

# Self-Evaluation Report: Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary Eesti Metodisti Kiriku Teoloogiline Seminar

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Submitted on July 6, 2018

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## Abbreviations

APDP	Action Plan of the Development Plan
BMTS	Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary
BOT	Board of Trustees
CCTEF	Central Conferences Theological Education Fund (of the UMC)
DP	Development Plan
ECC	Estonian Council of Churches
EEA	Estonian Evangelical Alliance
EHIS	Estonian Education Information System
EKKA	Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education
ECPC	Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church
ETIS	Estonian Research Information System
FTUT	Faculty of Theology of Tartu University
GBGM	General Board of Global Ministries (of the UMC)
GBHEM	General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (of the UMC)
HITSA	Information Technology Foundation for Education
ITEELC	Institute of Theology of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTSE	Methodist Related Theological Schools in Europe
NEECC	Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference (of the UMC)
SA	Salvation Army
SIS	Student Information System
TTS	Tartu Theological School (of the Baptist Union)
UMCE	United Methodist Church in Estonia

## Introduction

Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary (BMTS) was founded in 1994 with the primary goal of educating clergy for the Methodist church in the Baltic countries. From the very beginning the education was practically oriented, and was operating in three languages: Estonian, Russian, and English. The first graduating class in 1998 consisted predominantly of Methodist ministers already working in congregations in Estonia and Latvia. After a while the scope broadened, and besides Methodists the seminary began to offer theological education also for Christians from other denominations. As there was a clear need for theological education also for people who served in various ministry areas as lay leaders (non-clergy) in their local congregations, and often on voluntary basis, the emphasis shifted once more. Now we see as our target group Christians who feel called to do Christian ministry inside and outside the church, either as clergy (ordained, and employed by church) or lay (mostly as volunteers or employed part-time by church or NGO-s). The emphasis on multi-lingual and multicultural as well as an ecumenical approach has become the trademark of the seminary as we strongly value and encourage the grassroots-level ecumenical bridge-building among our students and faculty. The ECC has repeatedly pointed out this feature of the BMTS (special awards in 2005 and 2007).

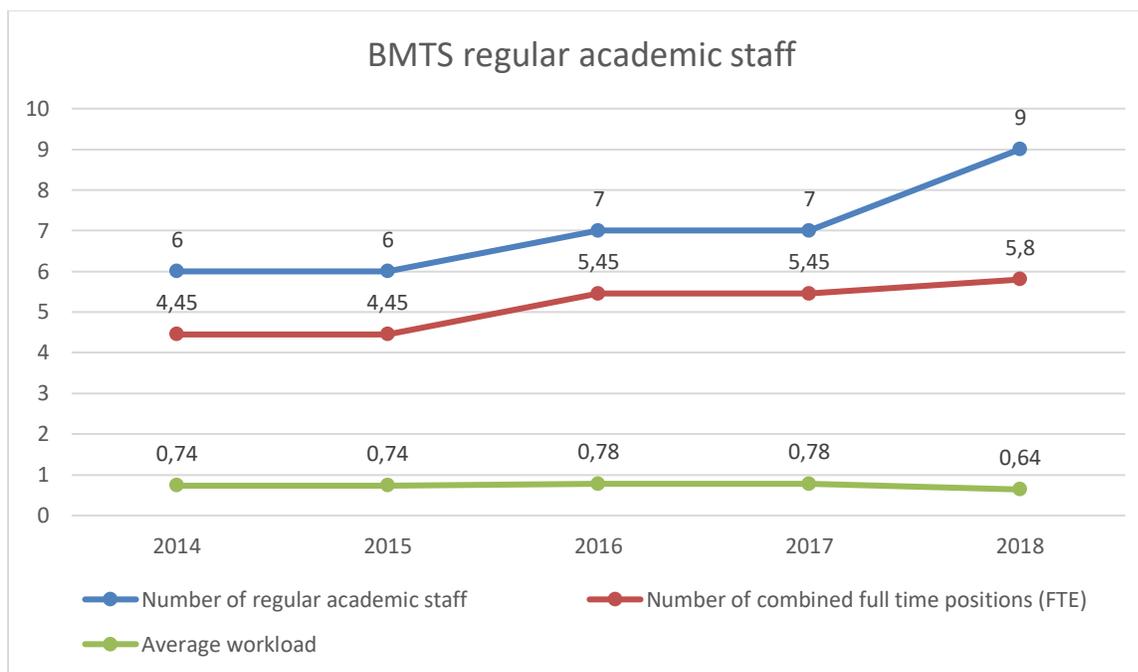
## General information

Name in Estonian	Eesti Metodisti Kiriku Teoloogiline Seminar
Name in Russian	Теологическая Семинария Эстонской Методистской Церкви
Name in English	Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary
Legal status	Applied higher education institution under the jurisdiction of UMCE
Register code	80196661
Licence number	351KHM
Established	1994
Contact information	Narva mnt 51, Tallinn 10152, Estonia +372 6688467, seminar@emkts.ee, www.emkts.ee,

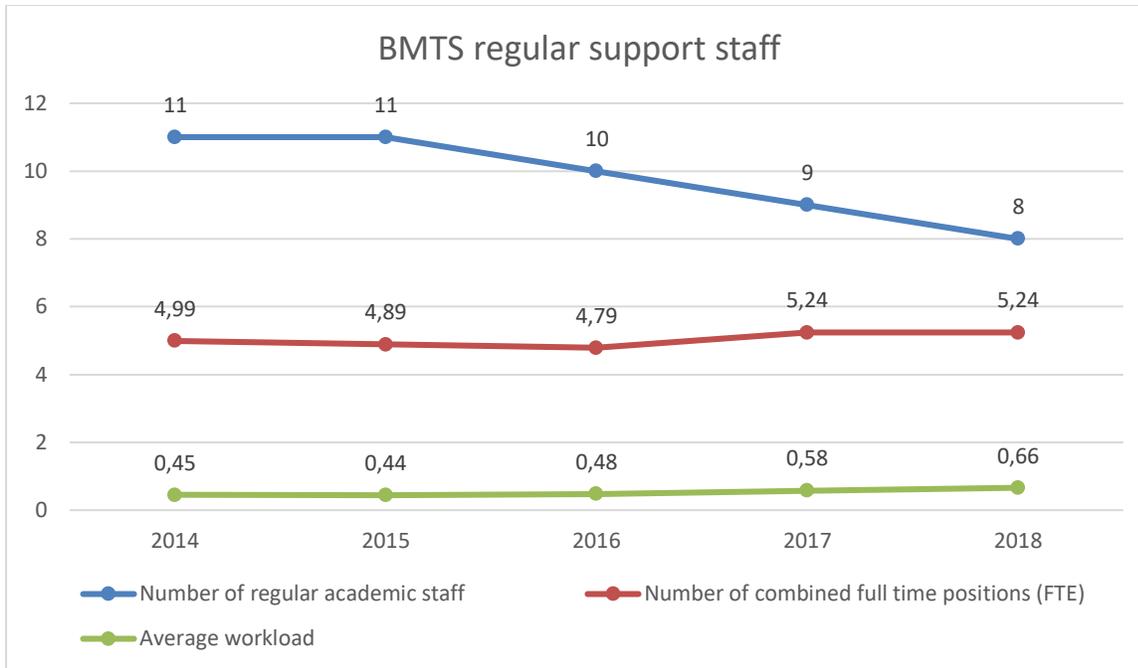
	Rector Külli Tõniste (beginning from August 1, 2018) <a href="mailto:kulli.toniste@emkts.ee">kulli.toniste@emkts.ee</a> Contact person regarding accreditation documentation: Anna Seifullina <a href="mailto:anna.seifullina@emkts.ee">anna.seifullina@emkts.ee</a>
Bank account	EE842200221010980782 in Swedbank
Curricula in EHIS	12657 Teoloogia ja misjon (in Estonian) 12658 Teoloogia ja misjon (in English - Theology and Mission) 12659 Teoloogia ja misjon (in Russian - Теология и миссия)

#### *BMTS Staff and student 5-year Trend 2014-2018*

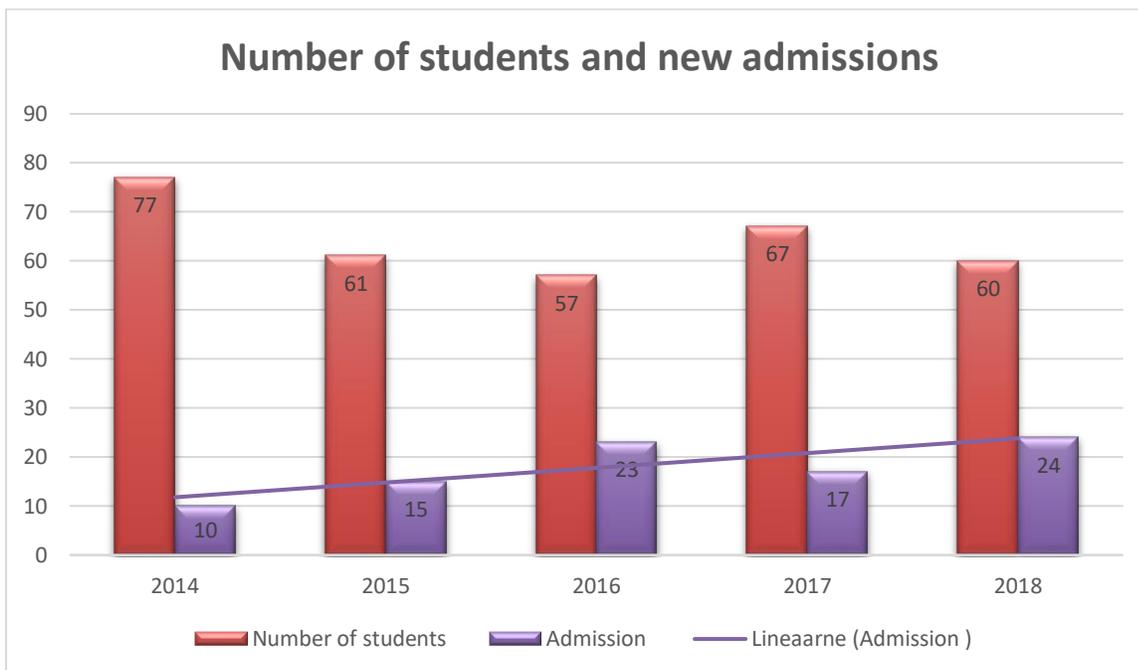
The following three tables show the overall staffing and student body developments at the BMTS between 2014 and 2018. Comments about the chart 4 and 5 can be found in 1.2.1 and about chart 10 in 2.1.2.



*Chart 4 BMTS regular academic staff trend 2014-2018*



*Chart 5 BMTS regular support staff trend 2014-2018*



*Chart 10 Number of students and new admissions.*

## Preparation of Self-Evaluation Report

The self-evaluation report has been prepared by a working group consisting of the academic dean Mark Nelson, rector Meeli Tankler, bookkeeper and librarian Maiu Mäevere, faculty member Külli Tõniste, assistant Anna Seifullina and IT specialist Rein Laaneser. As a preparation for completing the self-analysis, all working group members participated in the seminar led by EKKA in November 2017. The actual working process began in the end of the year 2017. Representatives of translators as well as from the student body have been involved in discussions on specific issues. Some of the self-analysis topics were also discussed at the academic council meeting in January 2018. The self-analysis is based on our DP and the APDP for 2016-2019 (confirmed by the academic council meeting on 10.06.2016) as basic documents that describe the vision and developmental trends of the seminary.

## Main accomplishments during the last five years

- Formalizing our connections with several partner schools and institutions: signing MOU with Asbury Theological Seminary (USA) in 2013; with Salvation Army in Estonia in 2014, with Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church in 2014 etc. As a result of this process the partnerships have become more concrete, and all sides have been motivated for looking new areas of mutual interest for developing the connections further.
- Bringing seminary e-learning to the new quality level based on positive experience in participating in Europe-wide e-learning project BEST in 2011-2013 (see 1.3.2. Information systems, Moodle <http://moodle.emkts.ee>)
- Being able to stabilize the number of students even as the length of the study program went down from 4 years to 3 years in 2013/14 (see *Chart 4*)
- Joining HITSA's Student Information System (SIS) for applied higher education in spring 2015 which has improved students' self-management and made information better available (see 1.3.2. Information systems, SIS).
- Employing several younger faculty who have brought with them innovative teaching methods and approaches (Külli Tõniste, Douglas Childress, Anna Seifullina, Taavet Taimla)

- Accommodating students with special needs (deaf students) and learning as a faculty to support their needs and specific features of learning.
- Launching the one-year laity study course (Bible school) in partnership with UMCE in 2016.
- BMTS curriculum received the unspecified term of study in 2017 by Estonian Ministry of Education.
- Significantly improving the support process of diploma paper writing and its mentoring
- Improving and specifying the admission process, especially concerning international students, in 2017/18 (see 2.1.2 Admission practices).

## 1. Organizational management and performance

### 1.1. General management

#### 1.1.1. Role in Estonian Society

The DP (<http://www.emkts.ee/development>) defines the seminary's goal as follows: "to train theologically well prepared Christians to serve the church and community." Having a special emphasis on mission and defining the term "mission" broadly as serving the spiritual and physical needs of the community in various ways (educational activities, social services, evangelism, pastoral care, humanitarian aid etc.) both inside and outside the walls of the church. The seminary's approach to theological studies is practically oriented.

**Chaplaincy.** BMTS has been able to provide theological education for chaplains who are employed by the state, and while being part of their respective denominations serve outside the church structure in military, prisons and police forces. Our graduates serve and educate others: we have offered Basics of Chaplaincy as an elective course, and we have repeatedly hosted our alumni who serve as chaplains to introduce their field of ministry among other career and voluntary work opportunities in special annual student conferences called "Kuum päev".

**Ecumenical Partnerships.** BMTS has been ecumenically open from the very beginning but in recent years our partnerships have grown deeper and been formalized.

In 2014 we signed the MOU with Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church (ECPC), and they have decided to educate their clergy in our seminary. Their church bishop who graduated in 2018

wrote his diploma paper on attitudes toward theological education in the ECPC which has historically been not very supportive of formal theological education and found positive attitudes due to graduates from our seminary doing good ministry in their local communities. We partner also with the one-year Bible school of the ECPC: we exchange faculty with them, and they use our seminary library as a study resource.

Cooperation with Salvation Army in Estonia has also enriched our seminary studies, and especially our internship opportunities. Their cadets have taken classes at our seminary as part of their required training program, and their leaders (entitled officers) have taught Foundations of Diaconal Ministry for several years. In January 2018 we organized a joint study trip to Helsinki Salvation Army headquarters in the framework of this class.

We have signed a MOU with Missions Committee of Estonian Evangelical Alliance (EEA), and this provides broader possibilities for mission practicum such as short-term mission trips to Finno-Ugric people groups in Russia.

**Multilingual Approach.** BMTS is the only theological school in Estonia that offers theological education also in Russian. We consider it important for Russian speaking people who live in Estonia to be able to study theology in their mother tongue. However, it has opened our seminary also for international students from the former Soviet Union (predominantly from Ukraine) whose communication language is mostly Russian. Estonian Council of Churches acknowledged our seminary in 2007 with an award for integration with the comment "your activities have supported the cooperation and integration of different national and cultural communities in Estonia."

As we offer our program also in English, we are thus open to receive international students from east and west. We see the greatest benefit of our multilingual approach in creating opportunities for communication between students from diverse cultural backgrounds who study in the same classroom but use different study languages. In the time of growing estrangement and fears regarding people coming from other cultures our multilingual and multicultural environment is strongly encouraging dialogue and building relationships through common study experiences and shared goals.

### *1.1.2. Mission, vision and strategic goals*

The goal of the seminary is to prepare clergy and lay leaders for ministry in the church as well as in Christian and charitable organizations, offering theological higher education in the Wesleyan/Methodist tradition based on needs of the church and society, and to support spiritual formation in the course of the study; as well as to organize continuing education and various study courses for UMC in Estonia.

In order to work toward our mission, we have set up our strategic goals in the Development Plan (DP) (see <http://www.emkts.ee/development>) as follows:

1. The Seminary insures internationally acknowledged level of all fields of studies.
2. The Seminary is an educational institution with a distinct identity, its operation based on the Seminary's code of ethics (see <http://www.emkts.ee/ethics>)
3. The Seminary works in close co-operation with Asbury Theological Seminary (USA), the Institute of Theology of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, the theological faculty of University of Tartu and Tartu Theological Seminary of the Baptist Church.
4. The Seminary has strong partnership with the UMC in Estonia, promotes its activities within the Methodist Church, in other member churches of the Estonian Council of Churches and in the whole of society.
5. The Seminary has modern infrastructure, is a flexible and well-operating organization.

