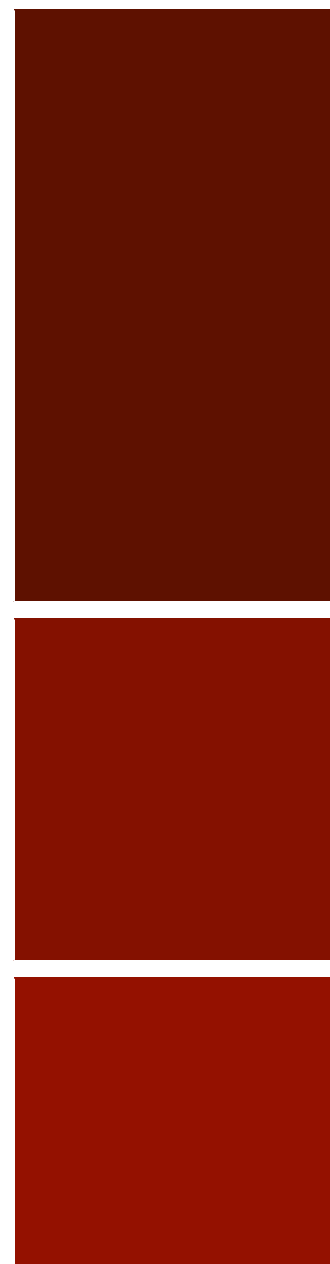


REVIEW REPORT

International Baptist Theological Study
Centre (IBTSC), Amsterdam

Related to a visit for a Cyclical Review;
November 13-15, 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 International Baptist Theological Study Centre (IBTSC), Amsterdam, 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 Visiting Evaluation Team (VET) and an on-site visit November 13-15, 2024, for the purpose of accrediting IBTSC's programmes based on the European Council for Theological Education (ECTE)'s *Standards and Guidelines* and relevant ECTE Supplemental Guidelines. The VET suggests to the ECTE Accreditation Commission (AC) ten commendations of excellence, three recommendations and seven requirements.

B. INTRODUCTION TO THE REVIEW

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

IBTSC obtained institutional and programme accreditation from ECTE as an AP in 2019.

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

Programmes

Programmes submitted for accreditation in 2024:

EQF/QF-EHEA	Name of qualification used by IBTSC	ECTS	ISCED Level	ICETE Level	Delivery Mode
EQF 7 /Second Cycle (partial)	Post Graduate Research Certificate in Theology (PGCert)	30	7 (partial)	Master	DE/OE
EQF 7 /Second Cycle (partial)	Thesis Bridging Programme (TBP)	30	7 (partial)	Master	DE/OE

The Visiting Evaluation Team

The composition of the VET to IBTSC was as follows:

Dr. Patrick Mitchel (Team Leader)

Dr. Marina Behera (VET member)

Tiago Fonesca (Student Representative)

Dr. Grace Al Zoughbi (Review Secretary)

Visit Arrangements

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

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

- The RS provided access for the VET-members to the SER, supplemental documents, and all previous correspondence with the institution via hyperlink.
- 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 Internal Review Co-ordinator (IRC) of the institution was identified and received a copy of the visit protocol.
- In conjunction with the VET leader, the IRC organised and agreed to a schedule for the visit.
- An initial pre-visit meeting of the VET took place via video-conferencing to discuss the SER and supporting documents.

The team was very warmly received by the leadership and the staff. The institution provided all online and on campus means needed for an effective evaluation of the academic work and communal life. From the team's perspective, 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 November 13, 2024, and concluded November 15, 2024. The review was conducted in English.

Visit Schedule

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

Director of the Faculty of Religion and Theology at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam	Administrative Staff
Previous Director of IBTSC	Teaching Faculty
New Director of IBTSC	Board Representatives
Senior Administrator	Stakeholders
Academic Head	Church Representatives
Leadership Team	Students
	Alumni

The complete schedule is in the Appendix to this report.

C. INTRODUCTION TO THE INSTITUTION AND PROGRAMMES

General Description of Institution

IBTSC, Amsterdam, has been a member of ECTE since 2017 and institutionally accredited since 2019. Established in 2013 as a Dutch association (“Vereniging”), its mission focuses on theological education and research, primarily serving the European Baptist Federation (EBF) region.

IBTSC operates through two main areas: the Research Community and the Learning Network.

At the core of the Research Community is its partnership with Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU), which provides guidance and support to students throughout the VU PhD programme. The two programmes under review by ECTE further strengthen this collaboration:

- The Postgraduate Research Certificate in Theology (PGCert = EQF Level 7/Second Cycle partial) introduced in 2019, fulfils VU’s doctoral entry requirements.
- The Thesis Bridging Programme (TBP = EQF Level 7/Second Cycle partial) launched in 2023, helps potential PhD candidates lacking a research element in their Master’s degree.

Mission and Vision Statement

In 2020, having developed an overall Strategic Plan, IBTSC started a major branding process guided by a Christian-based marketing company. Branding included a wide consultation with the IBTSC Board, staff, students and partner organisations. The mission statement resulting from the branding process is ‘Empowering Scholars and Leaders in the Church for the World’.

IBTSC’s vision statement is: To serve the EBF and wider Baptist community as a theological research community and training network. Committed to academic excellence in research, disseminating knowledge and facilitating learning for the benefit of churches, individuals and ministries in their local context.

History

Since 2020, several significant developments have occurred at IBTSC. The Learning Network was established, and a rebranding process was initiated. The institution also revised and implemented a Library Strategic Plan and strengthened its strategic partnership with EBF.

In 2021, the “IBTSC Extraordinary Chair in Christian Ethics” was founded at VU, with Prof. David Gushee as the chair-holder.

IBTSC renewed its focus on the EBF region by building connections with Almaty Bible College (ABC), including a visit to the Almaty campus by IBTSC staff in 2022. This resulted in five

individuals enrolling as doctoral students and increased Central Asian participation in the Learning Network.

Key partnerships have been refreshed, particularly with organisations such as Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) World Mission, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and Canadian Baptist Ministries, emphasising strategic collaboration and sustainable financing.

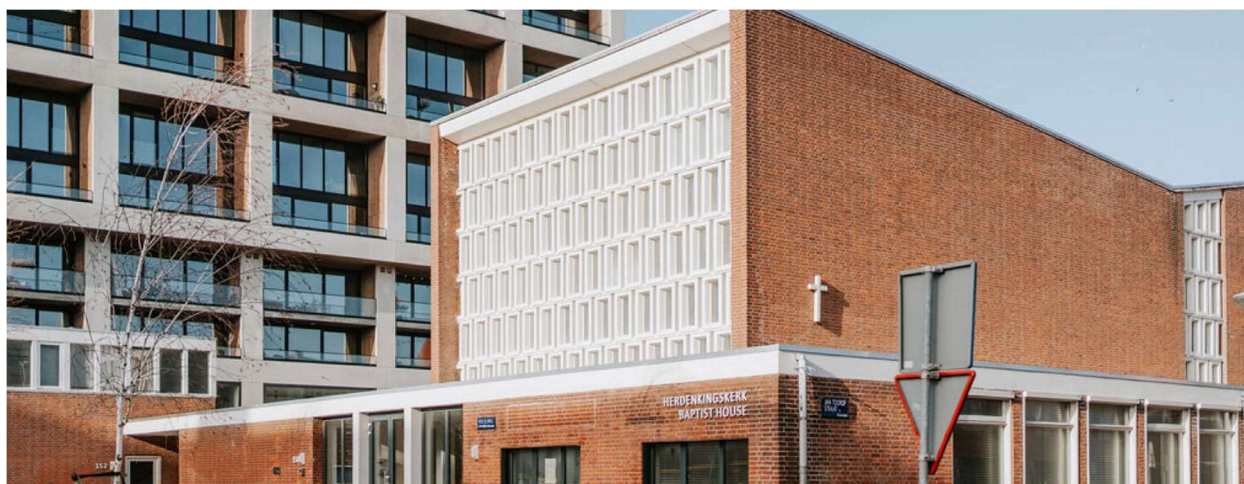
Facilities

IBTSC is located at the Baptist House in Amsterdam, which it shares with the Dutch Baptist Union and Baptist Seminary. The facilities are well-maintained by the landlord.

