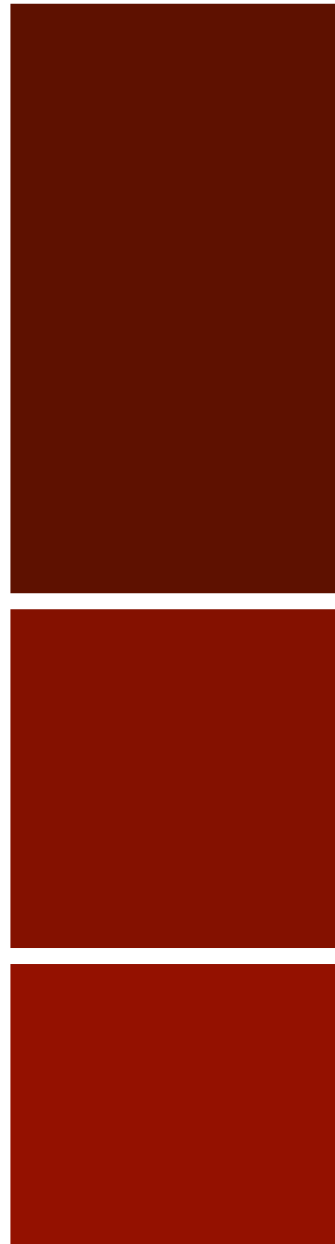


# REVIEW REPORT

Seminário Teológico Baptista (STB),  
Queluz

Related to a visit for a cyclical review;  
September 30 - October 2, 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 Seminário Teológico Batista (STB - Baptist Theological Seminary), Queluz, an alternative provider of higher education (AP).

This report relates to a process, including a desk analysis of the Cyclical Self-Evaluation Report (C-SER) plus supplemental documentation provided to the Visitation Evaluation Team (VET) and an on-site visit September 30 - October 2, 2024, for the purpose of accrediting STB's programmes based on the ECTE's Standards and Guidelines and relevant ECTE Supplemental Guidelines. The VET suggests to the ECTE Accreditation Commission eight commendations of excellence, ten recommendations and one requirement.

## B. INTRODUCTION TO THE REVIEW

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### Description of the review

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

STB obtained institutional and programme accreditation from ECTE as an AP in 2012 with the last re-accreditation in 2018.

The documents guiding this review are the Standards and Guidelines of the ECTE (part A.1-6 and B.1-5), 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.

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### Programmes

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Programmes submitted for re-accreditation in 2024:

EQF/QF-EHEA	Name of qualification used by STB	ECTS	ISCED Level	ICETE Level	Delivery Mode
EQF 6 /First Cycle	Curso Avançado em Bíblia e Teologia / Advanced Diploma in Bible and Theology (practice-oriented)	180	6	Bachelor	D/OE
EQF 7 /Second Cycle	Curso Especializada em Estudos Teológicos / Specialised Diploma in Theological Studies (practice-oriented with a research project)	120	7	Master	D/OE

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## The Visitation Team

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

Dr. Caleb Hutcherson (Team Leader)  
Katharina Penner (VET Member)  
Carmen Crouse (Staff Person)  
Jonida Osman (Student Representative)  
Dr. Kulli Tõniste (Review Secretary)

Due to travel restrictions, Dr. Caleb Hutcherson was unable to join the team in person. A staff person was added to ensure sufficient personnel resources on site.

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## Visit Arrangements

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The C-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 STB 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 all previous correspondence with the institution via hyperlink.
2. VET members recorded the results of their initial reading of the documents within a shared document.
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 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 September 30, 2024, and concluded October 2, 2024.

The review was conducted in English and where needed, translation from/to European Portuguese was provided by the institution.

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## Visit Schedule

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

- President
- Vice President
- Dean of Students
- Registrar
- Academic Coordinator
- 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 AND PROGRAMMES

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### General Description of Institution

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STB has been a member of ECTE since 2009 and has been accredited as an institution since 2012, most recently in 2018.

STB is a private legal association with its governing bodies, although its General Assembly, the association's highest body, consists exclusively of Portuguese Baptist Convention (PBC) church members. Its other governing bodies include representatives of teachers, students, the PBC Board of Directors and PBC member churches. Within the scope of its activity, STB promotes: 1) the creation and organisation of programmes and other training actions with different levels of education; 2) the definition of the curricular contents and plans of the programmes and training actions; 3) the award of qualifications and diplomas of its programmes; 4) the school and administrative organisation that it considers most appropriate to the general interests of the school population and its pursued purposes; 5) the definition of strategic actions to achieve its objectives and to use all the means and resources for its purposes.

ECTE recognises STB as an AP for the EQF Level 6/First Cycle programme named "Curso Avançado em Bíblia e Teologia (CABT)/ Advanced Diploma in Bible and Theology (practice-oriented)" and the EQF Level 7/Second Cycle programme named "Curso Especializada em Estudos Teológicos (CEET) / Specialised Diploma in Theological Studies (practice-oriented with a research project)" although Portuguese legislation and regulations do not recognise that category (AP). STB is not authorised as a higher education institution in Portugal or participates in its national education system. STB academic programmes are unaccredited by A3ES (*Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior / Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education*), nor do they confer any academic title or degree in Portugal.

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### Mission and Vision Statement

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STB's Vision is "Life and ministry founded on the Word," and its Mission is "Mature servant-leaders who effectively minister in God's mission."

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### History

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The history of STB, an institution of the PBC aimed at theological teaching, dates back to October 6, 1969, when the school opened its doors for the first time to receive eight students in its facilities in Queluz, near Lisbon, under the direction of Lester Carl Bell, missionary of the Foreign Missions Board (FMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), in USA.

This initiative continued to provide meaningful experiences of biblical and theological education, first in Viseu and Porto and later in Leiria, between 1950 and 1964. Thus, the

opening of STB was the corollary of several efforts developed between 1965 and 1968 to overcome the lack of a stable and organised institution for this purpose.

STB in Queluz is the fourth Portuguese Baptist theological training school in one hundred years. During its' half-century of operation, STB has contributed to the theological training of many pastors and church leaders in Portugal, as well as workers and missionaries from Angola, Mozambique, and other countries across different continents.

In 1976, STB moved to more suitable facilities, where it remains today. These facilities offer classrooms, a library that holds around ten thousand volumes, work offices, a cafeteria, and accommodation for students.

STB has grown, with many people attending its various teaching programmes at its headquarters, in its extensions and also using digital platforms. Through a close partnership with churches, STB has been devoted to forming Christian disciples prepared to serve in pastoral ministry, missions and evangelism, teaching, and other vocations. STB is recognised within Baptist contexts throughout the broader Lusophone evangelical community for its rigorous theological education.

#### Main Achievements from 2019 to 2023

In October 2019, STB celebrated fifty years of its activity. On that occasion, the first seven of the twenty-two students who started the first EQF Level 7 CEET programme cohort received their diplomas. In 2024, one or two students from the second EQF Level 7 CEET programme cohort are expected to defend their theses.

The circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the growing internationalisation of the community and the development in the use of online resources resulted in growth in student numbers and cultural diversity in the other STB programmes. Seeking to perceive the times, STB articulated learning modes, provided distance mentoring, developed new short-term training opportunities to respond to specific needs, invested in training new teachers, built bridges with other schools and stimulated the proximity between the training of students and their local communities.

From 2024, the EQF Level 7 curriculum allows the possibility to choose between two specialisations: Theology and Biblical Interpretation or Theology and Practice of Christian Counselling.

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## Facilities

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STB has its premises in the city of Queluz, municipality of Sintra, district of Lisbon, the country's capital city. They are divided into three urban buildings: two in the parish of Monte Abraão and one in central Queluz.

In the last 3-4 years, the main building (initially built in 1976) has undergone extensive renovations regarding painting, roofing, and other infrastructures. In addition to its facilities, STB uses other spaces to carry out its activities, both PBC facilities – such as the Baptist Camp, where classes, meetings, etc. have been held – as well as churches and other evangelical organisations' facilities – where classes, conferences, special services, etc., can be held.





In the main building (headquarters), STB occupies four floors:

1) the lower basement, with a room for leisure, bathroom, and kitchenette, for the use of the students and in which resident students prepare meals on weekends and holidays periods;





- 2) the basement, where there is a library (with more than 10,000 volumes), kitchen, laundry, a multi-purpose dining room (with a capacity of 50) that serves as a third classroom or study;
- 3) the ground floor with the administrative offices, the classrooms, a teachers' room, a lounge and an auditorium, with seating for 50 people now adapted for face to face and online classes;
- 4) the first floor right, with seven rooms and bathrooms, for male students who are residents, or who spend limited periods, which has space for fourteen students; the first floor left, with two bedrooms, a lounge, a kitchenette and bathroom to lodge a couple or four students.



