will be engaged in the self-directed learning process and be responsible for their study schedule” (Programme description, p.3).

In the thesis phase students are assigned a supervisor specifically for this task who also plays a role of a mentor, motivator, academic and spiritual guide. Supervision is also a form of mentorship. Assigned supervisors support students once they finish their coursework and embark on their work on the thesis. The supervisor provides guidance and constructive feedback for students, keeps students accountable to their work and provides support and encouragement.

### **Commendations:**

- The VET commends OCRPL and the programme design team for achieving a rigorous academic programme.
- The VET commends OCRPL for considerable improvement in the practices of the mentoring component since the last review (2022, Final Review Report, p. 26, B.1.5-6).

### **Recommendation:**

The VET recommends that attention is given to the integration components of the programme by appropriately assessing and assigning credit for formal Christian spiritual formation and character education elements.

**Requirement:** None

**Panel Conclusion:** Substantial Compliance

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## Standard B.2 - Curriculum Development

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INSTITUTIONS DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT APPROVED, OUTCOME-BASED PROGRAMMES THAT ARE FIT FOR PURPOSE IN CONTEXT

**Standards examined:** B.2.1 Design & approval processes; B.2.2 Outcomes & fitness for purpose; B.2.3 Curricula, Module descriptors & learning activities; B.2.4 Graduate profiles; B.2.5 Content, level, feasibility & progression; B.2.6 Credit allocation & duration; B.2.7 Content; B.2.8 Monitoring processes.

### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Leaders
- Faculty
- Stakeholders
- Staff and students of the institution

P-SER. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- ECTE\_SER\_MTh\_OCRPL\_Final\_011023
- F18 MTh Programme Curriculum Map
- F32 OCRPL Faculty Development Strategy (2023)
- ECTE\_SER\_MTh\_OCRPL\_Final\_011023
- F30 MTh Syllabus (2023)> Programme Outcomes
- F10 MTh Faculty Meeting Minutes (Sample)
- F42 OCRPL Quality Assessment & Management Handbook (2023)
- F11 MTh Graduate Profile
- F19 MTh Research Proposal and Dissertation (= thesis)
- F20 MTh Schedule for MTh 1 Cohort (2020-2021)
- F21 MTh Schedule for MTh 2 Cohort (2021-2022)
- F22 MTh Schedule for MTh 3 Cohort (2022-2023)
- F38 OCRPL MTh Programme Feedback
- F40 OCRPL MTh Research Methodology Module Feedback Form
- F28 MTh Student Survey (Sample)
- F27 MTh Student Progress Report (2022) (Sample)

### Analysis and Assessment:

The programme designed and implemented by OCRPL is well crafted, outcome-based, and fit for purpose in context provided that quantification and assessment of formal spiritual formation and character formation elements are integrated.

### Design and approval

The curriculum has a clearly defined structure, modules, learning outcomes (which reflect OCRPL's wider vision and philosophy), reading lists, assignments and methods of assessment and delivery that suit an EQF Level 7 programme delivered online. Modules vary in length but follow a similar format in regard to design and delivery and in terms of assessments and requirements.



Each module is subject to a variety of Quality Assurance (QA) measures that ensure that they are set up to achieve the desired module outcomes and are in line with the ultimate programme outcomes. These measures include:

- Alignment with the curriculum
- Review of the learning objectives and content assessment in terms of accuracy and relevancy
- Validity of assessment: discussion and reviewing current assessment methods for relevancy and validity
- Accessibility of learning materials and online resources (e.g. via OCRPL library)
- Turnitin and plagiarism detection
- Feedback mechanisms (from students and faculty)
- Providing technology support to students and faculty

OCRPL has approved processes for the design and formal approval of its programme. The design of the programme includes analysis, consultation, determination of learning outcomes and graduate profiles, curricular structure, level and duration, module content and delivery strategy. OCRPL involves students, stakeholders, external experts, and reference points in designing, developing, and evaluating programmes that reflect their vision and mission in context. Programmes are subject to formal institutional approval processes and regular evaluation. The design of the programme includes a specific analysis of the context that has determined the choice of DE/OE delivery.

The qualification resulting from OCRPL's programme is clearly specified and communicated and refers to the correct level of the Quality Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

#### Outcomes and Fitness for Purpose

The curriculum has been designed to meet the OCRPL vision and clearly defined learning outcomes and enable the students to be faithful and effective in their existing and future cross-cultural ministry. The learning outcomes of the programme are thus designed specifically with the cultural, ecclesiastical, and social context of church leaders across the Global South in mind. OCRPL is particularly mindful of contexts where Christianity is a minority and/or Christians are persecuted. These contextual challenges are significant factors in the make-up of the graduate profile and the vision and mission of OCRPL. It seeks to support aspiring and existing church leaders in these challenging contexts with the provision of quality ministerial training through distance education that is affordable and attainable. Regarding ECTE Standard DE/OE.41: This online programme meets the requirements.

The programme is designed to meet clearly defined learning outcomes. The curriculum articulated by the OCRPL is fit for purpose and that provides students with opportunities for spiritual and character formation, with academic knowledge and with skills that include those that are transferable and may be applied in their future careers. The programme reflects the outcomes defined in the QF-EHEA for the relevant cycle as well as the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe. In defining learning outcomes, OCRPL has carefully considered its own context, needs, mission statement and the cultural, ecclesiastical, and social context of its students. OCRPL has formulated a programme profile that includes the purpose and nature of the programme of studies and states the specific field of learning ("Religion and Culture").

