REVIEW
REPORT

Pars Theological Centre, Hampshire
Related to a visit for a Programme Review;
March 25-27, 2024

ECTE

European Council for
Theological Education

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A. Executive summary

Report of a Programme Review of an EQF Level 6 programme/First Cycle named "Bachelor Equivalent in Theology & Christian Ministry" seeking a first accreditation of this programme of the Pars Theological Centre (Pars), an alternative provider of higher education (AP) based in Hampshire, United Kingdom.

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 March 25-27, 2024, for the purpose of accrediting a Pars programme based on the ECTE's *Standards and Guidelines* and relevant ECTE Supplemental Guidelines. The VET suggests to the ECTE Accreditation Commission (AC) 6 commendations of excellence, 2 recommendations and no requirements.

B. Introduction to the review

Description of the review

Pars obtained institutional and programme accreditation (EQF Level 5 (partial)/EQF Level 5) from ECTE as an AP in 2022, dedicated to train leaders who could serve and lead the church in loving God and neighbour, transforming the Persian-speaking world for the glory of God.

This report details the Programme Review of an EQF Level 6/First Cycle qualification.

The documents guiding this review are the Standards and Guidelines of the ECTE, part B (programme standards), 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.

Programme

Programme submitted for accreditation in 2024:

EQF/QF-EHEA	Name of qualification used by Pars	ECTS	ISCED Level	ICETE Level	Delivery Mode
EQF 6/ First Cycle	Bachelor Equivalent in Theology and Christian Ministry کارشناسی الهیات و خدمات مسیحی	180	6	Bachelor	online / hybrid

The Visitation Team

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

Katharina Penner (Team Leader)
James Lockwood (VET member)
Raul Gradjan (Student Representative)
Dr. Grace Al-Zoughbi (Review Secretary)

Visit Arrangements

The AC approved the team and the dates of the review visit, and these were communicated to Pars by the RS who also asked the institution if they had any reservations about the team members, but there were none. The 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 AC. 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 all previous correspondence with the institution via hyperlink.

2. VET members recorded the results of their initial reading of the documents within the review worksheet.

3. The Internal Review Coordinator (IRC) of the institution was identified and received a copy of the visit protocol.

4. A messenger app group was set up internally for the VET members for fast communication, and a second one for fast communication with the institution.

5. In conjunction with the VET leader, the IRC organised and agreed to a schedule for the visit.

6. An initial pre-visit meeting of the VET took place via video-conferencing to discuss the SER and supporting documents.

7. 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 on-campus visit began 25 March 2024 and concluded 27 March 2024.

The review was conducted in English and where needed translation from/to Farsi 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
Associate Director
Leadership team
Director of Studies
Head of Formation
Administrative Staff
Mentors/Tutors
Teaching Faculty
Board Representatives
Stakeholders
Church Representatives
Students
Alumni

The complete schedule is in Appendix 1 to this report.

C. INTRODUCTION TO THE INSTITUTION AND PROGRAMMES

General Description of Institution

Pars has been a member of ECTE since 2017 and has been accredited as an institution since 2022.

Pars Theological Centre's legal name is Multimedia Theological Training Limited (MTT). MTT is registered with Companies House (number: 07693753) and the Charity Commission of England and Wales (number: 1144746). In Farsi the institution is called دانشکده الهیات پارس Daneshkade Elhiyat Pars – Pars Theological College. Pars is an AP and therefore does not confer legal degrees.

Mission and Vision Statement

Pars' vision is to see a vibrant and mature Iranian church, united in love for God and neighbour, transforming the Persian-speaking world for Christ.

Pars' mission is to equip and mobilise the Iranian church by training a new generation of biblically rooted, theologically informed, emotionally healthy, and spiritually mature men and women of God, committed to serve and lead the church in loving God and neighbour, transforming the Farsi-speaking world for the glory of God.

