

MICRO-CREDENTIAL PROVIDER REVIEW REPORT

Union School of Theology

Related to initial Micro-credential Provider Review
6th May to 8th 2025

ECTE

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Council for
Theological
Education

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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A report of a Micro-credential Provider (MCP) review of Union School of Theology (hence UST), as an alternative provider of higher education. UST has been a member of ECTE since 2015 and is listed on the ECTE Review Directory. UST obtained institutional and EQF Level 6 and 7 programme accreditation from ECTE as an Alternative Provider in 2019, with the review process conducted in accordance with the ESG 2015. The institution maintained ECTE accreditation through 2024 and currently holds good standing. UST has successfully transitioned to a validation agreement with the Open University following an external peer review in 2018 and subsequent revalidation in 2023 for another five years.¹ This validation confirms that UST's programmes meet the Open University's standards and quality requirements, enabling the delivery of validated awards of the Cert HE (Theology), BA Hons (Theology), GDip (Theology) and MTh (Scripture and Theology).²

This report pertains to a process that included a desk analysis of the MCP-Self-evaluation report (MCP-SER) and additional documentation supplied to the MCP Visitation Evaluation Team (MCP-VET) and an online review conducted from May 6th through 8th, 2025.

The goal of the review was to accredit UST as a Micro-credential Provider at QF-EHEA Short Cycle/EQF Level 5, QF-EHEA First Cycle/EQF Level 6, QF-EHEA Second Cycle/EQF Level 7. This is in accordance with the European Council for Theological Education (ECTE)'s *Micro-credential Provider Standards and Guidelines* (MCP-SG)³. The MCP-SG is based on part 1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG 2015), and the review process is based on parts 2 and 3 of the ESG.

The report is presented by the MCP-VET panel and includes the following findings for the consideration of the ECTE Accreditation Commission (AC): four areas of performance worthy of commendation, two recommendations for improvement and four suggested requirements.

B. INTRODUCTION TO THE REVIEW

Description of the review

This is a MCP review of UST an Alternative Provider (AP) of higher education dedicated to training leaders for the church, in partnership with the local church.

The main document guiding this review is the ECTE's *MCP-SG*, which have been designed to reflect ESG1 standards, emerging good practices in the European Higher Education Area concerning micro-credentials, the ICETE *Standards and Guidelines for Micro-credential Providers* (SG-MCP).⁴ Additionally, the review was informed by ECTE's *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*⁵, as well as ECTE's *Guidelines for Distance and Online Education*.⁶

¹ See [Positive judgement for Union School of Theology after OAA review](#) (accessed 28 May 2025)

² See https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf (accessed 18 June 2025)

³ See <https://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Micro-credential-Providers-Standards-and-Guidelines.pdf> (accessed 28 May 2025)

⁴ See <https://icete.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Standards-and-Guidelines-for-Micro-credential-Providers.pdf> (accessed 18 June 2025)

⁵ See <https://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs.pdf> (accessed 28 May 2025)

⁶ See <https://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Guidelines-for-Distance-and-Online-Education.pdf> (accessed 28 May 2025)

Since, at the time of the review, UST had not yet delivered micro-credentials, this evaluation focuses on the institution's preparedness rather than actual implementation. The VET has been able to examine policies and provisions and, in some cases, observe actual practices. As such, the VET has made judgment calls of compliance given the policies and procedures in place. The review also considers UST's existing internal quality assurance policies and practices as they apply to micro-credentials.

How the provider prepared for the review

The *MCP-Self Evaluation Report (MCP-SER)* was prepared using the designated online template.⁷ Two teams were formed to produce the MCP-SER – a steering committee comprising the Provost of Union along with a student, a pastor, and an executive committee comprising the Dean of Studies and Programme Manager. The documents guiding their preparation included the *MCP-SG, Guidelines for Producing Self Evaluation Reports*, and National/regional reference documents on micro-credentials.

The steering committee and executive committee were set up on 14th January 2025, in which the key responsibilities were established.

The Dean of Studies and Programme Manager were tasked with developing the documentation, with periodic review meetings arranged involving the steering committee.

UST undertook a comprehensive review as part of completing the MCP-SER template, which included the following key activities:

1. **Benchmarking and Contextual Analysis:** UST examined the current landscape and potential of micro-credentials in higher education and theological training, comparing their practices to existing standards.
2. **Educational Programme Assessment:** They evaluated its current educational offerings to identify opportunities for integrating micro-credentials into its life long learning strategy.
3. **Policy and Procedure Review:** UST assessed its existing policies and procedures as a basis to develop new ones as needed to ensure they were fit for purpose for micro-credentials.
4. **Infrastructure Capacity Assessment:** The institution investigated whether their current administrative systems, including the Student Management System (SMS) and Learning Management System (LMS), as well as their personnel, were capable of supporting micro-credentials delivery.
5. **Stakeholder Engagement:** UST consulted stakeholders to discuss the potential applications of micro-credentials.
6. **Technical Feasibility Discussion:** They collaborated with their IT department to explore the technical requirements for implementing micro-credentials badges.

Input from the steering committee was gathered at the periodic reviews, with adjustments made to the documentation as necessary.

⁷ See <https://ecte.eu/ser-mcp/> (accessed 18 June 2025)

The Dean of Studies prepared a preliminary version of the MCP-SER and submitted it to the MCP Review Coordinator (MCP-RC) for a pre-submission check. This review process involved checking the draft for completeness, ensuring that it addressed all the required standards and included all necessary components, without providing any evaluative feedback. The MCP-SER was returned with comments that required clarification.

The final version of the MCP-SER was approved by both UST committees on 13th February 2025 and submitted in English to ECTE on 26th February 2025.