In a second building, next to the main one, STB occupies an apartment on the fifth floor. This apartment includes three bedrooms, a lounge, a kitchen, and bathrooms, which house up to six students. It is currently hosting a professor and his family.

Ultimately, it occupies a second floor in a separate building in central Queluz. It includes a hall, three bedrooms, a lounge, a kitchen, and a bathroom, which lodges couples, families, or visiting professors.

Altogether, the facilities are functional, but not excellent because of their size and dispersion and the adaptations which had to be made to convert dwelling spaces for use as classrooms and administrative services. Nevertheless, the present facilities have the advantages of not being very expensive in terms of maintenance and being very well located in terms of public transport, next to two railway stations, which facilitates access for students, teachers, and personnel.

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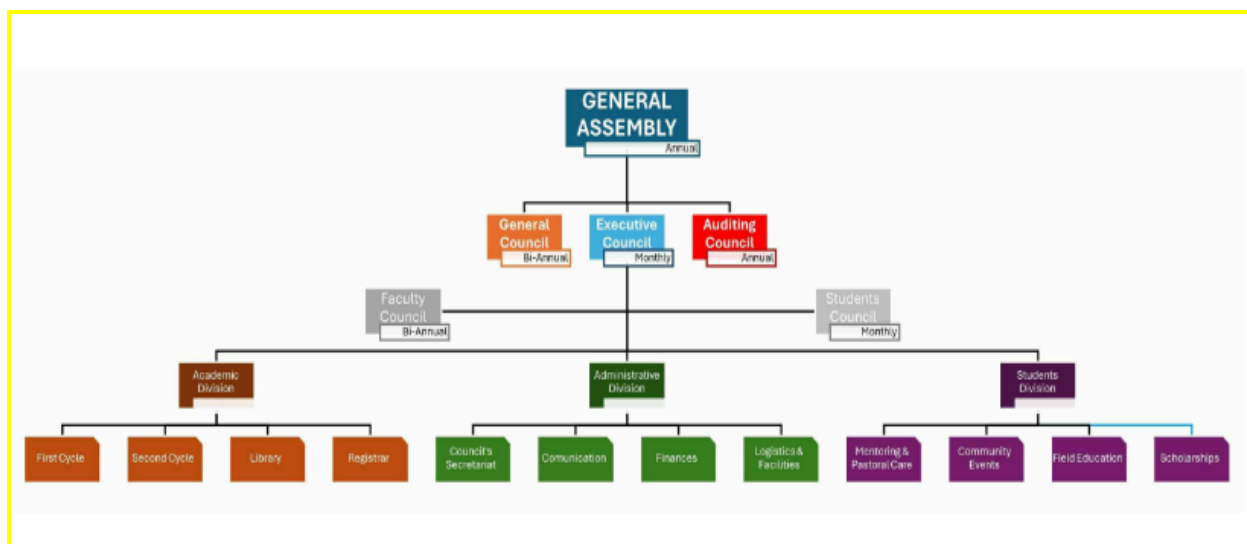
## Governance

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STB has maintained the same governance structure since 2014 with the following governing bodies: General Assembly, General Council, Executive Council (that is the Leadership Team of the school, not to be confused with a governing body) and Auditing Council. There are also two consultation bodies: Faculty Council and Students Council.

The chair of the PBC Board heads the General Council, and the President of the STB Executive Council (Executive Leadership Team) leads the Faculty Council. The STB General Assembly includes the same members as the PBC General Assembly and is the governing body for STB. The composition of the Auditing Council of PBC is also equal to that of the STB, thus maintaining the connection and dependence on PBC.

The STB Executive Council (Executive Leadership Team) has straightforward tasks in leading the daily operations of the school.



This cyclical review is being carried out while the school is engaged in a broader organisational and academic reform process, which includes three fundamental actions: 1) revision and implementation of a new Strategic Plan; 2) institutional and functional restructuring; 3) academic development.

Executive Council Members, by gender, tipe, time and work (2020-2024)																				
	2020				2021				2022				2023				2024			
	Gender	Type	Time	Work	Gender	Type	Time	Work	Gender	Type	Time	Work	Gender	Type	Time	Work	Gender	Type	Time	Work
President	M	E	P	Vo	M	E	P	Vo	M	E	P	Vo	M	E	P	Vo	M	E	P	Vo
Vice President	M	E	P	Mi	M	E	P	Mi	M	E	P	Mi	M	E	P	Mi	M	E	P	Mi
Dean of Students	M	nE	P	Mi	M	nE	P	Mi	M	nE	P	Mi	M	nE	P	Mi	M	nE	P	Vo
Academic Coordinator	M	E	P	Pa	M	E	P	Pa	M	E	P	Pa	M	E	F	Pa	M	E	F	Pa
Institutional Relations Manager	M	nE	P	Vo	M	nE	P	Vo	M	nE	P	Vo	M	nE	P	Vo	M	nE	P	Vo
Treasurer	F	nE	P	Vo	F	nE	P	Vo	F	nE	P	Vo	F	nE	P	Vo	F	nE	P	Vo
Member	M	E	P	Pa	M	E	P	Pa	M	E	P	Pa	M	E	P	Pa	M	E	P	Pa

Gender M = Male / F = Female  
Type E = Educational staff / nE = Non-educational staff  
Time F = Full-time / P = Part-time  
Work Pa = Paid / Mi = Missionary Vo = Volunteer

## Educational and non-educational Staff

### Non-Educational Staff

The paid non-educational staff consists of a full-time administrative secretary and part-time housekeeper. All other functions are supported by professionals who donate their time.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Secretary (F) Full-time (paid)	1	1	1	1	1
Registrar (F) Part-time (volunteer)	1	1	1	1	1
Accountant (F) Part-time (paid by PBC)	1	1	1	1	1
Assistant Librarian (F) Part-time (volunteer)	2	–	–	1	1
Cook (F) Full-time (paid)	1	1	–	–	–
Housekeeper (F) Part-time (paid)	1	1	1	1	1

Gender:  
M = Male / F = Female

## Educational Staff

The structure of the teaching staff remains the same as during the previous review. In the first cycle programme, there is an increasing number of teachers with EQF Level 7 qualifications, and in the second cycle programme, there is a growth in teachers with EQF Level 8 qualifications. There are also more female teachers in both the first and second cycles programmes than previously.

### 2020

	No. of Teachers	Teaching activity			Gender		Origin		EQF qualifications		
		<10%	10-20%	20-50%	M	F	N	nN	6	7	8
TOTAL	34	–	–	–	85%	15%	68%	32%	38%	30%	32%
1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle	24	10	10	4	87%	13%	78%	22%	50%	37%	13%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle	12	–	–	–	96%	4%	31%	69%	0%	15%	85%

Gender:  
M = Male  
F = Female  
Origin:  
N = National  
nN = Non National  
Qualifications:  
EQF 6 = Bachelor  
EQF 7 = Master  
EQF 8 = Phd

### 2024

	No. of Teachers	Teaching activity			Gender		Origin		EQF qualifications		
		<10%	10-20%	20-50%	M	F	N	nN	6	7	8
TOTAL	39	–	–	–	79%	21%	69%	31%	31%	26%	44%
1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle	24	13	8	3	83%	17%	81%	19%	39%	45%	16%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle	18	–	–	–	76%	24%	48%	52%	0%	12%	88%

Gender:  
M = Male  
F = Female  
Origin:  
N = National  
nN = Non National  
Qualifications:  
EQF 6 = Bachelor  
EQF 7 = Master  
EQF 8 = Phd

## Budget

In the last five years STB showed balanced accounts with positive net results. Funds were also established for specific areas of activity and projects. STB's primary revenue sources are donations (mainly from the PBC Cooperative Plan, Theological Education Day and other gifts from churches or individuals) – 49%, specific donations for scholarships – 6%, student tuition – 32% and renting of facilities/housing – 13%.

STB accounts are prepared internally by the secretariat and are technically handled by the PBC accountant, who does not monitor STB management daily. The treasurer and the Executive Council then monitor the accounts. Before being approved annually by the General Assembly, the accounts are audited by the Auditing Council, which must issue a favourable opinion.

