REVIEW REPORT

Istituto Biblico Evangelico Italiano (IBEI), Rome

Related to a visit for a cyclical review;
May 16-18, 2024

European Council for
Theological Education

ECTE

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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report of a cyclical review of the institution and the programmes of Istituto Biblico Evangelico Italiano – IBEI (Italian Evangelical Bible Institute), Rome, an alternative provider of higher education (AP).

This report relates to a process, including a desk analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) plus supplemental documentation provided to the Visitation Evaluation Team (VET) and an on-site visit May 16-18. 2024, for the purpose of accrediting IBEI's programmes based on the ECTE's *Standards and Guidelines* and relevant ECTE Supplemental Guidelines. The VET suggests to the ECTE Accreditation Commission six commendations of excellence, five recommendations and two requirements.

B. INTRODUCTION TO THE REVIEW

Description of the review

This is a cyclical review of IBEI as AP, dedicated to the development of men and women for Christian ministry in both national and international contexts.

IBEI obtained institutional and programme accreditation from ECTE as an AP in 2009 with the last re-accreditation in 2019.

The documents guiding this review are the Standards and Guidelines of the ECTE (part A and B), the Guidelines for Programme Design, the Guidelines for Site Visits and VETS, the Guidelines for Institutional Status and Qualifications Nomenclature, and Guidelines for Distance and on-line Education.

Programmes and Delivery Modes

Programmes submitted for accreditation in 2024:

EQF/QF-EHEA	Name of qualification used by IBEI	ECTS	ISCED Level	ICETE Level	Delivery Mode
EQF 5 / Short Cycle (partial)	*Certificato di teologia*	60	5 (partial)	Certificate	Full-time in residence, part time DE with Extension Sites, full-time DE/OE and part-time DE/OE.
EQF 6 / First Cycle (P)	*Diploma di teologia*	180	6	Bachelor	Full-time in residence, full-time DE/OE.

Programmes and Delivery Modes

EQF level 5: "*Certificato di teologia*" 60 ECTS, "short cycle partial"
Delivery Mode:
Residential School: *Scuola residenziale* (full-time on campus)
Extension School: *Scuola succursale* (part-time Distance Learning in Extension Sites)
Online Synchronous School: *Scuola telematica* (full-time Distance Learning Online)
Online Asynchronous School: *Scuola a distanza* (part-time Distance Learning Online)

EQF level 6: "*Diploma di teologia*" 180 ECTS "first cycle". Practice oriented.
Delivery Mode:
Residential School: *Scuola residenziale* (full-time on campus)
Online Synchronous School: *Scuola telematica* (full-time Distance Learning Online)
Our nomenclature is not protected.

The Visitation Team

The composition of the VET team to IBEI was as follows:

Dr. Paul Kleiner (Team Leader)
Dr. Göran Janzon (VET member)
Dr. Külli Tõniste (VET member)
Ervehe Ndreca (Student Representative)
Dr. Graham Cheesman (Review Secretary)

Visit Arrangements

The 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 IBEI 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:

1. The RS provided access for the VET-members to the SER, supplemental documents, and previous correspondence with the institution via hyperlink.
2. A shared working report document was set up for members of the team to access and modify both before and 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.
3. VET members recorded the results of their initial reading of the documents within the shared worksheet document.
4. The Internal Review Coordinator (IRC) of the institution was identified and received a copy of the visit protocol.

5. A WhatsApp group was set up internally for the VET members for fast communication, and a second one for fast communication with the institution.
6. In conjunction with the VET leader, the IRC organised and agreed to a schedule for the visit.
7. Two initial pre-visit meetings of the VET took place via video-conferencing to discuss the SER and supporting documents.

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 and response to previous recommendations. The review took place over three days plus travel. The on-campus visit began May 16, 2024 and concluded May 18, 2024.

The review was conducted mainly in English although some team members had a good working knowledge of Italian and, where needed, translation from/to Italian was provided by the institution.

Visit Schedule

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

Study Director (BA)
Chief of Administration
Leadership team
Administrative Staff
Educational Staff (Mentors/Tutors)
Teaching Faculty
Board Representatives
Stakeholders
Church Representatives
Students
Alumni

The team also attended chapel services and classes.

The complete schedule is in the Appendix to this report.

C. Introduction to the institution

General Description of Institution

Since 1959, the Italian Evangelical Bible Institute has served the Italian evangelical churches by supporting them in the formation of believers through various approaches and strategies. They have a long association with ECTE, as members since 1990 and a first EEAA accreditation for the two-year programme in 1996. IBEI is a recognised *Associazione Giuridica* (juridical association) with officially registered bylaws. IBEI is an AP that cannot confer legal degrees (see SER A.1.2 for more details).

Since 2019, the last ECTE review, some major changes have taken place. In 2022, Gianfranco Giuni ended his three-year mandate, and Daniele P. Pasquale was appointed as new Principal. Since then Andrew G. M. Hamilton has been appointed Vice Principal and Susanne Waldner to the new role of Educational Coordinator.

From the educational perspective, three main changes took place. The first has been the introduction of a new delivery mode, the Online Synchronous option starting in September 2020. The second has been the Online Asynchronous option offered also in the Albanian language starting in September 2022. The third has been the revision of the curriculum, with the new curriculum in place in September 2023.

Beyond the programmes presented for accreditation, IBEI carries other activities, such as IBEI-Emmaus Introduction to the Bible courses, a Publishing House with a Theological Journal (*Lux Biblica*) and Seminars and Conferences open to the public.

Mission and Vision Statement

IBEI's stated vision is "to be a school available to all Italian evangelical churches to carry out a training service for the growth of the church in Italy, with the end result of propagating the Good News of salvation by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ, and thus helping to fulfil Jesus' mandate, "Go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...""

IBEI's motto is "Prepared to Serve," which summarises IBEI's mission as stated to come alongside evangelical churches in the training of believers, broadening and deepening their biblical-theological knowledge, developing their practical and specific skills, and fostering their character and relational growth in the community context. An emphasis is placed on teaching the Word of God, to implement the principle of 2 Timothy 2:2: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust them to faithful men… who are also able to teach others."

IBEI is an interdenominational ministry and states that it considers the Bible as the absolute authority and reference regarding matters of faith, ethics and morals.