Micro-credential level submission and language

For the 2025 MCP Provider accreditation, the EQF/QF-EHEA levels associated with the micro-credentials submitted were:

EQF/QF-EHEA	Name of qualification used	ECTS	ISCED Level	Delivery Mode
EQF 5 (partial)/Short Cycle	Micro-credential	1-5	5	Hybrid, online
EQF 6/ First Cycle	Micro-credential	1-5	6	Hybrid, online
EQF 7/Second Cycle	Micro-credential	1-5	7	Hybrid, online

The micro-credentials will be delivered in the English language.

The Visitation Team

The composition of the MCP VET panel to ETS included the following experts, all of whom had received specific training to review MCPs through the ICETE Academy course...

Dr. Eric McCauley (Team Leader, MCP-Review Coordinator (RC)), Greta Pina, MSc, MA (VET Member as Student Representative), James Lockwood, MSc, MA (VET Member), Tiago Fonseca MA (VET Member)

The Accreditation Commission (AC) previously approved a core group of experts for the 2024-2025 initial phase for MCP reviews.

The MCP-RC asked the provider if they had any reservations about the VET members, but there were none.

The MCP-RC informed the Accreditation Director (AD) of the selected VET members and the scheduled dates for the online review.

Visit Arrangements

Given that UST has already undergone an external review both by the Open University and by ECTE, a desk-based online visit was arranged rather than a site visit.

The MCP-SER was prepared and submitted to the MCP Review Coordinator (MCP-RC) on time, along with supporting documents. Logistical and administrative arrangements before the visit were set up as follows:

1. The MCP-RC gave VET members access to the MCP-SER, supplemental documents, and past correspondence via hyperlink.
2. VET members recorded their initial observations of reading within a shared document.
3. The Internal Review Coordinator (IRC) of the provider was identified and received a copy of the visit protocol.
4. To facilitate logistical and organizational planning for the review, two messenger app groups were established: one for internal use by VET members and another for communication with the institution.
5. In coordination 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 MCP-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 sharing the team's findings with the UST leadership on the last day of the visit.

The online review schedule was developed adhering to established good practices for online reviews⁸, with an emphasis on the following activities, among others:

- **Standardised Assessment Criteria:** Online site review assessed the same accreditation standards, guidelines, and supporting evidence as on-site visits.
- **Interview Management:** Interviews with a variety of staff and stakeholders were limited to no more than four hours per day, with scheduled breaks and VET panel discussions interspersed throughout. Video conferencing sessions were capped at one hour in duration to maintain engagement and focus.
- **Daily Working Sessions:** The VET panel conducted at least one working session daily to share insights, document observations in the review worksheet, and reach a consensus on the site visit outcomes.
- **Confidentiality Measures:** All participants ensured the confidentiality of the proceedings, and no recordings were made to protect potentially sensitive information being shared.

Specifics of the review schedule and stakeholders are below.

⁸ See <https://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs.pdf#page=46> (accessed 28 May 2025)

Review Schedule

The online review was conducted from Tuesday, May 6th through Thursday, May 8th, 2025. Refer to Appendix A for a detailed schedule.

The VET met with the following stakeholder groups:

- Provost
- Vice-President
- Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement
- Teaching Faculty
- Educational Staff
- IT manager
- Student
- Pastor
- Senior UST Programmes Coordinator
- Mentor
- Librarian
- Programmes and Assessment Coordinator

For reference, Appendix B provides a detailed breakdown of the standards that were addressed in each meeting during the online review visit.

The team was warmly received by the leadership and the staff. The provider arranged all online means needed for an effective evaluation of the organisation. From the team's perspective, the documentation submitted, and discussions held, were transparent and sufficient for the purposes of the evaluation. The documentation provided a useful summary of the provider's current state. The review took place over three days.

The review was conducted in English.

C. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROVIDER

General Description of Provider

Union School of Theology (UST) is a theological training institution rooted in the Evangelical and Reformed theological tradition. It is committed to providing a community that integrates academic excellence with spiritual formation, preparing students for future Christian ministry.

Union School of Theology is part of Union Foundation, a charitable organisation. The Foundation comprises 4 ministries: school (UST), Union scholars (Newton House), publishing and mission, which operate in tandem as an interconnected ecosystem. This synergy enables the Union to grow while providing multifaceted support to the church.

The Union Foundation, which encompasses UST, holds a registered status in England and Wales as both a company (Registration Number: 1987227) and a charity in Wales (Registration Number: 517324).

The institution's theological training provision has a history dating back to 1985, when it was known as the Evangelical Theological College of Wales (1985–2006). It was later renamed to Wales Evangelical School of Theology (2006–2016), and in 2016, it was rebranded as Union School of Theology as it is known today.

At the time of the review, the school had established partnerships with the Open University UK for the GDip and MTh programmes⁹, and with the Free University Amsterdam for the PhD programme.

The faculty comprises eight full-time members, supplemented by adjuncts and research supervisors. The current student body comprises a headcount of approximately 280. The school's educational approach has emphasised using learning communities, with every student being a part of a community, whether online, meeting in local towns, or at the school's ministry centre.

UST currently provides both short learning opportunities and full qualifications. These short learning opportunities were designed before the introduction of European micro-credentials and are structured and delivered in a manner similar to them.

Instruction and learning resources are available in English.

⁹ See

<https://university.open.ac.uk/validation-partnerships/become-partner/current-ouvvp-partners-updated-jun-19/union-school-theology> (accessed 28 May 2025)

Mission Statement and Vision for Micro-credentials

UST's mission is to foster a community that combines academic excellence with spiritual formation, preparing students for future roles in Christian ministry. UST considers micro-credentials to play an important role for its future development. It is believed that they will serve two primary purposes:

1. Facilitating entry into the MA and PhD programmes through a bridging mechanism. This will involve the possibility of “stacking” or combining micro-credentials, where the required number of micro-credentials will be clearly outlined on the institution’s website. The bridge to the MA programme will provide diverse entry points, while the bridge to the PhD programme will enable students with MDiv or MA qualifications to progress without necessarily completing an MTh or all MTh modules. The number of micro-credentials required will be determined by the student’s educational background and experience, with four micro-credentials being envisaged.
2. Offering individual modules from existing programmes as stand-alone micro-credentials as part of UST’s lifelong learning strategy. This acknowledges that students may not always be willing or able to commit to a full programme of study, and may instead wish to address specific knowledge gaps or engage in continuing professional development (CPD). The institution also aims to provide CPD opportunities at EQF levels 6 and 7 through micro-credentials catering to the needs of students.

