

ISTL Germany/Switzerland
President Dr. Stefan von Rüti
Academic Dean Dr. Johannes Sieber
Regensbergstrasse 242a
CH-8050 Zürich

Sent via e-mail

November 25, 2024

Re: Decision by ECTE Accreditation Commission

Dear Stefan and Johannes!

Greetings from ECTE. At the outset of this letter, allow me to thank you again for hosting our visiting evaluation team (VET) during the site visit in June 2024 as part of your cyclical review by ECTE.

We fully comprehend and appreciate the work invested by you and your team in preparing for this review, hosting the site visit and follow-up.

Thank you also for the additional representation submitted to us in September 2024 responding to suggested requirements by our VET.

The deliberations of the ECTE Accreditation Commission (AC) follow a standard sequence: the AC first deliberates on the suggested requirements and recommendations with the right to adjust each one or change a recommendation into a requirement (or vice versa). Any such changes/adjustments are documented in this letter.

The AC members then consider your additional representation before a compliance rating for each Standard in question is made.

The last step is to set a submission date for further additional representation related to any Standard which has been rated with non-compliance.

The ECTE Accreditation Commission (AC) in its session on October 15, 2024, and on November 19, 2024, deliberated on the cyclical review of ISTL D/CH based on the Final Report and your additional representation.

The sequence in this letter follows the structure of the ECTE Standards & Guidelines.

The AC added one requirement related to:

A.2.2 - Governance and Management – non-compliance

The AC requires that the separation of governance and management is made clear by ensuring that members of the executive team have voice but no vote in Board deliberations and decisions.

Rationale: While executive team members are normally present in Board meetings for reporting and presentations, they are not formally members of the Board as part of the separation between governance and management.

Compliance with this Standard could be documented, for example, by submitting a copy of the updated governance handbook including minutes of the meeting when this change was confirmed with an updated organisational chart making this explicitly clear and which is made public.

A.2.4 – Strategic Planning – non-compliance

Rationale: The Standard requires that a Strategic Plan is in place. Also, the additional representation did not provide what was asked for, it only listed strategic initiatives.

The AC confirms – with adjustments - the requirement that ISTL submit a Strategic Plan which lists not only strategic initiatives, but describes how the process towards the Strategic Plan was designed, carried out and approved:

- overall design and development of Strategic plan (steps, various decision-making processes by respective bodies at the various levels of the institution).
- the governance role in the development and approval of the plan.
- intentionally designed and collected stakeholder input, especially by students.
- the governance role in the development and approval of the plan.
- information on how and when the goals may be attained,
- what resources are required,
- who will be responsible for each element and to whom they are accountable,
- what group will monitor the process.

A.3.1 – Human Resources – substantial compliance

The AC confirms the requirement that ISTL produce anti-discrimination and staff protection policies.

Based on the additional representation the AC decided on substantial compliance.

The AC upholds this as recommendation to be further developed by including training on, for example, anti-discrimination and inclusivity issues. Further development of the guidelines and implementation to be reported via the Annual Progress Report.

A.3.3 – Educational Staff – substantial compliance

The AC confirms and adjusts the recommendation that ISTL continues taking further appropriate steps towards a sustainable faculty development plan. This must include an intentional focus and pro-active strategies to ensure that especially the large number of adjunct faculty/lecturers are oriented fully to (and understand) ISTL's

- vision & mission,
- programmes and delivery modes,
- principles and policies (to include QA loops, especially relating to student feedback,
- philosophy of education,
- practices/workflow

and are thus enabled to informedly fulfil their educational role, mandate and practice at ISTL.

A.5.3 - Learning resources – substantial compliance

The AC confirms and adjusts the suggested recommendation that ISTL further develops its support of programmes with learning resources that are accessible and fit for purpose for all students and at all study sites. This must include a focused and intentionally designed approach to helping students locate, access and use resources needed for EQF Level 6 programmes.

With requirements remaining institutional re-accreditation cannot be granted. The institution will remain “under review” until ISTL has achieved substantial or full compliance to those Standards with requirements given by the AC.

B.3.1 – Educational Philosophy and Adult Pedagogy – substantial compliance

The AC confirms the requirement that ISTL clearly articulates a written and detailed educational philosophy and andragogy, that is grounded theologically, and that undergirds the curriculum and the learning and teaching strategy, and they disseminate it at the level of faculty and students and make it publicly available.

Based on the additional representation the AC decided on substantial compliance.

The AC upholds as a recommendation that structured communication beyond dissemination of the document on educational philosophy be designed as part of the Faculty Development plan (to include all educational staff) so that it can be understood and thus be owned and applied by anyone involved in the educational process at ISTL, but especially focusing on adjunct faculty.

B.3.2 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment – substantial compliance

The AC confirms the requirement for ISTL to develop and implement an equal opportunity policy and strategies which would ensure equity and consistency in dealing with different student needs.

Based on the additional representation the AC decided on substantial compliance.

The AC upholds as a recommendation to include in the equal opportunity policy

- rationale for importance of policy and concrete steps for implementation
- further development of policy to include, for example, assessment regulations and how they are implemented.

B.3.5 – Delivery Feedback – non-compliance

The AC confirms the suggested requirement that ISTL closes the feedback loop of course evaluation to teachers and students.

Based on the additional representation the AC decided on non-compliance.

Rationale: The additional representation outlines how this is intended to be done. Compliance requires that implementation is ensured, not just the design completed.

Compliance can be reached by demonstrating and documenting that the loop is, indeed, closed (i.e. documenting communications, written summary by faculty of what adjustments have been made based on student feedback).

B.4.1 Admission - substantial compliance

The AC confirms the requirement for ISTL to establish an explicit policy that supports academic equality, making provisions for special access cases, for candidates with special needs and in exceptional circumstances.

Based on the additional representation the AC decided on substantial compliance.

The AC upholds the further development of this policy as a recommendation to include aspects outlined in the Guidelines for Special Access (see especially Monitoring Procedures).

B.4.4 and B.5.1 Graduation and certification/Qualification nomenclature – non-compliance

The AC confirms the requirement that ISTL must use a more consistent and legally sound nomenclature for their qualifications that are in line with national and international frameworks for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

For rationale, please refer to the listing of the major shortcomings related to B.5 in the Final Review Report, page 42.

Institutional re-accreditation is the basis for programme re-accreditation. With institutional and programme requirements pending re-accreditation cannot be granted.

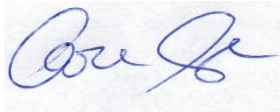
Your additional representation related to all requirements must be submitted **no later than June 30, 2025**.

The institution and its programmes will be listed as “under review” in the ECTE website directory until at least substantial compliance is reached for all Standards.

Please see the Final Review Report for the recommendations issued by the Visiting Evaluation Team and confirmed by the Accreditation Commission without adjustments. Annual reporting is required for all developments relating to recommendations, starting with the Annual Progress Report in 2025.

Do not hesitate to contact me as questions arise.

Cordially in Christ,



Carmen Crouse
Accreditation Director