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## Student Numbers

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	EQF Level 6/ First Cycle (Curso Avançado em Bíblia e Teologia)		
	Entering	Total headcount	Graduating
2018-19	1 (M1/F0)	19 (M16/F3) FTE: 8	3 (M3/F0)
2019-20	2 (M0/F2)	18 (M12/F8) FTE: 6	-
2020-21	9 (M7/F2)	25 (M18/F7) FTE: 9	-
2021-22	1 (M1/F0)	23 (M18/F5) FTE: 7	5 (M4/F1)
2022-23	13 (M11/F2)	30 (M24/F6) FTE: 6	2 (M1/F1)
2023-24	7 (M6/F1)	27 (23M/4F) FTE: 6	-

	EQF Level 7/Second Cycle (Curso Especializada em Estudos Teológicos)		
	Entering	Total headcount	Graduating
2018-19	-	21 (M20/F1) FTE: 15	7 (M7/F0)
2019-20	-	13 (M12/F1) FTE: 8	-
2020-21	-	3 (M2/F1) FTE: 2	-
2021-22	19 (M16/F3)	23 (M19/F4) FTE: 10	7 (M6/F1)
2022-23	-	13 (M10/F3) FTE: 7	-
2023-24	-	2 (1M/1F) FTE: 2	-

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## How the institution prepared for the review

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This cyclical review is a collaborative effort under the responsibility of the Executive Council. It is supervised by the Academic Coordinator and actively involves the President, the Dean of Students, and all its other members. The moderator of the CEET Coordinating Council, who is the Vice-President of STB, has also been actively involved in the evaluation of the second cycle programme. The administrative and academic services of the school and the financial services of the PBC provided the logistical and information support. Teachers, through the Faculty Council, and students, through the Students Council, have also participated in the review process.

The current process formally started with the Executive Council's resolution on May 19, 2023, that appointed the following working group: coordinators – Timóteo Cavaco and Alcir Souza (Executive Council); assistants – Fernando Freire and Inês Gandaio (teachers), Débora Hossi and Sarah Montino (students), António José Bento (PBC Board); some external consultants were also proposed.

During the following months, meetings were held in person and online, and the SER writing started in April 2024. During the preparation period, some important topics were discussed, such as learning modes, adaptation of curricular grids, duration of academic semesters, class calendars, development of micro-credentials, mentoring programmes for in-person and online students, teacher training for online and distance learning, etc.

The next main steps of the cyclical review were: 1) until July 2024 – preparation of C-SER and supporting documents, as well as collecting information for the revised Strategic Plan; 2) until December 2024 – VET evaluation (September/October), compilation of the VET report, and approval of the Strategic Plan; 3) until June 2025 – full implementation of the ECTE's recommendations.



## D. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

### INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS

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#### Standard A1 - Identity and Purpose

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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.

**DE/OE.1:** Security and privacy. **DE/OE.2:** DE/OE delivery is reflected in the mission, vision and goals of the institution **DE/OE.3:** Public information **DE/OE 4:** Availability.

##### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Leadership Team

Documents reviewed:

- SER sections A.1.1-4
- Bylaws
- Website with Mission and Vision
- Strategic Plan - latest draft available (not yet approved by GA)
- Website, newsletters, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Annual reports
- Moodle site: <https://teofilos.org/stb/>
- Student information on the website

##### Analysis and Assessment:

STB maintains appropriate legal status as an AP within Portugal where they operate in accordance with local laws and as suitable for their purposes. STB complies with fiscal and financial regulations in Portugal and operates within national legal frameworks in their usage of academic terminologies and award nomenclatures.

As an AP operating in Portugal, STB demonstrates understanding that ECTE accreditation does not serve national degree recognition purposes but is for the purposes of international comparability and quality assurance and development. STB clearly and publicly states the status as an AP. Given Portugal's status with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), STB is exploring a request to the national accreditation body (A3ES) to approve recognition of ECTE's accreditation based on ECTE's inclusion in the Database of the European Quality Assurance Register (DEQAR).

STB understand themselves as providers of tertiary level Christian theological education, endorsing the statement of faith and theological orientation of their main stakeholder, the PBC and community, while also remaining open to other evangelical denominations whom they also serve. STB integrates core Christian values into their operations and programmes. Biblical grounding is evident in all programmes.

ECTE core values are endorsed, applied, and reflected in learning activities, programmes, and institutional aspects. STB's statement of faith informs and influences every area of operations, including what is taught in the classroom, what is modelled by staff and faculty, and what is required of graduates.

STB has a clear vision and mission statement which is periodically reviewed by the leadership, understood by internal and external stakeholders, and matched with strategic planning and budget operations. The vision and mission statements clearly reflect institutional identity.

STB provides easy access to adequate information on the conditions to be fulfilled for the completion of a given programme of studies, the earning of an award or the transfer of accumulated credits to another institution. STB specifies all financial charges. STB does publish their information in Portuguese, one of the languages of instruction. STB has provided all essential parts in English for accreditation reviews.

STB provides information in various places, primarily through their website and Teofilos (VLE) platform, as well as several documents outlining academic regulations. While students indicated that they have access to information they need, the VET noted that they do not have easy access to all the complete and up to date information, particularly with regard to:

- graduate profiles
- assessment procedures
- pass rates and student retention and/or completion data, progression and mobility opportunities and graduate employment information
- the conditions to be fulfilled for the completion of a given programme of studies.

It is strongly recommended that a more complete information packet (such as a Student Handbook) be available on the Internet and be updated every year.

Concerning **DE/OE 1-4**: STB online delivery operates in full legality and respect of national laws concerning internet security and privacy of users. DE/OE is embraced by the administration and receives full support as a strategic means towards the accomplishment of its institutional mission and goals. In their public information, STB includes an accurate description of the delivery mode, of its requirements (e.g. availability of devices, internet connection, etc.) and costs. STB makes samples of delivery (tasters) available to prospective students. *Most* public information is freely available on the Internet.

#### **Commendations:**

A.1.1 - Identity and Purpose: We commend STB's thorough integration of core Christian values and their statement of faith throughout their curriculum and operations (A.1.1).

A.1.2 - Legal and Fiscal status: We commend STB for the explicit, intentional, proactive and transparent communication about the institution's status and the qualifications it offers (A.1.2, B.5.1).

#### **Recommendation:**

A.1.4 - Public Information: We recommend that STB collate the following documents and make this information easily accessible to applicants and students (ideally in a Student Handbook):

- graduate profiles
- assessment procedures
- mobility opportunities and graduate employment information

- the conditions to be fulfilled for the completion of a given programme of studies
- compatibility tables (B.5.2).

**Requirement:** None

**Panel Conclusion:** Substantially compliant

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## Standard A.2 - Governance and Quality Assurance

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### 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

**DE/OE.5** Academic administration integration. **DE/OE.6:** Decision-making structures **DE/OE.7-** Planning. **DE/OE.8 -** Target audience. **DE/OE.9 -** Technological progress. **DE/OE.10 -** Contingency plans. **DE/OE.11-** Student feedback.

#### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Governance representatives from the General Assembly, General Council, Student Council and Auditing Council
- Leadership Team (Executive Council)

Documents reviewed:

- SER sections A.2.1-6
- Annual General Assembly meeting minutes
- Annual reports
- Annual action plans
- Analysis
- Bi-Annual General Council meeting minutes
- Faculty Council meeting minutes
- [EN] PLANO ESTRATEGICO 2017 STB
- [EN] OBJETIVOS ESTRATEGICOS 2017-2019, 2024-2029
- Institutional and Academic Reform 2023-2025
- Quality manual
- Guidelines on Plagiarism

#### Analysis and Assessment:

Governance is executed by the General Assembly composed of representatives of all Baptist churches in Portugal. It reviews annual action plans, annual reports and balance sheets, approves budget, verifies that identity and purpose are preserved and that programmes and events fit the mission and vision of the school. The General Council functions as a chain link between the General Assembly and the STB Executive Council (Executive Leadership Team) and is the more direct governing body for STB. General Assembly Board members are elected every year, General Council and Auditing Board change every 3 years (elected by General Assembly – independent bodies).

Financial oversight is provided by the General Assembly and Auditing Council which per Portuguese regulations ensure that accounting follows established procedures and funding is used in line with the statutes and General Assembly approved budget. The Auditing Council has no decision-making authority relating to daily operations.

The General Assembly assigns the President and a member of the PCB Board, and two members elected by the General Assembly to serve on STB's General Council.

The student representative is a member of the General Council with voice and vote per the bylaws. The bylaws also stipulate that the STB President and Dean of Students (or a faculty member) have voice and vote in the General Council. Due to the vacancy in the role of Dean of Students, currently the STB Vice President is fulfilling that representative role on the General Council.

STB President and Vice President are part of the Executive Leadership Team and thus can be members of the General Council with voice, but not with vote. Currently both are members of the General Council with voice and vote, which does not constitute a clearly delineated line of responsibility between governance and executive management.

Other members of STB staff and faculty may have roles outside STB which within PBC make them voting members of the General Assembly. This can also create conflict of interest situations.