The Baptist House, renovated in 2017, is owned by the Baptist Union of the Netherlands. It serves multiple purposes, hosting the Baptist Union, the Dutch Baptist Seminary, and the EBF. Additionally, it functions as a place of worship, accommodating a Brazilian congregation on Saturday evenings, a Dutch Baptist congregation on Sunday mornings, and a Myanmar believers' community on Sunday afternoons and evenings.

IBTSC rents two offices and the first floor for its library facilities, making it the anchor tenant of the building. This status grants IBTSC access to all building facilities when needed. The Baptist House meets the Centre's requirements and offers four meeting spaces:

- A private discussion room for six people.
- A flexible workspace for around 15 people.
- A lecture room accommodating up to 20 people.
- A large meeting room with space for up to 80 people.



Baptist House

Use of Baptist House during Colloquium

During colloquium events, IBTSC fully utilises all meeting rooms, as well as the kitchen and dining areas. Each room is equipped with advanced audiovisual facilities, and a mobile computer/TV

system allows online meetings in any space. Visitors also benefit from full Wi-Fi connectivity throughout the premises.

Guest Facilities

In 2019, IBTSC began full occupancy of a small guest facility within the Baptist House complex. This includes three rooms: one double ensuite, one double, and one single with shared bathroom facilities. There is also a shared kitchen/dining area and laundry facilities. Renovated in 2017, the guest accommodation provides a welcoming environment for visitors.

Library Facilities

The John Smyth Library, located on the upper floor of the Baptist House, is central to IBTSC's work. It features quiet study spaces for 12 visitors, two workstations with scanning and electronic resource access, a microform workstation for capturing digital images, and a multifunction printer/scanner/copier.

IBTSC owns two distinct libraries:

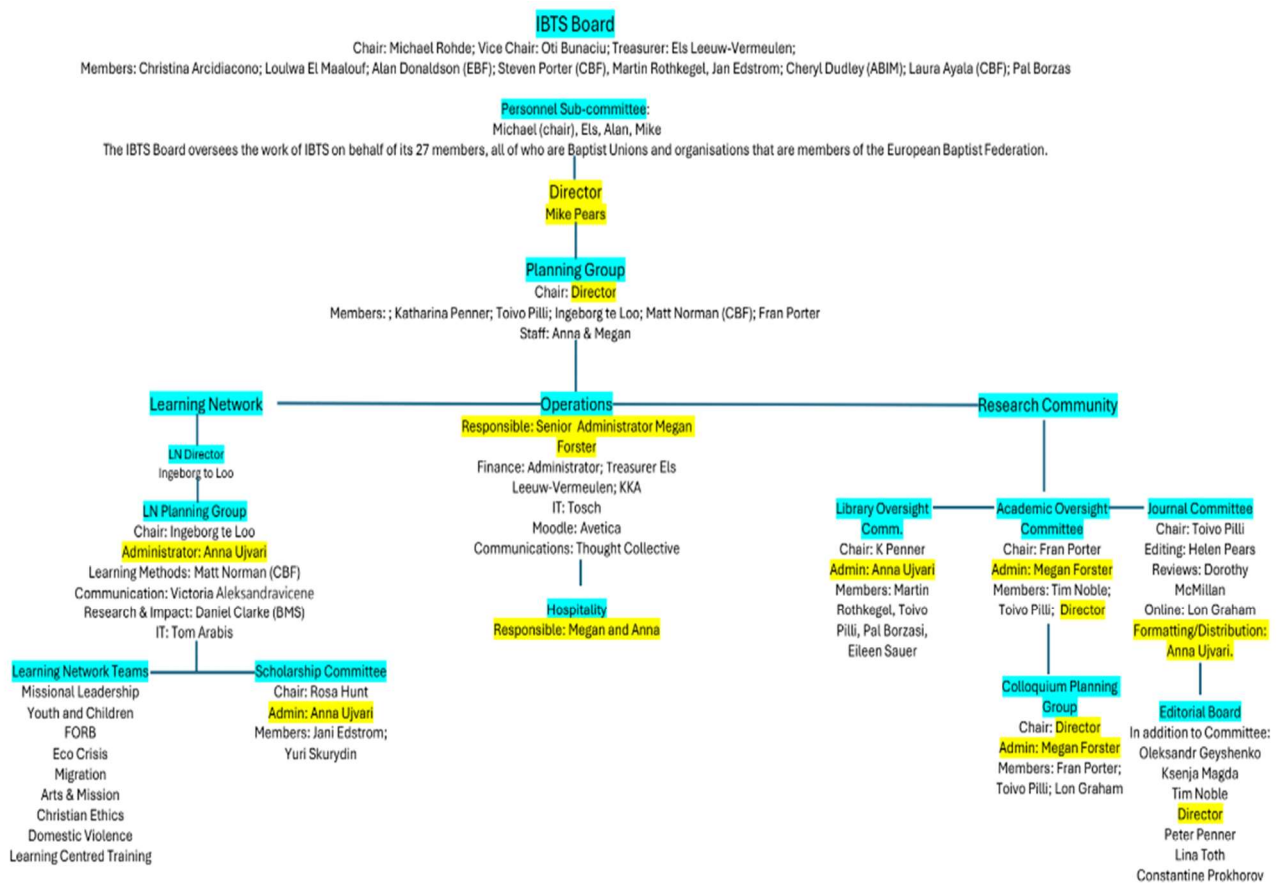
1. John Smyth Library (Print) – Baptist Research Library housing physical resources.
2. Digital Theological Library (DTL) – An electronic library offering a broad range of theological resources.

These facilities ensure a comprehensive academic and community-focused environment for IBTSC's mission.

Governance

IBTSC is overseen by the Board of Directors (BoD), appointed by the members of the Association during the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The Chair of the Board is also appointed by the Association members. The Board typically meets twice a year in Amsterdam, while an Executive Committee - comprising the Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer—meets as needed and maintains communication with the IBTSC Director. The association updated its Articles in 2019 to allow electronic voting.

Board members generally serve a five-year term, with the possibility of retirement or, in exceptional cases, re-election for a second term. A rotation system, implemented in 2015, ensures continuity, with some members receiving extensions to their service periods. A Nominations Committee, appointed by the Association members, proposes candidates for the BoD at the AGM. This process includes representatives from IBTSC's partner organisations, reflecting its collaborative approach.



Since 2019, the governance structure of IBTSC has included the Personnel Committee, which functions as a sub-committee of the BoD. This committee plays a key role in supporting the Board’s work in overseeing personnel matters.

The members of the Association and the Board members are listed in the Annual Reports, which are publicly available and presented at each AGM, ensuring transparency and accountability in the organisation’s governance.

Educational and non-educational Staff

IBTSC has three types of staff contracts that align with its international network and remote working arrangements:

1. Employed Staff – Staff members who are based in the Netherlands and are directly employed by IBTSC.
2. Contracted Staff – Staff members who are hired on specific contracts for roles.
3. Seconded Staff – Staff members who are temporarily assigned to IBTSC from other organisations.

Non-educational Staff

There are ten non-educational staff: two are full-time, eight are part-time, with an equal gender distribution of five female and five male staff.

Educational Staff

The educational staff at IBTSC, responsible for the TBP and PGCert programmes, consists of six individuals, all holding PhDs and teaching at levels 7 and 8. The educational staff includes full-time and part-time members. In addition, PhD supervisors are contracted.

IBTSC also has non-salaried staff who volunteer part-time, many of whom are involved in the Learning Network teams. Other volunteers support various committees, moderating, archiving, events assistance, and editorial work for the Journal of European Baptist Studies.

Budget

IBTSC has maintained balanced budgets for the past five years. Annual budgets are prepared by the Treasurer, Director, and Finance Administrator, with assistance from an external tax adviser and payroll officer. The budget is presented to the BoD in November for the upcoming year and is audited externally. The audited accounts are included in the publicly available Annual Report, which is presented at the AGM in September.