To fulfil its mission, IBEI offers various non-formal educational services through the IBEI-Emmaus Introduction to the Bible courses and at the academic level, through the Residential delivery mode, the Extension delivery mode and the part-time Distance Learning and the full-time Distance Learning.

In addition, it offers conferences/seminars of various kinds, and publishes the theological journal *Lux Biblica*.

Facilities

IBEI's facilities consist of a good-sized property on the outskirts of Rome built on the remains of a Roman villa, that includes the main campus, one main building with classrooms equipped for residential and internet based teaching, library, offices, cafeteria, and dorms. This facility allows for all academic programmes to take place on campus (Residential and Online Synchronous School), for the administrative needs of all programmes and of the Institution in general, and for other training related projects (such as summer groups).

Governance

In the past five years, IBEI has not changed significantly their organisational chart, although some changes are being contemplated in this current academic year. The most important change is related to the Executive Committee (EC): It was realised that a heavy participation of the President of the board in the EC did not allow for fluid/fast actions needed for the operational aspects of the Institutions. Therefore, IBEI is moving towards an EC composed by the Principal, the Vice Principal and the Business Administrator.

Institutional Organisational Chart
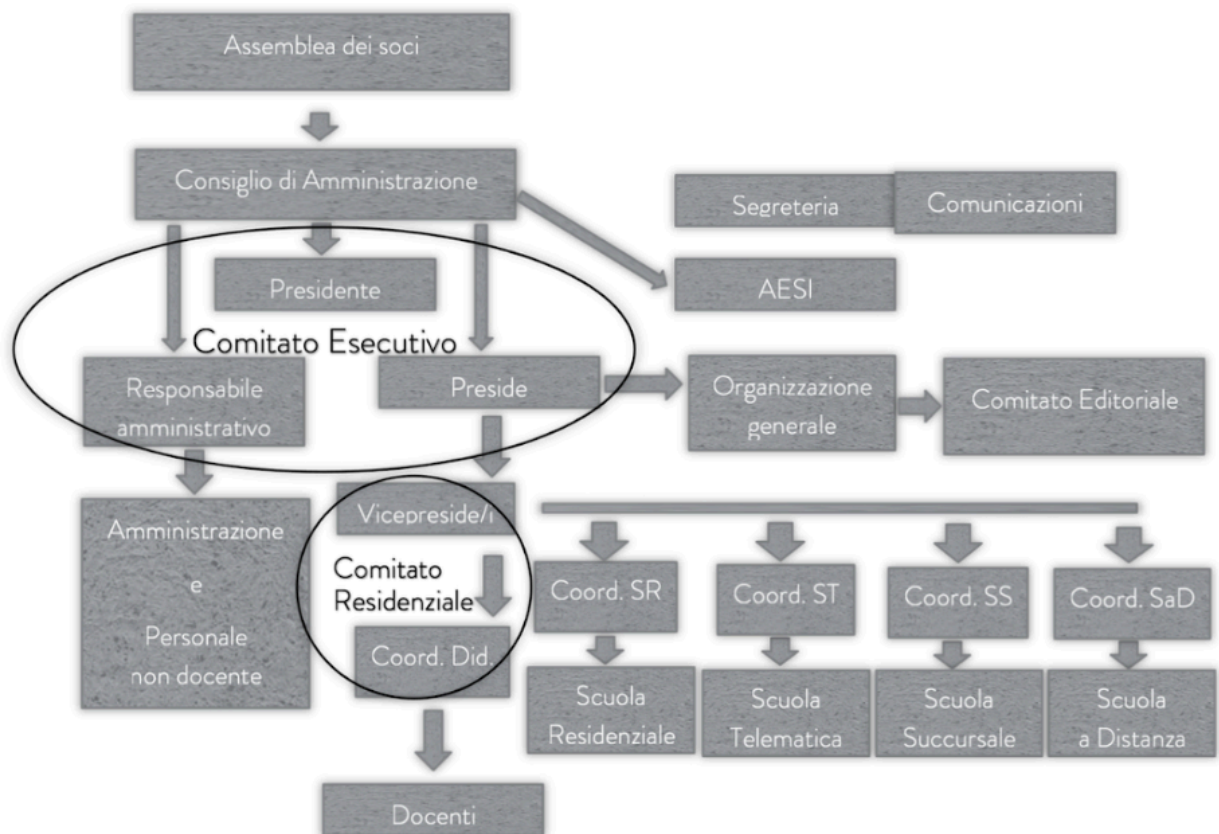
Internal Organisational Chart (Non-educational staff chart)
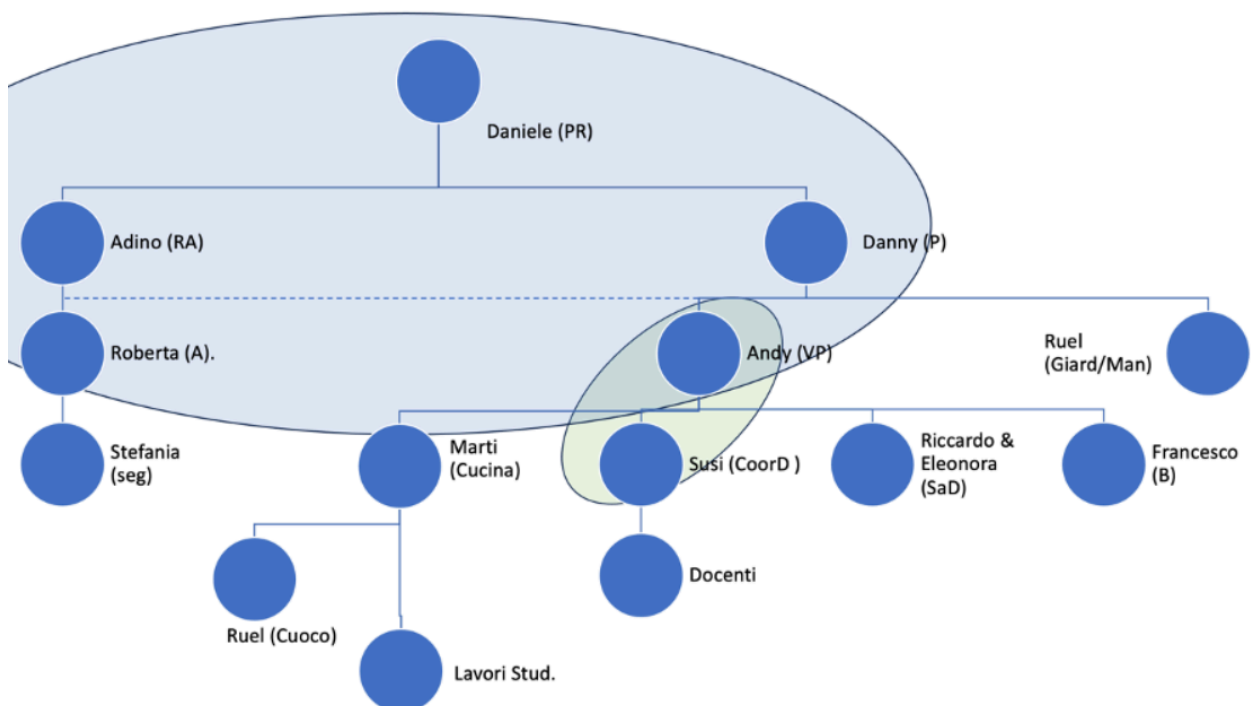
Educational and non-educational Staff