### *1.1.3. General structure and leadership*

The Seminary is a structural (sub)-unit of the UMCE. Seminary is led by the BOT and rector in cooperation with Rector's Cabinet.

According to the seminary **Constitution** (see <https://www.emkts.ee/constitution>) the BOT is the highest collegiate leadership body of the seminary. The Church Board of the UMCE as a representative body of the holder of the seminary elects the members of the BOT and presents them to the Annual Conference of the UMCE for approval. The members of the BOT with a right to vote are: the Bishop of the UMC Nordic and Baltic Area; the Superintendent of the UMCE; a Russian representative of the UMCE, a representative of the World Methodist Evangelism/ World Methodist Council; other members elected by the holder. No less than 1/5 of the total board membership should be representatives of the faculty, and no less than 1/5 of the

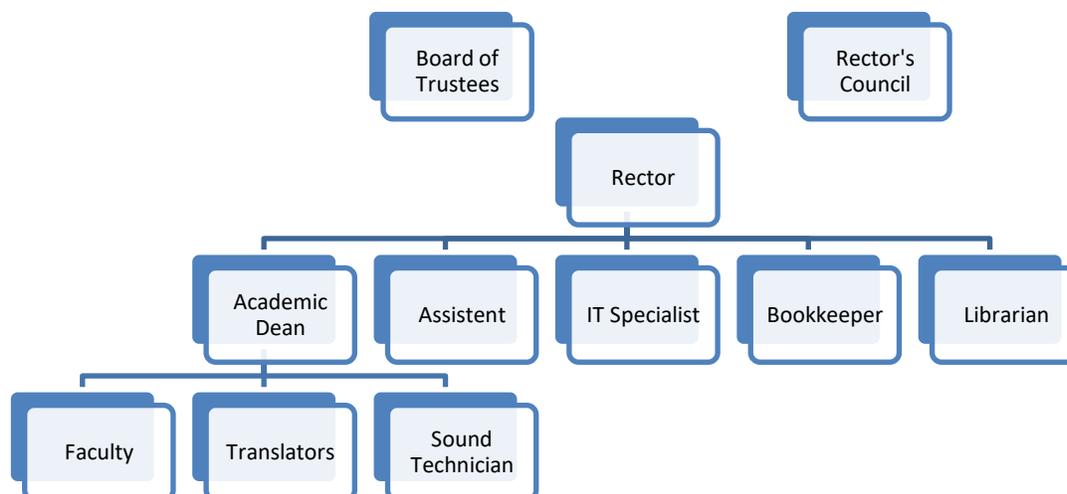
total board membership should be representatives of the student body. The BOT can decide to add advisory members without vote (§30, 1).

The BOT draws up a plan of development for the Seminary and presents it to the holder; annually approves the proposed budget drawn up by the Rector's Cabinet, and presents to the holder for approval; determines the range of stipends; institutes special scholarships from the resources of the Seminary; decides upon the creation of paid positions, determines salaries and presents these to the holder for approval; approves the permanent faculty; approves the qualification requirements and job descriptions for faculty and regulations for their certification; approves any joint curriculum and contract for joint curriculum before they come into force; selects the candidate for the Rector's position and presents him to holder for approval; approves the heads of structural units, and presents proposals to the holder about changes or additions to the Seminary Constitution (§29).

Rector's cabinet is the executive body of the BOT, and according to the Constitution is consisting of the rector, academic dean, bookkeeper, and the District Superintendent of the UMCE as a representative of the holder. For the tasks of the Rector's cabinet, see the Seminary Constitution (<https://www.emkts.ee/constitution> §32) Rector's cabinet meets according to the need but not less than once a month during the study year.

**Seminary rector** is elected for three years from among the persons with a graduate degree. The order of election is decided by the BOT. The Rector is elected and dismissed on the proposal of the BOT and approved by the Annual Conference of the UMCE. The Rector's work is evaluated by the Church Board of the UMCE and the BOT. Seminary rector heads the Seminary as the highest official, delegating certain authority to the Academic Dean and to the accountant following the directives of the UMCE, the Rector's Cabinet, and the BOT.

The year 2018 is a transition year as the rector who has served the seminary for 9 years will give the leadership role over to the new rector from August 1, 2018.



*Chart 1 General scheme of BMTS structure*

#### *1.1.4. Internal and external communication*

*Internal communication* with the student body is going on via mailing lists (in three languages), electronic Student Information System (SIS) that unfortunately is not yet functioning in Russian, and at the Moodle platform in three languages.

See further in 1.3.2. Information systems.

Students elect their representatives to form the Student Council, and these representatives participate at the academic council meetings. They bring issues and concerns raised by the student body to faculty and seminary leadership. Student representatives take also part at the BOT meetings. An informal platform for meetings and conversations between faculty, staff and students is the "student café" that happens during every study session since 2016 and has become a good fellowship experience.

Faculty and staff exchange information formally via mailing list, and permanent faculty meets regularly to discuss curriculum related issues and other current matters. According to the need specific task groups are formed to discuss specific matters. In a small school environment many current problems are solved without formal meetings, and information is shared orally.

The academic council meets at least 4 times a year, and there the minutes are taken and distributed to council members. Decisions made by the academic council that involve the whole seminary will be posted at the homepage and/or via mailing lists.

*External information see 4.1. Popularization of BMTS activities, and involvement in social development*

#### *1.1.5. Areas of good practices and improvements*

The leadership model where BOT is carrying predominantly the broader advisory role (bringing in experiences from different countries and contexts), and the day-to-day decisions are made by rector's council works well for the seminary. Being part of the church structure means also close connection to church activities, and thus the fact that the rector has been part of the church administrative board has consolidated this connection and strengthened mutual communication.

Introducing the SIS has greatly improved the internal communication between students and faculty. The informal communication has been strengthened through "student café" initiative.

Regular faculty meetings have strengthened the communication between faculty, and the faculty reading group has added a new platform for closer communication and theological discussion.

We see it as a big problem (that we cannot solve ourselves) that SIS is not available in Russian, and thus Russian speaking students need translation help in order to access their grades and other important data. The new version of SIS will hopefully solve this problem.

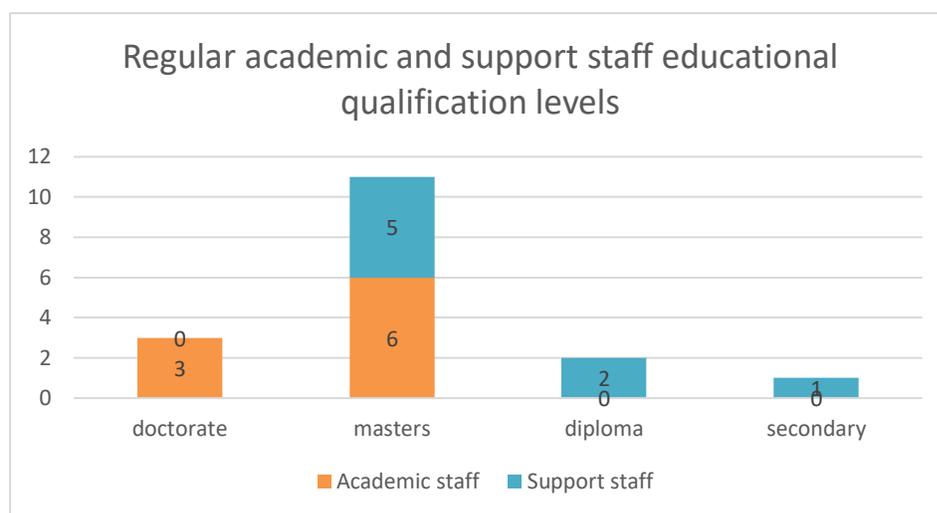
Even as the change of information between faculty has improved in the process of the recent curriculum development there is still need for sharing more detailed information about reading assignments and topics covered in order to move toward more coherent curriculum. This is an ongoing process, and we continue to work on it.

## **1.2. Personnel management**

### *1.2.1. Recruitment and development of administrative and academic staff*

In August 2013 BMTS announced an open search for 5 permanent faculty positions. Based on feedback from academic council as well as from student representatives, with the approval of BOT, 4 positions were filled. In 2015 one of these 4 left the seminary, and Külli Tõniste who has PhD in Biblical Theology from London School of Theology was hired as an associate professor

in Systematic Theology. She was sent to Estonia as a UMC missionary by GBGM. In October 2015 we were able to fill also the position that was left vacant during the open search process, a lecturer in Church History (Douglas Childress, MDiv from Asbury Theological Seminary, a missionary sent by GBGM). Two more permanent faculty are regularly teaching at the seminary (part-time).



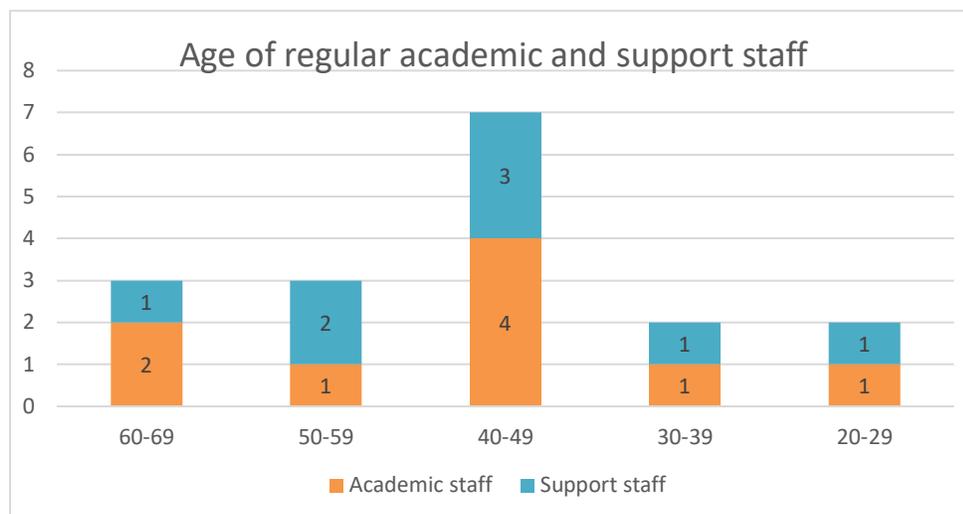
*Chart 2 Regular academic and support staff educational qualification level*

In addition to these faculty members the seminary is continuing its traditional practice to invite specialists in the specific field from Estonia as well as abroad whose qualification meets the requirements to teach certain classes. For complete faculty and staff statistics see:

<https://bit.ly/2I541NE>.

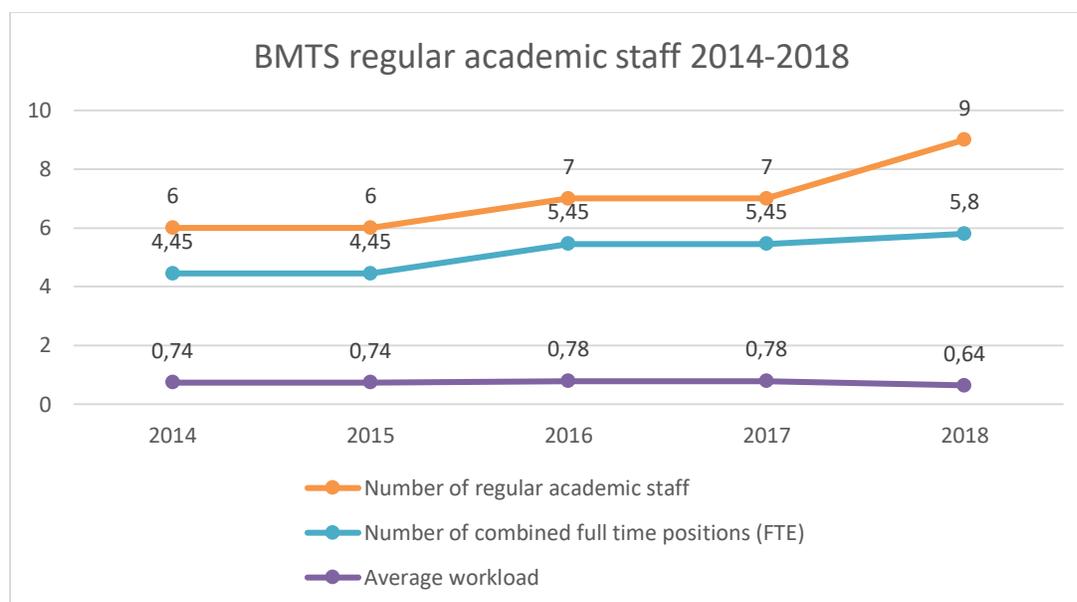
We purposefully continue to develop new Estonian faculty such as Taavet Taimla and Anna Seifullina, young, promising people who recently completed their Master's degree. Anna is

working also as registrar at the seminary.



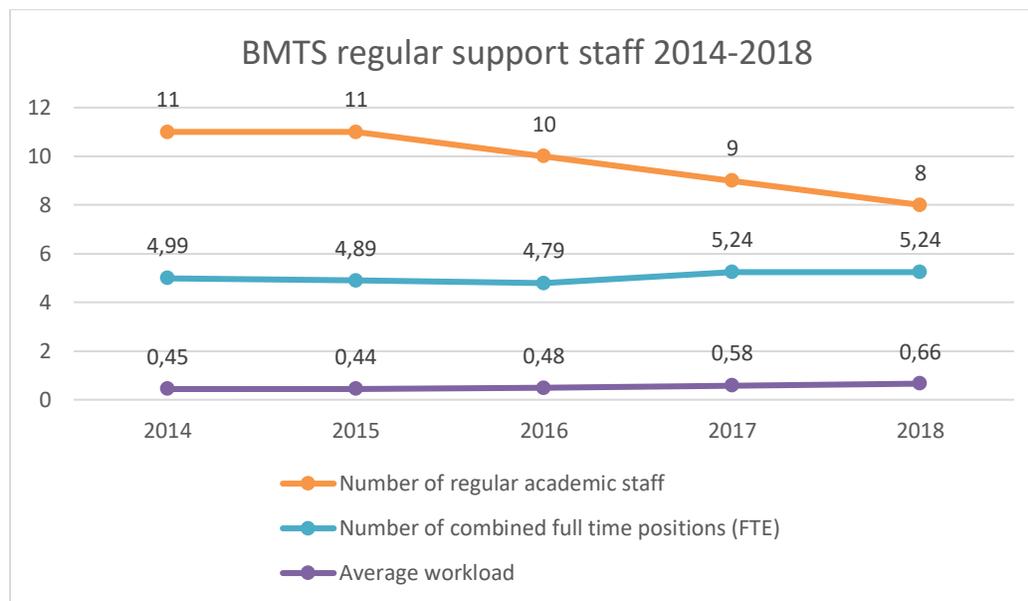
*Chart 3 Age of regular academic and support staff*

The following two tables show the overall staffing development trend at the BMTS between 2014 and 2018. The first, showing regular academic staff shows a gradual growth in the total number of regular academic staff and in the number of combined full-time positions. The slight drop in average workload in 2018 is due to two young faculty joining the staff with very small workloads. This however, is part of a strategic plan for their development as teachers and the long term strengthening of the faculty.



*Chart 4 BMTS regular academic staff trend 2014-2018*

The second table shows the trend for regular support staff. The BMTS use of translators increases the number of support staff required. In recent years, however, there has been a strategic attempt to employ fewer translators while increasing their individual workloads. The result can be seen in the chart below which shows a gradual decreasing of the number of support staff while increasing the number of combined full-time positions.



*Chart 5 BMTS regular support staff trend 2014-2018*

According to the Constitution (<https://www.emkts.ee/constitution>), the requirements about qualification, job descriptions and the rules about certifying the faculty are set by the BOT. The BOT is also confirming permanent faculty positions with their salary range (§28). As the Rector's Council (RC) is the executive body of the BOT, the task to revise seminary's job descriptions was delegated to the RC in connection to the planned annual salary raises starting in 2016. In 2016/17 job descriptions of staff and faculty became revised and updated with the participation and active input of persons employed at given positions.