Clearly the General Council functions as a governance body (see A.2.1). The fact that the existing lack of separation of governance and management exists in other small organisations in Portugal does not negate this Standard in higher education in Europe.

Annual reports are given during the annual General Assembly, and the Executive Leadership Team clearly operates within the General Assembly approved policies and parameters (i.e. budget). At the same time, the reporting structure is not firmly established. There are currently no performance assessments for the Executive Leadership Team by any governance bodies or their President/Chairperson.

STB Leadership models Christian character, a spirit of dedication, mutual respect, initiative-taking and responsibility for God's work, team spirit with shared decision making, committed to the mission of the school.

The Executive Leadership Team has a keen eye on what type of competencies are needed for STB and have been able to recruit many professionals in various areas - many of whom are donating their time to the institution. At the same time, they keenly look out for persons whose position, personality, competencies and alignment to vision and mission of STB are clearly given with an openness to provide such persons with opportunities to serve in the context of STB.

The VET suggests to the team at STB to consider pathways for creating awareness in the governing bodies about the value professionals add to STB - with the potential need for paid staff in certain roles in the future. This could be accomplished, for example, by showing in reports to governance boards how much these professionals' work would normally cost to build an awareness as a foundation to fundraising.

STB practices shared decision making, faculty, staff and students are involved and listened to at the General Assembly (some students are voting members). Student concerns, including those online or blended, are heard through the Dean of Students who is part of the Executive Leadership Team and through the student representative who is part of the General Council. Student feedback is actively sought in curricular developments/reviews/revision and aspects of communal life. The Student Council is composed of the President and two members elected annually at the beginning of each academic year.

The VET members find the structures for students and faculty involvement in decision making exemplary in design and in practice of shared decision making.

The VET team saw evidence of strategic planning taking place at STB. The sense that these processes have not always worked as STB colleagues would desire may stem from the fact that pieces of strategic planning are in various documents but not collated into one document.

The Executive Leadership Team is in charge of Quality Assurance (QA) at STB. QA involves faculty and students. A Manual clarifies processes how everyone will be informed, responsibilities in implementation and communication. Currently the QA policy does not include information on who implements, nor an established timeline.

Current QA processes in place:

- Course evaluations for all courses in both programmes
  - President & Vice President intentionally visit classes regularly (online and in person)
  - Course evaluations by students are reviewed by the President and Academic Dean for EQF Level 6 and the Vice President for EQF Level 7. Performance indicators are monitored with follow-up conversations with faculty as needed. This, for example, leads to decisions about faculty assignment to courses and initiates case-by-case professional development activities.
- Surveys of students and alumni - latest ones represent the starting point for current review of EQF Level 6 programme.
- Curricular review of programmes scheduled every 5-6 years.

The Internal QA policy and practice is currently under revision. It does not yet include all aspects outlined in this Standard. STB clearly expresses its desire for moving towards more professionalised approaches, which will also lay the foundation for the potential pursuit of national accreditation.

**OE/DE 5-11:** online study modes are considered in overall planning, technology, development, budget, QA and feedback. Online learners are represented in decision making structures.

**Commendation:**

A.2.1 - Governance: We commend STB and PBC for including the Student Representative on the General Council as a member with voice and vote.

**Recommendations:**

A.2.2 - Leadership and Management: We recommend that the governance bodies of STB consider ways to provide structured, formative feedback to the executive team on a regular basis and identify clearly which person (occupying which role) is tasked with leading the response to potential institutional crises and leading the process of leadership transition.

A.2.4 - Strategic Planning: We recommend that further development of the Strategic Plan includes compiling all existing elements into one document and adding details about implementation such as:

- how and when the goals may be attained,
- what resources are required (including staffing plans for strategic initiatives (cf Human Resource Standard),
- who will be responsible for each element and to whom they are accountable,



- what group will monitor the process,
- the governance role in the development and approval of the plan.

A.2.5 - Internal QA policies and Procedures: We recommend that the revision of the current IQA Policy document be completed and submitted with the Annual Progress Report for 2025, after fully integrating all aspects mentioned in this Standard.

**Requirement:**

A.2.1 - Governance: We suggest a requirement be given that clear separation of governance and management be established:

- in the General Council, by ensuring that the representatives of the Executive Leadership Team may have voice, but no vote.
- in the General Assembly, by explicitly stating in the bylaws (of STB or PBC) that anyone with a role in STB (irrespective of remuneration agreement) must abstain in votes related to STB.

**Panel Conclusion: Non-compliant**

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## Standard A.3 - Human Resources

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### 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.

**DE/OE.12** - Staffing plans. **DE/OE.13** - Expertise. **DE/OE.14** - Training of administrative staff. **DE/OE.15** - Experience. **DE/OE.16** - Training of faculty. **DE/OE.17** - Tools. **DE/OE.18** - Student-instructor ratios. **DE/OE.19** - Tutor qualifications. **DE/OE.20** - Workloads. **DE/OE.21** - Fees and remuneration.

#### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Administrators
- Educational and non-educational staff

Documents reviewed:

- SER sections A.3.1-4
- Strategic Plan
- Job Descriptions (for leadership, faculty, paid staff)
- Job Descriptions (unpaid professionals who donate their time)
- Annual reports which list training opportunities for faculty

#### Analysis and Assessment:

Non-educational staff

Human resources are in place to cover the basic operational needs of the institution. As with many smaller institutions, there is just one person (with many only part-time) per area of responsibility, making STB vulnerable operationally. There are few contingency plans in place for individuals who are unable to continue their services for an extended period of time (sickness, etc.). Monitoring of tasks and workloads by line managers is not well established, professional development is addressed on a case-by-case basis as needed.

The VET encourages STB to make provisions which can ensure continued operations in such cases (documenting workflows and processes). Ideally these provisions include designating back-up colleagues who receive an introduction to the respective tasks, information on where significant documents are stored and how they can be accessed, etc.)

STB follows Portuguese legislation in place for:

- health insurance provisions
- social security/pension plans
- vacation and paid sick leave
- antidiscrimination and staff protection.

STB follows Portuguese legislation with regard to grievance situations but does not currently have a specific grievance policy for staff.

Not all staff have job descriptions and many job descriptions are rudimentary. This includes professionals who are donating their time yet cover critical operational areas. Current job descriptions do not include:

- reporting structure/line management
- decision making range of person and delimitation thereof
- regular, documented performance evaluations
- personal development opportunities provisions related to roles at STB.

For professionals donating their time the VET suggests that written agreements define performance goals and indicators for assessment be defined in place of contracted work hours.

No staffing plans for specialists in online and hybrid delivery exist, needs are covered by outsourcing, with part-time educational staff and professionals who donate their time to STB.

There is still work to do in clarifying roles, tasks, and responsibilities, reporting structures, and establishing regular performance evaluations.

The VET perceived the working environment as harmonious and a shared understanding of vision and mission is clearly evident, providing the basis for a mutually respectful, supportive environment. Still, the **VET suggests concerning A.3.1 Human Resources** that a STB specific grievance policy for all staff be developed and distributed, with new staff receiving a copy as part of their orientation to STB. This would safeguard the institution as misunderstandings do come up.

#### Educational staff

Currently 45% of faculty teaching in EQF Level 6 programmes have earned an EQF Level 7 qualification. Over 50% of EQF Level 7 faculty with doctoral degrees come from outside Portugal and have national teaching assistants.

#### Faculty Development Provisions:

- STB clearly aims at developing Portuguese teachers and have been able to recruit several lately with a background in education prior to their own theological studies.
- STB intentionally recruits and assigns senior faculty to serve as mentors to new colleagues in an exemplary fashion as they are getting ready to pass the baton. This enriches the teaching body not only with an active generational changeover-process but provides a mutually enriching learning experience, especially with OE/DE.
- In most cases two faculty members are assigned to one course (by President and Academic Dean) - intentionally pairing colleagues with complementary competencies and with the intent of learning from each other.
- Regular training sessions in teachers' meetings (recently with focus on DE/OE aspects of teaching and learning).
- Follow-up conversations based on course evaluations by the President or Academic Dean as needed.

With the majority of teachers in the EQF Level 6 programme without an EQF Level 7 qualification, this clearly is more than "exceptional cases" as defined in this Standard. However, the intentional pairing of experienced and less experienced faculty is part of addressing this situation.

Faculty teaching in the EQF Level 7 programme focused on culture and theology are representing the various fields which do not all require vast orientation in Portuguese culture.

Intentional faculty development provisions and processes are in place, but currently without a fully developed and written institutional faculty development plan.