In the past five years, IBEI had a significant turnover, due to retirement and to changes in the curriculum: This included ten teachers retiring from duty and twelve new teachers hired.

All part-time teachers receive an honorarium corresponding to their teaching load. All of the full-time teachers receive their support from outside Italy. The vice-principal is formally hired by IBEI, and the principal receives part of his income through IBEI.

Information on current faculty was provided in the Teachers roster and Teachers bio.

Since the last review five non-educational staff retired and four so far have replaced them, leaving a total of ten non-educational staff (five male, five female), including the principal and vice principal

Budget

IBEI has provided budgets for the past five years. All accounts are externally audited. The source of funds is roughly divided in three areas:

- Income from services (student fees, publishing, and hospitality): 37%
- Income from gifts: 42%
- Income from volunteer work: 21%

Student Numbers

	EQF Level 5 / Short Cycle (partial) (*Certificato di Teologia*)		
	Graduating headcount	Male	Female
2019-20	9	5	4
2020-21	11	5	6
2021-22	14	9	5
2022-23	7	6	1
2023-24	5*	4	1
TOTAL	**46**	**29**	**17**

*as expected in March 2023

	EQF Level 6/ First Cycle (*Diploma di Teologia*)		
	Entering	Total headcount	Graduating
2019-20	2 (2F)	3 (1M/2F)	1 (M)
2020-21	5 (4M/1F)	6 (3M/3F)	1 (F)
2021-22	4 (2M/2F)	9 (5M/4F)	5 (3M/2F)
2022-23	3 (3F)	8 (3M/5F)	4 (2M/2F)
2023-24	2 (1M/1F)	6 (3M/3F)	2 (1M/1F)*
Total	**16 (7M/9F)**	**32 (15M/17F)**	**13 (7M/6F)**

*as expected in March 2023

How the institution prepared for the review

The SER has been produced to renew the accreditation of IBEI's programmes with ECTE with two objectives in mind: assessing current state and allowing for an "outside" assessment by ECTE.

The 2019 accreditation process resulted in a series of Recommendations, for which work has been done and reported in the various APRs since.

To produce this report, IBEI used the following reference documents:

- *Criteria and Procedures for ECTE Accreditation*
- *Standards and Guidelines for ECTE Accreditation*
- *Institutional and Programme Standards*
- *Guidelines for Producing Self-evaluation Reports*

- *Guidelines-for-Programme-Design-and-Using-ECTS*
- *Guidelines-for-the-Diploma-Supplement*
- *Guidelines-for-Institutional-Status-and-Qualification-Nomenclature*
- *Guidelines-in-Distinguishing-Research-and-Practice-Oriented-Programmes*
- *Guidelines-for-Distance-and-Online-Education*

The process of producing the C-SER started in the Summer of 2023 when the Principal (as coordinator of the production of this SER and ECTE reference person) prepared an action-oriented timeline and involved the following individuals:

- President of the Board
- Vice-president of the Board
- Vice-principal
- Educational coordinator
- Administrator
- Secretary

The timeline spelled out steps and responsibilities for producing the SER. In summary, IBEI had a phase of gathering information, a phase of analysing the information and a final phase of compiling the data and producing this document.

All supporting documentation was created in English, with a few exceptions marked by "ITA" at the end of the document name.

D. Findings of the review

Institutional Standards

Standard A1 - Identity and Purpose

Institutions have clearly formulated statements of identity and purpose

Standards examined:

A.1.1 Identity, A.1.2 Legal and Fiscal status, A.1.3 Vision and Mission, A.1.4 Public information.

Previous requirements or recommendations:

2019; "We recommend that choices of centres represent a wider spectrum of evangelical churches wherever possible in line with the recent decisions of the board." See also A.4.

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with Faculty, students, and stakeholders. SER section D.1- A.1. 1,2,3,4. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Website
- Prospetto informativo
- Doctrinal values
- Statutes
- Bylaws

Analysis and Assessment:

IBEI serves a considerably broader base of churches in Italy than previously, when it was primarily Brethren in focus. They are members of a theological forum of theological institutions in the country and are one of only a few which provide residential programmes. Presently IBEI has students from twelve different denominations. IBEI is not Roman Catholic, as is much of Italy, but it takes care to interact with Roman Catholic theology in a careful way examining official documents rather than polemically.

IBEI is a recognised *Associazione Giuridica* (juridical association) with officially registered bylaws. IBEI does not offer nationally recognised degrees and operates as an alternative provider of higher education.

IBEI has a clear vision and mission statement and seeks to develop the delivery of that vision through teaching at the central campus and a number of extension sites, presently in Rome, Milan, Skodra and, as of September, in Florence also.

A more specific vision of delivery of IBEI's mission via student formation is encapsulated in an often repeated pattern of "four Cs";

Growth in Knowledge (*Conoscenza*)
Growth in Character (*Carattere*)
Growth in Abilities (*Capacità*)
Growth in the Community (*Comunità*)

In general, public information standards are met. The website and the *prospetto informativo* (three parts) documents include a clear description of the different methods of delivery. Parts one and two are also available in Albanian. There are no well documented graduated employment statistics and it was explained that the Italian churches served by IBEI do not generally employ paid staff. This leads to IBEI graduates serving as volunteers/lay leaders in churches while being employed elsewhere.