History

Pars was founded in 2010 by an interdenominational group of Iranian theologians, pastors, and counsellors who were dreaming of a hub for deep, holistic, and contextual leadership training for the Iranian church in all its various theological and denominational expressions. The need for such a hub had intensified throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s given the exponential growth of the church in Iran. This interdenominational group - comprising the core of Pars at the time - consisted of friends and colleagues who were involved in teaching the Bible and developing leaders for the Iranian church (both inside Iran and out) over the years. However, their efforts were mostly ad hoc and disintegrated. Due to the rich friendships that were growing between them and the years devoted to patient prayer, seeking the Spirit's guidance, and conducting research in how to do theological education at its best, they came together under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Mehrdad Fatehi in Spring of 2010 to make their dream a reality. And, thus, Pars Theological Centre was born.
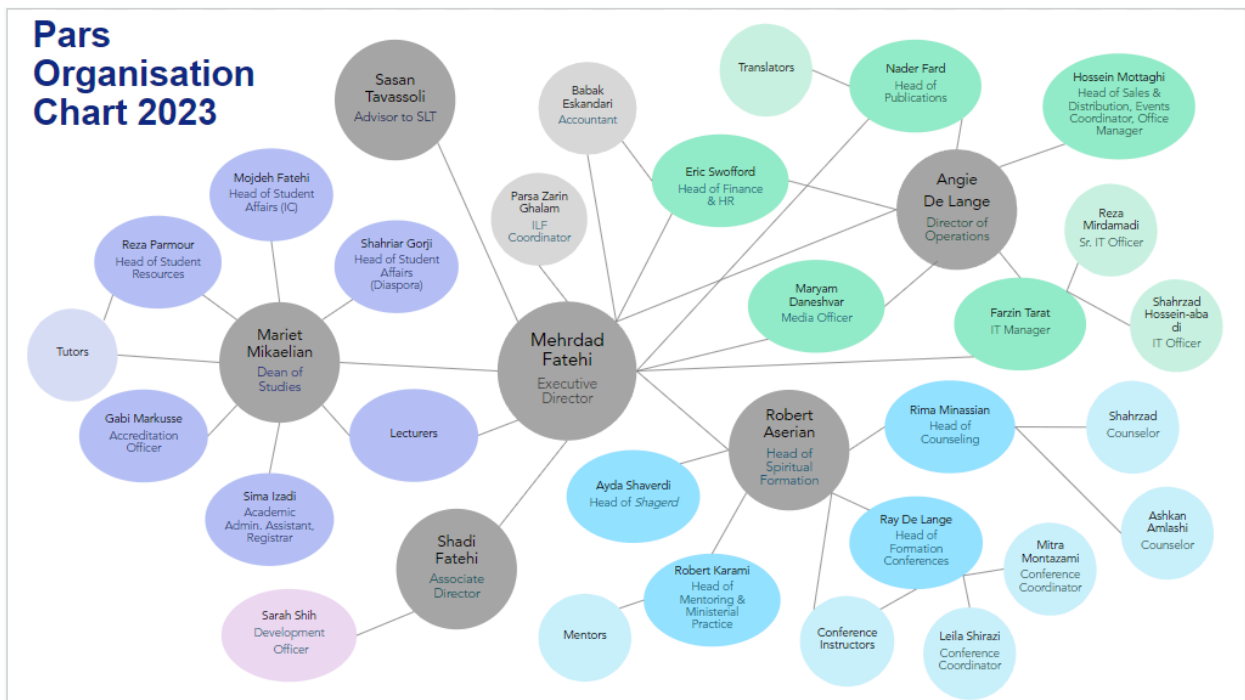
Facilities

Pars has a physical base in Hampshire, England, which, apart from staff offices, includes a professional studio for recording lectures, videos for social media, and other promotional materials, as well as a conference room.

Governance

Pars' organisational structure is as follows:

Pars is led by a UK Board of Directors/Governors, Academic Committee, and Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

The leadership structure with its three main governing bodies together run Pars and deal with different levels and types of decision-making:

I. Board of Directors/Governors

This board, which is Pars' (Multimedia Theological Training Limited's) UK Board of Trustees, constitutes the governing board of the institution. It provides the highest level of organisational authority in decision-making, dealing mainly with policies and plans. It meets three times a year.

Recently, the UK Board of Trustees (Pars UK) authorised and established a charity in the United States and a separate charity in Canada. Both the US and Canadian charities receive funds on Pars UK's behalf and provide tax acknowledgement to the donors. Neither Pars US nor Pars Canada have governing control over Pars UK. The trustees of Pars UK continue to oversee all matters and make decisions.

II. Academic Committee

This committee consists of most full-time and part-time faculty and provides leadership and supervision over all academic and educational matters. It gathers once a month.

III. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

This executive body consists of the Executive Director/Principal, Associate Director, Director of Studies, Head of Formation, the representative of the Board of Directors, and Director of Operations. Together they provide leadership over all executive, managerial, and administrative matters, as well as the day-to-day running of the institution. They meet once a week.