Student Numbers

	EQF Level 7/ Second Cycle (partial) (Postgraduate Research Certificate in Theology)		
	Entering	Total headcount	Graduating
2018-19	6 (M5/F1)	6 (M5/F1) FTE 3	5 (M4/F1)
2019-20	8 (M7/F1)	8 (M7/F1) FTE 4	8 (M7/F1)
2020-21	7 (M6/F1)	7 (M6/F1) FTE 3.5	6 (M5/F1)
2021-22	7 (M7/F0)	7 (M7/F0) FTE 3.5	4 (M4/F0)
2022-23	7 (M5/F2)	7 (M5/F2) FTE 3.5	6 (M4/F2)
2023-24	5 (M3/F2)	5 (M3/F2)	

	EQF Level 7/ Second Cycle (partial) (New Thesis Bridging Programme)		
	Entering	Total headcount	Graduating
2018-19	-	-	-
2019-20	-	-	-
2020-21	-	-	-
2022-23	3 (M2/F1)	3 (M2/F1) FTE 1.5	3 (M2/F1)
2023-24	3 (M3/F0)	3 (M3/F0) FTE 1.5	continuing

How the institution prepared for the review

The preparation of the C-SER and accompanying Programme Self Evaluation Report (P-SER) began in 2023, led by the Administrator and Director of IBTSC. A timetable and outline structure for the reports were created, but due to unforeseen staffing issues, including long-term sick leave, the submission of the C-SER and P-SER was postponed until 13 September 2024, with a VET visit scheduled for 13-15 November 2024.

In January 2024, the long-serving Administrator left to take a position at the VU, leading to significant administrative challenges. A former staff member took on a temporary part-time administrator role until - in March 2024 - IBTSC hired a part-time, remote-working Academic Administrator. At the time of submission of this report, this person has relocated to the Netherlands and now works four days per week as the Senior Administrator in the IBTSC Office.

Key staff involved in the process included the Director, Administrator (until January 2024), Temporary Head of Administration, Chair of the Academic Oversight Committee, Academic Administrator (from March 2024), Director of the IBTSC Learning Network, and Chair of the Library Oversight Committee. All these individuals are members of the IBTSC Planning Group. Additionally, an editor provided assistance.

IBTSC reviewed supplemental guidelines, including [Producing Self-Evaluation Reports](#), [Distance and Online Education Guidelines](#), and [Internal QA Policies](#).

As a small organisation, IBTSC did not form new committees for this task but used the existing Planning Group as the primary reference body.

D. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS

Standard A.1 - Identity and Purpose

INSTITUTIONS HAVE CLEARLY FORMULATED STATEMENTS OF IDENTITY AND PURPOSE

Standards examined:

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

Previous requirements or recommendations:

Expand the mission statement of IBTSC when revising the relevant documents.

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Faculty
- Students
- Stakeholders: members of the governance bodies, staff

Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

Objectives and Activities of the Association

- Strategic Plan 2019-24
- Organogram
- IBTSC website
- EBF website
- Baptist identities
- PUCIS correspondence
- Director's address Colloquium 2024
- Why theology publicity
- Learning Network Approach 2024
- Missional Leadership Residential programme
- Intercultural Learning job description
- Missional Leadership residential programme
- Hub Coordinator for Intercultural Learning
- Bridge Building Meeting (3-5 Oct 2022)
- Foundation of Association
- Objectives and Activities
- Annual Report 2023
- Board minutes 2019 adopting the plan
- Thought Collective agreement
- Research Handbook
- Programme information online
- Student fees document

Analysis and Assessment:

IBTSC has a well-established identity that is deeply rooted in its historical context while also rearticulated to address contemporary needs. This refreshed vision reflects its commitment to remaining relevant and mission driven. The institution's alignment with ECTE's core values is evident through its practices and ethos.

IBTSC complies robustly to Dutch legal and financial regulations. The presence of a Dutch chartered accountant on the Board underscores its commitment to sound financial governance and accountability.

IBTSC has cultivated strong partnerships and relationships within Baptist networks, exemplified by its connections to the EBF and the Prague-based Partnership of European Baptist Theological Institutions.

Despite a high dependency on fundraising (78%), IBTSC demonstrates a clear awareness of the associated challenges, such as rising costs and inflation. The institution has planned accordingly, maintaining a balanced approach to financial sustainability.

IBTSC has recently undergone a major rebranding exercise. The process has clarified the institution's vision and resulted in cohesive visual communication across various platforms, including the website, and a presence in various social media. This strategic refresh enhances IBTSC's public presence and reinforces its identity in the theological education community.

The institution is navigating leadership transition with the onboarding of a new Director, which presents opportunities for fresh perspectives and renewed strategic focus.

The IBTSC's website and social media channels present a cohesive and clear sense of identity, both visually and in written content. The recent rebranding work has successfully unified the institution's public and internal platforms, enhancing its overall coherence and professional image. Public information is readily available, with the Research Handbook serving as the primary source for programme details related to the two programmes under review. Information on graduate profiles is missing, but this will be addressed in Standard B.2.

Commendation:

A.1.4 - **Public information:** The VET commends IBTSC for the coherence and excellency in the rebranding work. The institution has a very clear identity, and it is visible in the various communication channels available. The social media platforms are consistent, promote engagement with their audience and value the people of the organisation.

Panel Conclusion: Full Compliance

Standard A.2 - Governance and Quality Assurance

INSTITUTIONS HAVE APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE STRUCTURES

Standards examined:

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

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Leadership Team
- Administrative Staff
- Teaching Faculty and Educational Staff
- Board Representatives
- Church Representatives
- Students
- Alumni

Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Agenda for General Meeting
- Annual Report 2023
- AOC committee meetings
- BMS / IBTSC Strategic Plans 2024
- Board Nomination letter
- Branding Process: Minutes of Board meeting, workshop summary
- Communication Analytics
- Course evaluation forms (student feedback)
- Educational and non-educational staff information
- EMBJ Application
- Foundation of Association
- Framework for Partnerships IBTSC and seminaries
- Governance and Compliance Chart
- IBTSC ETF Leuven Inter-cultural proposal
- IBTSC Research Fellows Programme May 2022
- Job Descriptions
- Learning Network documents 2019, 2020, 2024/25
- Library Evaluation/weeding strategy & development plan 2022-26
- Library Oversight Committee / and notes
- MOUs with Cardiff / Dutch Baptists / HLT Norway
- Organisational Activities Map
- Organogram
- Personnel Committee
- Planning Group meeting notes
- Profile Chair Christian social ethics
- Proposed Framework for Management of IBTSC Libraries
- Sample Board agendas
- Seconded agreement documents (BMS)
- Strategic Plan 2019-24, 2023-25, Board presentation 2022-23
- VU-IBTSC agreement

Analysis and Assessment:

IBTSC has established robust and clearly articulated structures, which include effective collaborations with key partners. While these arrangements are complex, they are well-managed and effectively integrated into institutional operations.

IBTSC has good governance structures in place. IBTSC benefits from a highly committed and competent Board, whose members bring diverse expertise to their roles. The practice of limiting terms to five years ensures regular infusion of new ideas and perspectives, fostering innovation and adaptability. The appointment of a new Director and a largely new team has built upon the solid foundation established by previous leadership, bringing fresh perspectives and renewed energy. The smooth transition, coupled with the robust working atmosphere and shared commitment among the team and Board, reflects a healthy and resilient organisational culture.

The creation of committees such as the Academic Oversight Committee (AOC) and the Library Oversight Committee (LOC) reflects ongoing institutional development and a focus on strategic governance. The self-reflective ethos at IBTSC is commendable, as demonstrated by transparent evaluations of past shortcomings, such as the inability to maintain the 2019 Strategic Plan. The institution's awareness of the need to develop an updated and redesigned Strategic Plan is a positive step forward.