Commendation:

A.1.3 - Vision and mission: We commend IBEI for use of the 4 Cs which capture the vision and mission in a succinct way which is easy to internalise.

Recommendation:

None

Requirement:

None

Panel Conclusion: Fully compliant.

Standard A.2 - Governance and Quality Assurance

INSTITUTIONS HAVE APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE STRUCTURES

Standards examined:

A.2.1 Governance, A.2.2 Leadership and Management, A.2.3 Decision-making structures, A.2.4 strategic planning, A.2.5 Internal Quality Assurance procedures, A.2.6 Cyclical External Quality Assurance.

Previous requirements or recommendations:

2019; "IBEI needs to pursue and complete the writing of their new strategic plan with specific orientation toward theological education, as well as appropriate adoption of university-type structures."

2019; "We recommend that IBEI define in writing the nature of the interface between governance and management responsibilities."

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with; the board, leadership team, principal, academic staff, students. SER sections D.1 - A.2.1 to A.2.6. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Statutes, organisational chart, list of board members, minutes of board and assembly (in Italian, limited understanding)
- *Relazione Preside*
- Departments
- Strategic plan 22-25
- Biannual report
- Quality control overview
- APR reflections on recommendations from 2019 visit

Analysis and Assessment:

There has been a significant development in understanding distinctions of roles and separating the work of the board and the management of the running of the college over the last few years. A board manual is being written to formulate the new understanding. It is a slow process not least because it involves modification of statutes and approval by the General Assembly. The board manual is presently in its third draft.

The composition of the board is also under review and the VET suggests female members and input from the student body at the board level. The board meets twice a year.

Decision-making structures within the management of the institution are simplified by there being one faculty for all delivery modes of the two programmes. Faculty meet three times a year and once a year for a retreat. Student representation is in place in that student representatives from each class meet twice a month with senior staff.

Relations between IBEI and its alumni, stakeholders and the board are working well in both directions.

Strategic plans at IBEI run for three years. There is a present active strategic plan, originally drafted by the present principal, which is relevant to 2022, 2023 and 2024. It was noted by the

VET that the next strategic plan should be produced jointly by the executive and the board and approved by the board. It should include major intended developments, timetable, responsible people to action each element. In particular, more detailed financial planning with regard to strategic initiatives would benefit the institution.

It would be valuable for the institution to formally assess how far the strategic plan has achieved its intentions on a yearly basis and for a mechanism to be created to assess the following year in the light of those conclusions.

There is an excellent summary document of the quality assurance procedures active in IBEI. Quality assurance is working well including the closing of the QC loops created by feedback.

Commendations:

A.2.2 - Leadership and management: We commend the new leadership team for their dedication and commitment.

A.2.5 - Internal Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures: We commend IBEI for the handy overview of quality assurance activities (including feedback loop), easy to consult and helpful for the monitoring.

Recommendations:

A.2.1 - Governance: We recommend that a clear timeline be established for decision-making concerning the revision of the statutes and this be presented to ECTE as a document with hyperlinks to the drafts of the statutes and board manual. (see requirement to standard A.2.1).

A.2.3 - Decision-making structures: We recommend that the Board Manual (cf requirement 1 to standard A.2.1.) includes a section on the possibility of input to the board from the student body or its participation in the decision-making on the board level, in relation to good practice in the Italian higher education setting.

A.2.4 - Strategic planning: We recommend that IBEI reports in the next APR how far the objectives for 2022, 2023 and at least partly for 2024 in the present strategic plan have been achieved and that the next SP, covering major development goals, timetable, responsibilities and financial needs, be worked out in interaction between the executive committee and the Board and finally adopted by the Board.

Requirement:

A.2.1 - Governance: We suggest a requirement be given that the actual draft of the board manual will be submitted to ECTE as soon as possible by a date set by the Accreditation commission. The draft must include the nature of the interface between governance and management responsibilities. (See recommendation to standard A.2.1).

Panel Conclusion: Non-compliant.

Standard A.3 - Human Resources

HUMAN RESOURCES IN INSTITUTIONS ARE FIT FOR PURPOSE AND MANAGED FOR FLOURISHING

Standards examined:

A.3.1 Human Resources; A.3.2 Non-Educational Staff; A.3.3 Educational Staff; A.3.4 HR Policies and procedures.

Previous requirements or recommendations:

2019; We recommend that IBEI faculty use the resources for continuing education available in the ICETE Academy through their membership in ECTE.

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with leadership, non-teaching staff, academic staff, board. SER sections D.1 - A.3.1 - 3.4. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Teacher's roster
- Teacher's bio
- Teachers' manual
- Ethical values
- Educational values
- Care plan and staff development
- Evaluation forms
- Job descriptions

Analysis and Assessment:

The staff meet weekly and there are annual faculty retreats, fellowship meals with students and staff take place. Staff evaluation takes place every six months. There is a "care plan and development" paper which sets out the way IBEI, especially through the principal, cares for and develops the staff and monitors professional development. Policies of anti-discrimination and protection are not formulated in a written document but are practised.

A full staff manual is being developed to include all HR policies.

Job descriptions are present and include standard aspects. Appointment of staff is mainly through active searches by IBEI and informal relationships with churches and organisations. The vice-principal proposes to the principal and then together they make a proposal to the board. The new board will simply receive notification of potential candidates for positions. There is a manual for new associate teachers and a written agreement.

There is no separate budget for faculty development and sabbaticals are not yet available because of the funding issue. Most teachers employed have at least a graduate degree with a few undergraduates and some with terminal degrees. Teachers are encouraged to develop professionally and in their own subject area and contribute to IBEI's academic journal. In meeting with teachers there was a general feeling that the teaching load was heavy but doable and there was plenty of encouragement, help and development opportunities available, especially in scheduled retreats and meetings. Teachers are continuing to be encouraged to use the ICETE academy for professional development but no monitoring of this takes place.

At present IBEI is looking for a pastoral couple to live on site.