Educational and non-educational Staff

At Pars, many of the faculty and staff fill several roles. Because the lectures are usually pre-recorded and can be given with minimal workload during a semester, the faculty often share other responsibilities at the institution. The number of non-educational staff includes a few of the faculty members who also have official roles in non-educational areas, such as the Executive and Operations Director, and the various department heads.

Number of non-educational staff

Pars has 22 non-educational staff, of which there are 9 women, 13 men, 5 fulltime and 17 part-time.

Types and number of educational staff

Pars has 32 educational staff.

Pars is an institution that delivers its educational programmes in a hybrid mode. Pars places great emphasis on a formational education, the faculty consists of 3 groups of people, each contributing in a significant way to the holistic formation of the students. These are:

- Lecturers/Module Directors who prepare and video record the online modules and are involved in the online programme to different extents depending on whether they are full-time or part-time.
- Tutors who help with the marking of the assignments, give regular feedback to students, and answer their questions.
- Conference Instructors who offer seminars through in-person and virtual formation conferences throughout the year.

Number and qualifications of educational staff:

- Doctorate: 7 PhDs +2 professional doctorates (DMin and Psych D).

- Master: 9 (of which 4 are currently PhD candidates).

- Bachelor: 7 BAs, each of whom has years of exemplary experience in the Iranian Church and are highly honoured leaders.

- Special experience or ability regardless of degrees: 2 conference instructors have BAs along with over 40 years of ministry/pastoral experiences. Pars regards them as highly experienced reflective practitioners who have a lot to offer the students.

A detailed list of educational staff with names, educational background, roles, specialisations and teaching loads was submitted as part of the SER. A chart of educational staff was received from Pars and assessed.

Budget

Pars has sound financial policies. Three years of financial reports were made available to the VET (2020-2022). The team found them to be transparent and, in spite of being heavily dependent on donations, the financial situation of Pars appears stable and sustainable.

Each year, Pars has its accounts audited by an independent third party. This audit is a requirement in the UK for charities of this size. Student fees make up only a small amount of Pars' income.

Pars monitors income and expenses on a monthly basis. If funds appear to be running short, they discuss measures to cope with the shortfall such as postponing future Formation Conferences. They also have a Reserve Policy, according to which they set aside the equivalent of 3 months of their expenditure for times of financial shortage. Pars also works closely with the development colleagues who provide details of anticipated gifts (income).

Self-supported (such as missionary and other) staff

Pars functions independent of any specific mission organisation. However, it has four individuals on staff who are supported financially by either a mission organisation or a specific church. One of these who is also a UK Trustee, receives a very small amount related to his lecturing for Pars, but is primarily supported by his mission organisation. One couple, both of whom are working with Pars full-time, receive full support as missionaries through their mission organisation.

Student Numbers

Pars has had an increasing number of students in its EQF 6/First Cycle programme over the past few years as follows:

	EQF 6 / First Cycle (Bachelor equivalent in Theology and Christian Ministry) کارشناسی الهیات و خدمات مسیحی		
	Entering	Total number	Graduating
2018-19 2nd Semester	30 (M:17/F:13)	182 (M:98/F:84)	0
2019-20 1st Semester	82 (M:56/F:26)	278 (M:156/F:122)	0
2019-20 2nd Semester	83 (M:30/F:53)	332 (M:160/F:172)	0
2020-21 1st Semester	18 (M:11/F:7)	224 (M:114/F:110)	0
2020-21 2nd Semester	51 (M:21/F:30)	290 (M:142/F:148)	0
2021-22 1st Semester	23 (M:12/F:11)	325 (M:146/F:179)	0
2021-22 2nd Semester	17 (M:5/F:12)	295 (M:128/F:167)	0
2022-23 1st Semester	19 (M:8/F:11)	282 (M:126/F:156)	0
2022-23 2nd Semester	39 (M20/F:19)	331 (M:150/F:181)	0
2023-24 1st Semester	65 (M:31/F:34)	363 (M:162/F:201)	17 (M:8/F:9)
TOTAL			**17 (M:8/F:9)**

How the institution prepared for the review

The P-SER was written under the guidance of the Director of Studies, together with the Accreditation officer. Many of the staff were involved directly or indirectly by providing information regarding their own department and writing one or more sections related directly to their department. The final report was edited by the Executive Director, and Associate Director.

D. Findings of the review

Programme Standards

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.