The unique characteristic of the BMTS is teaching in three languages simultaneously, and thus translators play an important role in seminary's daily life. With the help of simultaneous translation our students learning in three different languages can actually sit together in the same classroom during their lectures. Only in few classes where language nuances play a crucial role like Inductive Bible study, New Testament Greek, and Preaching, these three language groups are taught separately.

Representatives from Estonian Ministry of Science and Education visited the seminary in November 2012 with the goal to learn about our quite unique teaching and learning model in Estonia. They explored our translation cabins and translation equipment, examined course syllabi, schedules, informational packets and students' home assignments in all three languages, and concluded that this model of teaching and learning was sustainable and valid.

Multilingual approach is costly financially, and complicated logistically. However, we believe that it greatly enhances our seminary, and thus we have applied and received financial support for translation from Europe-wide Methodist organization Fund Mission in Europe (2013) as well as from CCTEF annually since 2014. In the APDP the translation issue is emphasized, and we consider it our strength as it allows us to reach people in our neighbourhood and internationally who would not be able to acquire professional theological education otherwise. Our long experience with translation encouraged us also to receive our first deaf students in 2016 who study with the help of sign language translator. In order to be better prepared for this new challenge we invited a specialist to the faculty meeting in September 2016 to orient us about the specifics of deaf persons' learning.

In 2016-2018 all seminary employees have had annual salary raise 4%.

### *1.2.2. Employee satisfaction*

Performance interviews with faculty and staff have also given information regarding the satisfaction with working conditions and overall atmosphere of the seminary. We can say that our permanent staff and faculty are well motivated to give their input not only in their respective work areas but also in the general development of the BMTS. In most cases they strongly feel that they are part of the team and share the vision and goals of the seminary.

In April 2018 seminary faculty participated in Europe-wide online research Academic Profession in Knowledge-Based Society.

Our 2018 graduate Kaire Lotamõis wrote her diploma paper on developing reputation of theological schools using BMTS as the example (Title: *Teoloogilise õppeasutuse maine ja selle kujundamine Eesti Metodisti Kiriku Teoloogilise Seminari näitel*). Her paper gives useful data concerning employee satisfaction. Kaire questioned inside and outside focus groups about BMTS

reputation. The following results came from the inside focus group consisting of 31 students, 8 regular faculty, 3 translators and 2 other administrative staff of the BMTS:

Question 1: I have positive emotions associated with BMTS

71% of the respondents agreed and 23% mostly agreed. That is 94% feel good about the seminary. Reasons highlighted friendly atmosphere at school.

Question 2: I trust BMTS

49% of the respondents trusted, 51% mostly trusted. That is 100%!

Reasons listed: Staff is excellent and motivated, they are Christian, experienced teachers, curriculum has been tested over time and the school is multi-denominational. Positive personal contacts with faculty and staff.

Questions 3: BMTS gives quality education

42% agreed, 50% mostly agreed and 8% mostly disagreed.

Reasons listed: teachers are experts, education meets expectations, faculty have knowledge base and relate to students personally. Criticism: not all subjects are necessary, quality varies by teacher, some things could improve, more practical subjects needed, lack of administrative support, wish for stronger faculty development and stronger e-learning tools.

Question 7: BMTS is the best school where to study theology in Estonia

25% respondents agreed, 64% mostly agreed 9% mostly disagreed and 4% disagreed.

**The following survey questions focused on faculty/staff perspective:**

Question 12: Work flow at BMTS is well organized:

49% agreed, 47% mostly agreed and 4% mostly disagreed. Respondents found that the business side of things, including posting grades and course schedules is slow.

Question 13: BMTS is staff friendly institution

69% agreed, 29% mostly agreed, 2% mostly disagreed. Commentaries found BMTS to be friendly and accommodating to students with small children, problems are solved while not always speedily but always with positive attitude. Translators need their materials from faculty sooner for that impacts the quality of their work.

#### Question 16: BMTS is financially sustainable

Author comments that this question was meant just for staff and faculty, but some students weighed in. Of total respondents 13 were faculty/staff and 17 were students. 17% agreed, 37% mostly agreed, 43% mostly disagreed.

Author concluded that BMTS is highly valued and trusted by its students and faculty. For improvements author recommended stronger communication of identity, future goals and leadership strategy. More faculty development opportunities and greater administrative staff. More strategic marketing of the school is needed. Author noted that in terms of marketing strategy (or the lack thereof) all theological schools in Estonia are in a similar situation.

#### *1.2.3. Employee participation in international programs, projects and networks*

BMTS is an officially recognized higher education institution among other United Methodist higher education institutions internationally, and as such is supervised by GBHEM of the UMC. Their representative is participating at the BOT meeting once a year, and they provide materials and support for both educational and organizational development. They also provided a mentor for the seminary rector.

As a Methodist school BMTS belongs to International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges & Universities (IAMSCU), and at the European level is part of the network MTSE (Methodist-related Theological Schools in Europe) which meets in every second year. These meetings are open to faculty, and usually 2-3 faculty participate. In January 2014 MTSE held its conference in our seminary, and we were able to host representatives from 12 schools (from 9 European countries). Since February 2016 our seminary rector Meeli Tankler is the secretary of MTSE. As the student exchange is already happening at the MTSE level since spring 2017, more detailed plans for faculty exchange are still in development.

The Seminary has a long-term partnership with **Asbury Theological Seminary** (ATS) in Wilmore KY. Their faculty have helped us to build up our own faculty, and several BMTS graduates have continued their studies there at the master and doctoral level. Our faculty member Külli Tõniste recently participated in their post-doctoral program Wesley Summer Seminar (in

summer 2017). The partnership has developed to the stage where we currently discuss a joint master program. ATS faculty who have regularly taught at our seminary are internationally recognized specialist and author in Wesley studies Dr. Ken Collins, and cultural anthropologist Dr. Steve Ybarrola who has close connections also with Tartu University. The MOU signed in 2013 is providing also opportunities for organizing joint conferences and research projects which we are currently working toward.

Seminary faculty has participated in the work of the Federation of European Evangelical Theologians (FEET) by attending conferences and writing book reviews for their journal, and the Seminary is a member of the network European Evangelical Accreditation Association (EEAA – currently in the process of changing its name to European Council for Theological Education) since 2014.

Seminary has mission partnership with several UMC congregations in US: Peoria First UMC (IL), Hyde Park UMC (FL), Asbury UMC (OK), Chapelwood UMC (TX) etc. These partnerships include mutual visits and information exchange.

The Seminary's focus on missions led Seminary faculty and students to form the missions committee under EEA to facilitate Estonian Christians' involvement with Finno-Ugric people groups in Russia. This work was led by BMTS dean Mark Nelson from 2004-2017. The current leader of this committee is BMTS graduate Kaire Lotamõis. Through these contacts 4 students from these ethnic groups have graduated from our seminary.

Küllli Tõniste is a member in the Society of Biblical Literature, Institute of Biblical Research and in Wesleyan Theological Society.

In February 2017 Meeli Tankler used the support through Dora+ to attend the MTSE conference in Rome.

#### *1.2.4. Areas of good practice and improvement*

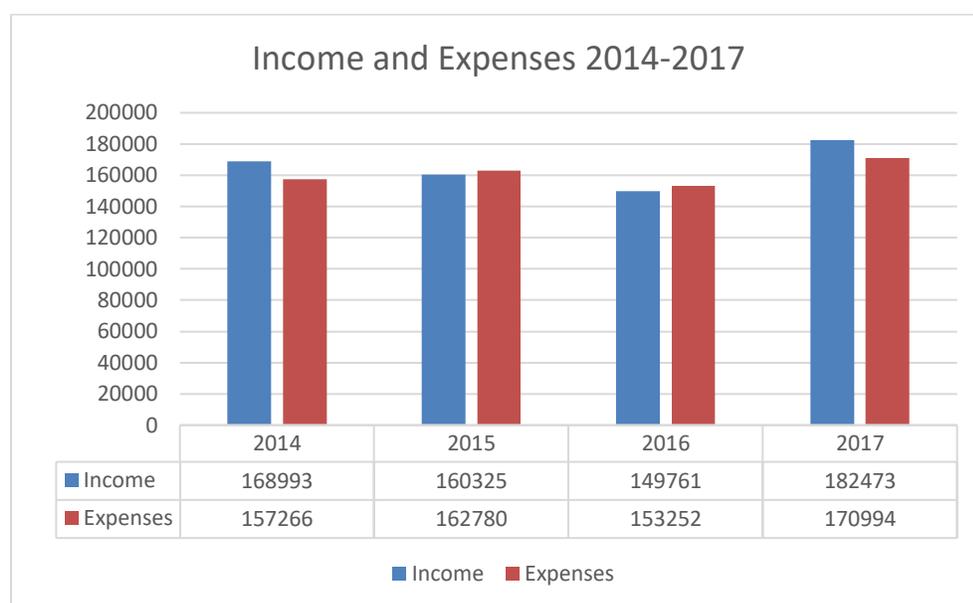
The number of academic and administrative staff is satisfactory in relation to the number of students. Since fall 2015 the workload of the academic dean, and since fall 2016 the workload of the registrar has been shifted from 50% to 75% in order to manage their workload better and improve the general administration of the seminary.

Supporting and motivating the young incoming faculty has been a positive experience, and the student feedback questionnaires from their courses have been predominantly positive.

Annual salary raises in 2016-2018 has been clearly interpreted by faculty and staff as a sign of good will on behalf of the BOT; however, the salary level is still not satisfactory in comparison with general salary level in Estonia.

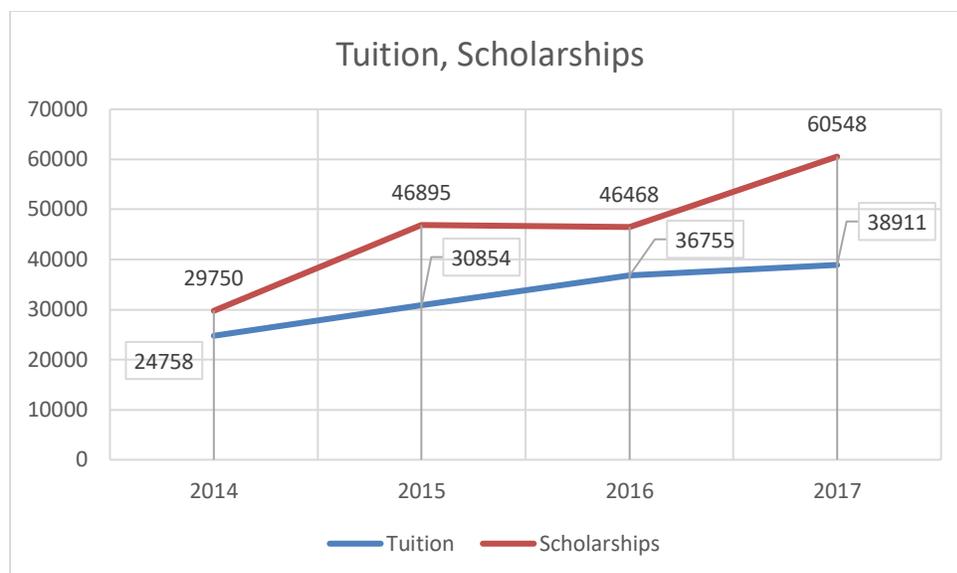
### 1.3. Management of financial resources and infrastructure

#### 1.3.1. Finances



*Chart 6 Income and Expenses*

**Seminary's financial base** is formed from several sources. The tuition and scholarship fund together constitute a significant part of income (up to 55%), and this amount has grown in recent years (from 33% in 2014).



*Chart 7 Tuition and Scholarship Fund*

Other sources of income are budgeted support from UMCE and UMC internationally; project-based and/or earmarked sums through different funds and organizations (Fund Mission in Europe, General Board of Global Ministries, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, BMTS Endowment Fund, Friends of Estonia, World Evangelism etc) and donations from churches, private persons (including seminary alumni) and institutions.

Since 2014 seminary has found a solid partner and additional source of income as the General Conference of UMC decided to create Central Conferences Theological Education Fund (CCTEF) for supporting theological education given by Methodist educational institutions all over the world. The fund operates on the basis of annual Project grants. In 2014-2017 BMTS have received 15-17% of its yearly budget through this fund, and the percentage is growing as the amount of this fund was doubled for the period from 2018 onward.

<b>Budget and Actual</b>								
<b>Income</b>	<b>Proposed 2014</b>	<b>Actual 2014</b>	<b>Proposed 2015</b>	<b>Actual 2015</b>	<b>Proposed 2016</b>	<b>Actual 2016</b>	<b>Proposed 2017</b>	<b>Actual 2017</b>
UMC	73600	99268	75000	74979	57955	60464	58600	46802

Tuition	24000	24758	28000	30854	31500	36755	37000	38911
Scholarships	42250	29750	37750	46895	71049	46468	48000	60548
Other Income	12000	15218	9000	7598	6000	6074	9000	36210
<b>Grand total Income</b>	<b>151850</b>	<b>168993</b>	<b>149750</b>	<b>160325</b>	<b>166505</b>	<b>149761</b>	<b>152600</b>	<b>182473</b>
<b>Expences</b>	<b>Proposed 2014</b>	<b>Actual 2014</b>	<b>Proposed 2015</b>	<b>Actual 2015</b>	<b>Proposed 2016</b>	<b>Actual 2016</b>	<b>Proposed 2017</b>	<b>Actual 2017</b>
Goods and services	4000	4240	3500	3496	2900	7810	5000	5961
BMTS Maintenance Expenses Narva str.51	21474	21474	21474	21474	21474	21474	22000	21474
Development expenses	4000	3677	3785	4273	4995	3401	5260	4420
Banking Charges	200	242	200	253	250	246	250	248
Office Supplies	4000	4118	3945	6889	5630	9573	6090	8966
Other Current Expenses	2000	7301	1870	6883	1800	2263	2000	3280
Student Assistance	1375	2000	250	220	250	0	0	600
Salaries Fund	114000	114215	114400	119292	129206	108485	112000	126045
<b>Grand total Expenses</b>	<b>151049</b>	<b>157266</b>	<b>149424</b>	<b>162780</b>	<b>166505</b>	<b>153252</b>	<b>152600</b>	<b>170994</b>
<b>Accounted return</b>	<b>801</b>	<b>11727</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>-2455</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-3491</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11479</b>

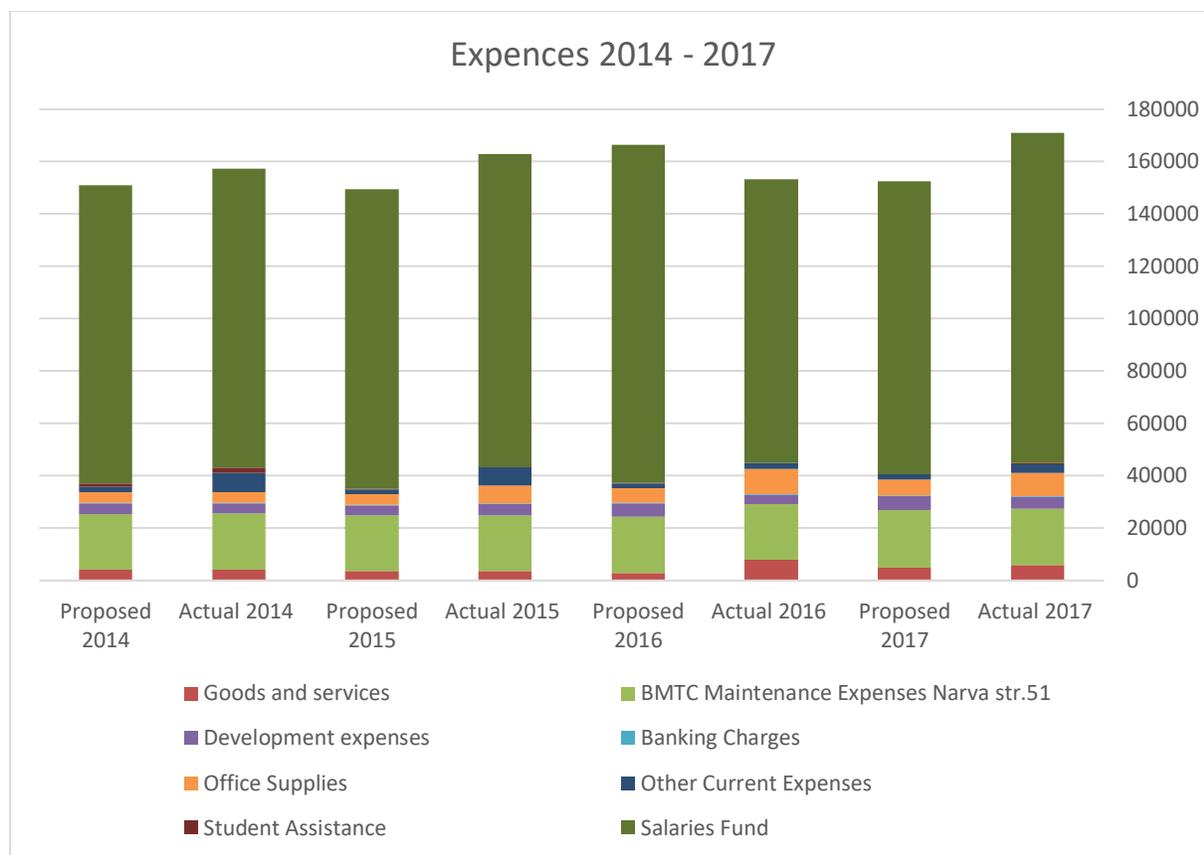
*Table 1. Budget and actual 2014-2017*

**Financial prognosis** is made by Rector's Cabinet. According to the need the representatives from Church Administrative Board may be invited to participate in this process. The financial prognosis and general financial situation is regularly monitored by the BOT. The budget for the upcoming year based on the financial prognosis is put together by Rector's Cabinet and confirmed by the BOT as well as by the Annual Conference of the UMCE. The Administrative

Board of the UMCE is monitoring the administration of the budget bi-monthly, and once a year the BOT deals with budget report and financial analysis in more detail. According to the information about income level some decisions about re-directing budgeted sums are made during the year which explains the difference between budgeted and actual income as well as budgeted and actual expenses.