Apart from issues raised by students and then brought to the Academic Committee for discussion, there is currently no structured opportunity for student participation in decision making as regards to both community life and academic programmes or a structured student committee at IBTSC. Addressing this gap will enhance student voice and engagement. Issues raised by students are brought to the Academic Committee for discussion.

Existing documentation related to external quality assurance (i.e. with VU and ECTE) is comprehensive but could benefit from clearer integration into institutional practice. IBTSC has yet to develop a formal internal quality assurance policy. While this has been acknowledged and included in the agenda for the new leadership, it will be essential to establish processes for cyclical reviews and unpacked mechanisms for incorporating student feedback.

The absence of a current Strategic Plan following the discontinuation of the 2019 strategy highlights a need for priority attention. The ongoing efforts by the new Director and Board to develop a forward-looking Strategic Plan will be crucial in guiding IBTSC's growth and development.

Requirements:

A.2.3 - Decision-making structures: The VET suggests to the AC a requirement that IBTSC develop a student government structure which enables student participation in decision making regarding both community life and academic programmes appropriate to the school's context.

A.2.4 - Strategic planning: The VET suggests to the AC a requirement that IBTSC submit a timeline for the development and approval of a Strategic Plan with a listing of aspects to be integrated (which provides 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, and the governance role in the development and approval of the plan).

A.2.5 - **Internal Quality Assurance procedures:** The VET suggests to the AC a requirement that IBTSC synthesise its various internal quality assurance practices and procedures into a unified policy, with clear guidelines for quality assurance, that can be made publicly available.

Panel Conclusion: Non-Compliance

Standard A.3 - Human Resources

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

Standards examined:

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

Previous requirements or recommendations:

Implementation of faculty recruitment plans: IBTSC is asked to inform ECTE on the realisation of the recruitment plans in its annual reports (recruitment of younger, additional women, Eastern Europeans, etc.).

The staff team is small. There exists a lack of emergency back-up strategies, which the school is fully aware of. The VET panel suggests that IBTSC make plans to ensure they have on-call back-up staff for emergencies thus ensuring a smooth functioning of the institution and the programme.

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Leadership Team
- Administrative Staff
- Teaching Faculty
- Educational Staff
- Board Representatives
- Stakeholders including Church Representatives
- Students
- Alumni

SER sections D.1.A.3. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- KvK June 2024
- Annual reports 2022 / 23
- Board nomination letter
- Governance compliance chart
- Organogram
- Board minutes 2023
- External reports to BMS / CBM
- Staff contracts samples
- Educational and non-educational staff information
- IBTSC personnel policy
- Personnel committee structure and information
- Staff review questions
- Email regarding staff development plan July 2023
- Director Job Description 2024
- Personnel Committee Early Minutes
- Staff Development Plan
- Director Appointment Advert

Analysis and Assessment:

The institution's unique non-traditional structure, with one teaching week per year and individual supervision for postgraduate students, highlights its innovative approach to theological education. However, further clarity on staff support and professional development opportunities, particularly for academic staff, would enhance understanding of how IBTSC sustains and develops its personnel.

IBTSC's teaching staff, including both in-house and adjunct faculty, are highly experienced and well-qualified, bringing a wealth of expertise to their roles. However, the institution's engagement with training in online delivery, learning design, and the development of educational resources is not clearly articulated in the SER, making it difficult to evaluate alignment with the main thrust of the standard.

IBTSC's non-academic staff are commended for their high level of professionalism, spiritual maturity, and commitment, reflecting the institution's values and mission. The team demonstrates strong qualifications and Christian character, contributing significantly to the overall operations and ethos of IBTSC.

The Personnel Policy reflects significant progress, with considerable effort made to professionalise HR practices in ways that meet the required standards. However, the staff development plan appears to remain a work in progress, leaving room for further clarification on its implementation and outcomes.

The SER offers valuable reflections on staff turnover and strategic planning, highlighting rigorous self-assessment during a period of institutional turbulence. Thoughtful actions have been taken to address these challenges.

It may be beneficial for IBTSC to consider establishing external support mechanisms, such as access to independent coaches, to provide professional support for staff during times of institutional change/transitions.

Commendations:

A.3.2/A.3.3 - Non-Educational Staff / Educational Staff: The VET commends the high level of professionalism, commitment, and Christian maturity of IBTSC's non-educational staff and educational staff.

A.3.4 - HR Policies and procedures: The VET commends IBTSC for the development of the Personnel Committee, HR policies, and for being able to integrate new staff into their workplace whilst maintaining a high-quality standard of theological education.

Recommendation:

A.3.1. - Human Resources: The VET recommends that IBTSC complete the staff development plan that has already been initiated, ensuring it includes both educational and non-educational staff.

Panel Conclusion: Substantial Compliance

Standard A.4 - Community and Context

INSTITUTIONS DISPLAY HEALTHY COMMUNITY DYNAMICS IN ACTIVE RESPONSE TO CONTEXT

Standards examined:

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

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Leadership Team
- Administrative Staff
- Teaching Faculty
- Educational Staff
- Board Representatives
- Stakeholders including Church Representatives
- Students
- Alumni

Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Colloquium 2023 programme
- Colloquium feedback discussion
- Colloquium feedback forms sample
- EBF theological commission
- Lists of stakeholder relationships
- Our People (ibts.eu)
- Relevant pages of IBTSC website
- Educational and non-educational staff information
- Thought Collective retainer
- IBTSC website and news
- Student handbooks
- Moodle
- Educational and Non-Educational Staff Information
- Research Handbooks: 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024

Analysis and Assessment:

IBTSC demonstrates intentional effort to foster relational community within its education model, particularly during the Colloquium week. This is commendable, given the challenges of building community life in a non-residential context.

IBTSC's reflection on network and stakeholder development is impressive, with strong examples such as the established relationship with the CBM. These partnerships are characterised by trust and alignment with IBTSC's vision and mission.

The existing alumni programme centres around research fellows and the "Friends of IBTSC" network. Formalising and expanding this programme could provide more structured opportunities for graduates to remain engaged and contribute to the institution's community and mission.

Conversations during the visit revealed a strong sense of community and support from IBTSC staff, highlighting the relational ethos of the institution. This strength should be emphasised and supported by clear structures to ensure it is sustained and accessible to all students.

The VET had the opportunity to meet with a representative from the CBM, a key stakeholder for IBTSC. There is a strong and established relationship between the two, characterised by mutual trust and a well-understood alignment with IBTSC's vision and mission. This partnership

highlights the institution's ability to foster meaningful and collaborative relationships with external partners that support and advance its goals.

The VET notes that IBTSC has a very strong relationship with the Faculty of Religion and Theology (FRT) at VU, as well as other theological universities, including notable collaboration with Tyndale Seminary.

Additionally, IBTSC students are located in diverse contexts across the globe, where they are actively engaged in mission, service, teaching, and reflection within their local settings. This international reach is a significant strength, demonstrating the institution's global impact and relevance.

Regarding the online learning environment, the VET found the Moodle platform to be well-structured, easily accessible, and user-friendly, ensuring students can navigate the resources with ease.

Commendations:

A.4.1 - Learning Community: The VET commends IBTSC for fostering and maintaining a healthy sense of community life among their members, providing community for students during their studies and engagement with their peers' research.

A.4.2 - Stakeholder Community: The VET commends IBTSC for developing and maintaining mutually enriching relationships with a wide range of stakeholder groups.

A.4.3 - Civil Community: The VET commends IBTSC for their fruitful and strong relationship to VU and the broader Baptist world. The VET also commends IBTSC for being an exemplary partner in preparing students for the PhD, as evidenced by discussions with VU. High levels of trust have been earned through a solid track record of success.

Recommendation:

A.4.2 - Stakeholder Community: The VET recommends that IBTSC continue to formalise and develop their already established Alumni programme.