DE/OE.39

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with leaders, faculty, stakeholders, staff, and students of the institution. P-SER. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Course Catalogue, Manifesto, Vision, Mission and Values document, Mentoring Manual for Mentors.
- Syllabi linked in the section of the P-SER, Programme profile, presentation from staff in person.
- Curriculum map, Case study sample, Programme Learning outcomes, Rubrics for short essay assignment, Rubrics for academic essay, Syllabus Principles of Teaching in the Church, presentation from staff in person.
- Mentored growth and development syllabus, student mentoring manual, mentees annual report.

Analysis and Assessment:

Pars has carefully outlined policies and procedures indicating how holistic integration will be achieved. Procedures include active partnerships with local churches, organisations and mentors. These policies are regularly reviewed and revised. Particular care, creativity and innovation are given to learning outcomes and activities related to spiritual formation and character education.

Pars has invested a lot of thought in designing and implementing a programme that is holistic in nature and combines four modes of learning: Online classes, Formation Conferences, Mentored Growth and Development, and Ministerial Practice and Reflection. The VET encourages the institution to continue to develop ways of integrating learning from the various streams of learning (e.g. theology and more practical topics), as they are already seeking to do.

In their educational philosophy, Pars pursues the fourfold goal of love (God and neighbour), and loving God is attributed to spiritual formation. Pars takes the spiritual formation of their students seriously and provides through their Formation conferences helpful community contexts where spiritual formation is nourished and practised. The Conferences are part of the formal learning plan and are assessed, given credit, and included in the total calculation of ECTS credits. Pars also places responsibility for spiritual formation on the students themselves by

providing but not mandating taking up the offer of free counselling or the use of the *Shagerd* website.

Further, Pars takes the character education of their students seriously and has designed appropriate credit-awarding courses to reflect this in the programme. Programme Learning outcomes include character-related (affective) aspects in each of the four goals (God, Self, Church, World). Syllabi on Mentoring, Ministerial Practice and Formational Conferences include discussions related to character formation and assess character-related outcomes through 1) student self-assessment forms and reflective papers/journals (following a mentoring period, after ministerial practice and formational conference) and 2) Mentor and MinPractice Referee evaluation forms. Pars aims for academic success and development of their students. This aspect is well planned out in their curriculum. The Programme Learning outcomes include cognitive outcomes on an academic level, and syllabi clearly demonstrate learning activities to achieve these outcomes.

The programme is designed to be practical in nature and the institution has made every effort to include this throughout the programme as well as in specific modules. Components that are part of the formal learning plan are appropriately assessed and given credit. Generic competencies are specified in the Programme Learning outcomes. Syllabi specify subject-specific and generic (transferrable) objectives and learning outcomes. Some courses and learning activities focus specifically on generic competencies such as problem-solving, communication and teamwork.

Whilst the context is difficult, the programme includes a well-structured mentoring programme with regular meetings, accountability, and evaluation to support students' development throughout their studies. Programme Learning outcomes to which mentoring components are mapped include the student's relationship with God as well relational issues with self, faith communities and world. Mentoring is directly intertwined with spiritual formation, character education, academic achievement, and practical training. The formal components are assessed through reflective papers, journals, evaluation forms by mentee and mentor. The Programme profile emphasises that it is a graduation requirement.

Mentors receive detailed instructions and are evaluated by the mentees as well as submit a self-evaluation.

Commendations:

B.1.2 - The VET commends the work of Pars to integrate spiritual formation throughout the programme and in the difficult context of online learning and those studying inside the country.

B.1.4 - The VET commends Pars' efforts to purposefully and intentionally guide students through the cross-cultural change of moving from rota learning to higher-level thinking skills of application, evaluation, and argumentation.

B.1.6 - The VET commends Pars on their very thorough, well thought through and well applied mentoring programme.

Recommendation:

B.1.4 - The VET recommends that Pars continues to devise and employ new and creative ways of developing critical thinking and research skills in their students.

Panel Conclusion: Partial Compliance

Standard B.2 - Curriculum Development

Standards examined:

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

DE/OE.40, DE/OE.42, DE/OE.43, DE/OE.45, DE/OE.46

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with leaders, faculty, stakeholders, staff, and students. P- SER. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Learning Outcomes, ministry partners form, student feedback, manifesto, Graduate Profile, Diploma Supplement.
- Course catalogue, programme profile.
- Website, curriculum map, sample syllabi, course improvement action plan, syllabus template, Course Design and Syllabus Writing Guideline and Checklist, Feedback questionnaire for students (=Course evaluation form), presentation from staff in person.
- Graduate profile.
- Course catalogue, allocated hours for learning activities, Syllabus for Ministerial practice.
- Allocated hours image, sample tutoring hours, equivalence global courses, academic calendar, transfer policy from Student handbook.
- Vision, Mission and Values document, Manifesto.
- Feedback questionnaire, linked evaluation forms, summary of student responses, quality assurance policy, course improvement action plan.