The UMCE Annual Conference requires from the seminary an annual report including budget report. Seminary budget is officially part of the general budget of the UMCE which is available in Äriregister (<http://www.rik.ee/et/e-ariregister>, Eesti Metodisti Kirik).

Seminary has the Endowment Fund by United Methodist Higher Education Foundation, (P.O. Box 340005 Nashville, TN 37203-0005 Tel (615)340-7385 <http://www.umhef.org>): 083 Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary Endowment. Once a year the seminary receives interests from this fund. On 31.12.2017 there was \$139,925.64 in this endowment. As a security cushion, BMTS has since 2013 a deposit account in LHV Bank in addition to its current account in Swedbank, and interests from there are transferred to the seminary banking account in the end of every year. On 31.12.2017 there was 100 035 euros on the LHV account.



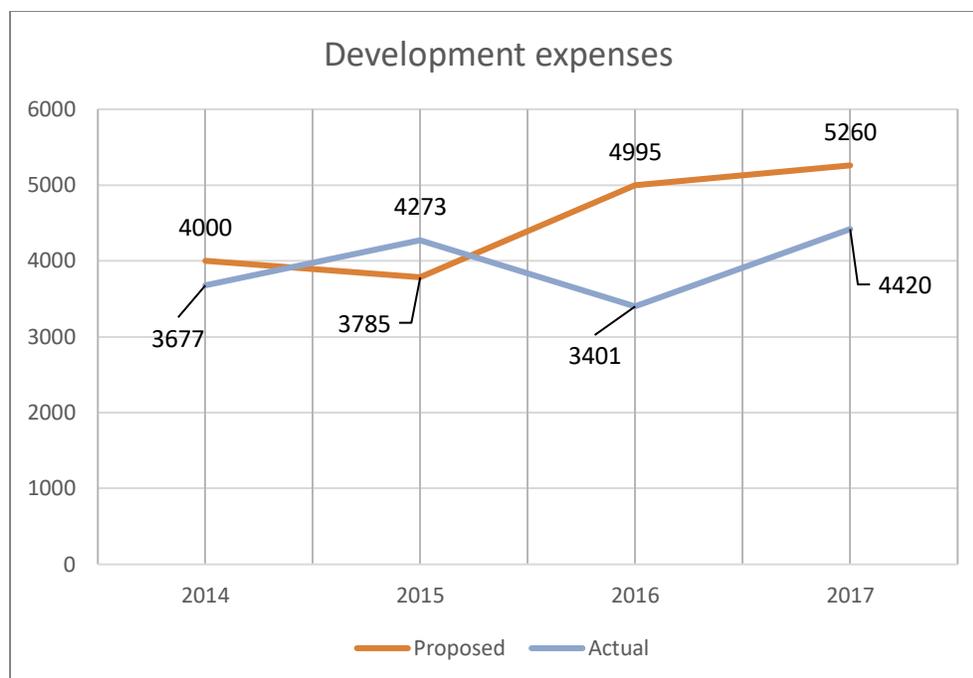
*Chart 8 Expenses 2014-2017 in detail*

In comparison with TIEELC the percentage of salary expenses in BMTS from total expenses is quite similar:

Year	TIEELC*	BMTS
2013	66	76
2014	76	73
2015	71	73
2016	No info	71
2017	No info	74

\*Source: IEELC Institutional Accreditation report p.20

*Table 2 Percentage of salary expenses*



*Chart 9 Budgeted and actual development expenses*

### 1.3.2. Information systems

**Study Information System (SIS):** <http://emkts.ois.ee> Online information system for managing student data. The system is developed by Information Technology Foundation for Education (HITSA) and enables management of all student data, courses, schedule, and registration for courses. All grading and transcript reports are managed with the help of this system.

**Office 365:** <http://www.office.com> The Seminary is using Microsoft Office 365 for a documentation management system, as well as OneDrive and Sharepoint tools for collaboration and archiving of documents. Office 365 accounts with full access to Microsoft applications like Word, Excel, PowerPoint and others are provided to all our students, teachers and staff.

**Moodle:** <http://moodle.emkts.ee> Since 2004 the Seminary is using Learning Management System Moodle for providing e-learning support for courses. Courses include assignments, forums, tests, and online study resources. Moodle is used by teachers for a blended learning approach, adding online digital media to traditional classroom teaching. Moodle provides different tools for giving feedback on study performance. Moodle is integrated with the Seminary's Office 365 for authenticating users and linking documents.

**Lime Survey.** <http://poll.emkts.ee> Web-based server for creating multilingual on-line surveys, collecting responses, creating statistics and exporting results to other applications. The

system is used for collecting feedback from courses as well as creating and implementing research questionnaires.

**Study Resources, EMKTS varamu.** <http://varamu.emkts.ee> Website for Seminary open access study resources, manuals and guides.

**Mailman.** <https://krae.emkts.ee/mailman/listinfo> Electronic mailing lists management server with web-based interface.

**OpenCast.** <http://lehv.bmk.ee:8080> Server with software for lectures video capture, processing, managing, and distribution.

**Internet-based application centre for student card** <http://www.minukool.ee> Seminary has joined the Internet-based student card application centre, [www.minukool.ee](http://www.minukool.ee) which offers students a flexible possibility to apply for a student card that meets their need - either an international ISIC or Estonian student card. Through the same system the faculty can apply for the international teacher's card ITIC.

**Estonian Education Information System (EHIS)** <http://www.ehis.ee> Seminary is forwarding its information about students, faculty, curricula, graduation information etc into national information system EHIS.

**Estonian Information System (EIS)** <https://eis.ekk.edu.ee/> is a platform to account the diploma and diploma supplement forms.

**Library** <http://webriks.ee/emkts/> is located on 142 m<sup>2</sup> and consists of 21 496 items. New books are purchased in consultation with faculty, and sometimes with consultants outside the seminary. A special emphasis has been on books and materials about Methodism, Wesley studies and mission. The library receives books also by donations from private persons or organizations. With the support of CCTEF project money, a new initiative of creating a Mission Resource Centre focusing on materials regarding mission and outreach has been launched recently.

Library in numbers:

<b>Item types</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Books	19431
Periodicals	1646
Manuscripts	102
Diploma papers	205
Audio visual materials	87
Master and doctoral thesis	25

*Table 2. Library Resources*

The basis of purchasing new books and info materials is the seminary curriculum, and four levels of choice have been agreed:

- 1) basic information (allows to introduce main fields of study)
- 2) support for concrete educational activities
- 3) support for scientific research
- 4) materials on Wesleyan and Methodist theology (having the broadest database in Estonia)

The library offers 2 computers for access to electronic materials. The electronic catalogue system Riks is used, and the inter-library web-based catalogue Riksweb is available for students and faculty. In co-operation with ATS the access to their electronic library is available upon request for the class taught by ATS faculty during the semester when the class is taught. In co-operation with Theological Seminary in Moscow we aim to improve access to Russian language theological resources. Our students received orientation how to utilize Tallinn University library databases (located next door) in their diploma paper research.

The idea of a joint theological e-library together with other theological schools has been discussed recently, and some steps are taken to this direction in co-operation with Tartu University librarians.

## **IT and technical support**

The school's contract for using Microsoft Office guarantees the newest versions of Office Pro Plus programs (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Publisher, Access) in all computers of the school. In addition, the teachers are authorized to install programs on up to five devices and use Cloud based OneDrive net resources for saving documents. During their studies all students are guaranteed the use of Office Pro Plus programs and Office Online tools, including OneDrive files for secure saving.

Office 365 provides one centralized authentication Directory. Seminary workers and students can log into all seminary IT systems (SIS, Moodle, Webriks Online Library, Resources Web Varamu, Office 365 Applications, OneDrive, SharePoint Intranet, the plagiarism checking site "Krat" and classroom computers) with their Office 365 profile which secures steady, working, safe and private access to seminary resources. Access to intranet resources is regulated based on user groups.

Students are able to use the computer class with 6 computers. This amount covers the need as most students use their personal laptops and mobile devices for studies and information search. In the computer class and library students and workers can log in with either a guest profile or with a personal seminary profile in order to save files more safely. It is possible to print from a classroom to the seminary office. A portable projector and a white board are available to use in the computers class.

Each administrative worker has been provided a work space with a computer and access to print in the seminary office. Authenticating in computers takes place with Office 365 profile.

There are two common computers in the teachers' room. It is possible to use a guest profile or log on by a personal seminary profile in order to save files safely. A scanner is available for use and it is possible to print with the library printer or in the seminary office.

In the library there is one computer for the librarian and two for the use of students. They can print from the library multifunctional printer/copy machine/scanner. A scanner connected to a computer and the multifunctional scanner/copy machine are available to use.

All Computers in the seminary are equipped with centrally managed ESET NOD antiviruses.

In cooperation with the Estonian Methodist Church it is possible to use backup storage server, mailing list server, and video server. In order to store video processing files the school has its own Network Attached Storage with Raid technology reflection saving device.

Teachers have three laptops for common use as well as a laptop for video recording and editing.

### *1.3.3. Working conditions*

Seminary is working in the building that was originally designed to house a theological seminary besides the church headquarters and the sanctuary. Seminary is using 5 classrooms in different sizes for lectures and group work. 2 classrooms are provided with translation cabins and adequate technical equipment for translation. In other classrooms the translation equipment can be used according to the need. 4 classrooms are equipped with data projectors, and in addition to this seminary has a mobile data projector for flexible use in the chapel and/or other facilities according to the need. The whole building has a good access to WIFI.

Teachers' room has 5 working places equipped with 3 computers.

Students, faculty and staff can during the sessions use the cafeteria, children's facilities and a big foyer. Seminary worship services and devotional times usually take place in the chapel; for the graduation service the main sanctuary is used with all necessary equipment (translation, sound equipment, musical instruments etc).

### *1.3.4. Areas of good practice and areas that need improvement*

Since 2015 Seminary has achieved financial stability, and the sources of financial income are solid and sustainable. This has helped toward developing a more reliable financial prognosis recently. A regular support through the CCTEF (in coming years the prognosis is for 20-22% of the annual budget) has consolidated the financial stability significantly. The Endowment Fund in US, and deposit in LHV Bank add financial security to the seminary. One clear sign of the financial stability was the decision of the BOT to raise all salaries 4% every year during the period of 2016-2018.

Financial stability still does not mean enough finances for development, and thus the Seminary needs to work hard toward ensuring the increase of income, and to broaden its income basis. Also the salaries of the faculty are still lower than median salaries in the higher education Field, and thus require from faculty a real dedication to stay at the Seminary.

Seminary facilities are modern and well equipped; in recent years some additional technical tools like a high quality video camera and a new data projector have been purchased as well as programs for advanced video editing. One of the recent developments is to provide quality video lectures that would support the learning process.

Our APDP (<http://www.emkts.ee/implementation>) is also urging us to design a special area in the teachers' room that could be used for personal conversations and mentoring (6.8).

## **2. Teaching and learning**

### **2.1. Effectiveness of teaching and learning, and formation of the student body**

#### *2.1.1. Educational objectives and their implementation*

The seminary's educational objectives are built upon the mission statement (<http://www.emkts.ee/statement>) and laid out in the curriculum (<https://bit.ly/2MfkXY4>). The objectives and learning outcomes of the curriculum as a whole, as well as those of the individual modules within the curriculum were reviewed and revised during the period 2014-16 as described in section 6.1 below.

Competency of our graduates is measured based on feedback from the primary employers such as the UMCE and ECPC. As the seminary shares a building with the national office of the UMCE, such feedback is regular and thorough and is used to guide development of the study program as well as teaching methods. As the primary employers are represented on the BOT and also teach classes for the seminary, it can be said that they are actively involved both in establishing and implementing the objectives based on their experiences as employers of seminary graduates.

Our ability to implement educational objectives that are relevant to the needs of society, competitive and considered satisfactory by employers can be seen in the fact that 75% of our alumni are professionally applying their theological training. A detailed breakdown of this statistic is found in 2.2.2 below.

The graduation rate at the seminary may be seen as follows: between 2014 and 2018, 53 students graduated from the seminary. Of these, 32 or 60% graduated in the nominal study period (see chart 13 in section 6.5 below).

More detailed information about the student body see 6.5. Student Body.

### *2.1.2. Admission requirements and practices*

In recent years more attention has been paid to the improvement of the student recruitment and application process. We have understood the importance of thorough admission interviews as a tool to find out about the potential student's motivation for theology studies. It is possible to somewhat decrease the number of dropouts by improving the admission process.

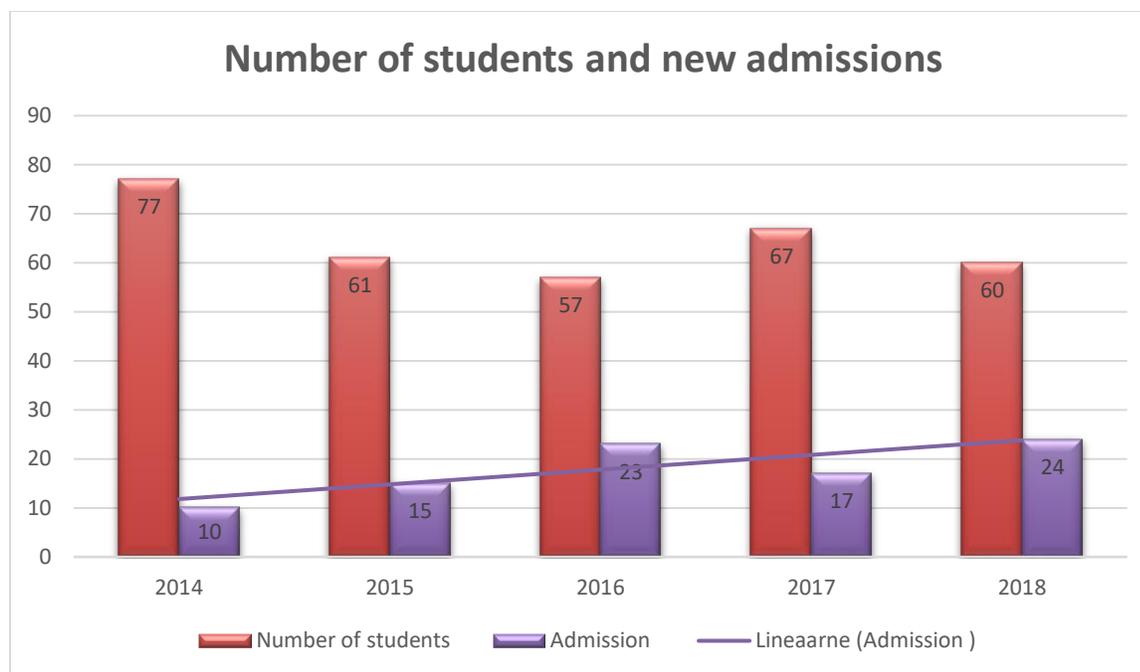
Admission regulations as part of the seminary Academic Regulations (number 2) can be found <http://www.emkts.ee/regulations>

Applicants are required to be members of a Christian congregation and be active in the church as the study process involves practicums in the congregation or in connection with a congregation.