In addition, UST anticipates that micro-credentials will provide the flexibility to respond to emerging needs within the sector to the broader Christian community, extending beyond those in ministry contexts.

Delivery modes

UST intends to employ a variety of methods to deliver its micro-credentials, allowing for flexibility and adaptability in its approach that includes face-to-face, hybrid, online and asynchronous online delivery, in their ministry centre and in other locations.

The school's ministry centre¹⁰ in Bridgend has gone through significant upgrading in the last few years. The school has two video-conference rooms, each having the capacity for 20 people to be physically in the room. The whiteboards in the rooms enable handwritten content to be digitized and saved electronically. One additional video-conference room/meeting room was designed for discussion style meetings and can hold up to 15 people. The school has a dedicated room for recording videos for the learning communities. Any educational activity—whether a lecture, class, or similar session—held in a video-conference room can be recorded.

UST provides all teaching staff laptops.

¹⁰ See <https://www.ust.ac.uk/ministry-centre> (accessed 13 May 2025)

The library has two desktop computers available for use for students and a computer terminal for accessing the library's online catalog to search for books, journals, and other materials.. Since 2022, its library provision has been enhanced with access to a robust eBook platform, in addition to various databases. A full-time librarian, is tasked with providing students with access to learning resources for all delivery modes.

UST's Virtual Learning Environment and Student Management System are integrated, allowing data exchange between the two platforms. The school employs a full-time IT manager who is responsible for maintaining and developing its IT infrastructure.

Currently, UST plans to develop and deliver micro-credentials without partners. Should partnerships become desirable in the future, UST benefits from established Memoranda of Understanding, processes, and procedures that can be adjusted as needed for micro-credential delivery.

Educational and non-educational staff

Eight educational staff members hold an EQF Level 8 qualification, and three hold an EQF Level 7 qualification, totalling eleven eligible individuals for micro-credential development and delivery. Initially, three faculty members with Level 8 qualifications have been selected to lead the first micro-credential offerings.

Three full-time staff oversee the school's administrative, one full-time IT administrator and one full-time librarian. A part-time worker has recently been hired to address operational needs, including the potential expansion of micro-credentials and other priorities.

Budget

The 2026 annual budget has yet to be approved. For 2025, budgeted positions for micro-credentials are included in the school's accreditation/validation costs, reflecting anticipated minimal micro-credential offerings. As previously mentioned, allocation for an additional programmes administrator has been made to support the expansion of programme offerings-

Micro-credential plans

UST plans to introduce micro-credentials as a pathway to their PhD programme, tailored for current PhD applicants who require skills in specific areas (e.g. research methods). This addresses a noted gap in past PhD applicants' preparedness, prompting the development of tailored micro-credentials to meet these needs. Initially, promotion of this initiative will be limited beyond application stage communication, as the specific deficiencies in applicants cannot be identified before their applications. These micro-credentials are projected to launch at the start of 2026.

Moving forward, UST intends to unbundle modules from their existing EQF Level 7 programme into stand alone or stackable micro-credentials. The modules have been designed with flexibility, enabling adaptation into a micro-credential format. This phase is likely to take place for the 2026-2027 school year.

As part of its lifelong learning strategy, UST has established Union Grow¹¹, an online digital learning platform for their stakeholders for life-long learning. The platform contains classes from videos and developed learning resources. Developing these courses into micro-credentials would significantly enhance their value.

¹¹ See <https://www.uniongrow.co/> (accessed 13 May 2025)

D. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

MCP STANDARDS

MCP 1 - Policies for quality assurance

PROVIDERS HAVE FORMAL POLICIES FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (IQA)

Evidence of Compliance:

MCP-SER and supplemental information:

- Academic Board Terms of Reference (ToR)
- Academic Teaching, Research and Curricula Committee ToRs
- Peer observation protocol
- Interviews on development and implementation of IQA policies
- Table of educational faculty
- Quality Assurance Committee ToRs
- Quality Enhancement Policy
- Student Experience Committee ToRs
- UST Public Information Quality Assurance Framework
- Union Foundation Governance Structure
- Central Teams Structure
- UST Committee Structure
- Design and Approval of MCs

Meetings with:

- Vice-President
- Provost
- Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement
- Executive Director
- Student representative
- Church representative
- Mentor representative
- IT manager
- Librarian

Analysis and Assessment:

UST's internal quality assurance (IQA) policies have received positive external reviews from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)¹² and Open University¹³. The VET affirms that the IQA aligns with the ESG 1 standards and that feedback loops are closed.

UST ensures the application of IQA policies to each micro-credential bearing the ECTE MCP label through a defined process.

The VET commends UST for its proactive approach to seeking stakeholder feedback, evidenced in interviews with faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders. This includes not only requests for feedback, but also intentional personal follow-up via email and phone calls, for example to students. A local pastor noted that UST engages with churches and Christian networks to understand their needs and often tailors specific resources to meet those needs.

The VET observed through the self-evaluation report and during the interviews that UST's IQA policies are developed and implemented by internal stakeholders using suitable structures and processes and also engage external stakeholders to ensure a thorough and robust quality assurance framework.

UST does not have immediate plans for subcontracted micro-credentials or partnerships.

MCP-1 Summary

UST complies with the MCP 1 Standard covering all aspects of the ESG 1. UST's internal quality assurance policies for micro-credentials are integrated with UST's current system, which has been positively reviewed by external bodies and is publicly available. New policies are developed as needed and specific micro-credential policies have been created and will be public once it launches the micro-credential programme.