**Recommendations:**

A.3.2 - Non educational staff: We recommend that:

- the current template for job descriptions for everyone with a role in STB be expanded to include:
  - reporting structure/line management
  - decision making range of person and delimitation thereof
  - regular, documented performance evaluations
  - personal development opportunities provisions related to role at STB.
- the Executive Leadership Team ensure that:
  - job descriptions be written for all staff (educational and non-educational), faculty and Executive Leadership Team members, to include professionals donating their time to STB
  - written agreements be drawn up for anyone who does not yet have such a written document to include documenting financial remuneration agreements (to include donated time).

A.3.3 - Educational Staff: We recommend that a faculty development plan be written, which reflects current elements in their intentionality and is proactive with responsibility for the implementation clearly assigned to one member of the Executive Leadership Team. Ideally this plan includes a special focus on helping EQF Level 6 faculty without EQF Level 7 qualifications to complete their programmes as soon as possible.

**Requirement:** None

**Panel Conclusion: Substantial compliance**

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## Standard A.4 - Community and Context

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### 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.

**DE/OE.22** - Online community. **DE/OE.23** - Non-curricular community activities. **DE/OE.24** - Pastoral and spiritual support. **DE/OE.25** - Cultivation of responsible character. **DE/OE.26** - Situated learning. **DE/OE.27** - Sharing resources. **DE/OE.28** - Communication strategies.

#### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Teachers
- Staff
- Students
- Alumni
- Stakeholders

Documents reviewed:

- SER sections A.4.1-4
- Regulamento interno (ethical codes and disciplinary measures)
- CEET Academic regulations
- Netiquette
- Partnership agreements

#### Analysis and Assessment:

STB considers community life as one of the educational components and fosters a healthy sense of community among their students, faculty and staff, governing board members. STB encourages development of healthy relationships, provides student support, informally facilitates graduate employment and alumni care, organises times of corporate worship and prayer, and nourishes community life for character formation. Pastoral and spiritual support are provided both online and face-to-face. The approach to community building in online environments needs to be formalised.

STB considers its mission to serve Christian faith communities in Portugal and lusophone countries and builds strategic relationships and partnerships with ministry organisations, alumni, churches, and donors. These relationships include accurate communication, consultation and sharing of information. STB actively cooperates with nearby theological schools. STB assists students in maintaining close ties with their home communities and churches.

Staff, faculty and leadership team are actively seeking not only continuous contact with stakeholder groups but pro-actively request input on behalf of STB, for example in the curricular revision process underway currently for the EQF Level 6 programme.

STB is well aware of their local and global context and nurtures local and global ties (lusophone countries, lusophone diaspora). STB models local involvement in social and cultural/educational institutions and encourages students to do so.

In its communications STB works hard to provide “just in time” information to all involved in the educational process. This creates a tension between “just in time” communication (much appreciated by all recipients) and the quality marker of making all pertinent information available in a structured way - normally done via Faculty, Staff and Student Handbooks in higher education institutions. Such handbooks ensure that the respective group has access to all regulations, provisions, etc. with respect to them, which is not only their right but also good practice. It increases transparency and avoids the impression of case-by-case decision making.

The VET strongly encourages STB to compile such comprehensive documents because such handbooks help to update information in one place, they provide a resource as questions come up so that enquiries can be directed to these documents, avoiding re-wording/re-formulating responses in each individual case.

**Commendation:**

A.4.2 - Stakeholder community: We commend STB’s proactive approach to building relationships and seeking to serve the lusophone community in and beyond Portugal, as well as seeking those stakeholders’ input.

**Recommendation:**

A.4.1 and A.4.4 - Learning Community and Communication: We recommend that the clear intentionality present with respect to community life be made visible within the educational philosophy by including how a healthy sense of learning community is fostered also in the online/distance education context along with a communication strategy specifically for OE/DE students. (DE/OE.22 + 28).

**Requirement:** None

**Panel Conclusion: Substantial compliance**



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## Standard A.5 - Educational Resources

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### 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

**DE/OE.29** - Student services. **DE/OE.30** - Induction. **DE/OE.31** - Study facilities/VLE. **DE/OE.32** - Access to resources **DE/OE.33** - Regulated resources. **DE/OE.34** - Monitoring of drop-out rates. **DE/OE.35** - Infrastructure and personnel. **DE/OE.36** - Communication lines. **DE/OE.37** - Operating technologies.

#### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Administrative Staff
- Educational Staff
- Programme Directors
- Faculty
- Mentors
- Students

Documents reviewed:

- SER sections A.5.1-6.
- Theophilus / Moodle
- Strategic Plan

#### Analysis and Assessment:

STB considers students as their greatest asset and student services play an important role in the educational process. Student services consider special circumstances and contexts, and they are tailored to fit the in-person as well as online delivery providing comparable quality of services.

An induction of new students is conducted at the beginning of the first semester, with attention on how to access technical, pastoral, academic or administrative support. An introduction to Moodle is available on Teofilos for all students. Master students take a Research Seminar to develop their academic skills.

STB is located close to a railway station with excellent connection into Lisbon, making it easily accessible by public transport for students living further away. Facilities are adequate, fit for purpose, strategically located, and correspond to national building regulations.

Accommodation, studying, socialising is available to all residential students (which are very few). The facilities include an elevator, thus making all levels of the building easily accessible for anyone with physical limitations. There are several workstations close to the library.

Several furnished and fully equipped apartments provide living space for students, visiting faculty and guests. There is also a communal kitchen, a multi-purpose room, and a student lounge for shared use.

The secretary is on site Monday through Friday and all staff and faculty have an open-door policy, thus signalling their availability when not in meetings. Interactions between faculty, staff,

leadership and students are warm, open, spontaneous and conducted with much respect for each other.

DE/OE students have access to staff and faculty by e-mail, phone or through video-conferencing.

Internet access is strong and accessible throughout the building. Classrooms have necessary technology for hybrid and online education.

STB ensures adequate access to learning resources for both programmes of study. Library space has been expanded and improved in the last two years. Holdings are mainly in Bible and theology, in recent years more titles on church history, theology and culture were added; there are some periodicals. When the EQF Level 7 programme started, the collection increased by 10%. The physical holdings are catalogued and searchable online for remote students.

Access to digital resources is available through a partner organisation for EQF Level 7 students only. Purchase of digital resources is planned in collaboration with three other local theological schools, who are using STB's physical library. Moodle courses often contain required digital reading titles. Links to open-access resources and theological journals are listed on Moodle. The library also offers a mailing service for students, an induction during the new students' orientation and further manuals on Moodle.

Data protection measures are in line with national and EU standards. Necessary permissions for data collection are obtained, data are stored securely (historical data are in print) and students have access to their own data. The scope of student data collection is appropriate in terms of contact details, student files, grades and transcripts and finances. Alumni data is appropriately maintained.

IT services are outsourced to a contracted professional company. Technical support is primarily provided by faculty and staff, but external advisers are also used. Teofilos, website and MS Teams are used for communication and collaboration.

Record-keeping is appropriately in place, including updated contact information, student files, grades and transcripts. Student files are kept and archived properly. The records of grades and transcript of each student are kept in a software and also in a back-up excel file simultaneously. Each student has his/her own file of academic progress, learning achievement and is regularly monitored.

IT technology is selected with educational purposes in mind, it is appropriate for educational and organisational operations; hosting and services are outsourced to a qualified company.

Accounting and record management software is appropriate and fit for purpose.

STB uses a broad spectrum of tools useful for distance and online education, both for content storage, interaction and assessment. Students receive an introduction to Moodle/Teofilos at the beginning of studies, a link to a tutorial is also available in each Moodle course. Technical support for students and faculty is provided. Technologies seem reliable and appropriately scaled for the number of users and courses.

**Commendation:**

A.5.4 - Information Management: We commend the rigorous, professional and appropriate record-keeping by the registrar of all student files, student progress and transcripts, providing necessary information and tracking the student academic development.

**Recommendation:**

A.5.3 - Library / Resource Learning Centre: We recommend that the library development plan is revised and updated to reflect aspects of print and online collection development for both levels of education, of student services, of space and budget allocations.

**Requirement:** None

**Panel Conclusion: Substantially compliant**

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## Standard A.6 - Finances and Sustainability

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### 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.

**DE/OE.38** - Financial analysis.

#### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Governance members
- Executive Leadership Team
- Faculty
- Students

Documents reviewed:

- SER sections A.6.1-5
- Annual budgets
- Annual accounts
- Bylaws

#### Analysis and Assessment:

STB operates with budgets approved by the General Assembly of the PBC. Budget control is maintained by the accountant in coordination with the STB President. The budget includes operational costs, funds for special projects and budgetary provisions for reserves/contingency funds. Larger investments can only be made following fundraising initiatives. The funds come from: 30% PBC, 15% Theological Education Day (promoted by Baptist churches), 30% tuition, 10% use of facilities, and 10% special projects.