In the application process following documents are required from applicants:

- A completed Seminary application form (PDF fillable file to be sent per e-mail or sent per post to the office) – available at the homepage: <https://www.emkts.ee/index.php/en/admissions/application-forms>
- Two references, one from the pastor and one from either a co-worker, employer or teacher who is not a family member.
- A copy of the applicant's secondary education certificate (preferably PDF). The applicant from Estonia will present the original at the admission interview. The international applicant is obliged to present the originals of the diplomas upon the arrival to Estonia.
- A copy of the applicant's passport (preferably online, PDF)
- A non-refundable application fee of 50 euros is required of all applicants who require a living permit in Estonia for the duration of their studies

Candidates who meet the needed requirements will be considered for an interview with the Admissions Board. International applicants can have the interview via Skype. Test on the biblical knowledge is part of the interview and has an influence on the admission decision.



*Chart 10 Number of students and new admissions.* 2013/14 was the final year in which the seminary operated a 4-year curriculum (see 6.1 below). Completing the move to a 3-year curriculum in 2014/15 resulted in the drastic drop in enrolment between these two years.

### *2.1.3. Study opportunities for people with special needs*

The seminary building is wheelchair accessible. Since August 2016 we have two deaf students who study with the help of a sign language translator. In order to accommodate their needs, we invited a specialist to the faculty meeting in August 2016 who gave the faculty an orientation in deaf people's language use and learning. One blind person has audited a class in pastoral care and counselling and was able to add important insights to the discussion about helping people with special needs.

### *2.1.4. Areas of good practice and improvements*

The experience of having deaf students in the student body and adjusting the study process to their needs has been a good experience for our students as well as for faculty. Our previous experience of working with translation has been helpful, and has encouraged the admission of students with special needs.

Reaching a certain stability in the number of students has been one of the recent successes, and the aim is also to reach some stability in the number of graduates as well as increasing the percentage of graduates who graduate in the nominal study period.

The improvement of the admission process in 2017/18 has been very helpful. It has included the opportunity to fill the application form online, and the form has become more thorough. Applicants now present their essay also as part of the application. More attention is given to the interview process.

Multiple admission inquiries from developing countries, and the responsibility for the students coming from outside the EU has generated huge additional workload to the seminary staff. Better guidelines need to be put in place regarding students coming from outside the EU, including an improved system of background checks.

## **2.2. Curriculum development**

### *2.2.1. Opening and development of curricula*

BMTS is a state accredited private applied higher education institution that issues a diploma in theology and mission. The diploma is equivalent to the bachelor's degree and allows the graduate to continue studies at the master level in Estonia and abroad. About 30% of our graduates have continued or are continuing their studies at the master's level, and several also at the doctoral level.

**The structure** of the curriculum (<https://bit.ly/2MIOBBW>) is based on the classical schema of theology studies that is used by majority of theological schools in Estonia and abroad. Until 2013 we had only one curriculum that was taught in three languages (with simultaneous translation). As the Estonian law was changed and the curriculum could be registered in one language only we had to open formally 3 separate identical curricula (in Estonian, in Russian, and in English) in 2013, and register our students according to their study language.

The current curriculum went through an intensive revision during the period 2014-2017 in order to specify better the learning outcomes as well as establish clearer criteria for grading and giving feedback to students. See 6.1. for a detailed overview of the curriculum revision process.

In the process of curriculum development, the seminary is taking into account general requirements for UMC pastor that are listed in the UMC Book of Discipline §340 (see <http://www.cokesbury.com/forms/DynamicContent.aspx?pageid=920>) as well as skills required by occupational qualifications of pastoral caregiver (05-15102013-07/3k ja 05-15102013-08/3k) and chaplain (05-15102013-05/3k ja 05-15102013-06/3k), confirmed in 2013 by Estonian Qualifications Authority <http://www.kutsekoda.ee/et/kutseregister/kutsestandardid/10491333>). Our rector was involved together with representatives from other theological schools in the preparation of these occupational qualifications guidelines in 2013.

In curriculum development we aim for internal coherence but also for the practicality and relevance for ministry context. Here we take into account not only the expectations of our own denomination, but also other denominations represented among our student body. The ministry needs of different denominations are met in various ways: by dealing with the broader context in classes on church history, interconfessional theology and ecumenism; by offering electives like Lutheran Theology or Basics of Orthodox Culture; by taking into account previous studies in denominational Bible Schools or courses (APEL), by allowing to lead the practicum in their respective congregations or organizations as well as by allowing the wide choice of diploma paper topics, and co-mentoring the diploma paper writing process with mentors from their respective denominations.

The curriculum development process is taking place on two levels. Firstly, at the faculty meetings feedback from faculty and students as well as the situation at the labour market is analysed, and needs, opportunities and ideas for possible changes are discussed and proposed. Secondly, at the academic council the proposal will be further discussed and the decision will be made. Student representatives are included in both levels.

More detailed information on curriculum development see 6.1. Curriculum and Curriculum Development.

In January 2017, Asbury Theological Seminary (USA) approached BMTS to discuss the possibility of developing a joint Master's degree in missions, focusing on church planting. In communication with our owner and primary employer, the Methodist Church in Estonia as well as with Methodist leadership across Europe we see a need for a program of this nature. Our partner, the Estonian Pentecostal Church as well as the Estonian Council of Churches have also

recently raised the need to focus more intentionally in this area. As very few European Seminaries offer a Master's degree in church planting, we feel that the market is right for an English language Master's in this field that would be open to students from across Europe. We are currently working on creating a new curriculum that will be in English.

### *2.2.2. Graduate satisfaction with the quality of learning and teaching*

Brief feedback form is requested each year from graduating students, and the results are discussed at the academic council meeting in fall.

In connection with BMTS 20th anniversary in 2014 a wider internet-based alumni survey was made inquiring about their work experience and continuation of studies. Below is some feedback received from that survey.

According to our collected data 75% of our graduates are applying their theological education in a professional capacity. It has to be mentioned, however, that in Estonia churches are small, and besides pastors there are few employees – lot of ministry is done on a voluntary basis.

Professional employment above includes voluntary church leadership positions in the areas of children's ministry, youth ministry, pastoral caregiving, and diaconal ministry.

The largest number, ca 30% serve as pastors (in the UMCE 80% of pastors are our graduates). An additional 45% of our graduates serve in other fields such as youth ministers (9%), prison chaplains (4%), military chaplains (3%), teachers of religions (4%), small group leaders in the congregations (7%), Christian media workers (4%), Sunday School teachers (4%), diaconal ministry (4%), faculty in theological higher education institutions (4%), in the leadership of Christian organizations (2%). Close to 35% have continued their studies at the master level (mostly in the TIEELC), and ca 5% in doctoral studies.

Currently a more comprehensive alumni survey is in progress in consultation with Laur Lilleoja, a sociologist. Our goal is to renew our contacts and relationships with all alumni and keep them connected with the BMTS. We also noted that some alumni were left out of the previous survey due to language or expired contacts. At the moment 33 survey forms in two languages have been received. Here are the preliminary results:

Overall satisfaction with the seminary: all answered positively giving 7 or above on 10-point scale except one respondent gave 0. While 24 of 33 (73%) gave high satisfaction of 9 or 10

points. On a related question: Would you recommend BMTS to a friend? All agreed while 25 of 33 (76%) gave high remarks of 9 or 10.

Our graduates success on the job market is mixed. 17 of 33 (52%) stated that BMTS education has helped them to find a job. On a related question: Has BMTS helped you to find your role in Christian ministry? The picture is more affirming: 24 of 33 (73%) agreed.

All respondents agreed that faculty was competent. On curriculum and study methods out of 33 alumni 30 found curriculum and methods to be mostly supportive of learning. But 4 out of 22 Estonians and 2 of 11 Russians did not feel well mentored in diploma paper research.

91% found that multi-lingual study was a strength. (surprisingly that percentage was equal among Estonian and Russian respondents) And 55% of Estonian respondents stated that study in multi-language environment has helped them in life. That number was 91% among Russian respondents!

About 30% of respondents have continued their theology studies at Master's level (10 of 33), that is about equal between Estonian and Russian group. 11% of Estonians have participated in BMTS continued education opportunities. This shows opportunity to build in this area.

18% of Estonian respondents and 27% of Russian respondents work either full time or part time in jobs specifically requiring theological education. Equally in both groups 33% state they are currently using seminary education as volunteers.

What needs to change? Many alumni did not feel competent to comment. Mostly alumni suggested improving internships and practical study opportunities and stronger involvement in ministry and mission work. Several alumni suggested adding a Master's program. Russian speakers wanted to see more team building and stronger spiritual formation.

### *2.2.3. Areas of good practice and improvement*

One of the strengths of the revision of the curriculum is the growing attention to ministry needs, mapping these needs, and comparing them with our learning outcomes as well as strengthening the ties with the Church as our main employer. However, we need to maintain a certain balance here as reflection and practice are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and the role of education should rather be leading people to reflect about their practice so that their knowledge and skills could create a positive synergism.

Another positive trend is the growing inclusion of student representatives into the discussions about the curriculum.

We should involve our graduates more into the life of the seminary, including curriculum development. The weakness of our alumni work is reflected also in our APDP (6.3.: <http://www.emkts.ee/implementation>).

One thing apparent from the survey is the need to review practicums and to provide more opportunities for practical ministry and to build continuing education opportunities so to help graduates to enter the job market.

Some things to ask in the alumni survey in the future is about the average time to employment. For example, how many months or years did it take from graduation to find full time employment. Also, the current survey does not reveal who may not be employed due to the fact that they are currently continuing their studies.

### **2.3. Student academic progress and student assessment**

#### *2.3.1. Monitoring and supporting students' academic progress*

The size of BMTS student body makes it possible to deal with students almost individually as we know them all by name and face. However, the use of SIS since spring 2015 has greatly improved the academic monitoring situation for students themselves as well as for the seminary. Formally, the academic dean and registrar are dealing with monitoring and supporting of students' academic progress. In individual monitoring we focus specifically on third year students as they move towards graduation and offer them individual support if needed. Quite often the diploma paper mentor becomes also an academic mentor helping the student to keep track with his/her studies.

See also 2.4.2. Career counselling, spiritual guidance and mentoring

Our students belong to small groups called fellowship groups that meet in every study session. The group members act as a support group for each other sharing their concerns and praying for each other. See more about fellowship groups in 6.5.

### *2.3.2. Student assessment*

Student assessment is based on criteria proceeding from learning outcomes. All syllabi list the expected learning outcomes, and the grading measures how well these goals were achieved. The level of acquiring the expected learning outcomes can be assessed in different ways: exams, tests, defence of thesis, group discussions, projects etc. The forms of assessing the knowledge in a given class is stated in the syllabus. The grades will be recorded in the SIS.

BMTS is using both differentiated assessment ("exam") and non-differentiated assessment ("pass/fail"). BMTS is using the grading scale A-E, and the failure in passing the class is marked with F.

In recent years the criteria for assessment in every syllabus have been specified by respective faculty, and we have repeatedly discussed the assessment (grading) as well as giving rating-free feedback to student papers at the academic council meetings together with student representatives. BMTS requires from faculty that the requirements for passing the class as well as assessment criteria should be made known in the beginning of each class.

The methods for assessment can be chosen by each faculty according to the specifics of their class. They use various methods (extensive oral examinations, tests on paper or online, written examinations, essays, book reflections, minor research projects etc). Most faculty are using several different methods that will lead to a final grade.

### *2.3.3. Account of prior learning and work experience*

Accounting of prior learning and work experience (APEL) is used according to the BMTS APEL regulations <http://www.emkts.ee/apel> . All applications are considered individually by the APEL committee. Applications are processed in SIS. Our experience shows that APEL is a good opportunity to integrate the previous knowledge, and to motivate people for lifelong learning.

The assessment of applications is done individually by the committee. Our experience has shown that APEL enables students to integrate their previous knowledge into current studies and is raising the learning motivation. APEL allows also to take classes in other theological institutions in Estonia and abroad, and to integrate them creatively into the body of theological knowledge.

#### *2.3.4. Areas of good practices and need for improvement*

The intensive work with developing the current curriculum is certainly one of our strengths, and we see from the feedback of students that they have experienced the improvement. Another positive development is the discussion about a joint master program with Asbury Theological Seminary, and we hope to reach this goal within the near future.

Students have expressed their expectations for more substantive feedback, especially about research projects and extensive course papers. As our APDP is emphasizing the need to focus on the formative aspect of feedback (6.4), and share these experiences at the academic council level, we are working towards better communication with students.

### **2.4. Support processes for learning**

#### *2.4.1. Organization of studies*

BMTS is operating in 4-day study sessions (from Wednesday to Saturday), 11 sessions a year. These are intensive days full of lectures. Per 1 ECTS we offer 6 hours in-class work (lectures or seminars) and expect from the student 20 hours independent work. We expect our students to participate in lectures at least 75% of time in order to pass the class.

See also Academic regulations <http://www.emkts.ee/regulations>

More detailed information about the study process see 6.3. Study process.

#### *2.4.2. Career counselling, spiritual guidance and mentoring*

Support services for students are functioning both formally and informally. In a small school, most students dare to approach faculty and staff informally with their questions and concerns; in a church-related school the normal practice is also praying for each other's needs either at the prayer meetings or individually.

Formally, we offer our students (see <https://www.emkts.ee/counseling>)

- Psychological counselling - it is usually given by the teacher of pastoral care, with the goal of supporting students in their studies as well as in personal life issues
- Spiritual guidance which is more faith-based, and takes predominantly place in small fellowship groups. If necessary, contact with a pastor can be arranged.

- Academic counselling by academic dean and registrar - includes also APEL guidance, and translation help for Russian speaking students using SIS which is available only in Estonian and English
- Academic mentoring regarding practicums and diploma papers – here we use appointed mentors
- Career counselling – it happens more generally during the annual "Kuum päev" where students have opportunity to learn about different Christian and charitable organizations, chaplaincy work in different contexts, community projects etc. Speakers are often themselves seminary graduates. But the psychological counselling and academic mentoring, especially in the framework of practicums, serves very often implicitly the same goal.

Career counselling in the church framework is often done through official church channels (in the Estonian UMC, it is the Board of Ordained Ministries that deals with ordination candidates; other churches have their own structures for students who feel the call to ordained ministry).

#### *2.4.3. International mobility*

International student exchange is predominantly taking place in the framework of MTSE where a taskforce has recently been set up to develop the contacts between schools. In spring 2015 one student from Reutlingen School of Theology attended classes in our seminary. In spring 2017 four BMTS students used the opportunity for short-term exchange with Reutlingen School of Theology in Germany, and Nazarene Theological College in Great Britain. These short time exchange trips have been supported and financed by The Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership (MGEFLD – [www.mgefld.wix.com/mgefld-europe](http://www.mgefld.wix.com/mgefld-europe)).

As many of our students are so-called “second carrier people”, already having family and working, the interest for international exchange is not too big. Another issue is the language as we have learned that people coming to study in their middle age are not very strong in foreign languages, and thus not confident enough to go for studies abroad. We are mostly encouraging short time exchanges, and working toward better information exchange regarding exchange opportunities with our sister schools in Europe. In August 2018 a network called Methodist-Related Theological Schools (MTSE) has invited seminary leaders across Europe to meet in London, and one of the topics at this meeting is student exchange.

#### *2.4.4. Feedback from students*

We have two levels of feedback: institutional and course level feedback.

On the first level our most recent data comes from Kaire Lotamois' diploma paper from spring 2018. She surveyed the seminary reputation involving an internal focus group of 44 and in external focus group of 107. The internal focus group of 44 included 31 current BMTS students 18 Estonian and 13 Russian-speaking. English track students were not surveyed because their small numbers would not allow for much analysis or anonymity.

94% of respondents were found to possess positive or mostly positive emotions associated with BMTS. 100% either trusted or mostly trusted BMTS.