UST's internal quality assurance policy is developed and implemented by internal stakeholders, involving external stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive quality assurance framework-

The VET commends UST for its proactive approach to seeking stakeholder feedback.

The VET finds compliance with MCP 1 and notes one commendation.

Commendation

- The VET commends UST for its exemplary commitment to stakeholder engagement, demonstrated by its active pursuit of feedback from a diverse range of individuals and networks on new initiatives. The VET also commends UST for its proactive efforts to understand the needs of its stakeholders and for seeking ways to provide them with meaningful support.

Panel Conclusion: Compliance

¹² See https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/reports/union-foundation-gqrw-22.pdf?sfvrsn=9eeea281_10 (accessed 13 May 2025)

¹³ See <https://university.open.ac.uk/validation-partnerships/become-partner/current-ouvp-partners-updated-jun-19/union-school-theology> (accessed 13 May 2025)

MCP 2 - Design and approval of micro-credentials

PROVIDERS HAVE FORMAL INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES FOR THE DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS

Evidence of Compliance:

MCP-SER and supplemental information:

- Design and Approval of Micro-credentials
- Academic Board ToR
- Academic Teaching, Research and Curriculum Committee ToR
- Interviews on creation and approval policies
- Table of educational faculty
- Quality Enhancement Policy
- Public Information Quality Assurance

Meetings and conversations with:

- Executive Director, Union Foundation
- Vice-President, Union Foundation
- Provost, UST
- Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement, UST
- Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology
- Lecturer in Biblical Studies and Greek

Analysis and Assessment:

UST has established formal institutional processes for the design and approval of micro-credentials that are distinct, tailored to their unique purposes and flexible. These processes ensure that micro-credentials are created with a focus on agility and quality, allowing for quick applications or changes without compromising educational standards. For instance, the *Design and Approval of Micro-credentials* policy outlines specific procedures, policies and forms required for creating and applying for new or revised micro-credentials. To propose a new micro-credential, an application adapted from the ECTE MC Design Template, must be submitted to the Dean of Studies two weeks before the Academic Teaching Research Curriculum Committee (ATRACC) meeting. Final approval from ATRACC is required one month before the course start date, with all revisions mandated by ATRACC needing resolution before final approval. Once approved, the MC's documentation is uploaded to the system, and the MC is added to the review schedule for a cyclical evaluation.

Amendments to an existing MC will need to be submitted via the *Requested Change Form* to ATRACC for approval, even if the course is inactive. The *Micro-credential Fact Sheet* will be published on the institution's website, with all public materials reviewed under the *Public Information Procedures Policy* to ensure quality and compliance. The ATRACC will be responsible for reviewing and approving all MCs, consistent with institutional quality practices.

The VET confirms the process for new and revising micro-credentials is documented and the specific forms are available.

Proposals for new modules may originate from any faculty member or adjunct faculty. Such proposals will often emerge in response to identified gaps or needs within a specific academic or practical field, following discussions with the school's network partners, or through input from other stakeholders.

Micro-credentials will be designed to specific educational levels and aligned with the learning outcomes defined by the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for levels 5, 6, and 7 and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) for the short, first and second cycles. Each micro-credential will clearly reflect the relevant EQF and QF-EHEA outcomes and may also incorporate additional outcomes, such as practical skills or specific theological competencies, that are not explicitly detailed in these frameworks.

UST developed two micro-credentials using a revised ECTE template, aligned with distinct QF-EHEA levels: Biblical Overview (EQF 5, short cycle) and Advanced Academic Writing for Religion and Theology Research (EQF 7, second cycle). The learning outcomes clearly reflect EQF level requirements and QF-EHEA descriptors, differentiating competencies between levels.

The following examples illustrate two micro-credentials aligned with the QF-EHEA, each appropriately differentiated by level.

EQF 5 /short cycle

MC title: Biblical Overview

MC Outcome: Identify key ideas within and explain the overarching meaning and message of the Bible.

QF-EHEA descriptor- Knowledge and understanding: Learners demonstrate knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon general secondary education and is typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks; such knowledge provides an underpinning for a field of work or vocation, personal development, and further studies to complete the first cycle.

EQF 7 /second cycle

MC title: Advanced Academic Writing for Religion and Theology Research

MC Outcome: Be able to critically self-reflect on both macro- and micro-linguistic management of a piece of academic writing.

QF-EHEA descriptor- Autonomy in learning skills: Have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.

Additionally, UST uses learning outcomes, specific to theological studies that are not explicitly outlined in the QF-EHEA/EQF frameworks.

UST, as a validated institution with positive reviews by the OU and QAA, aligns learning outcomes with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). While UST plans to map its micro-credentials to the QF-EHEA and communicate this alignment transparently in public and certificates, a formal curricular map has not yet been provided to ECTE as evidence.

The VET was impressed with the proactive way UST involves stakeholders in their micro-credential design. This is based on identified needs, as is the case for applicants to

doctoral programmes or by engaging in discussions with churches to understand their specific needs within their network.

UST values holistic integration and student formation that are typical of theological education. For example, in Research Methods, it focuses on the applied nature of research and its practical value for the church rather than pursuing academics solely for academic purposes. In addition, every student enrolled is expected to take part in a learning community.

UST's design and approval process for micro-credentials comprehensively addresses all the categories outlined in the standard format for micro-credential certification, as detailed in the MCP standards and guidelines in Appendix A. This includes specifying the expected student workload in ECTS.

MCP-2 Summary

Union School of Theology has established a robust and flexible design and approval process for micro-credentials, ensuring agility and quality. The institution's *Design and Approval of Micro-credentials* policy outlines specific procedures and forms for creating and revising micro-credentials. UST has demonstrated that it aligns its micro-credentials with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

While UST plans to align its learning outcomes onto QF-EHEA descriptors transparently, it has not yet created or officially documented a curriculum map to achieve this.