Fundraising activities include:

- The President cultivates personal contacts with (potential) individual donors.
- One member of the Executive Leadership Team is tasked with developing and maintaining institutional relationships.
- Newsletters to Alumni, Students, Pastors of PBC churches and friends of STB (3-4 times per year) in which needs are communicated and special projects introduced.
- Needs and special projects are communicated through various social media channels with multiple staff involved.

Fundraising information shared with potential donors is truthful and transparent.

The Auditing Council meets annually in line with Portuguese fiscal regulations to ensure funds are used according to the statutes and within budgetary provisions.

STB seems to have sufficient financial resources to sustain their mission and current operations. Budgetary and auditing procedures are in place. Income is appropriately allocated to operational costs, reserves and projects. As is true for any faith-based institution, STB relies on special donations to enable new initiatives.

All financial documentation and procedures reviewed by the VET indicate that STB has in place rigorous financial policies and procedures that indicate sound financial management. The Executive Leadership Team prepares the annual budget which is reviewed by the General Council and requires approval by the General Assembly.

STB has appropriate funding to support the quality of their programmes and operational costs. There is demonstrated continuity in income and expenses over time. Institutional budgets manifest reasonable expenditures and forward-looking investments to serve the mission of the institution.

Continuity and sustainability has been demonstrated over time (50 years of existence). Graduates lead churches that support STB, there is continuity in the governance bodies. Fees for in-person and online delivery are the same and have remained stable. Investments in technology are made when funds are available.

**Recommendation:** None

**Requirement:** None

**Panel Conclusion:** Fully compliant

# PROGRAMME STANDARDS<sup>1</sup>

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## Standard B1 - Holistic Integration

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

### Standards examined:

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

**DE/OE.39** - Institutions have carefully outlined policies and procedures indicating how holistic integration will be achieved given the distinctive potential and the limitations of the chosen DE/OE delivery mode.

### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

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

Documents reviewed:

- SER sections B.1-6
- Global Learning Outcomes
- Pastoral mentoring document
- Pamphlet for students on purposes of Mentoring
- Course Syllabi especially *Spiritual Foundations, Integrative Training, Internship, Mentoring 1 and 2, "Dirty hands"*
- Curriculum map
- 'Types of courses'
- CEET Academic regulations (Final work)

### Analysis and Assessment:

#### Aspects relating to all programmes under review

Both programmes emphasise holistic integration, combining academic and practical learning activities with attention to spiritual and character formation. Character development outcomes are embedded in syllabi as part of the learning process. Additionally, the EQF Level 7 CEET programme includes specific courses in research and ministry that integrate character formation. Both programmes are practice-oriented, with STB-defined learning outcomes that focus on preparing theology graduates for practical ministry roles in faith communities and society. These practical components are mapped onto the curriculum, assessed, and credited.

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<sup>1</sup> Analysis and compliance statements apply to all programmes unless otherwise specified.



## Aspects relating to individual programmes

### *EQF Level 6 / First Cycle: Curso Avançado em Bíblia e Teologia (CABT)*

The EQF Level 6 CABT programme is an integrated theology programme emphasising holistic learning. This integration is achieved through diverse learning activities, ongoing faculty collaboration, and a balanced curriculum that includes theoretical, practical, and formational components. The revised curriculum combines classroom instruction with practical ministry experiences, spiritual training, and mentoring.

Spiritual formation activities and courses designed to foster spiritual growth are embedded into the curriculum. Course syllabi clearly outline learning outcomes, though assessment methods for spiritual formation are less defined. Additionally, EQF Level 6 CABT students participate in supervised internships that include self-assessment and evaluation by a ministry supervisor.

The CABT curriculum offers a sufficient number of theoretical and practice-oriented courses at the EQF 6 level. Critical thinking and application skills are fostered through in-class and online discussions. Library induction training aids in information retrieval, including online resources. Students report that their learning experience at STB is comparable to, or occasionally more rigorous than, university-level studies. Formal academic components are properly assessed, credited, and included in the ECTS total.

Practical ministry-oriented courses develop competencies, are assessed, and receive credits. Students complete a credited internship and are encouraged to participate in extracurricular ministry activities.

Mentoring, coordinated by the Dean of Students, is voluntary for EQF Level 6 students, who may opt out if they have local mentors. Those who choose the Mentoring course receive pastoral support throughout their studies. Mentoring covers spiritual formation, character development, and academic progress, with assessments documented and included in the diploma supplement.

### *EQF Level 7 / Second Cycle: Curso Especializada em Estudos Teológicos (CEET)*

The EQF Level 7 CEET programme combines a strong academic and professional focus with competence-based, spiritual, and character formation components, including mentoring. The curriculum, designed with backwards planning and constructive alignment, integrates biblical interpretation, theology, ministry skills, and personal development. STB collaborates actively with local churches, organisations, and mentors to facilitate spiritual and character formation.

In the EQF Level 7 CEET programme, spiritual formation and mentoring are embedded in the formal curriculum. Respective syllabi provide detailed descriptions of assessment activities related to spiritual growth. A weekly prayer group is available, with online prayer options for remote students.

CEET students are encouraged to undertake a ministerial internship near programme completion. Several courses prompt reflection on ethics, integrity, rigour, and personal growth as ministers and researchers.

The curriculum emphasises Bible and Theology at the EQF 7 Level, with assignments focused on critical thinking, independent research, and problem-solving in ministry contexts. A Research Skills course develops students' writing and theological reflection abilities.

Practical components in ministry-oriented and other courses emphasise skills like theological reflection, contextualisation, ethical decision-making, and problem-solving. Students are encouraged to participate in internships, teaching, or mentoring activities, even if they are completing a thesis.

Mentoring in the EQF Level 7 CEET programme is divided into academic and spiritual domains. Academic mentoring is provided by programme directors and faculty to support student progress, while spiritual mentoring is offered by faculty, staff, or local church leaders.

**Recommendation:** None

**Requirement:** None

**Panel Conclusion:** Fully compliant

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## Standard B.2 - Curriculum Development

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

### Standards examined:

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

**DE/OE.40** - Analysis of context. **DE/OE.41** - Meeting learning outcomes. **DE/OE.42** - Description of instructional models. **DE/OE.43** - Appropriate learning activities. **DE/OE.44** - Situated placements. **DE/OE.45** - Feasible timeframes. **DE/OE.46** - Calculation of ECTS. **DE/OE.47** - Learning calendars. **DE/OE.48** - Monitoring student satisfaction.

### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Leaders
- Faculty
- Stakeholders
- Staff and students

Documents reviewed:

- SER sections B.2.1-8
- Student survey 2022
- “Global Learning Outcomes”
- Curricular maps
- Curriculum structure document
- Syllabi and Module descriptors
- Curriculum as such

### Analysis and Assessment:

#### Aspects relating to all programmes under review

STB follows a rigorous “backwards planning” approach in curriculum design, involving student representation, external consultation, and input from stakeholders, including the General Assembly of the PBC, graduates, and pastors. This collaborative process ensures that various perspectives — governance, employers, students, and alumni—are actively incorporated into programme design and development.

The design committee drafts the curriculum, gathers faculty feedback, and revises until consensus is reached, then submits it to the Executive Leadership Team for approval. Following approval, the General Council verifies the curriculum, which is implemented in the next academic year.

STB’s programmes are structured to meet defined learning outcomes and support students' spiritual, character, and academic development, as well as transferable skills. Recent academic reforms confirmed these outcomes, aligning them with the EQF standards, even though STB is not nationally accredited in Portugal. Programmes are contextually relevant for ordination, ministry, and teaching Evangelical Religious and Moral Education in public schools.

Curricular maps align programme components with learning outcomes, and the curriculum is accessible on STB's website. Online and face-to-face components are designed with continuity across EQF Levels 6 and 7. Module descriptors specify outcomes, objectives, content, activities, credits, and assessment, and undergo regular review by the Academic Coordinator. Faculty coordinate to harmonise modules, avoiding duplication of content and ensuring all outcomes are addressed. Descriptors exist for all credit-bearing activities, including mentoring, character projects, and ministry practice.

Learning activities are student-centred, theologically consistent, and creatively incorporate available technology, ensuring relevance to educational goals. Curricula and descriptors are developed collaboratively with faculty and stakeholders.

STB has aspirational graduate profiles for both programmes, guiding learning outcome development and supporting programme revisions and effectiveness assessments. As elements of these profiles are found in various documents, a consolidated Graduate Profile statement for each programme would enhance clarity.