The teachers' manual is comprehensive and useful. A greater use of "learning" rather than "teaching" would be appropriate to signal the emphasis.

There is a careful emphasis on ensuring that the difference in teaching modes and therefore the roles of teachers is understood and adjusted to ensure congruence in learning outcomes in the various delivery modes so that there is no substantial difference in learning outcomes. Moodle is well resourced for this, there are guidelines for teaching in various modes but even more training would be useful. A staff member meets with students from various delivery modes once a month to ensure things are working well. Curriculum content and assessment of each student is the same regardless of delivery mode.

Recommendation:

A.3.3 – Educational Staff: We recommend that IBEI work on an overall faculty development plan.

Requirement:

None

Panel Conclusion: Substantial compliance.

Standard A.4 - Community and Context

INSTITUTIONS DISPLAY HEALTHY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS IN ACTIVE RESPONSE TO CONTEXT

Standards examined:

A.4.1 Learning Community; A.4.2 Stakeholder Community; A.4.3 Civil Community; A.4.4 Communication.

Previous requirements or recommendations:

2019; "We recommend that choices of centres represent a wider spectrum of evangelical churches wherever possible in line with the recent decisions of the board."

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with Board, academic staff, non-academic staff, students, stakeholders, managers of extension centres. SER sections D.1 - A.4 1 - 4. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Report of VET member concerning visit to extension centre in Shkoder.
- Teaching manual
- Moodle VLE
- Website
- Various social media platforms
- Curriculum and relevant module descriptors
- *Lux Biblica*

Analysis and Assessment:

Interviews with students and personal experience demonstrates the formation and quality of the learning community in the residential mode as exemplary and strongly contributing to the students' experience.

Community and support for personal, academic and spiritual development is communal in all the other delivery modes in some way and is appreciated by the students.

Stakeholders are local churches and organisations. There are formal relationships with alumni and some organisations with structural ties to IBEI and the home churches of students (including three annual valuations). Other relations with churches and organisations are informal but valued. Relations to donors are handled person to person.

We note the steps were taken in accordance with the VET Recommendation from 2019 that "choices of centres represent a wider spectrum of evangelical churches wherever possible" and encourage IBEI again to seek new opportunities to realise its vision to serve a wider evangelical community. We encourage IBEI as well to develop possibilities to interact with an even broader spectrum of Christian Churches and institutions.

IBEI has an attractive website with information about its programmes in Italian with the facility for translation into English. Social media accounts such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube are also used.

The VET noted that evangelicalism is quite fragmented in Italy, and that Pentecostals are not part of the Evangelical Alliance. The liberal/conservative divide is strong, but it was noted that IBEI uses the Waldensian library. The specific context of Roman Catholicism as the majority church is addressed in study of documents and the invitation of a catholic priest to teach on Catholicism at IBEI. Dialogue and joint action is a sensitive subject in Italy, however relational understanding of the majority Christian context is important.

Commendations:

A.4.1 – Learning community: We commend IBEI for a healthy and spiritually strong learning community.

A.4.4 - Communication: We commend IBEI for the courageous publication, in spite of limited financial resources, of an academic theological journal (*Lux Biblica*) issued twice a year.

Recommendation:

None

Requirement:

None

Panel Conclusion: Fully compliant.

Standard A.5 - Educational Resources

INSTITUTIONS HAVE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT THEIR MISSION AND STRATEGY

Standards examined:

A.5.1 Student services; A.5.2 Study facilities; A.5.3 Library/Learning Resource Centres; A.5.4 Information management; A.5.5 Information Technology; A.5.6 Virtual Learning Environment and Educational Resources.

Previous requirements or recommendations:

None

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with students, librarian, non-academic staff, VLE and technology staff, leadership. SER sections D.1 - A.5.1-6. Examination of campus, and also premises for one extension centre, supplemental documents, in particular:

- Student's guide
- Teachers' handbook
- Moodle VLE
- Library plan
- Website
- Forms in the quality management cycle

Analysis and Assessment:

Student services are carefully planned and managed and there is clarity as to who is responsible for each service.

There is not full access for disabled students to all parts of the main campus due to the nature of the building.

Accommodation for residential students currently provides single room occupancy but, should numbers increase there is the option of double occupancy which would be acceptable to students in Italy. Communal meals are provided as excellent opportunities for strengthening of the community. There is good stewardship of the building, recycling in every room, commitment to green energy as much as the historic building allows. Air conditioning has been installed.

Classrooms are set up with appropriate technology for synchronous teaching and learning creating virtual classrooms where remote students can fully interact in both directions with what is going on in the classroom.

The library plan is present but basic and is constrained by funding. Library acquisitions prioritise quality academic books needed for the programmes and priority is given to books in Italian. Teachers have the right to ask for books relevant to their module which are then purchased. IBEI students have access to the Waldensian library, which is a good resource for theological studies.

The librarian does not have a formal qualification in librarianship but has experience in library work in the US and Italy. The research room is well equipped and there are some academic journals.

Overall, access to learning resources is adequate for the programmes, including digital resources for distance learning students

The teacher manual includes clear regulations regarding intellectual property.

The website provides significant information but is focussed on students and donors. More information about, for instance, board members and trustees, would be helpful.

Student files are adequately used and kept. Administration is carried out very efficiently by relevant staff. Gathering and using extra information such as marking trends, progression, success/failure, dropout rates, Christian service of graduates, etc. would be useful to the institution. The VET encourages IBEI to improve statistical data per delivery mode (applications, new students, dropouts, graduates) and to make grades more easily accessible to students.

The provision of technology includes computers for staff, three premium zoom accounts and dedicated Moodle platform as VLE. Hardware is present to effectively make use of this provision. Technical support is available for students and staff and the library is electronically present on Moodle which is well set up for the various online tasks.

Recommendation:

None

Requirement:

None

Panel Conclusion: Fully compliant.

Standard A.6 - Finances and Sustainability

INSTITUTIONS HAVE SUITABLE FINANCIAL POTENTIAL, PLANNING, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Standards examined:

A.6.1 Financial Potential and Planning; A.6.2 Financial Policies and Procedures; A.6.3 Sustainability; A.6.4 Remuneration and Fees; A.6.5 Fundraising.