92% found that BMTS gives quality education. 84% found BMTS education to be practical or mostly practical. 15% mostly disagreed. Especially Russian-speakers found that BMTS is leaning too academic and wanted more hands-on practical application to connect them better with the needs of churches and their future job market.

BMTS education was thought to be contemporary. 88% agreed or mostly agreed while Estonians were more positive, but some Russian speakers disagreed. Students wished for more practicums outside the classroom and computer programs to aid their research. Some said that theology is not a contemporary, subject by definition.

Students felt BMTS education and tuition rates were well balanced. 85% agreed or mostly agreed, 15% disagreed. Most found the tuition to be too low. However, some found it is still high for students coming from Ukraine.

BMTS fulfilled promises. 86% agreed or mostly agreed. Comments revealed need for more group learning and research opportunities were promised and faster grade feedback.

BMTS is the best place in Estonia to study theology. 89% agreed or mostly agreed.

It is encouraging that 98% found that BMTS is responsive or mostly responsive to students' needs. Some viewed that from school's perspective others from student's perspective. Overall it was noted that students receive personal attention, their questions receive answers although sometimes not as fast as they like. Students noted cultural inclusiveness. Sometimes need to be more considerate in ministry needs. Changes in courses are sometimes implemented too late.

BMTS is necessary among theological schools. 100% agreed or mostly agreed.

BMTS has clear vision. 82% agreed or mostly agreed, 15% mostly disagreed, 3% disagreed.

Main reason (13 out of 16 written comments left) had to do with poor communication.

On course level feedback there have been the following practices.

Until 2015 students filled the feedback surveys on paper at the end of each class which were collected by the dean and results were shared with the lecturer. Since fall 2016 the feedback is given online, and the survey is more regular, more extensive and more informative.

In the context of our small seminary a lot of informal feedback is also coming from face to face conversations with students as well as from remarks students make in the hallways and at the coffee table. Student feedback has been an important factor in decision making about lecturers, especially in choosing visiting lecturers.

#### *2.4.5. Areas of good practices and improvement*

One good practice is the annual "Kuum päev" addressing the whole student body which has been developed into a career counselling event, and at the same time is giving especially first year students some ideas about possible practicum bases for their last practicum (Mission practicum).

Another positive development is bringing the APEL applications to the SIS, and since fall 2017 can students themselves fill the APEL application online (<http://www.emkts.ee/apel>).

In fall 2016 we introduced the idea of group mentoring based on existing fellowship groups, but it has not been successful, and we are currently looking for other ways to improve the mentoring at the seminary. However, a lot of informal mentoring is happening on different ways.

BMTS is well trusted by students and alumni. Survey and informal feedback reveals that BMTS cares about students' academic and personal needs and opinion and seeks to be a responsive institution. Students of other languages do not feel left out academically. They wish to be more involved in practical ways and socially.

### **3. Research, development and/or other creative activity**

#### **3.1. RDC effectiveness and connectedness to church and society**

As an applied higher education institution the seminary has been searching its research focus in a more practical area in order to serve the Church (not only the UMC), and society in the best way. We are in dialogue with our own denomination in order to define certain ministry areas that would benefit from deeper theological support as well from as historical or sociological research. Our APDP (<http://www.emkts.ee/implementation>) is urging us to "advance the dialogue with the church (UMCE) in order to identify and define research areas of common interest" (6.9.1), and "initiate research topics about the history of UMCE, and mentoring students in their research" (6.5). As one step in this process of defining research areas of common interest, in March 2018 seminary rector Meeli Tankler was invited to research and present a paper on Biblical Understanding on Christian Marriage for UMCE pastors' gathering.

Our APDP also calls for "active participation in discussions regarding church and society, initiated by ECC and EEA, from the theological perspective" (6.5). As an example of that BMTS was actively involved together with other Estonian theological schools in planning and presenting a conference "Terra Mariana – with the knowledge of history from yesterday to tomorrow" in fall 2015, initiated by ECC. This conference centred on the results of the nationwide sociological research "About life, faith and faith life" conducted at the initiative of ECC in 2015 where trends and changes in Estonian population's attitudes about spiritual matters and religion were researched and compared to the 2010 research results. The conference picked up several topics based on the results of this research and developed them further. As a continuation of the research and the conference a book "Kuhu lähed, Maarjamaa" (Where are you Going, Terra Mariana?) was published in 2016 where BMTS faculty Ingmar Kurg and Üllas Tankler wrote two chapters about mission opportunities in the context of people's spiritual search and interests. These two chapters have been a basic reading material for discussions about church's future vision at numerous gatherings of pastors from different denominations all over Estonia (including UMCE pastors' continuous study day in fall 2017). The similar sociological research will be repeated in 2020, and representatives from BMTS are part of the planning group that has already met in fall 2017.

These are some examples of the research focus suited best to BMTS – to be involved in something that has practical implementation church-wide, inter-denominationally, and on the broader society.

### 3.2. RDC resources and support processes

BMTS faculty is regularly engaged in improving their qualifications and participates in seminars, conferences, and trainings in Estonia and abroad.

BMTS participates annually in **joint trainings of theological schools** sponsored by Estonian Ministry of Interior. The topics of these trainings are decided jointly by theological schools, and the last one in October 2017 was “Best practices in academic writing and mentoring.” Even as the main focus was on mentoring students the training also included discussions about joint research opportunities and faculty-student cooperation in research and article-writing. Nine BMTS faculty participated.

BMTS has only a modest budget line for faculty development. In 2017 the amount allocated was 3000 euros, and it has gradually grown in recent years. This is usually just enough to fund local conference attendance fees, and we encourage faculty to apply for support as they attend conferences in their field. BMTS faculty and staff attended jointly a training seminar on e-learning via Tartu University in winter 2018.

However, BMTS has **a strong network of international connections** that allows our faculty to participate internationally in conferences, seminars and research opportunities related to their field of study that often come with housing and/or travel scholarships (see <https://bit.ly/2P0nNi9>) This is helpful as there are not too many specific seminars in Estonia, and international experiences as well as connections are always encouraging and fruitful.

Some examples:

In November 2016 Meeli Tankler was invited to lead a workshop about developing a better connection between the church and the seminary at the **theological conference "The Impact of Theological Education,"** organized by International Consultation of Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) in Antalya, Turkey.

In June 2017 Külli Tõniste was selected for a 4-week **Wesley Summer Seminar** at Asbury Theological Seminary where she researched and presented a lecture entitled *John Wesley's Eschatology*.

In November 2017 Üllas Tankler was invited by **Methodist and Waldensian Church in Italy** to give a lecture at University of Rome on *Mission Partnership*.

Recently Douglas Childress' proposal was approved for 2-weeks of research at Manchester **Wesley Studies Centre** in August 2018 where he will also have access to the famous John Ryland's library housing some first editions of John Wesley's works.

We value our connections with other Estonian churches and theological schools. Our faculty is regularly teaching at **Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Institute of Theology** (Meeli Tankler) as well as **Estonian Christian Pentecostal Bible College** (Külli Tõniste).

BMTS seeks creative ways to mentor **new and potential faculty**. We attempt to match their personal interests with the prospective needs of the seminary for mutual benefit. In 2016-2018 Taavet Taimla and Anna Seifullina have taught several classes, and the feedback from students has been very positive as they bring with them some new teaching methods and lot of energy. We purposefully involve new faculty also in faculty meetings and different seminary activities to educate them on seminary life and help them to become part of the team.

**Mission and Methodism:** BMTS particularly focuses its research on Mission and Methodism. Our APDP (<http://www.emkts.ee/implementation>) highlights various projects that produce, translate or collect mission and/or Methodist related materials (6.5). Steps are taken to establish a **Mission Resource Centre** in addition to our seminary library to support our current curriculum and bring in some resources for our future joint Master's Degree with ATS. The project leader is Dr Ullas Tankler is working internationally on supervising mission projects and missionaries in Europe and Eurasia.

By the initiative of BMTS various books have recently being **translated** and **published**:

- In 2017 Toomas Pajusoo (seminary graduate) *Eesti ristikangelasi* was translated into Russian by Elena Topolja (long-time faculty).
- In 2018 John Wesley *52 Standard Sermons* were published in Estonian, translated by Priit Tamm (past seminary faculty) and supervised by Külli Tõniste

- Ken Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation* is currently being translated into Estonian (Priit Tamm) to be used as a study book
- Stephen Neill *A History of Christian Mission* is currently being translated into Estonian (Meeli Tankler) to be used as a study book

Through the CCTEF additional financial support was received in 2018 for translating and/or publishing necessary study books in Estonian and Russian.

Rector Meeli Tankler is part of the collegium to publish *Nordic Perspectives on Methodism*. The next edition is planned for 2019 and our faculty will continue to contribute as it has in the past (2015 M. Tankler, *The Search for Methodist Identity in Baltic Countries*, 2016 U. Tankler, *Migration – Challenges and Opportunities that Call for a Wesleyan Response*)

Since spring 2017 we are exploring a **joint master's degree program with Asbury Theological Seminary** in missions with a focus on church planting. This would open up new avenues for research at BMTS as well as support our infrastructure. We are hoping to launch the program in fall 2019.

The basis for this idea is the fact that we already employ faculty that are not only experts in Methodism and mission but also active in that field in Estonia and beyond. Üllas Tankler and Meeli Tankler have doctoral degrees and have contributed and published internationally on Methodism and mission. Üllas Tankler has also specifically researched the topic of mission partnership in different cultural contexts and given lectures and workshops internationally (from Kazakhstan to South Africa) as well as written articles on this topic. Douglas Childress, MDiv is currently researching Early Methodist preaching at Wesley Research Center in Manchester England and is putting together his PhD proposal. Taavet Taimla concluded his master's studies at Asbury this year and is interested in becoming a missiologist, and Kulli Toniste, PhD presented recently on Wesley's eschatology at Wesley Summer Seminar at Asbury and contributed to the publishing of *Wesley's 52 Standard Sermons* in Estonian language.

BMTS faculty work closely with the Methodist District Superintendent to improve the **clergy continuing education curriculum** (APDP 6.6) (<http://www.emkts.ee/implementation>). Within the framework of the clergy continuing education BMTS is pursuing a 2-year project *What Would Wesley Preach* (WWWP) jointly with the Estonian Methodist Church. The goal is to improve the state of preaching in our churches as well as improve homiletics resources in our

seminary library, and also to introduce Wesley's Standard Sermons (recently published in Estonian). All pastors are interviewed, data collected, and two training weekends organized in 2018 and 2019. The project got funding through CCTEF.

### *3.2.3. Areas of good practices and need for improvement*

BMTS faculty is keeping up to date in their fields of study and keeps improving their teaching and mentoring skills. The faculty research topics are well aligned with the courses they are teaching, and their research is raising the quality of our curriculum. Some faculty are contributing internationally under BMTS' name. BMTS international connections have improved and our faculty is being invited to continue in more venues than ever before. We see how our connections and relationships abroad provide faculty with funded research opportunities and travel scholarships and how in turn, our participation abroad strengthens our international relationships and partnerships. It is a circle that keeps producing positive benefits for our school.

While it may be unrealistic that *all* our faculty will be contributing internationally, we expect that all faculty improve their skills of teaching and attend professional events in Estonia and apply their skills and talents in service of their community. Systems are in place to keep track of faculty continuing education activities, presentations and community service.

Currently the faculty is not funded for their publications. It is being discussed whether it would be a wise investment and would motivate the faculty to publish more and at higher levels if funding were provided.

## **3.3. Student research supervision**

While BMTS is not a research university we value research in the areas that help strengthen churches and allow students to become more informed in a certain area of practical ministry.

### *3.3.1. Mentoring students in research*

In spring 2016 we felt the need to pay more attention to our diploma paper process with the goal of producing more relevant and higher quality diploma papers. We felt our students were confused and needed more guidance. Since that time, the support for the whole process has been planned in more detail, and the feedback from 2018 graduates is very positive and the quality of papers was higher this year.

We believe that research skills are needed in every area of life and our graduates need to become confident self-learners. Since we offer practical higher education and the curriculum is called Theology and Mission, we are particularly interested in seeing our graduating students practically engaging in mission and ministry.

The Diploma Paper (DIT302) syllabus specifically sets a goal to do research in the area of **Christian theology, life and service**, including:

- Biblical exegesis
- Theology,
- Church history,
- Practical theology,
- Missions,
- Ministry in local churches.

In spring 2017 we redesigned and clarified the diploma paper mentoring process in order to achieve two goals: 1) better support for students during the **research and writing process** and 2) to ensure that research topic is **practical** and **relevant** for the church. Here are a few steps we implemented under each goal:

1) To better support students during the research and writing, we provide **consultations** and **proseminars**, giving support from the beginning to the end of research process. In 2017 we collaborated with the Tallinn University Library reference staff to orient students in **library and online databases** and we provided training in **empirical research methods** and **academic writing**. In October 2017 a number of BMTS faculty participated in a joint **faculty training** with other Estonian theological schools (KUS and UI) on the subject of “Best Practices in Academic Writing and Mentoring” where we discussed best practices and shared our common concerns while mentoring research projects. The Diploma paper is a challenge that delays graduation for some students. Thus, we are working on getting more **feedback** from graduates about their diploma paper writing experience to better assess and improve our support systems and select the right mentors.

2) To ensure that the students choose **topics that meet the criteria** we have added a **formal approval process** with a **committee** consisting of faculty in Bible, Theology, History and

Ministry. This ensures that research would be useful for the church and that experienced mentors are available to guide the students.

### 3.3.2. Student research areas

TOPIC	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	<b>Total</b>
Biblical exegesis	1	2	1	0	0	<b>4</b>
Theology	1	0	3	1	1	<b>6</b>
Church history	2	1	0	0	1	<b>4</b>
Practical theology	4	1	3	1	3	<b>12</b>
Missions & Evangelism	3	0	4	2	1	<b>10</b>
Ministry in local churches	2	1	0	1	3	<b>7</b>
Other	1	1	3	0	0	<b>5</b>

*Table 7. Diploma papers from 2013-2017 according to the subject categories*

Practical theology, missions, and ministry are the most prominent topics. These subjects are also strongly represented in our curriculum. There has been less interest in biblical exegesis and church history. However, sometimes biblical exegesis or historical insights are a significant part of a more practical ministry paper. The category “other” contains papers relating to church and society, theology and popular culture, psychology, and social work. These papers are no less important for the church, but they simply do not fit neatly under any of the given categories. (For example, Liina Alla, *Usulisest väärkohtlemisest taastumine tänapäeva Eestis* (Recovery from spiritual abuse in Estonia today) is practical and necessary work as is also Kristjan Kalamägi, *Lootuse Küla rehabilitatsioonikeskuse ühiskonnas ja selle programmi efektiivsus* (Village of Hope rehabilitation centre and its effectiveness)).

Some topics cross disciplines. Interest in local church history is actually strong as it often is the backdrop or chapter in papers focusing on practical theology, mission, and development.

As a Methodist seminary we encourage research of Methodist church and Methodist/Wesleyan theology (although it is not required as many of our students are from other church backgrounds).

In 2013-2017 about 10% of diploma papers had explicitly Wesleyan/Methodist focus:

	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	Total
Explicitly focus on Methodism	1/14	1/6	1/14	2/5	0/9	5 of 48 = <b>over 10%</b> diploma papers

**2017.** Johanna-Margret Ojaots, *Eksortsism metodistlikus praktikas (Exorcism in Methodist Practice)*.

**2016.** Pille Mägila, *Naiste osalus ühiskonnas ja Metodisti Kiriku tegevuses aastatel 1920–1940 (Role of Women in the Estonian Methodist Church in 1920–1940)*.

**2015.** Rares Calugar, *The Methodist Movement in the Anglican Church and Lord's Army Movement in the Romanian Orthodox Church, Similarities and Parallels*.

**2014.** Tom Riska, *Establishment and Expansion of the Church: Comparing Roland Allen's Missionary Method and the Methodist Mission to Finland in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century*.

**2014.** Galina Kravtshuk, *Вклад духовных служителей в формировании Эстонской Methodistской Церкви города Тапа (The Contribution of Spiritual Ministers in the Formation of the Estonian Methodist Church of Tapa)*.

We are excited that in the 2018 diploma papers we see a strong connection between theory and praxis. For example, a Pentecostal Church leader Alur Ounpuu researched theological education in Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church to see the need for formal training among pastors to raise the effectiveness of current and future ministers. This information will help us in turn to shape our curriculum.