Panel Conclusion: Substantial Compliance

Standard A.5 - Educational Resources

INSTITUTIONS HAVE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT THEIR MISSION AND STRATEGY

Standards examined:

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

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Leadership Team
- Administrative Staff
- Teaching Faculty
- Educational Staff
- Board Representatives
- Church Representatives
- Students
- Alumni

Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Research Handbook
- Library Strategy
- Library Collection Development plan
- Library oversight committee
- Library catalogue
- Digital theological library
- Baptist heritage library
- Library catalogue on website
- Archive of Baptist heritage library
- Digital theological library online
- VET to see IT system onsite and sample access to student records, module and programme records and other information
- IBTSC - Avetica Data Agreement
- Personnel policy
- Privacy policy
- IBTSC Laptop use agreement
- Link to Tosch

Analysis and Assessment:

The VET was shown comprehensive administrative systems underpinning student services, which are thorough and well-organised. Students undergo both informal pre-interview discussions and formal interviews as part of their induction process. The AOC effectively monitors student progress, and there is a high level of personal communication between the administration, tutors, and students, contributing to a supportive environment. Students report being well-supported throughout their studies, and the information provided on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is clear and well-presented, making it easy for students to access necessary resources and stay on track.

The VET found that the Research Handbook is well-crafted and meets the required criteria, effectively guiding students in their academic journey. The AOC and the office administrator play vital roles in supporting the research process, further enhancing the academic framework at IBTSC.

There is strong evidence that IBTSC provides ample access to relevant EQF-level resources for its students. The institution offers an adequate physical library onsite, which students can access during their one-week residency (Colloquium/Induction) period, and other times should they

wish. During this time, students are allowed to borrow books for up to a year, ensuring they have the resources they need for their studies.

In addition to the physical library, IBTSC has made good provisions for online resources, enhancing students' access to materials. The library also facilitates access to materials beyond its immediate collection. Students can request copies of materials from library-sharing facilities in Amsterdam (not just VU), with the librarian assisting in sending these materials to them. Furthermore, students are encouraged to send lists of books they would like to include in their academic work, and the librarian will make every effort to secure them for use during their residency, demonstrating a high level of support for students' academic needs.

IBTSC has made significant efforts to manage student data, though there are areas that require further development. The VLE system is managed by a contracted service, providing a solid platform for course delivery. However, IBTSC is aware of the potential need for an information access policy for remote workers to ensure that all staff and students can securely access the necessary data. After reviewing the VLE and the scheduled online meetings, it became clear that tutoring continues beyond the induction week, providing ongoing support for students throughout their studies.

IBTSC is able to monitor drop-out rates due to its low enrolment numbers and the high level of staff involvement in students' academic journeys. The communication between students, staff, and supervisors is clear, and students have praised the institution for its prompt responses to inquiries.

Data on student performance and progress is collected at various levels: individual course, colloquium, and at the end of the programme. Up until 2024, records were kept manually, but IBTSC has introduced online forms and spreadsheets to streamline data retention and analysis.

Issues raised by students are brought to the Academic Committee for discussion. As the director is involved in the Academic Committee he may bring relevant issues to the Board's attention.

The Senior Academic Administrator has extensive experience in academic administration, is leading the implementation of revised systems designed to ensure transparency and sustainability, even in the event of staff turnover. This reflects IBTSC's commitment to maintaining effective data management practices and ensuring that systems are resilient for the future.

The VET acknowledges the significant progress made in transitioning to new systems and encourages the team to continue improving the information management of the institution. The team has made notable efforts in developing the IT infrastructure, and the agreement with Tosch could be highlighted here rather than simply referencing their website.

The VET assesses the institution's IT infrastructure as fit for purpose and operating efficiently. Both students and staff have access to the electronic tools necessary for their work.

The VLE is well-designed, user-friendly, and easy to navigate, offering all the required information in an organised and coherent manner. The courses are clearly structured, with distinct headings for each stage of the study journey. Students have expressed appreciation for IBTSC's ongoing efforts to improve the VLE.

Furthermore, the agreement on VLE provision would be more appropriately referenced here than under the previous standard.

Commendations:

A.5.3 - **Library/Learning Resource Centres:** The VET commends IBTSC for the excellent contributions of the library oversight committee, the accessibility and readability of resources, and the librarians' support in assisting students during their research.

A.5.6 - **Virtual Learning Environment and Educational Resources:** The VET commends the staff for their ongoing work and continuous improvement of the VLE. The resources are easily accessible to students, and the structure for faculty is clear and well-organised.

Panel Conclusion: Full Compliance

Standard A.6 - Finances and Sustainability

INSTITUTIONS HAVE SUITABLE FINANCIAL POTENTIAL, PLANNING, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Standards examined:

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

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Leadership Team
- Administrative Staff
- Teaching Faculty
- Educational Staff
- Board Representatives
- Stakeholders including Church Representatives
- Students
- Alumni

Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Budget Forecast 2023-25
- Budget Planning 2024
- Dutch pay scales
- IBTSC PhD research programme - fees for the programme
- External audits
- Student fees 2025 onwards
- Funding proposal learning network CBM / funding proposal BMS

Analysis and Assessment:

The institution has established solid fiscal structures and benefits from a long legacy and a well-regarded reputation. It has multiple income streams in place, and there is thoughtful self-reflection on staff sustainability, especially in light of significant turnover.

In discussions with the Treasurer and leadership, the VET was satisfied that the institution has sufficient financial resources in place while funding remains an ongoing challenge, especially in light of rising costs.

IBTSC's main sources of funding include:

1. Baptistische Theologische Hochschule Verein (Switzerland): An independent association in Switzerland that manages funds from the sale of property in Prague. The Board aims to protect capital investments while passing interest to IBTSC to support its mission.
2. Income from students: This includes student tuition and fees and payments from the VU for each graduating student.
3. Grants and donations: Contributions from individual donors, legacy funds, and grants from trusts and mission partners such as BMS and CBM.

Senior administrative Staff presented the institution's administrative systems for managing financial information, including fees, invoices, and data for audits. The accounts are externally audited, and there are well-established systems for budgeting, spending procedures, and monitoring student payments. A qualified individual oversees all invoices, and the accounting systems are being refined to incorporate online data management.

The institution appears financially stable and maintains an adequate number of students, with a good completion rate. The systems in place are strong and reliable.

While the institution does not offer its own institutional scholarships, it benefits from scholarship support provided by other funding organisations. Financial stability is further supported by an annual income from investments.

Additionally, the institution has made efforts to develop the "IBTSC Friends" initiative, which includes alumni and other supporters who contribute financially and offer prayer support for the organisation.

Panel Conclusion: Full Compliance

PROGRAMME STANDARDS¹

Standard B.1 - Holistic Integration

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

Standards examined:

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

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Leaders
- Faculty
- Staff and students of the institution

Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

(The following are general documents relevant to this section and a few documents especially relevant to the specific programmes).

- EHEAP framework
- Assignment descriptors for Interpretation and Research Skills modules
- Research Handbook 2024
- TBP Research Handbook supplement
- Thesis feedback form
- Assignment feedback form

Analysis and Assessment:

Aspects relating to all programmes under review:

IBTSC highlights the ethos of the PGCert and TBP, emphasising their role within a postgraduate-level research community, where adult learners are encouraged to be independent in their studies. The course structure includes cohorts of students with supervisors alongside who serve both as academic mentors and personal guides.

Discussions with the academic team confirmed that the PGCert and TBP include an assessed formative element, amounting to approximately 15% of overall assessments, which are linked to the module learning outcomes.

Holistic integration is occurring, as evidenced by student feedback and staff articulation. However, this integration may benefit from clear articulation in the institution's policies and procedures, with stronger links to Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs). From conversations with academic and non-academic staff, as well as students, there is a practice of holistic learning and education.

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

The delivery method of PGCert and TBP with an annual weeklong colloquium combined with independent research was clearly designed with the target groups in mind. The programmes are not end-goals in themselves but are geared towards adult learners with multiple areas of responsibility in life and the explicit goal of entering a PhD programme. Both programmes are intentionally designed as stepping stones toward a PhD rather than as end goals in themselves. The TBP provides a foundation that leads into the PGCert, which further equips participants with the skills and qualifications required to meet the VU PhD criteria.