Analysis and Assessment:

The design of the programme includes a specific analysis of the Iranian context that has determined the choice of DE/OE delivery.

It is evident that Pars has thought deeply and carefully about the design of its programmes. The EQF Level 6 programme has grown and developed throughout a period of the last 10 years through careful analysis of student feedback, in continuous consultation among faculty, in line with the general outcomes and the graduate profile. Module content and the mode of delivery are geared to the specific context. Online delivery has been purposefully supplemented with face-to-face formational components. The engagement with internal and external stakeholders and experts as well as the collaborative nature of the approval and design process is commendable.

Courses and programmes are formally evaluated and approved by the Academic Committee which meets once a month and comprises the core faculty. An educational consultant is involved in discussing useful programme elements, for example, he recently suggested creating 2-3 integrative courses that would help students integrate knowledge and skills developed in other courses.

The Diploma Supplement clearly communicates the appropriate qualification nomenclature.

Pars has well developed, contextual learning outcomes and these are mapped throughout the practice-oriented curriculum as demonstrated in a well-developed curriculum map. Self-statement by Pars: philosophy of education informs everything "from the development of our programme and curriculum to the details of putting together an online course or booking a conference centre, from study and research to learning and ministering," p.48.

Using the metaphors of head, hand and heart outcomes reflect academic aspects, practical skills, and competences as well as spiritual and character formation. These outcomes align well with standards and criteria of ECTE and the QF-EHEA descriptors. The programme reflects in a contextually adapted way the outcomes defined in the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) for EQF Level 6 as well as the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe.

Module descriptors feature a description of the DE/OE instructional methods that are used. Learning activities are designed within modules to help meet learning outcomes as fitting to the delivery context. Further, special care is used in designing feasible time frames that enable smooth student progression. ECTS credits are calculated and allocated for all learning activities that occur through DE/OE delivery.

Pars has developed an appropriate curriculum map that is focused, unified and relevant as well as module descriptors for all credit-bearing learning activities of the programme. Module descriptors follow a template that includes all necessary elements. Learning activities are varied and appropriate for adult learners, content and delivery mode are appropriate and aligned to learning outcomes. Online delivery is enriched through regular required synchronous webinars with the teacher where course material is discussed in QA sections and, experimentally, in breakout rooms.

Curricula and module descriptors are collaboratively developed by faculty and approved by the Academic committee. Course content and delivery is regularly evaluated based on colleague and student feedback by the teacher with the Director of Studies. The graduate profile is fit for purpose and the context the institution is teaching in. Pars maintains close communication with external stakeholders for possible ministry involvement of students and graduates. Board members confirm that students are often already involved in ministry and their ministry is enriched and improved throughout studies. Some of the recent graduates have already picked up further study opportunities.

The programme offers a diverse range of courses (both core and elective) and there is a clear progression in course levels as needed (foundational and core courses). A substantial portion of courses engage in biblical and theological studies. The practical and contextual focus of the course is reflected in these courses through the assignments. An agreed template helps allocate learning time to learning activities and assignments so that student workload is comparable, and students can complete courses and the programme in a feasible time frame.

Attrition has fluctuated throughout the years, not least due to contextual circumstances of persecution and high mobility. Often the first two courses help students determine the expected academic rigour and time commitment and whether they will decide to proceed with studies. Attrition due to programme requirements is being reduced by helpful student services and personal engagement of tutors and faculty.

During each study year students engage in ministerial practice under supervision in well-structured placement opportunities and are given 3 credits. Their involvement is assessed through self and referee/supervisor assessment, weekly journals, and a reflective paper. Pars has a well-developed activity duration and ECTS credit allocation process and a transfer policy in place. Credit allocation is modality neutral and equally adapted to online delivery and face-to-face instruction during webinars. Faculty is conscious of student workload and collaboratively evaluates time allocation to assignments and to the overall course. Students consider the workload as challenging but manageable.

Module descriptors quantify all student learning activities and ensure the demonstration of learning outcomes. Institutional learning calendars allow for flexibility of taking only one course per semester but once signed up for the course there are clear timeframes for lessons and assignments that students go through together. The transfer policy stipulates that not more than one-half (50%) of the credits can be transferred from a different institution.

It is clear through the P-SER and all other content and conversations during the visit that context plays a central role in everything Pars does, including in curricular content and delivery modes. 'Contextual awareness' is one of the core values, and Pars is very conscious of it.