It is clearly specified by OCRPL that its EQF 7/Second Cycle programme is research oriented. Its outcomes, learning activities, assessment and certification are consequently designed to match. Learning outcomes are established and regularly reviewed to align with the OCRPL's mission and strategic vision and with stakeholder input regarding the knowledge, skills and attributes required for varying contexts that graduates will engage with.

The programme offers students personal development, advanced specialised knowledge base, and cultivates cultural skills that prepares them to live and work as Christians in Christian-minority and Muslim settings, empowering them to participate in democratic opportunities and function as active citizens within these contexts. The four purposes of higher education:

- 1) preparation for sustainable employment;
- 2) preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
- 3) personal development;
- 4) the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation

are substantially met through this programme.

The faculty at OCRPL meets on a weekly basis and regularly discusses the progress, curriculum, the assessments, programme outcomes, the challenges that students face and their academic performance. Frequent regular meetings also assist in tackling any other emerging issues such as integration of technology (e.g. LMS, AI), curriculum development, mentoring and supervision, as well as future planning, recruitment, and promotional strategies. This helps OCRPL faculty to ensure that students meet the outcomes stated for each module and the wider programme outcomes.

#### Curricula, Module Descriptors and Learning Activities

The OCRPL programme has a comprehensive, focused, unified and relevant curriculum that is published in various forms on the website, within the syllabus, coursework document and the Student Handbook.

The curriculum is based on the graduate profile and the curriculum map outlines where the programme learning outcomes are achieved in the programme. OCRPL has a published curriculum for the programme under evaluation, which is focused, unified and relevant. OCRPL has standard module descriptors written for all credit-bearing learning activities that indicate learning outcomes and objectives, content, credit and duration, instructional methods, assessment criteria and the minimum requirements for the award of credit for each module. Learning outcomes, learning activities and assessment tasks are carefully aligned. It is clearly explained what learning outcomes are expected to be achieved from each module, course, and assignment within the programme. Student-friendly guidelines are provided for completing reading assignments (including instructions on how to access the required reading materials) and for writing essays. There are guidelines for tutors clearly outlining the responsibilities of student and tutor and each tutorial session contains a variety of learning activities which help learners to meet the stated learning objectives. There are clear timelines for achieving steps in the process.

Learning activities are designed within modules to help meet learning outcomes. Learning activities are varied, informed by adult and on-line learning theories, theologically coherent,

appropriately creative, making use of available technologies and designed to be fit for purpose. The curriculum and module descriptors have been developed in close cooperation with the teaching faculty and stakeholders. This was also externally moderated, validated and accredited by OCRPL's accredited partner institutions – the UP in South Africa and the IUDI in Cameroon. The programmes go through various quality assurance measures. The design of delivery is specifically intended to meet DE/OE. 42 and DE/OE. 43 standards.

OCRPL is looking to review the curricula, module format, and effectiveness of the outcomes once sufficient data and feedback from tutors and students have been gathered and further discussions and deliberations with faculty have taken place.

### Graduate Profiles

OCRPL has developed a written graduate profile for this programme.

The graduate profile helps to guide the curriculum development and provide deeper insights into the programme's goals and skills as well as competencies, which OCRPL aims to develop in students. The graduate profile also facilitates OCRPL in its assessment of the effectiveness of the programme in helping students to become scholars, teachers, and ministers in their local context. There are well defined outcomes, and evidence was provided in the P-SER by one graduate story. OCRPL develops and regularly reviews the graduate profile which matches programme learning outcomes. OCRPL also regularly reviews employability opportunities and further study opportunities for its graduates and reviews programmes accordingly.

However, OCRPL has not had a chance to fully evaluate the impact of the programme and implement a review of the employability option and further study options for its graduates.

### Content Level, Feasibility and Progression

The OCRPL has designed a programme in which learning outcomes are met through robust engagement with Islamic studies.

As a research-oriented programme, it provides credits for training in research skills (e.g. Module 1 Research Methodologies) and research activities (such as essay writing; thesis writing). The programme also includes enrichment sessions on academic writing, critical reading, and writing, referencing, avoiding plagiarism, time-management, and sessions specifically on writing a thesis proposal and thesis. It also has a very intentional “public life” emphasis, which includes opportunities to engage with local and global culture and contexts. The thesis is an opportunity to apply the acquired insights and skills to the local (or global) context and engage critically with challenges and opportunities of Christian-Muslim interactions.

Progression is an important feature. The curriculum has two main parts: (1) coursework and (2) a thesis. The students are allowed to proceed with their thesis only upon (A) successful completion of all modules in the coursework with a grade of 50 percent (pass) or higher and upon (B) successfully presenting and defending their research proposal. In addition, both the coursework and the thesis have a logical internal progression. For instance, within the module curriculum, there is progression and sequencing from pre-requisites and foundational modules to enrichment and advanced level modules requiring more advanced competencies.

DE/OE.44 and DE/OE.45, standards on placement and situational learning opportunities and feasible time frames are overall adhered to. The programme is designed in such a way that students can feasibly complete it in the given time frames and so that they enable smooth student progression. However, it is clear that some students need longer than the designated

time frame to graduate. The institution offers extensions where rules allow, and circumstances require. Some students fail to submit their thesis and drop out. Strong support in that lonely self-directed research stage is necessary to increase retention.