The SER provides a strong description of the PGCert and TBP, emphasising that students are encouraged to develop reflective practice and engage across cultures. The VET acknowledges the assessed formative element within the TBP and PGCert. This element contributes to a focus on spiritual formation, in addition to academic and character development. The involvement of student cohorts, input from supervisors, and academic and personal reviews by the AOC on student progress help to embed this holistic approach in the programme.

The AOC plays a formal role in monitoring student progress, ensuring that academic and personal support is provided as needed. This structure ensures that students receive necessary interventions or guidance to stay on track in their studies.

IBTSC meets and exceeds expectations in terms of its trusted status with the VU. In the competitive entry process for the VU PhD programme, IBTSC students perform very well, as they are known for being well-prepared and likely to succeed at the doctoral level. This reputation is supported by solid evidence within the IBTSC research handbook and strengthened by formal recognition with the VU.

Given the constraints of the PGCert and TBP, both of which serve as steps toward the PhD programme, the degree to which spiritual formation can be formally structured within these programmes may be limited. That being said, the SER clearly highlights that integrity in research is a core value, alongside learning within a Christian community. From conversations with students and staff, it is evident that high standards of research integrity are upheld and modelled consistently within IBTSC.

Character education in these programmes is primarily achieved through meeting high standards of academic research, integrity, and professionalism. These values are deeply embedded in the culture of the institution and reflected in the students' approach to their studies.

One potential enhancement for both the TBP and PGCert could be to introduce a short reflective assignment focused on holistic integration toward the end of each programme. This would encourage students to consolidate their academic and personal development before transitioning to the next level.

The cohort structure plays a key role in fostering informal peer-to-peer mentoring, with faculty-to-student mentoring primarily occurring through the dissertation process. Regarding compliance, since mentoring is not formally integrated into the programme structure, it does not need to be formally assessed or credited. Nevertheless, IBTSC is successfully providing both staff-to-student and peer-to-peer mentoring, which ensures students receive the necessary support.

Aspects relating to individual programmes

EQF 7 /Second Cycle (partial), 30 ECTS, PGCert

Spiritual formation is fostered in the PGCert in a broad sense, through academic research, learning in community, reflective learning, and the personal responsibility of mature student learners. Additionally, spiritual formation is integrated into formative learning, which is assessed and awarded credits within the PGCert. There is solid evidence within the Handbook and established accreditation practices to support the integration of these elements.

The PGCert module 'Practical Theology and Qualitative Research Methods' plays an important role in this standard and is well-designed to ensure that students gain the necessary skills for advanced research. Practical training is an integral part of the learning plan and is included in the curriculum, with corresponding credits awarded. The cohort structure serves as the primary setting for informal peer-to-peer mentoring, as well as faculty-to-student mentoring.

EQF 7 /Second Cycle (partial), 30 ECTS, TBP

Spiritual formation within the PGCert and TBP is fostered in a broad sense, through academic research, learning in community, reflective learning, and the personal responsibility of mature students. It is also integrated into formative learning, which is assessed and awarded credits within the TBP.

The TBP currently has a smaller student body (3 students in 2024, and 6 in 2025), with students organised into cohorts.

The TBP programme has just completed its first year, and its effectiveness will be further assessed as students move on to the PGCert and potentially progress to the PhD. There are no immediate concerns regarding this progression at this point. Given the narrow focus of the TBP, its practical training primarily targets the development of critical research skills in theology. As practical training is not formally included in the learning plan, it does not require formal assessment or the allocation of credits.

Commendation:

B.1.4 - Academic Achievement: The VET commends IBTSC for being an exemplary partner in preparing students for the PhD, as evidenced by discussions with VU. High levels of trust have been earned through a solid track record of success.

Panel Conclusion: Full Compliance

Standard B.2 - Curriculum Development

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

Standards examined:

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

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

- Leaders
- Faculty
- Stakeholders
- Staff and students

Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Student Handbook 2024
- Programme Duration PG Cert & TBP
- Research Handbook 2024
- TBP Research Handbook supplement
- Marks spreadsheet
- TBP Feedback sample 2024
- Programme Duration chart
- PG Cert Curriculum Map
- PG Cert consolidated module feedback
- VU Policy Review meeting

Analysis and Assessment:

Aspects relating to all programmes under review:

The PG Cert and TBP programmes are supported by robust structures, processes, and standards that ensure quality and alignment with the intended outcomes. Both programmes have been specifically developed to provide students with a pathway which is inherent to the PhD programme. The development and approval processes for these programmes are closely tied to the requirements of the VU PhD programme. The TBP is specifically designed for individuals with an MDiv or equivalent to facilitate access to the PG Cert programme, making research preparedness a central focus of the programme design.

The programmes have clear learning outcomes, defined duration, appropriate level, and a structured curriculum. Stakeholders are actively involved in the programme development process, and regular internal evaluations are conducted. However, a gap identified is the absence of graduate profiles for both programmes, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the expected graduate attributes.

At the institutional level, the AOC plays a key role in managing and overseeing these programmes. Board members appear well-equipped to approve plans and proposals, and their collaborative working relationships support effective governance.

The institution is proactive in tracking and adapting to changes in university policies and priorities, ensuring that the programmes remain aligned with university registration requirements and continue to equip students effectively for doctoral study.

Both programmes demonstrate strong experience in the development and delivery of postgraduate-level education.

The institution has substantial experience in delivering programmes using ECTS credits and employing appropriate learning activities, ensuring the delivery meets high academic standards.

Module descriptors, learning outcomes, and learning activities are clearly articulated and systematically mapped to the curriculum, ensuring a cohesive and meaningful learning journey for participants.

The PGCert's structure and delivery are well-established and demonstrate high standards in content development and academic rigor. The curriculum requires students to actively engage with their local contexts, fostering applied theological reflection and practical relevance. This contextual engagement not only enriches the learning experience but also ensures that students develop skills and insights that directly impact their communities, making the programme a vital component of theological education at the postgraduate level.

The curriculum and delivery framework are clearly structured, ensuring that the programme effectively supports student development and readiness for higher-level research.

The AOC plays a vital role in monitoring the quality of both the PGCert and the TBP. This includes oversight of programme content, delivery, and the overall student experience. The AOC's involvement ensures that both programmes maintain high standards, foster positive learning environments, and meet the academic and professional expectations of VU and other accrediting bodies. These quality assurance measures provide robust support for students transitioning through the TBP to the PGCert and onward to the PhD programme.

At the institutional level, the AOC plays a key role in managing and overseeing these programmes. Board members appear well-equipped to approve plans and proposals, and their collaborative working relationships support effective governance.

The institution is proactive in tracking and adapting to changes in university policies and priorities, ensuring that the programmes remain aligned with university registration requirements and continue to equip students effectively for doctoral study.

Aspects relating to individual programmes

EQF 7 /Second Cycle (partial), 30 ECTS, PGCert

Quality assurance is rigorously maintained through ECTE accreditation, which serves as the external quality assurance framework. This accreditation is recognised by VU, enabling the waiver of 30 ECTS for PhD candidates transitioning from IBTSC, further validating the programme's credibility and its alignment with advanced academic and professional expectations.

EQF 7 /Second Cycle (partial), 30 ECTS, TBP

The TBP has been developed with robust processes and standards, offering a clear contextual rationale and purpose. Designed and implemented in close consultation with the graduate school at VU, the programme is customised to prepare students for entry into the PGCert as a pathway to the VU PhD programme. While the TBP is not an end in itself, it provides a tailored and essential foundation for students aiming to progress into advanced theological research.

The TBP demonstrates a well-articulated structure and timeframe, emphasising a strong research orientation and a clear pathway to progression into the PhD programme. The

programme's learning outcomes, while implicitly aligned with its purpose, would benefit from more explicit articulation to fully meet external standards and maximise its alignment with the PGCert and VU requirements.

Commendation:

B.2.1 - **Design & approval processes:** The VET commends IBTSC for identifying a need, designing the programmes, and widening access for students, thereby enhancing their potential eligibility for PhD studies.

Requirements:

B.2.2 - **Outcomes & fitness for purpose:** The VET suggests to the AC that a requirement be given that IBTSC articulate specific Programme Learning Outcomes for TBP.