The VET finds non-compliance with MCP 2 and suggests one requirement.

Requirement

- The VET suggests a requirement that UST design a micro-credential curriculum map that specifies at least one micro-credential along with corresponding QF-EHEA and other outcomes.

Panel Conclusion: Non-compliance

MCP 3 - Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

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

Evidence of Compliance:

MCP-SER and supplemental information:

- Assessment of micro-credentials
- Assessment strategy framework
- Academic appeals policy and procedures
- Academic misconduct policy and procedure
- Teaching and learning policy
- Webpage with policies and procedures
- Learning support policy
- Webpage with course picker
- Assessment strategy framework
- SMS demonstration
- VLE demonstration

Meetings with:

- IT Manager
- Librarian
- Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement

Analysis and Assessment:

UST currently identifies student profiles, including interests in church planting, academic research, and ministry training. The school offers various delivery modes, such as online or in-person along with hybrid delivery. These options are aligned with EQF and QF-EHEA levels to ensure appropriate educational standards and recognition. Students will be involved in the design of every micro-credential through input and the approval process, as well as providing feedback after each micro-credential.

UST uses various teaching and learning methods such as lectures, seminars, student presentations, online forums, and online live and asynchronous discussions that are designed to be engaging, interactive, and accessible, aligning with good practices in online or in-person learning which are also well suited for the delivery of micro-credentials.

UST plans to deliver micro-credentials primarily in a hybrid format. This includes virtual synchronous sessions, asynchronous chats, pre-recorded videos, and feedback on assignments. All activities will be designed to be accessible remotely, with no in-person delivery planned. UST's approach to delivering micro-credentials is designed to meet the key needs of students who value variety and flexibility in their learning experiences.

Plans and drafts for the delivery modes and pedagogies specific to micro-credentials are not yet formally documented.

Following a demonstration, the VET panel concludes that the institution's online learning resources were well-designed and easily accessible and well suited for delivering micro-credentials. The VLE is modern and user-friendly, providing an effective platform for online learning that integrates with the SMS. Furthermore, the institution provides robust support services through its IT, learning resources, and administrative staff. These services included regular training sessions for students and faculty in both live (synchronous) and self-paced (asynchronous) formats.

The *Teaching and Learning Policy* supports diverse learning strategies and holistic development but lacks a specific policy for achieving holistic integration in online learning settings.

UST's assessment strategies, which will also be applied for micro-credentials, are carefully mapped to intended learning outcomes and follow a transparent structure. This approach ensures that assessments are purposeful and effective in measuring student learning.

UST has established a robust feedback framework from students that covers praise, progress, critical feedback, advice, and clarification requests. The institution closes the feedback loop by responding to student and faculty feedback, demonstrating its commitment to continuous improvement.

MCP-3 Summary

UST demonstrates a commitment to student-centered learning, with evidence of pedagogical flexibility, student feedback mechanisms, and a supportive learning environment. UST's assessment strategies are mapped to intended learning outcomes and ensure assessments are effective in measuring student learning. Additionally, UST has established a robust feedback framework that offers students the opportunity to give constructive feedback and closes the feedback loop by responding to student and faculty feedback.

However, there is no written policy specifically addressing the integration of holistic learning in online settings, and the plans and drafts for the delivery modes and pedagogies specific to micro-credentials are not yet formally documented.

The VET finds non-compliance with MCP 3 and suggests one recommendation and requirement that will be included in MCP 8.

Recommendation

- The VET recommends that UST seek to develop their policies to demonstrate clearly the activities and processes that support holistic learning for MCs, especially online courses.

Requirement

- See MCP 8

Panel Conclusion: Non-compliance

MCP 4 - Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

PROVIDERS FORMULATE AND IMPLEMENT SUITABLE POLICIES FOR THE MICRO-CREDENTIAL STUDENT "LIFE CYCLE" THAT INCLUDES ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION

Evidence of Compliance:

MCP-SER and supplemental information:

- Micro-credentials Admissions Process
- Student Management System demo

Meetings with:

- Senior UST Programmes Coordinator
- Programmes and Assessment Coordinator
- Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement

Analysis and Assessment:

UST maintains flexible, accessible and transparent policies and procedures currently in effect, which will also extend to micro-credentials, recognising the diverse academic and professional backgrounds of micro-credential students. UST will provide information about micro-credentials on its website, with applications submitted through the admission's portal.

UST will initially offer standalone micro-credentials, followed by the development of a stacking framework and strategies aligned with its existing EQF Level 7 qualification.

Currently, UST recognises prior formal, non-formal and informal learning. UST is adapting its existing recognition of prior learning (RPL) framework to include micro-credentials, including tailored design templates and approval workflows.

UST has selected a third-party subscription service that complies with ECTE's standards to issue digital micro-credential certifications, guaranteeing that all ECTE-mandated components prescribed in the Micro-credential Certificate Template¹⁴ are incorporated into the certificate design. However, the VET notes the lack of a defined timeline or implementation plan for the digital certificate.

¹⁴ See <https://ecte.eu/micro-credential-certificate-template/> (accessed on 18 June)

MCP-4 Summary

UST will maintain flexible, accessible, and transparent policies for admissions and micro-credentials, and applications will be processed via its online admissions portal.

The institution will initially offer standalone micro-credentials, later developing stacking frameworks aligned with its other qualifications.

UST has selected a compliant third-party service for digital certifications but has no defined timeline or implementation plan.

The VET finds non-compliance with MCP 4 and suggests one requirement.

Requirement

- The VET suggests a requirement that UST establish and submit a timeline for issuing secure, portable, and transferable certificates to learners upon completion of a micro-credential.