### Credit Allocation and Duration

This is currently a 72 ECTS credit programme (proposed 80 ECTS credits), requiring a minimum of eighteen months and up to two years of full-time study.

The programme design uses the European-wide definition of 25-30 hours of learning activity as one ECTS credit. The programme has also developed a comparability table of different credit systems (The Council of Higher Education (CHE) in South Africa and ECTE). OCRPL still needs to expand it and include other credit systems. In the curriculum and schedule, every module description explicitly mentions and describes the number of credits, the duration of the module, the related learning activities, and the form of the demonstration of learning outcomes. The programme integrates synchronous (e.g. lecturers; tutorials) and asynchronous (self-study and self-paced) elements. The coursework usually takes nine to twelve months, while the thesis usually takes a further nine to twelve months. This set-up means that learning time is distributed regularly and consistently over the years of study to a feasible level, and it facilitates student progression.

There is room for improving the format of learning calendars (schedule) and making sure they reflect not only module duration and the schedule of lectures and tutorials, but also the amount of required learning hours.

OCRPLs credit system complies with the ECTS framework. The programme is well balanced and achievable within the nominal study time and all learning activities (except for spiritual and character formation mentioned above) are appropriately quantified.

### Content

OCRPL operates in a multicultural context with cultural awareness and sensitivity and aims to utilise contextually appropriate content and delivery modes, which address the challenges and opportunities of the learners' and stakeholders' social and religious environments.

The programme delivery mode is online, affordable and, with some exceptions for areas of poor internet coverage, accessible. This allows learners in the Global South, who are unable to attend a residential programme due to financial or time constraints, the opportunity to partake in theological education in their own context. The programme content is shaped and designed to be both academic, accessible, and applicable to learners' contexts. The programme has a clear evangelical ethos and ministry training focus but also provides students for a variety of different vocations in different social and religious environments, service settings, and employment contexts. OCRPL achieves this by offering a range of modules which encourage learners to step outside of the church context into the public square and engage with different views and practices.

OCRPL also equips learners with transferable skills in their modules and seeks to expand students' thinking through encouraging dialogue across different denominations and ideas in tutorial sessions and public lectures. OCRPL also encourages learners to have active involvement in their local community.

### Monitoring Processes

The programme has regular monitoring and review processes to ensure it achieves intended outcomes in students.

At weekly meetings, the OCRPL faculty members discuss issues of student progression, completion, and workload. OCRPL faculty are actively looking for ways to address challenges. At the end of the programme, students complete a survey. This survey seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme content, relevance of the course, structure/design of the course, experience of the discussion forum, clarity of instructions for submitting assignments, value gained in the course, online experience, tutor interaction, tutorial sessions, supervision offered and overall satisfaction of students. This feedback is evaluated by the Programme Leader and the faculty, who assess if the issues raised require immediate attention or if they can be addressed at a next revision stage.

Monitoring processes include a specific focus on student satisfaction related to the DE/OE standard, in fulfilment of standard DE/OE 48.

The faculty is yet to establish a formal revision process where modules and the whole programme are assessed in terms of responding to the contextual needs of the students or changing and adjusting content in light of new research or developments.

#### **Commendations:**

- The VET commends OCRPL for a thorough and well-designed curriculum review process.
- The VET commends OCRPL for evident cultural sensitivity in both the design and the delivery of the programme.

#### **Recommendations:**

See under standard B.1 above.

**Requirement:** None

**Panel Conclusion:** Substantial Compliance

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## Standard B.3 - Learning, Teaching and Assessment

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### INSTITUTIONS IMPLEMENT GOOD EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE IN AREAS OF LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

**Standards examined:** B.3.1 Educational philosophy and adult pedagogy; B.3.2 Student centred learning and teaching and assessment; B.3.3 Module design and delivery; B.3.4 Variety; B.3.5 Delivery feedback; B.3.6 Assessment.

#### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Leaders
- Faculty
- Stakeholders
- Staff and students of the institution

P-SER. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- ECTE\_SER\_MTh\_OCRPL\_Final\_011023
- F26 MTh Student Handbook (2023)
- F24 MTh Statement on Education Philosophy and Adult Education
- F16 MTh Orientation Conference (2021) (Sample)
- F28 MTh Student Survey (Sample)
- F17 MTh Photobook (2020-2021) (Sample)
- MTh seminar recordings (YouTube links provided by OCRPL)
- OCRPL MTh faculty CVs
- F44 OCRPL Staff Handbook (May 2020)
- F30 MTh Syllabus (2023)
- F37 OCRPL Guidelines for MTh students and supervisors (2021)
- Learning Management System Online (<https://open.ocrpl.org/>)
- F18 MTh Programme Curriculum Map
- Interview with the Programme Leader and Faculty
- F38 OCRPL MTh Programme Feedback
- F40 OCRPL MTh Research Methodology Module Feedback Form
- F42 OCRPL Quality Assessment & Management Handbook (2023)
- F9 MTh Faculty Meeting Agenda (2022) (Sample)
- F10 MTh Faculty Meeting Minutes (Sample)
- F7 MTh Essay Examination (Sample)
- F 13 MTh Thesis Evaluation Grid (IUDI; OCRPL)
- F 14 MTh Thesis Evaluation Grid (Sample)
- Interviews

#### Analysis and Assessment:

OCRPL implements good educational practice in areas of learning, teaching, and assessment.