B.2.4 - **Graduate profiles:** The VET suggests a requirement to the AC for IBTSC to formally describe the existing graduate profiles, to include how they define Programme Learning Outcomes and course learning outcomes.

Panel Conclusion: Non-Compliance

Standard B.3 - Learning, Teaching and Assessment

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

Standards examined:

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

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

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

SER sections D.2.B.3.1-6. Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- Teaching Handbook
- Colloquium Handbook
- Research Handbook 2024
- TBP Research Handbook supplement
- Interpretation and research skills modules
- Master's Thesis Research proposal form
- TBP seminar and assignment dates
- Thesis marking procedure
- Thesis feedback form
- Agreed mark explanation
- TBP thesis policy

Analysis and Assessment:

Aspects relating to all programmes under review:

IBTSC's small student cohorts create a supportive learning environment that fosters student-centred learning. The nature of these cohorts facilitates personalised attention and a strong sense of community among students.

Additionally, IBTSC has clear procedures in place for handling complaints and academic misconduct, ensuring students are well-supported throughout their educational journey. The ethos and structure of the PGCert programme are particularly conducive to this approach, reinforcing a student-centred focus that prioritises the individual learning experience.

Considerable thought has gone into the design and delivery of the IBTSC programmes, with a well-structured approach that combines two intensive one-week residencies in Amsterdam with taught modules. This hybrid model ensures that students have both in-person engagement and the flexibility of independent learning.

The induction process appears to be thorough, providing students with a clear understanding of expectations and resources. The programme is well-timetabled, with clear scheduling that facilitates both academic progress and student engagement. This structured approach ensures that students are well-prepared and supported throughout their studies, enabling them to fully benefit from both the residential and online components of the programme.

The work on educational philosophy and adult pedagogy at IBTSC is ongoing. However, this work is not yet consolidated into a single policy document. Educational philosophy and pedagogy are explored and shared across both the Research Community and the Learning Network, creating a

dynamic and integrated approach. This integration ensures that educational philosophy is both practice-based and reflective, a characteristic valued throughout the organisation.

A distinctive aspect of IBTSC's approach is the mutual critical correlation between baptistic theologies and contemporary adult pedagogy. This involves a rigorous analysis that bridges the philosophical and practical dimensions of education, engaging with the frameworks of Baptist and Anabaptist theological traditions alongside contemporary educational theories.

Considerable thought has gone into the design and delivery of the programmes, with a well-thought-out progression that moves from foundational hermeneutical principles to the development of research skills, culminating in independent research. This structure ensures that students not only gain a deep understanding of theological concepts but also develop the necessary skills to engage in rigorous academic research. The SER outlines a robust process for gathering and reviewing module feedback, with the AOC reviewing the feedback before it is shared with the respective teacher.

IBTSC closely tracks student progress. Information about student performance, including grades and transcripts, is maintained manually in Excel files. This system works well due to the relatively low number of students enrolled in both programmes, which allows for personalised attention and effective monitoring.

The appeals process for students was explained during the meeting at IBTSC and is reportedly working well.

The SER provides a very thorough description of the marking processes, including the roles of first and second markers and a moderator.

The grading criteria are clearly defined, providing students and faculty with a transparent framework for assessment. This clarity helps ensure that expectations are understood, fostering fairness and consistency in evaluating student performance.

Feedback is collected systematically, ensuring that all aspects of student performance are evaluated. Instructors review and analyse the feedback, identifying patterns or areas where students may require additional support.

Aspects relating to individual programmes

EQF 7 /Second Cycle (partial), 30 ECTS, Post Graduate Research Certificate in Theology (PGCert)

Considerable thought has gone into the design and delivery of the IBTSC programmes, ensuring a well-structured approach. PGCert students participate in an intensive one-week residency in Amsterdam, where they engage in taught modules, followed by a second residential week in which they join the annual colloquium, which is attended by the supervisors and PhD research students. This hybrid model provides a balance between in-person engagement and the flexibility of independent learning.

EQF 7 /Second Cycle (partial), 30 ECTS, Thesis Bridging Programme (TBP)

The TBP students do not come to Amsterdam; their programme is entirely online. In this doctoral pathway, residency commences with the start of the PGCert year.

Requirement:

B.3.1 - **Educational philosophy and adult pedagogy:** The VET suggests to the AC a requirement that IBTSC articulates a written 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.

Panel Conclusion: Non-Compliance

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

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

Standards examined:

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

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

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

Examination of supplemental documents, in particular:

- PGCert Research Handbook
- TBP Research Handbook supplement
- VU 30 credit waiver agreement
- Application forms
- IBTSC website for PhD programme

Analysis and Assessments:

Aspects relating to all programmes under review:

The programmes are supported by robust structures, processes, and standards that ensure quality and alignment with the intended outcomes.

The programmes are for students with a Master's degree in theology (e.g., MTh, MPhil, ThM) from an accredited Anglo-American institution or a two-year Bologna-type Master's from a European university. The PGCert provides a foundation in research methodologies and a pathway to the VU-FRT Graduate School.

Prospective students are invited to an informal online interview with a member or two from the AOC. After the interview, a formal application with supporting documents is submitted for evaluation. If applicants do not meet PGCert entry requirements, they may be offered the TBP.

Applicants to IBTSC are evaluated based on the following criteria, aligned with the VU-FRT standards:

- **Academic Competency:** Evidence of previous undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications.
- **English Proficiency:** A TOEFL score of 580 or equivalent is required for non-native English speakers, unless prior theological studies were completed in English.
- **Research Interests:** Alignment with the Centre's identity, mission, and practice.
- **Financial Capacity:** Demonstrated ability to finance the research or secure financial support.

- **Ministry Involvement:** Priority is given to those active in Baptist or other forms of ministry (e.g., mission, theological education, leadership).
- **Gender Balance:** Encouragement for more women to engage in theological research.
- **Ministry Context:** Preference for applicants from EBF member unions, partner support agencies, and other ministry contexts.
- **Study Commitment:** Ability to balance work and study, with a realistic prospect of completing the PhD in 6-7 years part-time.
- **Research Community Engagement:** Willingness to remain involved in the Centre's research community.

The Research Handbook outlines the progression through the PGCert and beyond, detailing the six stages from entry to public promotion at the VU. Key sections include:

- The **Research Journey** (Pages 10-13), which outlines the stages of progression.
- **Key Dates** and the **Timeline of the Journey** (Appendices 5 and 6).
- An introduction to the PGCert and its timeline (Pages 18 and 42).

Student progression is carefully monitored, with administrators recording and tracking student progress.

The PGCert is an integral part of the PhD programme and is recognised by the VU-FRT Graduate School. IBTSC ensures recognition of prior learning for entry, requiring transcripts and academic references. If necessary, cases of uncertain degree status are referred to the VU Graduate School. Recognition of learning within the PGCert is consistent, assessed through student assignments, and communicated through the Research Handbook, Moodle, and orientation sessions.

Upon successful completion, students receive transcripts and an IBTSC certificate, including ECTS marks. However, there is no formal graduation ceremony for the PGCert. Feedback from a 2023 graduate highlighted the need for public recognition at the Colloquium, and this will be implemented from 2025 onwards to better acknowledge PGCert achievements.

The institution has substantial experience in delivering programmes using ECTS credits and employing appropriate learning activities, ensuring the delivery meets the expectations laid out in the Qualification Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) for EQF Level 7 Programmes.

Upon completion, students received a transcript and the ECTE accreditation certificate.

Aspects relating to individual programmes

EQF 7 /Second Cycle (partial), 30 ECST, PGCert

For students who exit the programme with a PGCert, a diploma supplement is required. Given the significance of this document in higher education, its inclusion would be a necessary requirement, ensuring that students receive appropriate formal documentation for their achievements.

EQF 7 /Second Cycle (partial), 30 ECTS, TBP

Recognition is intrinsic to the purpose of the TBP, and this is well-articulated through the programme's robust procedures and formal agreements with the VU.