Panel Conclusion: Non-compliance

MCP 5 - Educational Staff

PROVIDERS HAVE EDUCATIONAL STAFF INVOLVED IN THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS THAT ARE FIT FOR PURPOSE

Evidence of Compliance:

MCP-SER and supplemental information:

- Faculty overview
- Union Appraisal form v.5

Meetings with:

- Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology
- Lecturer in Biblical Studies and Greek
- Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement

Analysis and Assessment:

UST has demonstrated that its educational staff possess the necessary qualifications and expertise to design and deliver high-quality micro-credentials.

The institution's educational staff have demonstrated professional competence in their subject area, aligned with the learning outcomes of the micro-credentials, and possess academic qualifications that are typically one level above the level of the micro-credential being offered.

Furthermore, UST is committed to ongoing professional development, providing regular faculty training and updates in both their academic discipline and in pedagogical methodologies specifically relevant to online learning and micro-credential delivery. UST provides a supportive environment that is conducive to work.

The development of micro-credentials will be conducted by the staff as required with input from the Dean and in a collaborative manner, following clear policies and procedures. The VET notes that UST has already been training staff with short courses that are similar to micro-credentials. Additional support for micro-credentials is in the form of assisting the completion and submission of the MC Design Template based from the ECTE Design Template.

UST has a well-established process of recruiting and hiring adjunct faculty, which includes a clear procedure for selection, hiring, and review. This existing process will be applied to the recruitment of staff for micro-credential delivery as needed, ensuring that all instructional staff meet the institution's standards for quality and expertise.

MCP-5 Summary

UST's educational staff are qualified and experienced to deliver high-quality micro-credentials, with ongoing professional development and a supportive work environment. The institution has a clear process for recruiting adjunct faculty, ensuring all instructional staff meet its quality standards.

The VET finds compliance with MCP 5.

Panel Conclusion: Compliance

MCP 6 - Learning resources and student support

PROVIDERS HAVE APPROPRIATE FUNDING FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES RELATED TO MICRO-CREDENTIALS.

Evidence of Compliance:

MCP-SER and supplemental information:

- Library Strategy
- Student Management System (SMS) demo
- Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) demo
- Intranet demo
- Library platform demo

Meetings with:

- Senior UST Programmes Coordinator
- Programmes and Assessment Coordinator
- UST Programmes and Scholars Coordinator
- Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement
- IT Manager
- Librarian

Analysis and Assessment:

UST has well-designed and comprehensive learning facilities, including digital facilities and VLE, which it has been using and refining as needed for several years. The library is well-rounded, with a comprehensive collection of materials and a full-time librarian to provide support. The online and physical provisions are extensive, and the library and IT staff have developed a range of guides and tools to help students effectively utilise the available resources.

Micro-credential students will have access to these same tools and will undergo the same induction process as full- or part-time students, ensuring a seamless integration into the UST's learning environment. Additionally, the software and administrative systems in place are scalable, allowing for efficient management of this process.

The well-organized library and resources area on the VLE offer detailed descriptions and targeted assistance, ensuring students can effectively utilise these tools for their learning. The VLE is user-friendly, visually appealing, and clear, and it benefitted from recent investments in enhancing security.

UST has demonstrated that it has allocated sufficient funding in its budget to deliver micro-credential offers.

UST has strengthened its administrative capacity by hiring a staff member for micro-credential administrative management. It also has established suitable administrative systems and personnel to provide effective support to its diverse learner population, particularly in light of the shorter study durations associated with micro-credentials.

All students are informed of the available learning resources and support services.

MCP-6 Summary

UST has a comprehensive learning environment, including well-designed digital facilities and a library with extensive online and physical resources, which will be accessible to micro-credential students.

The institution has also established suitable administrative systems and personnel to support its diverse learner population, including the hiring of a staff member for the administrative management of micro-credential activities.

Additionally, UST has allocated sufficient funding in its budget to support the launch of its micro-credential offerings and has systems in place to ensure that all students are informed of the available learning resources and support services.

The VET finds compliance with MCP 6 and highlights one commendation.

Commendation

- The VET commends UST for their outstanding learning resources and support services, which include an extensive range of online resources.

Panel Conclusion: Compliance

MCP 7 - Information management

PROVIDERS HAVE SYSTEMS AND POLICIES TO ANALYSE AND USE RELEVANT DATA FOR THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS.

Evidence of Compliance:

MCP-SER and supplemental information:

- Student Management System demo
- Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) demo
- IT guidelines and procedures
- Quality Enhancement Policy

Meetings with:

- Senior UST Programmes Coordinator
- Programmes and Assessment Coordinator
- UST Programmes and Scholars Coordinator
- Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement
- IT Manager

Analysis and Assessment:

UST has implemented a robust Student Management System (SMS), which facilitates various processes, such as admissions, progression i.e. within a programme, billing, reports, assessment scores, student surveys, and transcript generation. The SMS is fully integrated with their Virtual Learning Environment. Plans are in place to extend the use of these systems to manage micro-credentials, which will involve customisations and further integrations at a later stage (see MCP-9 for more information).

The SMS and VLE platforms offer various relevant reports that are analysed and applied to further developments of the courses and programmes.

Significant investments have been made to minimise manual data handling and enhance software functionality. Recently, additional investments have focused on improving cybersecurity measures for both students and staff.

MCP-7 Summary

UST's existing systems, along with established policies and procedures, are effectively suited for managing micro-credentials. The use of the systems to collect, analyse, evaluate, and contribute to its quality assurance is clearly seen in the current programmes and the VET is convinced that this will provide the same framework for MCs.

The VET finds compliance with MCP 7 and highlights one commendation.

Commendation

- The VET commends UST for the recent investments in implementing a robust system and processes for managing student information, analysing data, and using the data for decision-making.

Panel Conclusion: Compliance

MCP 8 - Public information

PROVIDERS PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT MICRO-CREDENTIALS WITHIN AN OVERALL LIFELONG-LEARNING STRATEGY WHICH IS CLEAR, ACCURATE, OBJECTIVE, UP-TO-DATE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE.