Graduates are prepared for different service settings and for various primarily Iranian social and cultural contexts. Whilst clearly still in the early stages of formalising some of the review processes, it seems that Pars is taking monitoring and internal quality assurance seriously and puts good practices in place. Staff, students, tutors, alumni, and external stakeholders (formally and informally) are involved. Students and faculty feel heard and see that feedback and suggestions for improvement are acted upon. Student responses are monitored and inform course evaluation and revision.

Panel Conclusion: Full 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.

DE/OE.49, DE/OE.51, DE/OE.50, DE/OE.52, DE/OE.53, DE/OE.55, DE/OE.56.

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with leaders, faculty, stakeholders, staff, and students of the institution. P-SER sections. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Website, Vision, Mission and Values doc, Programme Learning outcomes, Prospectus, Student handbook, presentation from staff in person.
- Complaints policy, learning challenges policy, Plagiarism policy (Student handbook).
- Grading system.
- Feedback questionnaires (many and varied).
- Various rubrics: short essay, case study, academic essay.

Analysis and Assessment:

Pars has a well thought through educational philosophy, since their beginning, which is theologically grounded in the Great Commandment of love. The educational philosophy clearly impacts programme and course design, everyone (staff and faculty) is made to engage with it, including in biannual self-evaluation and self-reflection. Further, Pars is ambitious to learn and upskill in the area of adult pedagogy. They are doing this well and continue to develop their teaching skills, and are willing to upgrade their courses, in terms of content and delivery. Pars articulates their educational philosophy and adult pedagogy practices to include specific reference to the chosen mode of DE/O.

Pars employs a list of indicators of quality in learning and teaching that reflect the chosen delivery mode assessment. Due to online delivery, LMS Moodle plays a crucial role and it is very well designed: course delivery as well as learning resource provision, payment and communication opportunities. The curriculum includes a certain level of flexibility for students' learning paths through electives and through the number of courses taken during a semester (less courses, however, prolongs study time). Courses are organised and assessed in a way that helps students to become autonomous learners. Pars specifically formulates how the chosen mode of DE/OE contributes to student-centred learning and teaching. This is also reflected and articulated in the design of all modules in the programme.

The students are clearly at the core of everything. Every effort is made to create a positive learning experience for students from diverse contexts. The outcomes intended are made clear for the students. The criteria of evaluation are clearly stated on Moodle where students can see them beforehand. They also receive assistance through the webinars and through the written feedback which is improvement oriented. Learning in small groups sometimes takes place during webinars and usually during formational conferences and chapels.

Students are alerted to requirements of academic integrity in the student handbook and are required to sign a form with a commitment to abstain from plagiarism before starting any course. Pars is considering developing a plagiarism software as existing software does not work for the Farsi language.

Tutors play an important role in the educational process (including for maintaining academic integrity). They are often Pars graduates or students in higher years. They receive very detailed instructions, training and supervision by the Assistant to the Director of Studies.

Pars has implemented good practice in module design in relation to the mode of delivery. This is supported by research, implemented in training module writers, and supported by a process of testing, editing and revision. 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.

Pars has a well-documented process for module design and a well-rationalised reason for their delivery of the modules either online or in their F2F conferences. Course design and delivery on Moodle is of high quality. Community is built and spiritual and character formation is engaged in during the 10-15 conferences a year, the 3-5 webinars per course, the Zoom chapel and frequent mentoring meetings (once every 3 weeks). Pars has designed their programme delivery with a view for accessibility and lowering costs for students from diverse contexts and is conscious of the programme's quality and scalability.

There is a clear desire for variety and creativity in terms of delivery and assessment with attention to cultural aspects and alertness to contextual (security) issues. Oral assignments are being considered beside many varied written assignments, including written evaluations in practice for the mentoring and ministry experience.

Assessment is designed to be suitable and feasible for the chosen DE/OE delivery context. Measures are put in place to avoid unfairness and cheating.

Students are aware of the assessment procedures before they take a course, and the faculty is familiar with the assessment regulations. Assessment of the ministry internship and of the mentoring experience is in place as well, both self-evaluation and external evaluation. Tutors play an important role in assessment. They are well trained, closely supervised and evaluated. Their feedback is transparently logged in Moodle. They are in regular contact with the Course director in case of questions or appeals. Pars is considering the introduction of a final project with the purpose of better integration of learned knowledge and skills.