Both programmes emphasise theological and biblical studies, with ministry-oriented courses credited; the EQF Level 6 CABT programme also includes a credited internship. Programmes are structured to be completed within designated time frames but offer flexibility for part-time students. CABT's curriculum progressively builds from basic to advanced levels, clearly communicated through syllabi.

STB uses ECTS to quantify all learning activities, except mentoring, and applies the same credit allocation regardless of delivery mode. Formal prior learning can be transferred, though informal learning is not recognised for credit. A learning calendar is published in advance for student reference.

Contextual relevance is prioritised in curriculum design and delivery, preparing students for ministry in local and global (Lusophone) contexts. This flexibility poses some challenges for graduation rates, but the new Strategic Plan includes the delivery of Micro-Credentials to allow modular study as life circumstances permit, enhancing sustainability.

The Quality Manual, currently under revision, outlines monitoring and review processes. Recent reforms gathered feedback from faculty, leadership, and stakeholders (employers, students, alumni, PBC) to ensure programme relevance. Adjustments are made as needed within a stable framework. A 2022 student survey indicates satisfaction with online delivery, though further improvements in data analysis and application could enhance programme responsiveness.

### Aspects relating to individual programmes

#### *EQF Level 7 / Second Cycle: Curso Especializada em Estudos Teológicos (CEET)*

Progression in the CEET curriculum is defined as moving from the common core to specialisation to the final research paper or project. Such programme design (combining various delivery modes) and academic mentoring enables clear and smooth progression and completion.

#### **Commendations:**

B.2.1 - Design and Approval Process: We commend STB for the design and approval processes which proactively and conscientiously seeks input from various stakeholder groups in the decision-making process.

B.2.3 - Curricula, Module Descriptors and Learning Activities: We commend STB for syllabi compilation and approval process, which on the one hand ensure stability with regard to course level learning outcomes while providing space for adaptations related to pedagogical and didactic elements (types of assignments, required reading, etc.).

B.2.7 - Context: We commend STB for designing a very flexible educational delivery mode and design, thus enabling many students who could for various reasons never study in a full-time residential programme.

**Recommendation:**

B.2.4 - Graduate Profiles: We recommend that the existing elements of the Graduate Profile be formalised in writing for both programmes that synthesise the core learning outcomes STB has already developed.

**Requirement:** None

**Panel Conclusion:** Substantially compliant

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

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

#### Standards examined:

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

**DE/OE.49** - Educational philosophy. **DE/OE.50** - Student-centred learning. **DE/OE.51** - Quality indicators. **DE/OE.52** - Good practice in module design. **DE/OE.53** - Induction. **DE/OE.54** - Synchronous, asynchronous and semi-calendarized learning. **DE/OE.55** - Suitable and feasible assessment. **DE/OE.56** - Feedback to students.

#### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

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

Documents reviewed:

- SER sections B.3.1-6
- CABT and CEET Internal regulations
- Andragogical practices
- Course Syllabi esp *Integrative Pastoral Ministry, Christian Worldview and Contemporary Culture, Christianity and Society in Portugal, Church Mission and World Religions*
- Learning Outcomes
- Grading rubrics, requirements
- Late submission policies
- Guidelines on Plagiarism
- Right of Appeal procedures
- Module descriptors
- Curriculum maps
- Student Satisfaction Survey
- Teofilos/Moodle platform
- Course and Professor evaluation forms

#### Analysis and Assessment:

##### Aspects relating to all programmes under review

STB does not have a formal document that articulates a unified understanding of its theological education approach (including online education). However, each syllabus includes a course-specific educational philosophy, and the grading rubrics document reflects STB's curriculum goals. In practice, STB's educational approach is grounded in theology and aligned with its mission, vision, and values. This approach is embedded in faculty orientation, staff development, and new student inductions, fostering a shared understanding among faculty, staff, and students. Informed andragogic practices guide teaching strategies to suit each programme's academic level.

STB's programmes emphasise the spiritual and intellectual development of future leaders within the Portuguese evangelical context. Aligned with its mission, STB cultivates not only academic learning but also a transformative, community-oriented experience. Student motivation drives active engagement in studies and ministry preparation, supported by guidance, resources, and faculty respect.

STB practices effective module design tailored to each programme's delivery strategy. Programmes are delivered face-to-face, in hybrid formats, and online. STB balances creativity with attention to accessibility, quality, cost, and scalability in selecting delivery methods. Academic and student services maintain consistent quality across delivery models, particularly in the EQF Level 7 CABT programme, where varied approaches uphold uniform academic rigour.

Learning activities align with module aims and outcomes, while assessments are diverse and academically robust. STB regularly gathers feedback on teaching and module effectiveness through evaluations and class visits, with findings reviewed by the President and Academic Dean (EQF Level 6) and Vice President (EQF Level 7). Stakeholder input informs decisions on faculty assignments and professional development.

The Distance Education/Online Education (DE/OE) format supports student-centred learning, enabling access to theological education for those unable to attend in person. STB's DE/OE module design incorporates research-based practices, faculty training, and a review process for quality assurance. Students receive an induction explaining DE/OE delivery and assessment. Online modules use synchronous, asynchronous, and semi-calendarised elements, tailored to module outcomes and student contexts. DE/OE assessments are designed for feasibility and supported by mechanisms for timely feedback.

#### Aspects relating to individual programmes

##### *EQF Level 7 / First Cycle: Curso Especializada em Estudos Teológicos (CEET)*

The EQF Level 7 CEET programme involves nurturing a holistic development that encompasses spiritual growth, theological understanding and practical ministry skills. The programme offers student-centred learning intending to develop self-reflection, increase critical thinking and theological reflection through spiritual disciplines, mentoring, assignments that require reflection on theological concepts and their implication on practical ministries.

The content is explained clearly. Questions are planned to engage students in sustained discourse. Students are given sufficient opportunities to practise and apply what they are learning in their ministries and internships. Students receive formational feedback.

DE/OE meets students' needs through adapted adult pedagogy in supportive environment.

#### **Recommendation:**

B.3.1 - Educational Philosophy: We recommend that STB compile in one written document its educational philosophy that guides the curriculum and learning and teaching strategy and that also articulates its understanding and implementation of andragogical principles (see also recommendation A.4.1).

**Requirement:** None

**Panel Conclusion: Substantially compliant**

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

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

### Standards examined:

B.4.1 Admission; B.4.2 Progression; B.4.3 Recognition; B.4.4 Graduation and Certification.

DE/OE.57 - Suitable procedures. DE/OE.58 - Suitable admission criteria. DE/OE.59 - Progression and recognition without discrimination of delivery mode.

### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

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

Documents reviewed:

- SER sections B.4.1-4
- Website - especially *Candidatura* and *Boletim de Candidatura*, online application form
- Internal Regulations, CABT and CEET
- Diploma and Diploma Supplement

### Analysis and Assessment:

Admission criteria are defined and published. Secondary education is required to be admitted to the EQF Level 6 CABT programme. For the EQF Level 7 CEET programme an applicant is expected to have EQF Level 6 education and an interview. There are clear admissions criteria and processes outlined on the STB website, including special access for applicants with non-consecutive EQF Level 6 degrees. Other special access cases are discussed on a case-by-case basis by the Executive Leadership Team.

Appropriate admission policies are in place and documentation is kept systematically and securely.

There is progression from lower to higher levels of learning and recognition of prior learning, encouragement to aspire for further learning. Graduates of the EQF Level 6 programme go through the full admission and decision-making process if they apply for the EQF Level 7 programme.

Graduation certification documents include a diploma and a diploma supplement with key information about the level of degree (specifying EQF Level), status of STB as an institution and in relation to accrediting bodies (national and ECTE), achieved learning outcomes.

DE/OE related provisions are all in place and as expected. All students experience different delivery modes throughout the programme and are treated equally.

STB has clear, fit for purpose graduation and certification regulations that are applied consistently. However, the regulations do not include some aspects considered to be good



practice in higher education such as regulations on a defined average minimum grade (GPA) (B.4.2), maximum time to completion (B.4.4), process for re-application of inactive students (B.4.4), regulation on failed courses(B.4.4).

As the possibility of Micro-Credentials (MC) is being developed, the VET encourages STB to consider using MC's for Special Access situations where applicants show the potential to successfully complete a full qualification but may be lacking the formal educational credentials for admission. Admitting such applicants into an MC on the respective EQF Level can serve as a testing ground for students and the institution and provide a factual basis (i.e. respective grades in the MC) for admission into the full qualification.

With respect to terminology, the VET suggests considering the use of "inactive status" instead of "drop-out". In modular part-time and blended delivery modes, it is a strength that students decide the pace of study which also includes significant breaks. The term "inactive" communicates a more positive connotation than "drop-outs."