Previous requirements or recommendations:

2019; "We recommend that urgent effort be made in order to attract a greater number of students to the residential programme, in order to sustain properly IBEI operations."

2019; "We recommend that IBEI give urgent attention to the appointment of a fundraising/ communications staff member in order to develop the vitally needed partner and financial base of the school."

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with the Board, financial officers and secretaries, principal. SER sections D.1 - A5.1-5. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Bylaws
- "Detailed finances…" document (procedures)
- Financial audits
- Balance sheets
- Teachers roster
- Theology and practice of fundraising document

Analysis and Assessment:

The financial procedures in operation are well described and documented. The financial aspects are managed by professionals.

The issue of financial stability in general seems to be part of the task of the principal. IBEI's financial situation has improved since the last review, although the situation is still not the situation is still not as solid as the principal envisions. 50% of the budget goes to faculty and staff. This is subsidised by self-/donation supported staff and faculty members. One third of income comes from tuition so is vulnerable to low student numbers. This places a big pressure on fundraising.

Budgeting considerations and positions are needed to undergird strategic initiatives and be included in the Strategic Plan under preparation. Long term plans will need careful decision-making such as whether they wish to continue to subsidise the residential programme through other delivery methods. Residential full-time programmes in Italy seem to be suffering in general.

Fundraising efforts were conducted by a former Board member until recently. The principal now has a leading role in fundraising which is well organised. IBEI uses financial software and financial management software in this task. Information on the website is directed towards donors in the UK, US and Canada and the institution is aware of the need to mobilise more Italian donors in order to develop sustainability.

Recommendation:

None

Requirement:

None

Panel Conclusion: Fully compliant.

PROGRAMME STANDARDS[1]

For the previous accreditation process in 2019, a variety of delivery modes were presented as separate programmes. As a result of IBEI's complete revision of the curriculum, the two programmes presented in this accreditation process in 2024 (the EQF level 5 /Short Cycle partial and the EQF level 6 first cycle) are presented as single programmes with various delivery modes. Careful examination was therefore given to ascertain that each delivery mode was capable of reaching the same learning outcomes stated for the programme.

Standard B1 - Holistic Integration

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.

Previous requirements or recommendations:

Special guidance needs to be given to supervisors of students completing their summative final year's thesis to ensure timely completion.

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with leaders, faculty, stakeholders, staff and students of the institution. SER sections D.2 - B.1.1-6. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Module descriptors
- Sample syllabi provided
- Learning outcomes
- Curriculum maps
- Personal Growth Project

Analysis and Assessment:

Aspects relating to all programmes under review

IBEI has framed holistic integration very thoughtfully as well as reflected this goal in their curriculum maps, learning outcomes and course syllabi leading to well designated programmes. This is a visible strength of the institution.

Educational staff and faculty are chosen based on their character as well as competence and they are all involved in spiritual formation and fellowship. Attention is given through faculty retreats, Christmas celebrations etc. for building Christian community and fellowship.

Spiritual formation is a focus of staff development as well as student learning. Opportunities for spiritual development are especially evident in the residential programmes. However, according to programme directors, students and alumni, spiritual formation reaches equal learning

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[1] Analysis and compliance statements apply to all programmes unless otherwise specified.

outcomes in the different delivery modes. Peer mentoring groups and fellowship times provided and guided by mentors are features of the distance learning delivery modes in the extension centres and churches.

IBEI's commitment to character formation is outlined in the "Personal Growth Project '' which addresses character issues, educational needs, relationship issues, ministry experience etc. This is managed by the individual student's mentor.

Academically, the syllabi are well prepared, clear and thorough. Teaching, according to the students, is at a good level and generally involves application to their lives as well as academic development. This was confirmed by class attendance by two VET members. The delivery is student centred and employs a variety of formats. The final major research paper is seen as very important with clear guidelines developed since the last ECTE review.

There is a thought through and well documented system for practicums which includes various aspects from testing for spiritual gifts to hands-on ministry experience. Written assessment criteria for practicums are in place.

Mentoring is well set out as a part of learning activities in the syllabus of the Personal Growth Path. The concept of "celebration" was especially appreciated by the VET. Mentoring of students in the extension centres takes place in meetings of the students together in a mutual way. The coordinator asserted that student assignments in this area are the same as for other delivery modes and programme learning outcomes are seen to be met.

Aspects relating to individual programmes

Programme EQF level 5/Short Cycle (partial) 60 ECTS

The 16 learning outcomes for this programme seem ambitious if designed to be achieved in one year, however discussion with the programme directors led to an affirmation that they generally are met. Some advice was given concerning the phrasing of a few of the outcomes which was accepted.

Programme EQF Level 6/ First Cycle 180 ECTS

In some places, the learning outcomes for this programme do not seem to adequately include progression. See recommendation under standard B.2.5.

The EQF level 5 programme functions as the first year of the EQF level 6 three-year programme. The EQF level 5 therefore has the same entrance requirement as a BTh programme corresponding to the entrance requirement for universities in Italy.

Recommendation:

None

Requirement:

None

Panel Conclusion: partial compliance (subject to recommendation under B.2.5).

Standard B.2 - Curriculum Development

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.

Previous requirements or recommendations:

2019; IBEI should develop its current practical training in evangelism to address a current weakness of the programmes.

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with leaders, faculty, stakeholders, staff and students. SER sections D.2 - B.2.1-8. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Process of review
- Curriculum
- Learning outcomes
- Curriculum maps
- Andragogic practices
- Syllabi
- Module descriptors
- Student handbook
- Teachers handbook
- Moodle material

Analysis and Assessment:

Aspects relating to all programmes under review

The new curriculum has been well designed with due consultation required by the standard. Externally, educational consultants were used in this construction of the new curriculum. The curriculum is reviewed every five years and adjustment to the modules on a yearly basis is built into the system.

Learning outcomes are correlated to the modules and activities with proper allocation of ECTS credits. The learning outcomes as presented in the curriculum maps, the additional information related to key bundles of learning activities such as exegesis, faith in society etc. and especially the thesis, meet the main categories of the programme learning outcomes of the QF/EHEA. The VET suggested that the institution could review the learning outcomes at the next opportunity to strengthen transferable skills and research and innovation in the advanced modules.