Requirement:

B.4.4 - Graduation and certification: The VET suggests a requirement to the AC that IBTSC develops a template for a diploma supplement, issue Diploma Supplement for every graduate and that the level of education (EQF 7/Second Cycle- partial) be included in the transcript.

Panel Conclusion: Non-Compliance

Standard B.5 - Qualification Nomenclature and Credits

INSTITUTIONS FOLLOW INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED QUALIFICATION NOMENCLATURE AND CREDIT-COUNTING SYSTEMS

Standards examined:

B.5.1 Qualification nomenclature; B.5.2 Credits.

Evidence of Compliance:

Meetings with:

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

SER sections D.2 - B.5.1-2.

Analysis and Assessments:

Aspects relating to all programmes under review:

IBTSC demonstrates a clear understanding of EQF Level 7 descriptors within the QF-EHEA within the European higher education system. However, the website and Student Handbook do not explicitly reference or specify the QF-EHEA in their nomenclature with respect to the two programmes offered. Incorporating this terminology would enhance transparency and provide students and stakeholders with a clearer understanding of the academic level of the programmes offered, especially in relation to European higher education norms.

Recommendation:

B.5.1 - **Qualification nomenclature:** The VET recommends that IBTSC include the QF-EHEA language into its website and manuals for both programmes on EQF Level 7/Second Cycle (partial).

Panel Conclusion: Substantial Compliance

E. CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

A.1.4 - **Public information:** The VET commends IBTSC for the coherence and excellency in the rebranding work. The institution has a very clear identity, and it is visible in the various communication channels available. The social media platforms are consistent, promote engagement with their audience and value the people of the organisation.

A.3.2/A.3.3 - **Non-Educational Staff / Educational Staff:** The VET commends the high level of professionalism, commitment, and Christian maturity of IBTSC's non-educational staff and educational staff.

A.3.4 - **HR Policies and procedures:** The VET commends IBTSC for the development of the Personnel Committee, HR policies, and for being able to integrate new staff into their workplace whilst maintaining a high-quality standard of theological education.

A.4.1 - **Learning Community:** The VET commends IBTSC for fostering and maintaining a healthy sense of community life among their members, providing community for students during their studies and engagement with their peers' research.

A.4.2 - **Stakeholder Community:** The VET commends IBTSC for developing and maintaining mutually enriching relationships with a wide range of stakeholder groups.

A.4.3 - **Civil Community:** The VET commends IBTSC for their fruitful and strong relationship to VU and the broader Baptist world. The VET also commends IBTSC for being an exemplary partner in preparing students for the PhD, as evidenced by discussions with VU. High levels of trust have been earned through a solid track record of success. B.1.4.

A.5.3 - **Library/Learning Resource Centres:** The VET commends IBTSC for the excellent contributions of the library oversight committee, the accessibility and readability of resources, and the librarians' support in assisting students during their research.

A.5.6 - **Virtual Learning Environment and Educational Resources:** The VET commends the staff for their ongoing work and continuous improvement of the VLE. The resources are easily accessible to students, and the structure for faculty is clear and well-organised.

B.1.4 - **Academic Achievement:** The VET commends IBTSC for being an exemplary partner in preparing students for the PhD, as evidenced by discussions with VU. High levels of trust have been earned through a solid track record of success.

B.2.1 - **Design & approval processes:** The VET commends IBTSC for identifying a need, designing the programmes, and widening access for students, thereby enhancing their potential eligibility for PhD studies.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A.3.1 - **Human Resources:** The VET recommends that IBTSC complete the staff development plan that has already been initiated, ensuring it includes both educational and non-educational staff.

A.4.2 - **Stakeholder Community:** The VET recommends that IBTSC continue to formalise and develop their already established Alumni programme.

B.5.1 - **Qualification nomenclature:** The VET recommends that IBTSC include the QF-EHEA language into its website and manuals for both programmes on EQF Level 7/Second Cycle (partial).

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

A.2.3 - **Decision-making structures:** The VET suggests to the AC a requirement that IBTSC develop a student government structure which enables student participation in decision making regarding both community life and academic programmes appropriate to the school's context.

A.2.4 - **Strategic planning:** The VET suggests to the AC a requirement that IBTSC submit a timeline for the development and approval of a Strategic Plan with a listing of aspects to be integrated (which provides 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, and the governance role in the development and approval of the plan).

A.2.5 - **Internal Quality Assurance procedures:** The VET suggests to the AC a requirement that IBTSC synthesise its various internal quality assurance practices and procedures into a unified policy, with clear guidelines for quality assurance, that can be made publicly available.

B.2.2 - **Outcomes and fitness for purpose:** The VET suggests to the AC that a requirement be given that IBTSC articulate specific Programme Learning Outcomes for TBP.

B.2.4 - **Graduate profiles:** The VET suggests a requirement to the AC for IBTSC to formally describe the existing graduate profiles, to include how they define Programme Learning Outcomes and course learning outcomes.

B.3.1 - **Educational philosophy and adult pedagogy:** The VET suggests to the AC a requirement that IBTSC articulates a written 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.

B.4.4 - **Graduation and certification:** The VET suggests a requirement to the AC that IBTSC develops a template for a diploma supplement, issue Diploma Supplement for every graduate and that the level of education (EQF 7/Second Cycle- partial) be included in the transcript.

IN CONCLUSION

The VET recommends to the ECTE AC that IBTSC be judged to be in compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines* of the ECTE with the exceptions of the requirements listed above.

The VET recommends to the ECTE AC that, subsequent to compliance with the requirements, it grants IBTSC accreditation, with the relevant recommendations listed above monitored through the annual reporting processes of ECTE.

The VET would like to record their gratitude to IBTSC 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 IBTSC 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 Visiting Evaluation Team:

Signed:

Dr. Patrick Mitchel (Team Leader)

Dr. Marina Behera (VET member)

Tiago Fonesca (Student Representative)

Dr. Grace Al Zoughbi (Review Secretary)

November 2024

APPENDIX

Visitation Schedule

		Place	Comments
<i>Day 1: Wednesday, Nov. 13</i>			
08:00 -08:45	VET shown to office: Team Briefing		
09:45 -11:15	PhD Student Viva	VU	
11:15 -12:00	Tea and Meeting with Stakeholders <i>Director VU</i> <i>PhD Student</i>	VU	
12:15 -12:45	Travel back to Baptist House		
14:00 -14:45	Introductory meeting with Senior Leadership Team <i>Previous director and teacher</i> <i>New director</i> <i>Senior Administrator</i> <i>Academic Head - and teacher</i> <i>Previous Staff member Administrative leadership</i>		
15:00 -15:30	Tour of Facilities	IBTSC	
15:30 -16:15	Board Members <i>Treasurer - finance</i> <i>Board Member</i>	online	
16:45 -17:00	<u>Students– Online</u> <i>PGCert</i> <i>Research (already progressed past PGCert)</i> <i>TBP</i> <i>Alumni</i>	IBTSC and online	
17:15 -18:00	Team Time /Review Worksheet		
<i>Day 2: Thursday, Nov. 14</i>			
08:30 -09:30	Team Briefing for the Day		
09:30 -10:15	Meeting with Chair of Academic Sight Committee		
10:30 -11:15	Library		IBTSC
12:00 -12:45	Administrative Staff <i>Senior Administrator</i>	Students: PhD research students through the PGCert	Online
14:00 -14:45	Educational Staff (includes programme directors)	<i>IBTSC Chair of the Board</i>	Online IBTSC and online

	<i>PGCert and the TBP</i>			
15:00 -15:45	Meeting with Alumni	Meeting with students		
16:15 -18:00	Team Time /Review Worksheet Decide on need for follow-up conversations for day 3 – communicate to Review Manager			
<i>Day 3: Friday, Nov. 5</i>				
45 min	Team Briefing for the Day			
45 min	Reserved for follow-up conversations as needed			
45 min	Reserved for follow-up conversations as needed			
	Finalising Report (commendations, recommendations, requirements)			
	Sharing Conclusions with leadership team (Minimum break of two hours after finalising report)			