## Educational Philosophy and Adult Pedagogy

OCRPL has a clearly articulated educational philosophy that is grounded theologically and that undergirds the curriculum and the learning and teaching strategy. The entire learning community understands and actively engages with the institution's approach to the nature, purpose, and practice of theological education.

OCRPL also has clearly articulated adult pedagogy practices, grounded in educational theory, studies of best practice and theological understandings of adult learning. OCRPL recognises that the majority of students will be coming to this programme with prior knowledge and experience. As such, OCRPL has developed a document on adult pedagogy, which brings together best practice and the context of our learners.

OCRPL makes its statements of educational philosophy and andragogy publicly available.

The educational philosophy and adult pedagogy practices are clearly formulated to include specific reference to the chosen mode of DE/OE in conformity to standard DE/OE.49.

## Student Centred Learning and Teaching and Assessment

OCRPL has a range of core practices and developed a number of strategies in order to enhance its students' motivation and engagement in student centred online education.

Students are encouraged to be autonomous learners with adequate guidance, support, and input from educational staff in a climate of mutual respect. Students are respected in the diversity of their needs, but OCRPL needs to produce and implement equal opportunity policies and strategies which are lacking. Instruction is accompanied by adequate learning materials/support that fit the lesson objectives and the style of teaching; the learning environment is caring and conducive to learning; content is explained clearly and developed with emphasis on its structure and connections; questions are planned to engage students in sustained discourse structured around powerful ideas; students are given sufficient opportunities to practise and apply what they are learning and receive improvement-oriented feedback; the educational staff provide assistance for students in order to enable them to engage in learning activities productively; educational staff model and instruct students in learning and self-regulation strategies and encourage work in small groups to construct understandings or help one another master skills; they use a variety of formal and informal assessment methods to monitor progress towards learning goals; educational staff establish and follow through on appropriate expectations for learning outcomes. Expectations are clearly outlined and communicated at every level of the programme.

The following principles and practices are indicators of the general quality in learning and teaching:

- The programme faculty members are highly qualified and experts in their field. Each of them also brings their unique specialisation within the field of Islamic study – either Christian-Muslim relations, Shari'a law or political Islam.
- OCRPL has a Staff Handbook and is in the process of developing a Faculty Handbook specifically for this programme.
- OCRPL publishes a programme specific curriculum and Student Handbook with all relevant and necessary information for students, such as standardised course descriptions and outlines.

- The curricular design ensures that learning outcomes, activities, and assessments are constructively aligned, and appropriately designed for online learning.
- The assessments are designed to ensure flexibility and integrity for online learners. These assessments are formative, and competence orientated.
- The programme design emphasises feedback and reflection. Students are encouraged to learn from the feedback of their supervisors and examiners, implement it and strive to improve their work.
- The programme includes a Study and Research Skills course to orientate students in the various complexities of online learning.
- Students are encouraged to develop their communication, critical thinking, and research skills by participating in discussions, engaging with challenging topics and conducting research.
- The programme is an excellent opportunity for students to develop digital skills whether through using digital platforms such as Zoom, Turnitin or LMS, or accessing digital libraries and online subscriptions, and becoming more comfortable with technology and education.
- It is an excellent practice that written work is graded by two professors who both give a score and in case of a large difference discuss the paper in more detail.

OCRPL provides practical, IT, mentoring and spiritual support to the students, striving to create a supportive online community and wherever possible, making physical connections with the students (e.g. through the local churches, conferences, TSA hubs). OCRPL is in the process of implementing the LMS (Learning Management System) for this programme, but this still requires further development. Once fully operational, the LMS will allow students to have access to organised course material, submit their assignments, see their progress as well as engage in online chats and discussion forums. OCRPL has actively sought out ways to support students in their needs and provide flexibility for them. Thus, the institution offers live tutorial sessions, as well as recordings of all tutorial sessions, all of which are accompanied by PowerPoint Presentations. OCRPL delivers this programme in a way that takes careful consideration of the stimulation of students' motivation, self-reflection, and engagement in the learning process. The Student Handbook is well written and very thorough.

OCRPL encourages feedback and communication from students and considers how they can be supported and assisted in their study and ministry. OCRPL encourages its students to be a part of a broader OCRPL community through participation in other OCRPL events such as guest lectures, monthly public lectures, occasional seminars for the doctoral students and an annual community event for all OCRPL students across the various programmes. OCRPL also has a student representative body which interacts with the OCRPL programme leaders, registrar's office, and academic committee to voice feedback on the students' learning experience.

OCRPL has developed some procedures for dealing with student complaints and supervision, but it still needs to develop formal, comprehensive procedures for dealing with learner complaints, appeal procedures and policies.

#### Module Design and Delivery

Good attention is given to the needs of ministerial training for students in the Global South.



OCRPL applies good practice in module design in relation to programme delivery strategies and programme level. Programme delivery is done primarily online but includes research-oriented elements. Online delivery offers both synchronous and asynchronous learning that seeks to balance the use of time. In choosing their delivery strategy OCRPL demonstrates creativity and awareness of issues such as accessibility, quality, cost, and scalability. Also, OCRPL is fully taking into consideration issues of cultural sensitivity, security, and multi-religious context.

To further support contextual needs some connection points between Islam and Christianity could be developed stronger in this programme, some student feedback seems to point in that direction also.

Relating specifically to DE/OE standards:

DE/OE.52 – Good practice in module design. OCRPL implements good practice in module design in relation to the chosen DE/OE mode of delivery. This is supported by research, implemented in training module writers, and supported by a process of testing, editing and revision.