**Recommendations:** None

**Requirements:** None

**Panel Conclusion:** Fully compliant

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## Standard B.5 - Qualification Nomenclature and Credits

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INSTITUTIONS FOLLOW INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED QUALIFICATION NOMENCLATURE AND CREDIT-COUNTING SYSTEMS

### Standards examined:

B.5.1 Qualification nomenclature; B.5.2 Credits.

### Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

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

Documents reviewed:

- SER sections B.5.1-2
- Website
- Diploma supplement

### Analysis and Assessment:

The qualification resulting from the *Curso Avançado em Bíblia e Teologia (practice)* by STB including 180 ECTS hybrid (residential and online) study is specified and communicated as EQF 6/First Cycle level.

The qualification resulting from the *Curso Especializada em Estudos Teológicos (practice)* by STB hybrid (residential and online) study (120 ECTS) is specified and communicated as EQF 7/Second Cycle level.

The leadership recognises and clearly communicates that STB operates as an AP.

STB defines the expected student workload in their programmes in terms of ECTS in line with the European Framework for Qualifications and the ECTE Certification Framework. STB defines workload in terms of ECTS credits within the established range with 1 ECTS defined as 30 hours of student learning.

STB demonstrates awareness of international systems of credit counting (e.g., Carnegie, UK Credits, etc.) and provides detailed information in the Diploma Supplement that makes deriving comparability straightforward.

**Recommendation:** None

**Requirement:** None

**Panel Conclusion:** Fully compliant

## E. CONCLUSIONS

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### SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

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A.1.1 - Identity and Purpose: We commend STB's thorough integration of core Christian values and their statement of faith throughout their curriculum and operations (A.1.1).

A.1.2 - Legal and Fiscal Status: We commend STB for the explicit, intentional, proactive and transparent communication about the institution's status and the qualifications it offers (A.1.2, B.5.1).

A.2.1 - Governance: We commend STB and PBC for including the Student Representative on the General Council as a member with voice and vote.

A.4.2 - Stakeholder community: We commend STB's proactive approach to building relationships and seeking to serve the lusophone community in and beyond Portugal, as well as seeking those stakeholders' input.

A.5.4 - Information Management: We commend the rigorous, professional and appropriate record-keeping by the registrar of all student files, student progress and transcripts, providing necessary information and tracking the student academic development.

B.2.1 - Design and Approval process: We commend STB for the design and approval processes which proactively and conscientiously seeks input from various stakeholder groups in the decision making process.

B.2.3 - Curricula, Module Descriptors and Learning Activities: We commend STB for syllabi compilation and approval process, which on one hand ensure stability with regard to course level learning outcomes while providing space for adaptations related to pedagogical and didactical elements (types of assignments, required reading, etc.).

B.2.7 - Context: We commend STB for designing a very flexible educational delivery mode and design, thus enabling many students who could for various reasons never study in a full-time residential programme.

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### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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A.1.4 - Public Information: We recommend that STB collate the following documents and make this information easily accessible to applicants and students (ideally in a Student Handbook):

- graduate profiles
- assessment procedures
- mobility opportunities and graduate employment information
- the conditions to be fulfilled for the completion of a given programme of studies
- compatibility tables (B.5.2)

A.2.2 - Leadership and management: We recommend that the governance bodies of STB consider ways to provide structured, formative feedback to the executive team on a regular basis and identify clearly which person (occupying which role) is tasked with leading the response to potential institutional crises and leading the process of leadership transition.

A.2.4 - Strategic Planning: We recommend that further development of the Strategic Plan includes compiling all existing elements into one document and adding details about implementation such as:

- how and when the goals may be attained,
- what resources are required (including staffing plans for strategic initiatives (cf Human Resource Standard),
- who will be responsible for each element and to whom they are accountable,
- what group will monitor the process,
- the governance role in the development and approval of the plan.

A.2.5 - Internal QA policies and procedures: We recommend that the revision of the current IQA Policy document be completed and submitted with the Annual Progress Report for 2025, after fully integrating all aspects mentioned in this Standard (A.2.5).

A.3.2 - Non educational staff: We recommend that:

- the current template for job descriptions for everyone with a role in STB be expanded to include:
  - reporting structure/line management
  - decision making range of person and delimitation thereof
  - regular, documented performance evaluations
  - personal development opportunities provisions related to role at STB.
- the Executive Leadership Team ensure that:
  - job descriptions be written for all staff (educational and non-educational), faculty and Executive Leadership Team members, to include professionals donating their time to STB
  - written agreements be drawn up for anyone who does not yet have such a written document to include documenting financial remuneration agreements (to include donated time).

A.3.3 - Educational Staff: We recommend that a faculty development plan be written, which reflects current elements in their intentionality and is proactive with responsibility for the implementation clearly assigned to one member of the Executive Leadership Team. Ideally this plan includes a special focus on helping EQF Level 6 faculty without EQF Level 7 qualifications to complete their programmes as soon as possible.

A.4.1 and A.4.4 - Learning Community and Communication: We recommend that the clear intentionality present with respect to community life be made visible within the educational philosophy by including how a healthy sense of learning community is fostered also in the online/distance education context along with a communication strategy specifically for OE/DE students. (DE/OE.22 + 28).

A.5.3 - Library / Resource Learning Centre: We recommend that the library development plan is revised and updated to reflect aspects of print and online collection development for both levels of education, of student services, of space and budget allocations.

B.2.4 - Graduate Profiles: We recommend that the existing elements of the Graduate Profile be formalised in writing for both programmes that synthesise the core learning outcomes STB has already developed.

B.3.1 - Educational Philosophy: We recommend that STB formulate in a written document its educational philosophy that guides the curriculum and learning and teaching strategy and that also articulates its understanding and implementation of andragogical principles (see also recommendation A.4.1).

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## **SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS**

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A.2.1 - Governance: We suggest a requirement be given that clear separation of governance and management be established:

- in the General Council, by ensuring that the representatives of the Executive Leadership Team may have voice, but no vote.
- in the General Assembly, by explicitly stating in the bylaws (of STB or PBC) that anyone with a role in STB (irrespective of remuneration agreement) must abstain in votes related to STB.

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## IN CONCLUSION

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The visitation team recommends to the ECTE Accreditation Commission that STB be judged to be in compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines* of the ECTE with the exceptions of the requirements listed above.

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

The VET would like to record their gratitude to STB 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 STB 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. Caleb Hutcherson (Team Leader)**

**Katharina Penner (VET Member)**

**Carmen Crouse (Staff Person)**

**Jonida Osman (Student Representative)**

**Dr. Külli Tõniste (Review Secretary)**

**October 2024**

# APPENDICES

## Visitation Schedule

Time	Meeting Focus/Members	Place
<b>Day 1: Monday, 30 September</b>		
11:15-12:00	Introductory meeting with Senior Leadership Team President, vice-president, academics, teacher	Meeting Room
12:00-12:45	Tour of Facilities	
14:15-15:00	Governance Members Executive Council + Chairs: General Assembly, General Council/PBC President, Audit Council, Students Council General Council member	Meeting Room
16:30-17:15	Educational Staff CABT and CEET	VET's Office
17:15-18:00	Students – in person meeting CABT and CEET	VET's Office
19:30-20:45	Visit Class (in person): Aconselhamento/Counseling Online Class: Cosmovisão Cristã e Cultura Contemporânea/Christian Worldview and Contemporary Culture	Classroom/ Online
<b>Day 2: Tuesday, 1 October</b>		
11:15-12:00	Learning Resources (library/online)	Library
12:00-12:45	Programme Directors	VET's Office
14:15-15:00	Administrative Staff Secretary, registrar, accountant	Main Office
16:30-17:15	Mentors/Tutors – Internships etc. Dean of Students, Teachers	VET's Office
17:15-18:00	Teaching Faculty Meeting with Alumni [CABT+CEET: in person and online]	Meeting Room   VET's Office

19:30-20:45	<p>Visit Class (in person):</p> <p>Literatura e Teologia no Pentateuco e Livros Históricos do Velho Testamento/Literature, and Theology in the Pentateuch and historical Books of the Old Testament</p> <p>Online Class: Metodologia de Estudo da Bíblia/Study of the Bible Methodology</p>	Classroom/ Online
20:45-21:30	Chapel/Community Time	Dining Room
<b>Day 3: Wednesday, 2 October</b>		
11:15-12:45	Reserved for follow-up conversations as needed	VET's Office
18:00-19:00 (UTC+1hr)	Final Meeting with Leadership Team: Sharing Conclusions	Meeting Room