Evidence of Compliance:

MCP-SER and supplemental information:

- Design and Approval of Micro-credentials
- Quality Enhancement Policy
- Public Information Quality Assurance Framework

Meetings with:

- Senior UST Programmes Coordinator
- Programmes and Assessment Coordinator
- UST Programmes and Scholars Coordinator
- Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement

Analysis and Assessment:

UST intends to provide public information on micro-credentials, which is detailed and accurate, as the micro-credential will be launched.

On the basis of available public information on current programmes, the VET is confident that UST will provide clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date, and readily accessible information for micro-credentials.

During the discussions, the VET noted that UST has made significant efforts to engage non-traditional learners and more mature professionals who cannot commit to a full programme by offering accessible learning opportunities through online and hybrid part-time formats. During the visit, school leaders expressed their commitment and desire to use the micro-credential's flexible nature to further extend this focus.

MCP-8 Summary

UST plans to provide transparent, accurate descriptions of micro-credentials in compliance with MCP 8 standards once they are ready to be launched. However, no drafts of public information related to micro-credentials are available at this time.

The VET notes that if UST applies established public information processes – currently used for existing programmes - to micro-credentials, it will ensure the dissemination of clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date, and accessible information.

UST leadership has expressed strategic commitment to leveraging micro-credentials to engage non-traditional learners and mature professionals unable to pursue full qualifications.

The VET finds non-compliance with MCP 8 and suggests one requirement.

Requirement

The VET suggests a requirement that UST create a publicity plan that includes:

- A draft of all publicity materials related to MCs (MCP8)
- Strategies with implementation plans for sharing information about micro-credentials with relevant parties, including collaboration and promoting micro-credentials (MCP8)
- Information about delivery modes and pedagogies used in MC delivery and where this information will be accessible (MCP3)

Panel Conclusion: Non-compliance

MCP 9 - On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

PROVIDERS MONITOR AND PERIODICALLY REVIEW AND EVALUATE THE QUALITY OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS.

Evidence of Compliance:

MCP-SER and supplemental information:

- Academic Board TOR
- UST Committee Structure
- Academic Teaching, Research and Curriculum Committee TOR
- Quality Assurance Committee TOR
- Quality Enhancement Policy
- Public Information QA framework
- Union Foundation Governance Structure
- Central Teams Structure

Meetings with:

- Senior UST Programmes
- Coordinator
- Programmes and Assessment Coordinator
- UST Programmes and Scholars Coordinator
- Dean of Studies and QA

Analysis and Assessment:

The quality assurance process for micro-credentials will be integrated into UST's robust IQA framework. An external examiner is appointed yearly who will review each micro-credentials and assessments, submitting an annual report to the Academic Teaching, Research and Curriculum Committee (ARACC). The ATRACC evaluates these reports alongside student feedback to recommend improvements as needed.

The VET reviewed current reports and received a demonstration of the software where reports will be collected. At the time of the review, the VET did not see any templates or documents with placeholders for data on micro-credentials. UST has the necessary expertise and tools to carry out assessment that is fit for purpose should similar practices for modules be applied to micro-credentials.

The ATRACC meets four times a year, allowing MC stakeholders to monitor progress and to make adjustments in a timely and flexible manner. The review and monitoring processes are structured to be transparent and efficient, while systematic QA protocols ensure rigorous adherence to established quality benchmarks.

MCP-9 Summary

The quality assurance process for micro-credentials will be integrated into UST's robust IQA framework. An external examiner will review and assess each micro-credential annually, submitting an internal annual report. Although UST has the required expertise and experience to conduct assessments for micro-credentials, data fields and reporting templates specifically designed to collect and evaluate micro-credentials have not yet been formalised.

The VET finds non-compliance with MCP 9 and suggests one requirement.

Requirement

- The VET suggests a requirement that UST provide a template with placeholders for the ongoing monitoring of MC's according to MCP 9.

Panel Conclusion: Non-compliance

MCP 10 - Cyclical external quality assurance

PROVIDERS UNDERGO REGULAR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (EQA) OF THEIR MICRO-CREDENTIALLING ACTIVITIES ON A CYCLICAL BASIS

Evidence of Compliance:

MCP-SER and supplemental information:

- Academic Teaching, Research and Curriculum Committee TOR
- Academic Board TOR
- Quality Assurance Committee TOR
- Accreditation Certificate-Union School of Theology (Open University)
- UST 2023-24 IPM Completion letter (Open University)

Meetings with:

- Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement
- Vice-President
- Provost
- Programmes and Assessment Coordinator
- Senior UST Programmes Coordinator

Analysis and Assessment:

UST will undergo regular external quality assurance of their micro-credentialing activities with ECTE on a cyclical basis.

UST will submit an Integrative MCP Compliance Report¹⁵ following a complete cycle of delivery of at least three micro-credentials that provides evidence of implementation of policies, procedures, and plans outlined in the initial review.

In subsequent years, UST will submit an MCP Annual Progress Report¹⁶ to the ECTE which includes overall changes as well as new and retired micro-credentials.

UST will document that all micro-credentials they offer bearing the ECTE MCP label have undergone the internal quality assurance procedures described in the ECTE MCP 1 *Policies for Quality Assurance* (mirroring ESG 1).

Beyond micro-credential provider accreditation, UST is externally examined by other higher education accreditation authorities, which contributes directly and indirectly to the institution's quality assurance. The VET is encouraged to see that UST is proactive in seeking feedback not only from their constituent stakeholders but also for their continued quality development.

¹⁵ See <https://ecte.eu/integrative-mcp-compliance-report/> (accessed 18 June 2025)

¹⁶ See <https://ecte.eu/mcp-annual-progress-report/> (accessed 18 June 2025)

MCP-10 Summary

UST is committed to the external quality review process of its role as a micro-credential provider and will adhere to formal reporting cycles, to submitting annual reports that document programme advancements, enhancements, and procedural updates to uphold transparency, institutional accountability, and sustained quality assurance.