Since churches in Italy do not regularly employ Christian workers or ministers, the employment aspects of graduate profiles have been a difficult area for IBEI to formulate.

However, the document "Process of review, approval and implementation of curriculum" defines the regular monitoring process of both programmes and also sets out a regular review

of the graduate profiles. The curricular review process includes the involvement of students, alumni and other stakeholders in order to respond to the needs of the students of all four delivery modes, of stakeholders, and of society.

Students did express the desire for more help before graduation and afterwards concerning the gap from studies to ministry and this was passed on to the leadership.

Credit allocation is conducted acceptably. Different delivery modes take different amounts of time for various elements in the courses, but everything is well explained in the documentation.

In response to the previous recommendation, IBEI has developed a new week-long evangelistic programme.

As to engagement with context in teaching, see A.4 above.

Aspects relating to individual programmes

Programme EQF level 5/Short Cycle (partial) 60 ECTS

This programme includes 60 ECTS credits, to be completed in one year (full-time, in Residential and Online Synchronous School) or three/four years (part-time, in Extension and Online Asynchronous School). Extenuating circumstances can delay the completion of the level 5 programme. Because it is delivered in four modes, Students can choose the delivery mode in which to take the various modules.

Programme EQF Level 6/ First Cycle 180 ECTS

This programme includes 180 ECTS credits, to be completed in three years of full-time study (Residential and Online Synchronous School).

As to content level, feasibility and progression, more could be done as to progression and sequencing from foundational to advanced levels of knowledge and competence, as guidance both for students and teaching staff. This is especially important since EQF level 6 is the outcome qualification, but EQF Level 6 includes courses designed on level 5 and six.

Recommendation:

B.2.5 – Content, Level, Feasibility and Progression: We recommend that IBEI makes adjustments to learning outcomes and module descriptions to better reflect progression and sequencing, from foundational to advanced levels of knowledge and competence.

Requirement:

None

Panel Conclusion: Partial compliance.

Standard B.3 - Learning, Teaching and Assessment

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.

Previous requirements or recommendations:

2019; Special guidance needs to be given to supervisors of students completing their final year's thesis to ensure timely completion.

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with leaders, faculty, stakeholders, staff and students of the institution. SER sections D.2.B.3.1-6. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Educational values
- Andragogical practices
- Syllabi
- Module descriptors
- Curriculum maps
- Feedback material
- Moodle material
- Appeal procedures
- Material on late submission of thesis
- Student handbook
- Teachers' handbook

Analysis and Assessment:

Aspects relating to all programmes under review

Andragogic theory and practice is a strong area "which views students as independent learners with prior knowledge and experiences". Materials and information on Moodle for faculty strengthens this emphasis. Teaching styles are varied and material accompanying teaching is adequate, Moodle is well used. Syllabi and module descriptors are well done. Students in their meeting with the VET generally expressed their satisfaction with the teaching and learning at IBEI.

The asynchronous distance learning community, by its nature, requires adjusted approaches to providing community building experiences. IBEI has designed a student-only forum on Moodle (the "piazza") as one approach. Also, twice every module, meetings occur together with the teacher of that module. The meeting with extension school managers revealed a system working well in conjunction with Moodle and tied closely to the central campus which provides organisation, teaching, assessment and feedback.

Student feedback related to courses is conducted via anonymous forms on Moodle. Feedback is conveyed to teachers in summary by the principal and is used to adjust modules and their teaching.

Assessment is varied and is dependent on the programme learning outcomes.

In response to the previous recommendation, the work on the final research paper now starts in the middle of the second year, as opposed to the end of the second year, allowing for more time to absorb the methodology needed. Moreover, more clear guidelines are provided both for students and supervisors.

Procedure for dealing with students' dissatisfaction is set out, with appeal procedures, in a separate document.

Commendation:

B.3.2 - Student centred learning: We commend IBEI for building a system with different delivery modes which provide flexible learning paths for students.

Recommendation:

None

Requirement:

None

Panel Conclusion: Full compliance.

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

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.

Previous requirements or recommendations:

None

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with leaders, faculty, stakeholders, staff and students of the institution. SER sections D.2 - B.4.1-4. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Website
- Application (section in *modulistica*)
- Material from applications
- Certificate
- Diploma supplement
- *Prospetto Informativo part 1*

Analysis and Assessment:

Aspects relating to all programmes under review

Students recounted a variety of ways in which they heard about the institution and were encouraged to apply. Processing of applications is well dealt with, and it was noted that IBEI are considering a more in-depth reference form from the applicant's church than presently used.

Progression from the level 5 programme to the level 6 programme requires success in the previous programme but not an additional level above pass.

There is an acceptance of prior learning at the relevant level and nature, up to the agreed maximum ECTS as set out in the ECTE supplementary paper, but this is not fully documented.

Certificates and diploma supplements are correctly created.

Recommendation:

None

Requirement:

B.4.3 - Recognition: We suggest a requirement be given that a paper detailing procedures on recognition of prior learning be created by IBEI.

Panel Conclusion: Non-compliance.

Standard B.5 - Qualification Nomenclature and Credits

INSTITUTIONS FOLLOW INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED QUALIFICATION NOMENCLATURE AND CREDIT-COUNTING SYSTEMS

Standards examined:

B.5.1 Qualification nomenclature; B.5.2 Credits.

Previous requirements or recommendations:

None

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with leaders, faculty, stakeholders, staff and students of the institution.

SER sections D.2 - B.5.1-2. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Website - especially https://www.ibei.it/titoli-studio
- Diploma Supplement

Analysis and Assessment:

Aspects relating to all programmes under review

The qualification resulting from the ***Certificato di Teologia*** by IBEI (1 year of full-time study in Residential or Online Synchronous School, 3-4 years in Extension and Online Asynchronous School, 60 ECTS credits, foundational level) is specified and communicated as EQF 5 (partial) level.

The qualification resulting from the ***Diploma in Teologia*** by IBEI (3 year of full-time study in Residential or Online Synchronous School, 180 ECTS credits, advanced level) is specified and communicated as EQF 6 level.

"Diploma" and "Certificado" are very open terms in Italian nomenclature and not protected by law for use by nationally accredited Higher Education Institutions. Bachelor is called Laurea in Italian. The comparability table of ICETE is provided on the website to enhance international mobility (https://www.ibei.it/titoli-studio/).