Another student, Kaire Lotamois researched seminary reputation inside and outside focus groups as well as seminary's current marketing practices and proposed a marketing plan. Her work will help BMTS to reach out to non-denominational potential students, improve BMTS brand and build stronger relationships.

Another Pentecostal church leader, Markko Pold studied the church planting movement of the Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church in 1990s, and compared it with the current church planting efforts. In order to gain insight for current church planting and development activities he questioned church planters back then about what they would do differently today.

We believe that our more intentional diploma paper guidance process provides a more rewarding research experience for our students and useful information for our churches. In recent years we have added mentors for Russian-speaking research, but even more Russian-language specialists are needed to mentor Russian-speaking students. Our Russian-speaking students provide important insight into the diversity of Christian communities in Estonia and beyond.

### *3.3.3. Recognizing and avoiding plagiarism*

The Academic Writing course in the very beginning of the first year teaches students to use sources correctly and avoid plagiarism. We have learned that the understanding of plagiarism is different in different school systems and countries, and thus the detected cases are dealt with individually. The seminary's rule against plagiarism is published on our web page (<http://www.emkts.ee/papers>). Teachers who detect plagiarism are instructed to notify the dean in writing. Students that receive repeated warnings will be dealt with more severely.

The seminary is in process of joining two plagiarism detection systems KRATT and URKUND in order to screen for plagiarism.

### *3.3.4. Areas of good practices and improvement*

We improved the diploma paper mentoring process by defining the objectives and criteria more clearly, by rewriting guidelines, by setting schedules and deadlines for several different stages of research, by orienting students in library and online research and by providing committee support and feedback in choice of topic and structuring their thesis, not just at the final stages of defence. We consider it a good practice as we responded to the students who communicated that they needed more specific support in their diploma paper process. We listened to them, we brought in our insights as a faculty, and the results have greatly improved the quality of diploma papers as well as student satisfaction with the whole process. As a result, we see papers that have practical strategic purpose for the churches in Estonia. We see students who see the link between theory and praxis. We still need a better style manual and more Russian-speaking mentors and second readers.

## **4. Service to Society**

### **4.1. Popularization of BMTS activities and involvement in social development**

BMTS has a tradition to organize every spring an Open House event in one or two days, sometimes introducing a visiting professor on a specific topic (ex. Dr. Ray Baker from Sweden, lecturing on C.S. Lewis in 2015), and sometimes inviting our own faculty to focus on a specific topic (in 2016, focusing on eschatology) or simply opening seminary session for public.

The regular means of giving public information about the seminary are interviews in Christian radio (Pereraadio and Raadio 7) twice a year, usually before the annual open house event in spring and for recruiting of new students in August. Estonian National Broadcast has in recent years offered BMTS time in their weekly program "Kirikuelu" (Church Life) once or twice a year. Press releases about seminary news will be sent to radio stations, and additional interviews take place depending of the weight of the news.

In spring 2017 a special video presentation was put together by seminary alumni with the purpose of recruiting new students, and it was broadcasted in TV7 as well as shown in several UMC local congregations and at the UMCE Annual Conference.

In cooperation with Youth Department of Estonian Council of Churches, BMTS has been represented at the national youth information event "Teeviit" (Signpost) where most higher education institutions promote their study courses and recruit potential students.

Once a year, in May, a so-called Seminary Sunday is celebrated in all UMCE congregations, and on that occasion a newsletter is sent out as well as information about admissions.

Rector sends out a monthly newsletter in Estonian, Russian and English by e-mail to seminary friends. Seminary has a web-page, and a Facebook page has been developed recently.

At the **denominational level**, our faculty is actively involved in UMC on European, Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference (NEECC) as well as the national level:

- Meeli Tankler and Üllas Tankler are members of European Methodist Council that meets annually and brings together Wesleyan and Methodist churches all over Europe
- Seminary rector Meeli Tankler was invited to represent Estonia at the International consultation on religious freedom, led by Methodist Church in Britain, in March 2017
- Seminary rector Meeli Tankler is member of the NEECC Council that meets twice a year to discuss church life in the region, and plan joint events. She is a member of the continuous education working group.
- Seminary is onboard in organizing international Schools of Congregational Development at the NEECC level in every 4 year, and seminary faculty is giving their input at these events
- Seminary faculty participate in UMCE committees that organize Christian summer conference, youth camps, seminars, and various mission events
- Seminary faculty give lectures, teach bible lessons, go to mission trips, and serve in various capacities in local UMC congregations as well as at the national church level
- UMCE journal Koduteel is regularly publishing seminary news as well as articles and sermons written by seminary faculty and alumni
- Seminary is organizing UMCE clergy continuing education and one-year study course for laity, and giving most of the study course lectures

At the **interdenominational level**, Seminary rector Meeli Tankler is part of the Educational round table of the Estonian Council of Churches and has been involved in organizing annual

nation-wide educational conferences that are open to Christian as well as secular educators (for example April 2016 "Virtues and Values," March 2017 "What is a Good Education?").

Seminary is also closely connected with Estonian Bible Society (EBS): our faculty Rein Laaneser is a board member of EBS, and seminary alumni Küllike Evertov and Ergo Naab are both project coordinators in EBS. At the Bible exhibition opening in Pärnu UMC in January 2018, Meeli Tankler gave one of the introductory lectures. Mark Nelson is on the editorial board of the bi-annual missions magazine "Hõimurahvaste Aeg" that is a joint project of EBS, EEA and the Lutheran Mission Centre.

Seminary has signed a MOU with Estonian Evangelical Alliance (EEA), and seminary faculty are active members of EEA committees (theology committee and mission committee), giving their input in organizing events and developing theological framework for EEA ministry. BMTS academic dean Mark Nelson helped to found and was chair of the EEA mission committee from 2004-2017. In this role he was instrumental in organizing short mission trips into Finno-Ugric people groups in Russia where many seminary faculty and students have participated. Mark Nelson also served on the board of the Evangelical Alliance from 2013-2017. In 2018 Mark Nelson's position with EEA was handed over to BMTS graduate Kaire Lotamõis.

#### **4.2. In-service training and other educational activities for the general public**

BMTS is offering short courses on practical topics in local congregations outside Tallinn. In recent years, several UMCE congregations have invited seminary faculty to lead one-day seminars or participate in locally organized study events that are open to people outside the congregation, and often advertised in the local media. Some examples: seminar on pastoral care in Reeküla UMC in January 2013; study day in Pärnu UMC in 2014 (different topics), seminar on worship in Reeküla UMC in 2016, Bible study program in Viitka UMC in 2016 etc.

Classes offered as electives are usually open for auditors and advertised as such. Some recent examples that have drawn in students from outside the seminary are Communicating the Christian Message in Public (June 2017, in cooperation with The Upper Room publications), and Church Planting (2017/18, in cooperation with EEA).

For UMC volunteers some classes are offered for auditing on reduced prices or free of charge. Thus in 2013 several Childrens' ministry volunteers audited the Inductive Bible Study

introductory course; in 2017 several young people who work with troubled youth audited the introductory course on pastoral care and counselling.

### **4.3. Other public-oriented activities**

As a church owned school we value and encourage our faculty involvement in church and community life. BMTS faculty has been participating in Estonian National Broadcast Vikerraadio program offering weekly morning devotions (Üllas Tankler in January 2016, Meeli Tankler in April 2016 and January 2017, Rein Laaneser in 2017).

When Estonian National Television initiated a program „Tähendamisi“ (Meaning-wise) in 2017, connected to Reformation 500, BMTS rector Meeli Tankler was invited to participate in 3 episodes offering personal reflections on Martin Luther quotes.

In cooperation with EEA mission committee led by BMTS graduate, a Christian art exhibition was organized in BMTS building in February 2018 where Estonian artists themselves commented on their artwork at the opening night.

Being part of the UMC in Estonia, seminary faculty and staff as well as students are involved in preparation and management of various churchwide events which are open to broader public such as annual Churches Night in several cities across Estonia, or Wesley Memorial Day in Paide in May 2018.

### **4.4. Areas of good practices and improvements**

Seminary is well visible at the UMCE level as faculty is actively involved in their respective churches, they are writing articles to the denominational journal “Koduteel”, and participating in planning and organizing church-wide events. We have offered continuous education courses that are open for public but these events should be better promoted.

Communication to other denominations as well as to the society could be better – although the channels of communication we have used so far (Christian radio, seminary homepage, Facebook) seem to be preferred channels by all according to the recent research connected to the diploma paper of one of the graduates Kaire Lotamõis in 2018.

Some ideas offered in this diploma paper for better communication and community involvement could certainly be used in the future: being involved in charity, organize blood donation day at

the seminary, organize concerts, participate in various community activities etc. In order to realize these ideas the students should take more initiative, and we do hope that it will happen. Seminary needs to involve and organize its alumni more as they are our representatives and best advocates in society.

## **5. Summary and plan for further action**

The 2018/19 school year marks a transition in seminary's leadership. The incoming rector's primary goal is to make a smooth transition, maintain good working relationships with faculty and staff, and have good communication. We are beginning the year with staff retreat to review our vision.

BMTS celebrates its 25th anniversary next year. In connection to this big birthday we will shape our vision and mission and communicate this to the public. In other words, improve the telling of our story, upgrade our website, and produce some marketing tools for this year.

BMTS has a priority to reconnect with our alumni. We will develop a regular and more personal communication with our alumni. Part of this undertaking involves having a reunion to celebrate 25 years in theological education at the BMTS and the 235 BMTS graduates and feature their success. We have recruited volunteers to help.

What's more, BMTS desires to build stronger partnerships with the UMC in Estonia. We hope this would lead to increased giving to the seminary on Seminary Sundays. Former Superintendent Taavi Hollman will join the BMTS team part time as pro-rector . We believe this close link with UMC leadership will help us to deepen our partnership. We continue to dialogue with the UMC on current needs in ministerial preparation and research.

Further, we will fundraise for seminary's endowment and development. We hope to budget and use the development funds for upgrades including physical environment and library infrastructure to make space for collaborative learning and team building that our students crave. We will continue to recruit new faculty and develop the existing faculty. We strive to pay a more competitive wage. We already provide a great work environment.

Just as we worked systematically and collaboratively to improve the diploma paper research process, we need to reimagine our spiritual formation program and our practicums to better mentor students in the process of personal growth and in finding their place in ministry.

We will continue to earn our students' trust and give quality undergraduate higher education that is also practical. We will continue to work toward a joint Master's Degree with Asbury Theological Seminary as long as it strengthens also our undergraduate program. We will collaborate with other theological schools locally to expose our students to as many opportunities as possible.

Finally, we will keep listening to our students needs and maintain unity and build deeper relationships within our increasingly international and interdenominational student body.

## **Part II: Quality Assessment of a Study Program Group**

### **6. Self-Assessment on a Study Program Group**

#### **Report about actions based on the last assessment**

BMTS went through the study program assessment quite recently, in spring 2017, and was given the unspecified term of study in July 2017. The assessment committee gave the seminary several recommendations which have been worked through by BMTS leadership, and actions based on these recommendations have been planned and partly going on. Not everything has yet been achieved in such a short time (since July 2017).

- Develop co-operation with other theological seminaries in Estonia in order to use mutually each other's resources

Actions: as our APDP (<http://www.emkts.ee/implementation>) is also prompting us to be proactive in organizing joint training events (6.9.3) BMTS was actively involved in preparation of our last joint faculty training in academic mentoring in 2017 which took place at our seminary building. We are already in discussion planning the next joint training in November 2018. Seminary rector Meeli Tankler has been teaching a class at the ITEELC in 2016/17 and 2017/18. Conversations about joint elective classes and joint student

conferences were initiated at the 2017 training event and are developed further. Negotiations about creating a joint e-library have begun.

- Develop admission strategies for students from different regions (Baltic states, Nordic countries, Ukraine etc)

Actions: a new admission strategy was implemented for 2018/19 students from third countries. Application forms can be filled online, and recommendation letters are received directly from persons who give the recommendation. The earlier timeline for receiving admission documents from International students (March 1 until May 1) has allowed the BMTS registrar to work through the documentation, make sure the education certificates as well as recommendation letters are adequate, and has given the admission committee sufficient time to prepare for individual admission interviews (via Skype). These interviews with selected candidates in 2018 were led in May instead of August as in previous years, and thus students will have adequate time slot to deal with their visa documentation before the beginning of the new study year. The experience has been encouraging but there is still space for improvement, and we continue to work in this area.

- Find options and plan a strategy for faculty research relevant to the applied higher education, and support their publications

Actions: the idea expressed in the APDP 6.4. Creating supportive conditions for permanent faculty for research and writing scientific articles in co-operation with ATS has been explored further, and some steps are taken. We are also exploring options for research co-operation with MTSE schools in Europe. BMTS leadership is also discussing and developing a strategy to pay a fee for published articles.

- Put together different development strategies and financial projections in order to lower the risks if the support from sponsors would decline

Actions: there has not yet been actions on this issue as the seminary leadership is changing, and the new rector will need some time with her team for strategy building.

- Find new options for diversifying the income, f ex further training or community projects

Actions: no actions so far; just some ideas that need further exploration.

## 6.1. Curriculum and curriculum development

The curriculum (<https://bit.ly/2IBKFHn>) consists of mandatory and elective courses. Mandatory courses lay the basis for theological knowledge and introduce the student into main ministry areas of the Christian church. The amount of elective courses is limited in a small school. As the goal of the seminary is to educate specialists for a certain field (pastors, chaplains, Christian leaders) as well as lay people who will utilize their education in broader areas the scale of elective courses is rather wide. We offer electives that would deepen the theological understanding (f ex Paul's Mission strategies, Women in the Bible, Old Testament characters) as well as more practically oriented courses (f ex Basics of family counselling, Youth ministry, Foundations of Chaplaincy). Using the APEL students can make their choice of elective courses even broader by reflecting their prior learning or professional conference participation from the theological point of view.

As an applied higher education institution we emphasize the importance of practicums as well as courses that include practical assignments. Several mandatory courses in the areas of Practical Theology or Biblical Sciences include a practicum (PRT 312 Homiletics practicum, PRT 322 Worship practicum, PIO 304 New Testament Inductive Bible Study practicum) or practical assignments for independent work (PRT 301 Lifelong Learning in the Congregation, PRT 312 Foundations of Pastoral Leadership, PRT 305 Evangelism and Discipleship, PRT 303 Practical Communication Psychology, PRT 304 Foundations of pastoral care and counselling).

Some courses are integrating different subject areas like PRT 304 Foundations of pastoral care and counselling (pastoral theology, psychology, communication theory); PRT 312 Foundations of Pastoral Leadership (leadership, ecclesiology, pastoral theology, communication theory), Christian media (journalism, communication theory, hermeneutics) etc.

Several courses support the acquirement of better learning skills: first of all, YLD302 Academic writing in the very beginning of the first study year as well as the YLD303 Bible Study Tools that instructs how to use theological databases, and to work with different Bible commentaries. The course PRT301 Lifelong Learning, also offered in the first study year, leads students to reflect about their personal learning style, and to develop their personal strengths as learners. In the framework of DIT301 Foundations of Scientific Research topics related to learning skills and

critical thinking are practiced such as working critically with scientific sources, compiling a scientific text, comparing and analysing different texts on a given topic etc.

See 10 most important syllabus that include goals, course objectives, evaluation method, schedule, assessment, required reading and assignments: <http://bit.ly/2m0uS54>.

As several visiting lecturers come from other countries they add a certain international flavour to our curriculum. They try to take into account our context (especially those coming for the first time would ask questions about our country, church life, student body, and curriculum) but in the long run they will reflect the educational practices of their respective schools, and thus give our students some glimpses of the theological education internationally. Visiting lecturers teach usually in English, and students can listen them via simultaneous translation into Estonian and Russian, but we always recommend students to listen in the original language. Foreign language skills should be part of the higher education, and the ability to read and use theological literature in English is something we try to develop.

In 2013 the rector Meeli Tankler defended at the Asbury Theological Seminary (USA) her doctoral thesis *Harmonizing Individual and Ecclesiastical Expectations with the Institution of Theological Education*, based on a qualitative research about ministry needs in the UMC in Baltic countries. The data was compared with BMTS curriculum learning outcomes with the goal of making corrections into the curriculum as (and if) needed. The first changes were introduced into the curriculum already in fall 2013: new courses such as PRT310 Foundations of Diaconal Ministry (3ECTS) and PIO304 New Testament Inductive Study practicum (2ECTS) were added, and the scope of PRT309 Foundations of Pastoral Leadership was increased to 4ECTS.