DE/OE.53 – Modules include an induction that clearly explains to students how the learning will be delivered and how they will be assessed in the DE/OE context.

DE/OE.54 – Synchronous, asynchronous, and semi-calendarised learning. OE modules select and justify the use of synchronous, asynchronous, and semi-calendarised learning based on the module learning outcomes and of students' contexts.

### Variety

The programme has various online activities integrated within its programme. These activities enable learners to remain engaged with online content and ensure that the learning outcomes are met through appropriately designed learning activities.

There are also a variety of assignment types used which are tailored to the learning outcomes of each module in addition to essays and thesis. However, assessment in general seems to rely heavily on reflection-type assignments.

### Delivery Feedback

Feedback on module delivery, quality of teaching methodologies and overall design effectiveness is regularly gathered from students and tutors through end of coursework surveys, through verbal feedback and from stakeholders.

OCRPL gathers feedback on these areas especially through an online form where learners provide feedback of their learning experience. OCRPL takes this feedback very seriously and uses the feedback to determine whether short term or long-term action needs to be taken on a course.

After a programme is taught through and students graduated, the programme goes through a review in three areas: content, design (structure and format) and delivery (quality of teaching, LMS usability).

### Assessment

OCRPL has adapted the UP assessment criteria. They have 2 examiners, one internal and one external. This provides for fairness. The internal examiner is usually stricter than the external. Faculty carry a mix of teaching and assessment workload. Faculty meet weekly to discuss student progression and any challenges faced. Minutes are kept. The supervisor, registrar and

programme director meet bi-annually with all students to reconnect and see what is the wider picture of student's life and progress.

Issues of plagiarism are also dealt with in the faculty meeting. Students sign documents promising they will not plagiarise and that they have a commitment towards academic integrity. These documents are then used to remind students about their promises and accountability.

It is good that the institution is taking plagiarism prevention measures seriously.

However more needs to happen with cases of plagiarism that occur. The Faculty Development document will have a section on this in the future.

**Commendation:**

- The VET commends OCRPL for a well-documented education philosophy and adult pedagogy.

**Recommendation:**

- The VET recommends that a plagiarism policy be written, which clearly outlines for all parties (students, faculty and dean, AC) how plagiarism cases are addressed and what consequences may result following various outcomes.

**Requirements:**

- The VET suggests to the AC that a requirement be given that OCRPL produces and implements an equal opportunity policy and strategies, particularly in regard to the delivery of teaching and learning (as signalled by the institution in the P-SER).
- The VET suggests to the AC that a requirement be given that OCRPL develop further procedures for dealing with learner complaints, appeal procedures and policies.

**Panel Conclusion:** Non-Compliance

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## Standard B.4 - Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

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INSTITUTIONS FORMULATE AND IMPLEMENT SUITABLE POLICIES FOR THE STUDENT "LIFE CYCLE" THAT INCLUDES ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION

**Standards examined:** B.4.1 Admission; B.4.2 Progression; B.4.3 Recognition; B.4.4 Graduation and certification.

### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Leaders
- Faculty
- Stakeholders
- Staff and students of the institution

P-SER. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- ECTE\_SER\_MTh\_OCRPL\_Final\_011023
- F5 MTh Admission Policy (2022)
- F26 MTh Student Handbook (2023)> Admission and Eligibility, Graduation
- F43 OCRPL Registrar Duties and Responsibilities (2023)
- F25 MTh Student Fee Notice and F29 MTh Student's Contract (2022)
- F41 OCRPL MTh Scholarship Application (2023)
- F5 MTh Admission Policy
- Web site: <https://ocrpl.org/study/mth-religion-and-culture-studies/how-to-apply/>
- Student (info) files provided by OCRPL
- [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1\\_myZFqNnohsCUqwuTpWFiFCLY6XqwxQh](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_myZFqNnohsCUqwuTpWFiFCLY6XqwxQh)
- ECTE\_SER\_MTh\_OCRPL\_Final\_011023
- F39 OCRPL MTh Programme Flyer

### Analysis and Assessment:

OCRPL formulates and implements suitable policies for the student 'life cycle' that include admission, progression, recognition, and certification. However, see Recommendations.

#### Admission

OCRPL has a clear candidate profile that can be used during the admissions process to evaluate the suitability of candidate students for this programme.

The application is submitted through an online form. This application form requires personal details, a digital photo, education history and documentation, role in the church, personal faith statement, current employment, English language ability, key contacts (reference/mentor), readiness for online learning and finance information. This process is overseen by the OCRPL Registrar's office, which functions as the primary support staff for learners. The requirements for entrance are available on the OCRPL website and in the Student Handbook. These entry requirements are in line with comparable higher education access.

OCRPL has started using an online Student Information System (SIS), through which students will also apply to the programme in future. This system helps to automate key aspects of the admissions process and ensures that the institution is effectively monitoring the applications, storing applicants' information, and progressing applicants through the process. Implementing this system assists in reviewing the application process and procedures to ensure they effectively serve the needs of the programme and applicants.

In light of retention challenges in programmes like the one under review, it might be helpful to analyse if the admission process is sufficiently vigorous with explicit information on study workload given by admission counsellors. It may be wise for the institution to assess whether the admission standards are sufficiently vigorous and whether the students are sufficiently prepared for this programme. Many students report difficulty with time management and report that readings are challenging. This was discussed with the institution and there is a good awareness in this area, but the matter is worth exploring further by the institution. The team does not see this as a formal recommendation.