Mechanisms are in place to provide prompt, regular feedback to students. Feedback is collected through student feedback and colleague evaluation, collaboratively and individually, written and oral. It includes comments on module delivery, teaching methodology, design effectiveness. Students and faculty feel that they are listened to, and their feedback is getting acted upon.

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.

DE/OE.57, DE/OE.58, DE/OE.59,DE/OE.60, DE/OE.61

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with leaders, faculty, stakeholders, staff, and students of the institution. P-SER sections. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Special access policy, Student Handbook, website, presentation from staff in person.
- Student handbook, Programme profile.
- Transfer policy (P-SER, p. 62-3), Special access policy, Entrance exam, Entry interview questions.
- Diploma supplement, transcripts, Certificate.

Analysis and Assessment:

Admission policies and procedures are clear and fit for purpose. Pars seeks to adapt to the different contexts to aid students in the admission process. This includes an interview and exam to confirm the students are of an appropriate level. Further, Pars has clear policies for recognition of prior learning and transfer of credits that are fit for purpose and appropriate for the context.

Pars has remote admission procedures that are suitable for DE/OE students.

Pars has admission criteria that include connectivity and access specifications for OE students.

Progression and recognition regulations at Pars do not discriminate between delivery modes. Pars has clear guidelines in place for progression. There is obvious and sensible progression in the programme in that some courses are built on prerequisite courses. There is some freedom in sequence, but not complete freedom which is useful for online programmes. There are opportunities for further studies. Opportunities to further support the students with progression and recognition are being pursued by the staff.

Graduation ceremonies are suitable for the contexts of DE/OE students and arrangements are in place for the secure delivery of certification documents. Certification includes delivery mode. Certification such as the Diploma Supplement should include a description of the DE/OE delivery mode. The institution has clear and comprehensive graduation and certification regulations including a highly detailed diploma supplement, transcripts, and certificate.

Commendation:

B.4.1 - The VET commends the addition of the exam and interview in the admission process and the benefits this has brought to the students and the institution as a whole.

Panel Conclusion: Full 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.

Evidence of Compliance:

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

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

- Diploma supplement.
- Calculating credit sheet, equivalence global courses (comparability table).

Analysis and Assessment:

Pars has clearly defined and communicated qualification nomenclature information for students and the public. They explain clearly that it is not recognised by the UK authorities and are having conversations with a lawyer about the legal use of terms such as Bachelor. Pars defines all modules and learning activities in line with ECTS credits. They are aware of international systems and have comparability tables as required.

Commendation:

B.5.3 - The VET commends Pars' efforts in developing learning resources in Farsi and facilitating access to English language resources.

Panel Conclusion: Full Compliance

Standard B.6 –Quality Assurance of Institutions

DO THE PROGRAMMES OPERATE IN INSTITUTIONS THAT SATISFY ESG QUALITY STANDARDS

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:

- Quality assurance policy, Ethical conduct of study (Handbook, p. 37-40), presentation from staff in person.
- Educational staff fall 2023 (several are marked as PhD cand), QA policy, Syllabi (learning activities and assessment).

Analysis and Assessment:

It is evident from many sections of the P-SER, conversations, and the linked QA policy that quality assurance is taken seriously at Pars, including for programme development and delivery. The QA policy reflects the relationship between learning and teaching and research activities. This is made available to all staff connected to the institution and to students. The Student Handbook includes explanations and guidelines on avoiding academic fraud and the expectations for academic integrity.

The teaching staff are appropriately qualified for the courses they teach, and continued learning and development is encouraged, including financially. Tutors are required to do 10 hours of weekly learning and development (5 hours paid and 5 hours of their own time). This is usually in the form of taking Pars courses.

Academic staff go through a review process every two years where goals are set, reviewed and other forms of feedback and development are discussed. This process is documented and used on an ongoing basis. Pars encourages innovation in teaching methods, the use of new technologies and student-centred learning practices. Student services respond adequately to student learning needs. Admission officers, academic administration, tutors, and IT support are primary staff involved in student support. Faculty get involved in student support during the 3 or more webinars per online course or through mentoring and during formational conferences. Moodle houses many short video clips that explain various operations.

There are obvious barriers to the provision of sufficient resources. However, Pars has well organised resources that are available, is creatively seeking out additional resources that are fit for purpose in Farsi and English, and also developing and publishing more learning content themselves.

Pars has developed a bespoke student information system which is currently being phased into use. This collects all the student information and allows staff to analyse and use this in all aspects of their work. Students are aware of all the data that is kept on record and can access

most of their information through Moodle. The student view of the new software is currently under development to compliment the information already available through Moodle.