The VET finds compliance with MCP 10 with one commendation.

Commendation:

The VET commends UST for systematic external quality assurance processes, which enhance stakeholder trust and uphold quality standards.

Panel Conclusion: Compliance

E. CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

1. **Relating to standard MCP 1:** The VET commends UST for its exemplary commitment to stakeholder engagement, demonstrated by its active pursuit of feedback from a diverse range of individuals and networks on new initiatives. The VET also commends UST for its proactive efforts to understand the needs of its stakeholders and for seeking ways to provide them with meaningful support.
 2. **Relating to standard MCP 6:** The VET commends UST for its outstanding learning resources and support services, which include an extensive range of online resources.
 3. **Relating to standard MCP 7:** The VET commends UST for the recent investments in implementing a robust system and processes for managing student information, analysing data, and using the data for decision-making.
 4. **Relating to standard MCP 10:** The VET commends UST for systematic external quality assurance processes, which enhance stakeholder trust and uphold quality standards.
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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Relating to standard MCP 3:** The VET recommends that UST seek to develop their policies to demonstrate clearly the activities and processes that support holistic learning for MCs, especially online courses.
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SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

1. **Relating to standard MCP 2:** The VET suggests a requirement that UST design a micro-credential curriculum map that specifies at least one micro-credential along with corresponding QF-EHEA and other outcomes.
2. **Relating to MCP 4:** The VET suggests a requirement that UST establish and submit a timeline for issuing secure, portable, and transferable certificates to learners upon completion of a micro-credential.
3. **Relating to standard MCP 8:** The VET suggests a requirement that UST create a publicity plan that includes:
 - A draft of all publicity materials related to MCs (MCP8)
 - Strategies with implementation plans for sharing information about micro-credentials with relevant parties, including collaboration and promoting micro-credentials (MCP8)
 - Information about delivery modes and pedagogies used in MC delivery and where this information will be accessible (MCP3)
4. **Relating to standard MCP 9:** The VET suggests a requirement that UST provide a template with placeholders for the ongoing monitoring of MC's according to MCP 9.

IN CONCLUSION

The visitation team recommends to the ECTE Accreditation Commission that the European School of Theology be granted MCP accreditation based on substantial compliance with the *Micro-credential Provider Standards and Guidelines* of the ECTE Recommendations confirmed by the AC will be monitored through the annual reporting processes of ECTE.

The visitation team would like to record their gratitude to the Union School of Theology staff for a warm welcome and 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 the Union School of Theology and by extension the Union Foundation 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 on the findings, analysis, conclusions, commendations, and suggested recommendations.

The visitation team:

Signed:

Dr. Eric McCauley (Team Leader, Review Secretary)

Greta Pina (Team Member, Student Representative)

James Lockwood (Team Member)

Tiago Fonseca (Team Member)

July 2025

APPENDICES

A: Review Schedule

Day 1: Monday, May 6th

9:15	VET daily briefing
10:00	01 Introductory meeting with Senior Leadership Team <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Vice-President, Union Foundation– Provost, Union School of Theology– Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement, UST
11:00	02 Administrative Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Senior UST Programmes Coordinator– Programmes and Assessment Coordinator– UST Programmes and Scholars Coordinator– Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement, UST
12:00	03 Learning Resources, Library/Online <ul style="list-style-type: none">– IT manager– Librarian– Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement, UST
13:00	VET daily debrief

Day 2: Tuesday, May 7th

9:15	Team Briefing for the Day
10:00	04 MC Director and school leaders <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Executive Director, Union Foundation– Vice-President, Union Foundation– Provost, Union School of Theology– Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement, UST
11:00	05 Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Pastor– Student– Mentor
12:00	06 Teaching Faculty and Educational Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology– Lecturer in Biblical Studies and Greek– Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement, UST
13:00	VET daily debrief:

Day 3: Wednesday, May 8th

9:00	Follow-up: Student Management System <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Senior UST Programmes Coordinator– IT Manager
10:00	VET Finalising Report (commendations, recommendations, requirements)
12:00	07 Sharing Conclusions with leadership team <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Vice-President, Union Foundation– Provost, Union School of Theology– Dean of Studies and Quality Enhancement, UST

B. Mapping Standards with the Review Schedule¹⁷

MCP= Micro-credential Provider Standard [The MCP standards mirror the ESG 1 standards]

MCP-OE = Micro-credential Provider-Online Education Standards

UST MCP Review	Session #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6-8 May 2025		Intro	Staff: Admin.	Learning Resources /Online	MC Director and School leaders	Stakeholder	Staff: Teachers and educational	Conclusions
Policies & QA	MCP 1			X	X	X		
Design & Approval	MCP 2				X		X	
Student centred learning, teaching & assessment	MCP 3						X	
Admission, progress, recog & certif	MCP 4		X					
Educational staff	MCP 5						X	
Learning resources & stud. support	MCP 6		X	X				
Info management	MCP 7		X	X				
Public information	MCP 8		X					
On-going monitoring & periodic review	MCP 9		X		X			
Cyclical external QA	MCP 10				X			
Security & privacy	MCP-OE1		X	X				
Public information	MCP-OE2		X	X				
Contingency plans	MCP-OE3			X				
Staffing	MCP-OE4						X	
Communication	MCP-OE5		X			X		
Student services	MCP-OE6		X	X				
Technology & Virtual learning environments	MCP-OE7		X	X				
Resources	MCP-OE8		X	X				
Holistic learning	MCP-OE9			X	X		X	
Learning design	MCP-OE10				X		X	

¹⁷ Lighter shades of colour indicate that the standard is present in multiple sessions, whereas darker shades signify that the standard appears only once in the online review.