A more balanced student body would enhance learning and preparation for life. The VET recommends that OCRPL explore/find ways to recruit a more balanced student body, which would enhance learning and preparation for life for male and female students.

OCRPL has remote admission procedures that are suitable for DE/OE students (DE/OE.57), are clear and fit-for-purpose, and application forms and competent support staff to assist applicants in the process. The admission criteria include connectivity and access specifications for OE students (DE/OE.58).

#### Progression

OCRPL has progression regulations within and between qualification levels that are clear, fit-for-purpose, public and are applied consistently. They take into consideration comparable standards in the wider academic community.

Students are able to progress to the next level on completion of a programme. This is clearly outlined on the OCRPL website as well as in promotional material. The programme under review has run for three years now, OCRPL already has some of the first graduates pursuing further studies.

Progression and recognition regulations of this OCRPL programme do not discriminate between delivery modes (DE/OE.59).

#### Recognition

OCRPL has recognition practices of prior learning (including non-formal and informal) that are clear, fit-for-purpose, public and are applied consistently. These recognition procedures rely on national and international recognition principles and on cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and international agencies. Recognition regulations are applied in sensitivity to student mobility within and across higher education systems. This includes reviewing the applicant's former qualifications, considering their ministry experience, and engaging with them during an interview process to evaluate whether their knowledge and understanding is at par with the entry level requirements of the programme.

Progression and recognition regulations do not discriminate between delivery modes (DE/OE.59).

## Graduation and Certification

There are clear, fit-to-purpose and public graduation requirements which must be met by learners in order to successfully complete the programme. These are outlined in the Student Handbook and curriculum. The graduation requirements demonstrate the achievement of programme learning outcomes. Students are informed of graduation requirements at the time of admission and no changes will affect their modules of study unless mutually agreed.

OCRPL students must successfully complete the necessary assignments and submit required essays, as well as the thesis in order to complete the programme. Presently, under the partnership model through which this programme is being offered, the accredited partner university issues formal certification and hosts graduation ceremonies as per their specific policies on graduation and certification.

According to the P-SER, OCRPL will look to develop certification documents for completion of this programme should ECTE programme accreditation be granted. The programme will also benefit from ensuring graduation and certification regulations are contained within written policies to safeguard the quality and consistency of this process. OCRPL is aware of the need to issue a formal diploma supplement and is aware of ECTE's template and explanatory notes as to what is required as certification for graduating students, including the necessary categories in the ECTE Certification Framework and achievement within the (QF-EHEA). Graduation ceremonies are suitable for the contexts of DE/OE students and arrangements are in place for the secure delivery of certification documents (DE/OE.60).

### **Recommendations:**

- The VET recommends that OCRPL explore/find ways to recruit a more balanced student body, which would enhance learning and preparation for life for male and female students.
- The VET recommends that the existing documentation on the recognition of prior learning be developed further and published.

### **Requirement:**

- The VET suggests to the AC that a requirement be given that OCRPL creates and issues a diploma supplement and templates for all other necessary documentation to all graduates of this Level 7 programme.

**Panel Conclusion:** Non-Compliance

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## Standard B.5 - Qualification Nomenclature and Credits

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INSTITUTIONS FOLLOW INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED QUALIFICATION NOMENCLATURE AND CREDIT-COUNTING SYSTEMS

**Standards examined:** B.5.1 Qualification nomenclature; B.5.2 Credits.

### **Evidence of Compliance:**

Meetings with:

- Leaders
- Faculty
- Stakeholders
- Staff and students of the institution

P-SER. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- OCRPL website for the programme: <https://ocrpl.org/study/mth-religion-and-culture-studies/>
- F26 MTh Student Handbook (2023)

### **Analysis and Assessment:**

OCRPL follows internationally recognised qualification nomenclature and credit-counting systems.

#### Qualification Nomenclature

OCRPL demonstrates awareness of international systems of degree nomenclature and considers issues of duration, level, nature of study, distinction of research-orientation for EQF 7/Second Cycle levels and credits. The programme does not award a degree as a UK institution of higher education, nor does the institution advertise the programme with such or a similar statement. The programme intends to be transparent and truthful in the handling of academic nomenclature and terminology.

The qualification resulting from a programme is clearly specified and communicated by the OCRPL and it is noted that the ECTE accreditation indicates the correct level in the (QF-EHEA).

#### Credits

The programme defines student workload in line with the QF-EHEA and the ECTE Certification Framework in ECTS. Credits can only be awarded for successfully completed modules.

The total number of ECTS credits for the programme currently amounts to 72 credits (proposed 80 ECTE credits). One credit is equal to 25 notional hours of learning. The programme design incorporates non-assessed and assessed learning activities equal to the required notional hours of learning per module and in line with the total number of credits per module.

The credit counting is clearly communicated to students on the OCRPL website, the student handbook, and the various modules' syllabi.

**Recommendation:** None

**Requirement:** None

**Panel Conclusion:** Full Compliance

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## Standard B.6 – Quality Assurance of Institutions

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### DO THE PROGRAMMES OPERATE IN INSTITUTIONS THAT SATISFY ESG QUALITY STANDARDS?

#### *B.6 IS A SUMMARY OF INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS A1-A6*

**STANDARDS EXAMINED:** B.6.1 POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE B.6.2 TEACHING STAFF B.6.3 LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT B.6.4 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT B.6.5 PUBLIC INFORMATION B.6.6 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE.