The VET acknowledges the development of resources available since the previous visit. The VET suggests that Pars continue searching for a professional who would service students and faculty with additional literature and train students in information competency (independently search, access, critically evaluate and ethically use needed information). This would directly support the development of critical thinking and research skills in students.

Commendation:

B.6.4 - The VET commends the use of technology, and the staff involved in developing this, throughout the course including the use of Moodle, the quality of video content and the newly developed platforms.

Recommendation:

B.6.1 - The VET recommends that Pars includes all elements listed in the ECTE "Internal Quality Assurance Policies" document in their own QA policy document. Specifically, section 1 of point 4 of the policy which relates to "Policies on establishing, reviewing, revising and approving academic integrity policies".

The VET acknowledges that all of these policies exist, are documented and in use and should be added into the QA policy document.

Panel Conclusion: Partial Compliance

E. Conclusions

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

B.1.2 - The VET commends the work of Pars to integrate spiritual formation throughout the programme and in the difficult context of online learning and for those studying inside Iran.

B.1.4 - The VET commends Pars' efforts to purposefully and intentionally guide students through the cross-cultural change of moving from rota learning to higher-level thinking skills of application, evaluation, and argumentation.

B.1.6 - The VET commends Pars on their very thorough, well thought through and well applied mentoring programme.

B.4.1 - The VET commends the addition of the exam and interview in the admission process and the benefits this has brought to the students and the institution as a whole.

B.5.3 - The VET commends Pars efforts in developing learning resources in Farsi and facilitating access to English language resources.

B.6.4 - The VET commends the use of technology, and the staff involved in developing this, throughout the course including the use of Moodle, the quality of video content and the newly developed platforms.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

B.1.4 - The VET recommends that Pars continues to devise and employ new and creative ways of developing critical thinking and research skills in their students.

B.6.1 - The VET recommends that Pars includes all elements listed in the ECTE "Internal Quality Assurance Policies" document in their own QA policy document. Specifically, section 1 of point 4 of the policy which relates to "Policies on establishing, reviewing, revising and approving academic integrity policies".

IN CONCLUSION

The visitation team recommends to the ECTE AC Pars be judged to be in compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines* of the ECTE in programme areas.

The team recommends to the ECTE AC, that it grant Pars 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 Pars 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 Pars for their excellence and commitment in following their calling.

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

The visitation team:

Signed:

Katharina Penner (Team Leader)

James Lockwood (Team member)

Raul Gradjan (Student Representative)

Dr. Grace Al-Zoughbi (Review Secretary)

April 2024

Visitation Schedule

				Participants from Pars Team		Comments
Day 1: Monday, 25.03.2024						
08:30-09:15	**Team Briefing**					
09:30-10:15	**Introductory meeting with Senior Leadership Team + Accreditation Officer**					Zoom link provided to RS by the school
10:30-10:50	Tour of facilities and personal introductions with faculty and staff on site					
11:00-11:45	Programme/curriculum development issues (Dr of studies, ExecDir, AccrOfficer, AsDir)					
11:50-12:30	Tour of Moodle and SIS					
14:00-14:45	Learning Resources + Publications		Meeting with Alumni		5 Alumni	
15:00-15:45	Board Members					
16:30-17:30	*Chapel* - VET is introduced to staff and students VET members have a chance to address staff and students					
17:45-19:00	**Team Time /Review Worksheet**					
Day 2: Tuesday, 26.03.2024						
08:30-09:15	**Team Briefing for the Day**					
09:30-10:15	Teaching Faculty (Lecturers)					
10:30-11:15	Mentoring & Ministerial practice					
11:45-12:30	**Team Time / Review Worksheet**					
14:00-14:45	Educational Administration		Meeting with students		5 students	
15:00-15:45	Meeting with Tutors		Student Counseling Staff + Conferences			
16:15-17:00	Support Staff/Operations: Media, IT manager		Dir. of Operations, Finance & Human Resources			

17:00-18:30	**Team Time /Review Worksheet** **Decide on need for follow-up conversations for day 3 – communicate to Review Manager**		25
Day 3: Wednesday, 27.03.2024			
45 min	**Team Briefing for the Day**		
45 min	**Reserved for follow-up conversations as needed**		
45 min	**Reserved for follow-up conversations as needed**		
2-3 hours	**Finalising Report (commendations, recommendations, requirements)**		
1 hour	**Sharing Conclusions with leadership team**		Zoom link provided to RS by the school