The leadership is very much aware of ECTE directions in this matter, states and recognises that IBEI operates as an Alternative Provider of higher education.

IBEI defines workload in terms of ECTS credits within the established range with 1 ECTS defined as 30 hours of student learning.

Recommendation:

None

Requirement:

None

Panel Conclusion: Fully compliant.

E. Conclusions

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

A.1.3 - Vision and mission: We commend IBEI for use of the 4 Cs which capture the vision and mission in a succinct way which is easy to internalise.

A.2.2 - Leadership and management: We commend the new leadership team for their dedication and commitment.

A.2.5 - Internal Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures: We commend IBEI for the handy overview of quality control activities (including feedback loop), easy to consult and helpful for the monitoring.

A.4.1 - Learning community: We commend IBEI for a healthy and spiritually strong learning community.

A.4.4 - Communication: We commend IBEI for the courageous publication, in spite of limited financial resources, of an academic theological journal (*Lux Biblica*) issued twice a year.

B.3.2 - Student centred learning: We commend IBEI for building a system with different delivery modes which provide flexible learning paths for students.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A.2.1 - Governance: We recommend that a clear timeline be established for decision-making concerning the revision of the statutes and this be presented to ECTE as a document with hyperlinks to the drafts of the statutes and board manual. (see requirement to standard A.2.1).

A.2.3 - Decision-making structures: We recommend that the Board Manual (cf requirement 1 to standard A.2.1.) includes a section on the possibility of input to the board from the student body or its participation in the decision-making on the board level, in relation to good practice in the Italian higher education setting.

A.2.4 - Strategic planning: We recommend that IBEI reports in the next APR how far the objectives for 2022, 2023 and at least partly for 2024 in the present strategic plan have been achieved and that the next SP, covering major development goals, timetable, responsibilities and financial needs, be worked out in interaction between the executive committee and the Board and finally adopted by the Board.

A.3.3 - Educational Staff: We recommend that IBEI work on an overall faculty development plan.

B.2.5 - Content, Level, Feasibility and Progression: We recommend that IBEI makes adjustments to learning outcomes and module descriptions to better reflect progression and sequencing, from foundational to advanced levels of knowledge and competence.

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

A.2.1 - Governance: We suggest a requirement be given that the actual draft of the board manual will be submitted to ECTE as soon as possible by a date set by the Accreditation commission. The draft must include the nature of the interface between governance and management responsibilities. (See recommendation to standard A.2.1).

B.4.3 - Recognition: We suggest a requirement be given that a paper detailing procedures on recognition of prior learning be created by IBEI.

IN CONCLUSION

The visitation team recommends to the ECTE AC that IBEI be judged to be in compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines* of the ECTE with the exceptions of the requirement listed above.

The team recommends to the ECTE AC that, subsequent to compliance with the requirement, it grant IBEI accreditation, with the relevant recommendations listed above monitored through the annual reporting processes of ECTE.

The VET would like to record their gratitude to IBEI 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 IBEI for their excellence and commitment in following their calling.

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

The visitation team:

Signed:

Dr. Paul Kleiner (Team Leader)

Dr. Göran Janzon (VET member)

Dr. Külli Tõniste (VET member)

Ervehe Ndreca (Student Representative)

Dr. Graham Cheesman (Review Secretary)

May 2024

APPENDICE

Visitation Schedule

		Place	Comments
	Day 1: Thursday, 16.05.2024		
08:00-08:30	**Team Briefing**		
08:30-08:50	**Chapel:** *VET is introduced to staff and students VET members have a chance to address staff and students.*	Main classroom	
09:00-09:45	**Introductory meeting with Senior Leadership Team** Principal, Vice Principal, Accountant		
10:00-10:50	**Visit Class** "CP1 - Pastoral Care 1" 2 VET-members / **Tour of Facilities with Library** (2 VET-members) Accountant, Librarian		
11:10-11:55	**Educational Staff** (includes Programme Directors) Vice Principal/Academic Dean and Educational Coordinator		
12:10-13:20	**Team Time /Review Worksheet**		
14:00-14:45	**Site Managers of Extension Sites** (via Zoom): Rome Coordinator, Milan Coordinator, Shkoder Coordinator	VET "meeting room"	
15:00-15:45	**Administrative Staff** Admin, Accountant, Secretary / **Students**– in person meeting	Admin Office; VET "meeting room"	
16:30-17:15	**Learning Resources** (library/online) Educational Coordinator and Librarian		
17:30	**Team Time /Review Worksheet**		
	Day 2: Friday, 17.05.2024		
08:00-08:45	**Team Briefing for the Day**		
08:45-09:30	Teaching Faculty Lecturers in Church History, Youth Ministry, Exegesis and Theology, Hebrew		
09:45-10:30	**Programme Directors** Vice Principal (with Educational coordinator) is in charge of programmes. For the various delivery modes: Extension School, Residential School, Online Synchronous School, Online Asynchronous School	VET "meeting room"	

11:00-11:45	**Support Staff** Kitchen Coordinator and Housekeeping Manager, Cook and Maintenance	VET "meeting room"	
12:00-13:20	**Team Time /Review Worksheet**		
14:00-14:45	Mentors/Tutors – Internships, etc. Mentoring and ministry practicum coordinator, Mentors	VET "meeting room"	
15:00-15:45	**Board Members** President, Vice president	**Meeting with Alumni *** Residential, Online Async	VET "meeting room" and VET "office" + Zoom	
16:15-17:00	**Students from Extension Sites** (via Zoom) Roma, Milano, Online Sync, Online Sync, Online, Async	VET "meeting room"	
17:15	**Team Time /Review Worksheet** **Decide on need for follow-up conversations for day 3 – communicate to Review Manager**	VET "office"	

Day 3: Saturday, 18.05.2024

08:00-08:30	**Team Briefing for the Day**		
08:45-09:30	**Reserved for follow-up conversations as needed (split team)**	**Reserved for follow-up conversations as needed (split team)**	TBD	
09:30-10:45	**Finalising Report (commendations, recommendations, requirements)**	VET "office"	
11:00-12:00	**Sharing Conclusions with leadership team**	VET "meeting room"	