#### **Evidence of Compliance:**

Meetings with:

- Leaders
- Faculty
- Stakeholders
- Staff and students of the institution

P-SER. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- F42 OCRPL Quality Assessment & Management Handbook (2023)
- Staff Appraisal Form (2023/2024)
- Tentative Action Plan Draft (provided by the institution on site)
- Website: <https://ocrpl.org/study/mth-religion-and-culture-studies/>

#### **Analysis and Assessment:**

OCRPL as an institution is fit-for-purpose to deliver the EQF Level 7 programme submitted for accreditation but see recommendations relating to certain matters below.

#### Policy for Quality Assurance

This programme has a functioning quality assurance procedure as part of its strategic management. This quality assurance includes programme development and delivery, the relationship between learning, teaching and research, and issues of academic integrity and academic fraud.

OCRPL's policy for quality assurance is made public and forms part of their strategic management. The internal stakeholders develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

#### Teaching Staff

OCRPL has a strong base of well trained and highly qualified teachers in this programme. The institution assures itself of the competence of its teachers and applies fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff.

Teachers are engaged in continued learning. They emphasise their life-long learning habits and find the public lectures provided by OCRPL helpful for their development. Teachers also report that AI use and IT related training is provided. Teachers also are given time to attend, and funding, to participate in conferences, etc. There is an ease of association which enables faculty to share stories of student success and how they have helped them overcome issues of motivation or other obstacles. Faculty are well supported by IT staff, but they also recognise that



there are issues with internet connection in sites where students are and there is room for improvement in this area.

Teachers make improvements to course materials based on student feedback. Teachers said that they receive feedback either from their colleagues and administration or directly by students. It was not clear whether the course evaluation surveys taken are regularly shared with teaching faculty members also.

Overall, the faculty and their processes are fit for purpose and, as individuals, exemplary. There is further work to be done (of which the institution is aware) in the area of faculty development, and policies, refining issues such as how to address issues of plagiarism. Also, in light of retention challenges, the mentors/supervisors may benefit from more training on how to help students progress through the programme. There is also a need to set intervention strategies and policies for students that have fallen behind.

### Learning Resources and Student Support

This programme has appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities. Adequate and accessible learning resources and student support are ensured. OCRPL is committed to developing an online learning community which meets the contextual needs and challenges of its learners and staff. OCRPL supports this programme with online learning resources that are fit for purpose. Virtual education requires a strong infrastructure and the OCRPL campus is equipped with excellent technology and resources. OCRPL also has a strong and dedicated IT staff ready to assist students and faculty. It offers a range of online student services to support learning adequately such as the online classroom, Turnitin, technical support, mentorship, and supervision. The institution has good wifi and good technology for online delivery. The VET also saw a high-quality recording studio.

The VET team is convinced that students have adequate access to a library online and can access online research tools such as ATLA, EBSCO etc. Study materials are made available through a user-friendly virtual infrastructure and lectures and meetings are recorded on zoom.

However, the students and faculty who are usually not on campus experience internet problems which sometimes make it difficult to hold meetings and conversations as connection frequently is interrupted. The VET team noted some frustration due to these issues. The VET recognises that there is not much that can be done by OCRPL, apart from insisting from the beginning of the studies that it is very important that students and faculty have proper devices and that they have access to a stable connection (and always go there) for their learning activities. Perhaps some resources could be directed toward students so they could purchase or borrow technology for the time of their study. It is very good that Zoom lectures are also recorded to mitigate the issues with internet connection.

### Information Management

OCRPL collects, analyses, and uses relevant information for the effective management of the institution and its programmes. This information management covers everything the institution does, including its quality assurance policies and procedures. It is stored in the Student Information System (SIS) and will soon be integrated into the institution's Learning Management System (LMS) and other systems such as Turnitin.

OCRPL is also conscious of its need to implement formal policies, which allow for collective gathering and review of information at regular intervals.

### Public Information

OCRPL seeks to publish information about all of its activities, including this programme, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date, and readily accessible. The information about the programme includes selection criteria, learning outcomes, qualifications, teaching, learning opportunities and assessment procedures. The website has good programme information available. The presentation of the institution, however, is strongly male rather than female or equally oriented and something could be done to ensure that pictures used encourage equal access.

Given that OCRPL has identified that information about pass rates and graduate employment information is lacking, this will need to be attended to.

### Cyclical External Quality Assurance

This programme is submitted to this external quality assurance for the first time. OCRPL will follow the cyclical review process as part of its ECTE accreditation in the future.

### **Recommendations:**

- The VET recommends that the institution considers how more can be done in the area of providing that students have proper technology and access to reliable internet in order to attend this online learning programme.
- The VET recommends that OCRPL include information on pass rates and graduate employment information in its public representation.
- The VET recommends that OCRPL explore/find ways to recruit a more balanced student body, which would enhance learning and preparation for life for male and female students.

**Requirement:** None

**Panel Conclusion:** Substantial Compliance

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## SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

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1. B.1: The VET commends OCRPL and the programme design team for achieving a rigorous academic programme.
2. B.1: The VET commends OCRPL for considerable improvement in the practices of the mentoring component since the last review (2022, Final Review Report, p. 26, B.1.5-6).
3. B.2: The VET commends OCRPL for a thorough and well-designed curriculum review process.
4. B.2: The VET commends OCRPL for evident cultural sensitivity in both the design and the delivery of the programme.
5. B.3: The VET commends OCRPL for a well-documented education philosophy and adult pedagogy.

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## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. B.1 and B.2: The VET recommends that attention is given to the integration components of the programme by appropriately assessing and assigning credit for formal Christian spiritual formation and character education elements.
2. B.3: The VET recommends that a plagiarism policy be written, which clearly outlines for all parties (students, faculty and dean, AC) how plagiarism cases are addressed and what consequences may result following various outcomes.
3. B.4: The VET recommends that OCRPL explore/find ways to recruit a more balanced student body, which would enhance learning and preparation for life for male and female students.
4. B.4: The VET recommends that the existing documentation on the recognition of prior learning be developed further and published.
5. B.6: The VET recommends that the institution considers how more can be done in the area of providing that students have proper technology and access to reliable internet in order to attend this online learning programme.
6. B.6: The VET recommends that OCRPL include information on pass rates and graduate employment information in its public representation.
7. B.6: The VET recommends that OCRPL explore/find ways to recruit a more balanced student body, which would enhance learning and preparation for life for male and female students.

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## SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

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1. B.3: The VET suggests to the AC that a requirement be given that OCRPL produces and implements an equal opportunity policy and strategies, particularly in regard to the delivery of teaching and learning (as signalled by the institution in the P-SER).
2. B.3: The VET suggests to the AC that a requirement be given that OCRPL develop further procedures for dealing with learner complaints, appeal procedures and policies.
3. B.4: The VET suggests to the AC that a requirement be given that OCRPL creates and issues a diploma supplement and templates for all other necessary documentation to all graduates of this Level 7 programme.

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## IN CONCLUSION

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The visitation team recommends to the ECTE Accreditation Commission that the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life (OCRPL) be judged to be in compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines* of the ECTE in programme areas with the exceptions of the requirements listed above.

The team recommends to the ECTE Accreditation Commission that, subsequent to compliance with the requirements, it grant OCRPL accreditation, with the relevant recommendations listed above monitored through the annual reporting processes of ECTE.

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

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

The Visitation Team:

**Signed:**

**Marcel Macelaru (Team Leader)**

**Küllli Tõniste (VET member)**

**Ciprian Gheorghe-Luca (Student Representative)**

**Graham Cheesman (Review Secretary)**

**December 2023**

# APPENDICES

## Visitation Schedule

Abbreviations Key:

- VET – Visitation Evaluation Team – Marcel Măcelaru, Külli Tõniste, Ciprian Gheorghe-Luca
- TL – Team Leader – Marcel Măcelaru
- IRC – Institution Review Coordinator – Prasad Phillips
- RC – Review Secretary of ECTE – Graham Cheesman

Note:

- Due to the programme format and delivery, zoom or hybrid meetings with faculty and students are also acceptable

Date	Starting Time	Length	Purpose	Who	Notes
Mon 27 Nov 2023	9:30	45 minutes	VET briefing	Marcel, Külli, Ciprian	TL leads. Agree on details about the visit.
	10:15	15 minutes	Saying hello	IRC, VET, all staff involved with the master programme	TL leads. The VET panel introduce themselves and explain the purpose of the accreditation visit.
	10:30	45 minutes	Introductory meeting	IRC, VET, OCRPL master programme leadership	TL leads. Overview of the Master Programme, purpose, scope, etc. in relation to OCRPL vision and mission
	Coffee Break				
	11:30	1 hour	Facilities and Resources	VET and IRC	Tour of facilities. Focus on learning resources pertaining to the programme being evaluated.
	Lunch				
	13:30	90 minutes	VET Debrief / Report	Marcel, Külli, Ciprian	Agree on details about upcoming meetings. Working on the VET Report.
	15:00	1 hour	Curriculum and Course Offerings	IRC, VET, OCRPL persons	TL leads. After an initial 15 minutes together, VETs are

			Faculty Qualifications and Development Opportunities	responsible, faculty	assigned to two separate rooms with specific individuals: persons responsible for programme development in Room 1; faculty members in Room 2
Coffee Break					
16:30	1 hour	Student Assessment and Learning Outcomes / Placements & Practicum	Student Representation, organisation, learning experience, etc	IRC, VET, OCRPL persons responsible, faculty, student representatives, students	TL leads. VETs are assigned to two separate rooms with specific individuals: persons responsible for student placement and practicum & faculty in Room 1; student representatives & students in Room 2
Dinner					
18:30	2 hours	VET Debrief / Report		Marcel, Külli, Ciprian	Debrief. Working on the VET Report.

Date	Starting Time	Length	Purpose	Who	Notes
Tues 28 Nov 2023	Breakfast				
	9:00	1 hour	VET briefing	Marcel, Külli, Ciprian	TL leads. Agree on details about the day.
	10:00	1 hour	Meet staff & persons responsible for mentoring / character formation / pastoral care	IRC, VET, anyone involved	TL leads. VETs are assigned to 2 separate rooms with specific individuals: persons responsible for course delivery (including technical staff) in Room 1; persons responsible for mentoring / character formation / pastoral care in Room 2
	Coffee Break				



	11:30	1 hour	Report drafting	VET, RS	TL leads. RS participates.
	12:30	30 minutes	Final meeting with the leadership	VET, RS, IRC OCRPL leaders (programme leaders)	TL presents conclusions of the visit. RS participates.
Lunch					