The biggest change in the past 5 years was transition from 4-year curriculum to 3-year curriculum from 2013/14 study year. The current 3-year curriculum is not so different content-wise but the amount of general courses was significantly reduced as well as the amount of elective courses (which had been disproportionately big for such a small school). See exemplary curriculum layout for 3-year curriculum divided in semesters:

(<http://bit.ly/2KKTbID>). In the same year the formal change took also place as the Estonian Ministry of Science and Education did not allow any more the curriculum in more than one language, and we had to register three curricula that are identical in content but differ by study language.

In 2014-2017 BMTS went through a strategic curriculum revision process with the goal of specifying the learning outcomes and focusing more explicitly on mission. The following factors provided important feedback that guided the revision process:

- the BMTS rector's doctoral dissertation "Harmonizing Individual and Ecclesiastical Expectations with the Institution of Theological Education" (Asbury Theological Seminary, 2013) which studied essential curriculum components required for providing seminary students with an educational experience responsive to the ministerial needs of UMC in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania;
- monthly meetings between the rector and the BMTS' owner and primary employer of graduates, the Administrative Board of the UMCE as a source of ongoing informal feedback;
- formal student feedback from individual subjects that moved from an 18-question paper evaluation to an electronic survey using the Lime Survey platform. The new expanded feedback survey includes 37 questions that are automatically analysed according to 7 basic categories (student motivation, structure of the course, presentation, encouragement of independent thinking, classroom relationships, general outcomes and learning environment). The electronic feedback survey was tested in 2016-17 and regularly used starting in 2017-18;
- informal ongoing student feedback due to our Seminary's small size, which encourages communication between leadership, faculty, staff and students. The Seminary actively promotes this through scheduling noon prayer times when everyone joins together and provides opportunities to pray for each other's needs as well as through the Student Coffee initiative that began in 2017-18 as a regular informal gathering of the entire Seminary family;
- formal feedback from graduates in the form of surveys;
- informal feedback from graduates happens on a regular basis due to the small nature of the Estonian Christian community, which provides regular contact with alumni.

The Dean together with the rector and regular faculty formed a working group for curriculum development. The proposals of the working group were taken for input and for approval to the Academic Council, which includes student representatives. When necessary, input and approval was also sought from the Seminary's Board of Trustees as well as from the Seminary's owner, the United Methodist Church in Estonia.

Curriculum development during the period 2014-2018 went through the following stages:

Autumn 2014 – Curriculum revision began with reviewing and clarifying the BMTS' core values, mission and vision statement. The revised text was forwarded to the Academic Council and then on to both the Board of Trustees and the owner for final approval.

Spring 2015 – Following a survey of students, the decision was made to lengthen study sessions from 3 days (Thursday – Saturday) to 4 days (Wednesday – Saturday) to allow for a more relaxed study session and to allow more electives to be offered within the normal study session periods. 4-day study sessions began with the 2015-16 school year.

Spring 2015 – Curriculum revision began with revising the goals and learning outcomes of the curriculum as a whole followed by the goals and learning outcomes of the individual curriculum modules. The structure of the curriculum was revised to create fewer modules by combining Systematic Theology and Church History due to the logical overlap in content. The old Practicum module was combined with Practical Theology, since a considerable number of practicum courses were already taught under the Practical Theology module. Relatively small but significant changes were made to individual course names, goals and learning outcomes primarily to ensure more clear alignment with the goals and outcomes of the curriculum as a whole. Whereas the old curriculum was named “Theology,” the revised curriculum was given the name “Theology and Mission.” The new curriculum name emphasizes the practical nature of the program and aligns with the goals and objectives to unite the program providing a clearer picture to perspective students of the unique emphasis that we offer.

The working group presented the proposed curriculum revisions to the Academic Committee on four occasions over a 13-month period in an intentional effort to get wide ranging input especially from the student representatives. The Academic Committee accepted the revised curriculum on 10 June 2016 and it came into effect with the 2016-17 school year.

Small-scale development is an ongoing process even after the new curriculum was adopted. An example of development that involves multiple stakeholders is the Worship Theology class. A committee that included faculty, graduates as well as representatives from two significant employers, the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches, put the plan for this class in place. Since Worship Theology is expressed differently by different churches, this broad based committee allowed for the development of a course that would be as applicable as possible across the spectrum.

## **6.2. Resources**

See 1.3. Management of financial resources and infrastructure.

## **6.3. Study process**

The study process is guided by Academic regulations (<http://www.emkts.ee/regulations>). The Seminary offers full-time studies divided between study sessions, 11 four-day sessions every year. The study consists of contact hours, independent study, practical work, or online courses. The proportions of study forms are assigned in the syllabus.      **HYPERLINK**

"<http://www.emkts.ee/index.php/en/academic-info/academic-regulations>"HYPERLINK

"<http://www.emkts.ee/index.php/en/academic-info/academic-regulations>"HYPERLINK

"<http://www.emkts.ee/index.php/en/academic-info/academic-regulations>"

We offer 6 contact hours per 1 ECTS and expect students to do independent work 20 hours per 1 ECTS. This is similar practice with other theological schools. Contact hours can be lectures, seminars, or some form of group work where students and lecturer interact with each other. Majority of courses have also e-support in Moodle, and thus the time for contact hours can be spent more effectively as the lecturer has various ways to supply students with additional study material.

Practical work can be defined as a study form designed for achieving the learning outcomes through practicum or other forms of practical activities described in the syllabus. Practicums are significant part of the study, and in the course of practicum the supervisor or mentor is playing an important role. The aim of the practicum is to provide the work experience in the actual work environment. We offer a variety of places for practicum besides the church environment: social institutions, schools, children and youth camps, prisons etc.

Independent work is the student's own work in order to acquire knowledge, and it can be reading or writing or searching for information. The amount of time spent on independent study is most difficult to measure but officially a student should invest 20 hours of independent study for each ECTS. Using the e-learning environment Moodle can be part of this as well as group projects together with other students.

A special feature of BMTS is fellowship groups for supporting the student's spiritual and personality growth. These groups are mandatory as part of the Spiritual Formation class, and they meet once in every study session. Discussions in these groups are based on classical religious books and/or theological topics proposed by the faculty. Some time for sharing and prayer is included. Fellowship groups offer space for critical reflection based on lectures heard and books read, and they are also a secure environment to practice small group ministry which is an important discipleship tool in most Christian churches.

E-learning platform Moodle has been used since 2004 and has developed well in recent years. Most subjects have e-learning support, and majority of faculty is using this platform actively. IN

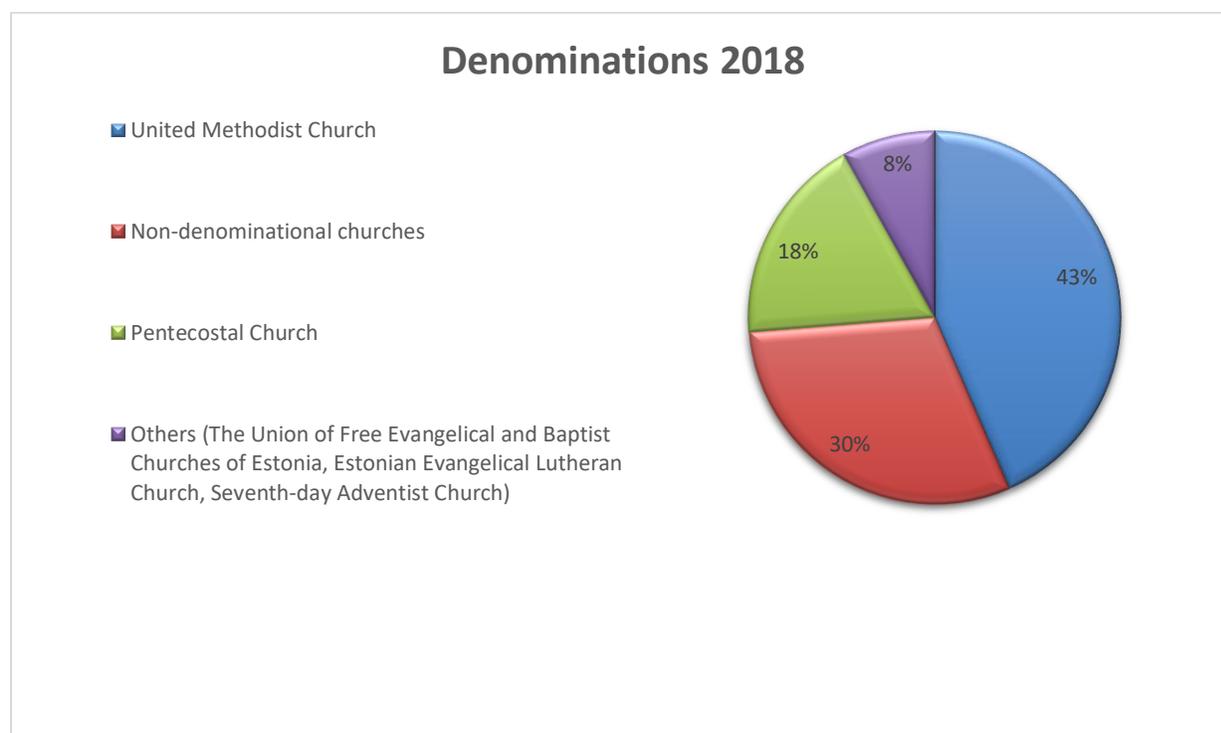
January-February 2018 all permanent faculty took a course on Moodle, led by Tartu University professor Marju Piir.

#### 6.4. Faculty

See 1.2.1. Recruitment and development of administrative and academic staff

#### 6.5. Student body

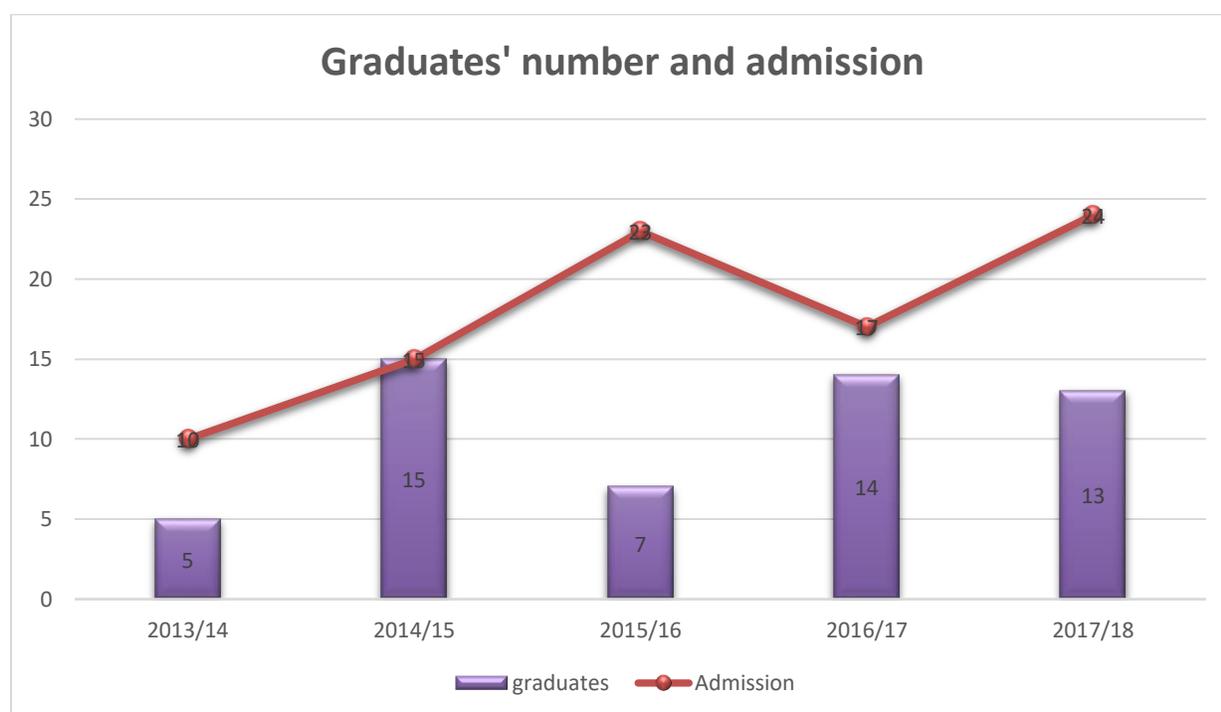
In the end of 2017/2018 study year we had 60 students, and 13 of them graduated in June 2018. A positive trend has been the stabilization of the number of students in spite of changing from 4 years to 3 years, and thus not having four groups of students but only three. The number of admissions has grown in recent years. Our student body is international and comes from different countries, cultures and also from quite different denominational backgrounds. Up to ¼ of our students come from small non-denominational congregations and groups that have different attitudes about theological education as such. We consider it our mission to help them navigate in the field of theology as they explore their own congregation's teachings in comparison with historical churches' doctrines and traditions.



*Chart 11 Denominations represented in the student body (1 June 2018)*

The previous educational experience of the student body is also quite diverse: the admission requirement is secondary education, but we have also students with bachelor's and even master's degree who have decided to add theology studies to their previous education. We have learned that there are some cultural differences in secondary education level as well as the educational philosophy between different regions of the world, and it is reflected in the study results especially during the first year. The student body is also diverse age-wise as we have students coming directly from secondary school, and students in their 50-s and 60-s.

The ratio of student candidates and admitted students has so far been generally 1,2. The clear exception will be fall 2018 due to the unexpectedly big interest of candidates from third countries this year. This new situation prompted the admission committee to make a decision about the optimal number of students studying in English that the seminary would be able to provide adequate support services.



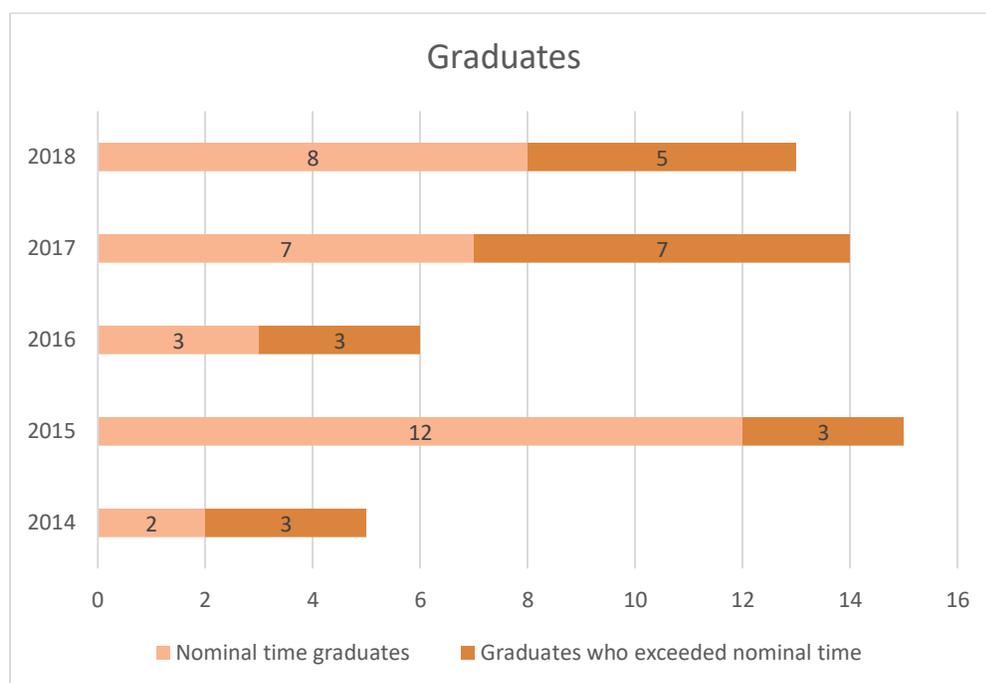
*Chart 12 Graduates and new students*

In fall 2017 seminary received 24 first year students. The number of applicants has grown in recent years, and we have been able to receive more students. In comparison with other theological schools the number of students applying to BMTS is somewhat higher, and it is certainly due to the multilingual study opportunity.

Year	TIEELC	TTS	BMTS
2017	12	15	24
2016	23	13	17
2015	18	10	23
2014	19	12	15
2013	20	3	10

*Table 3. Comparison of admissions.*

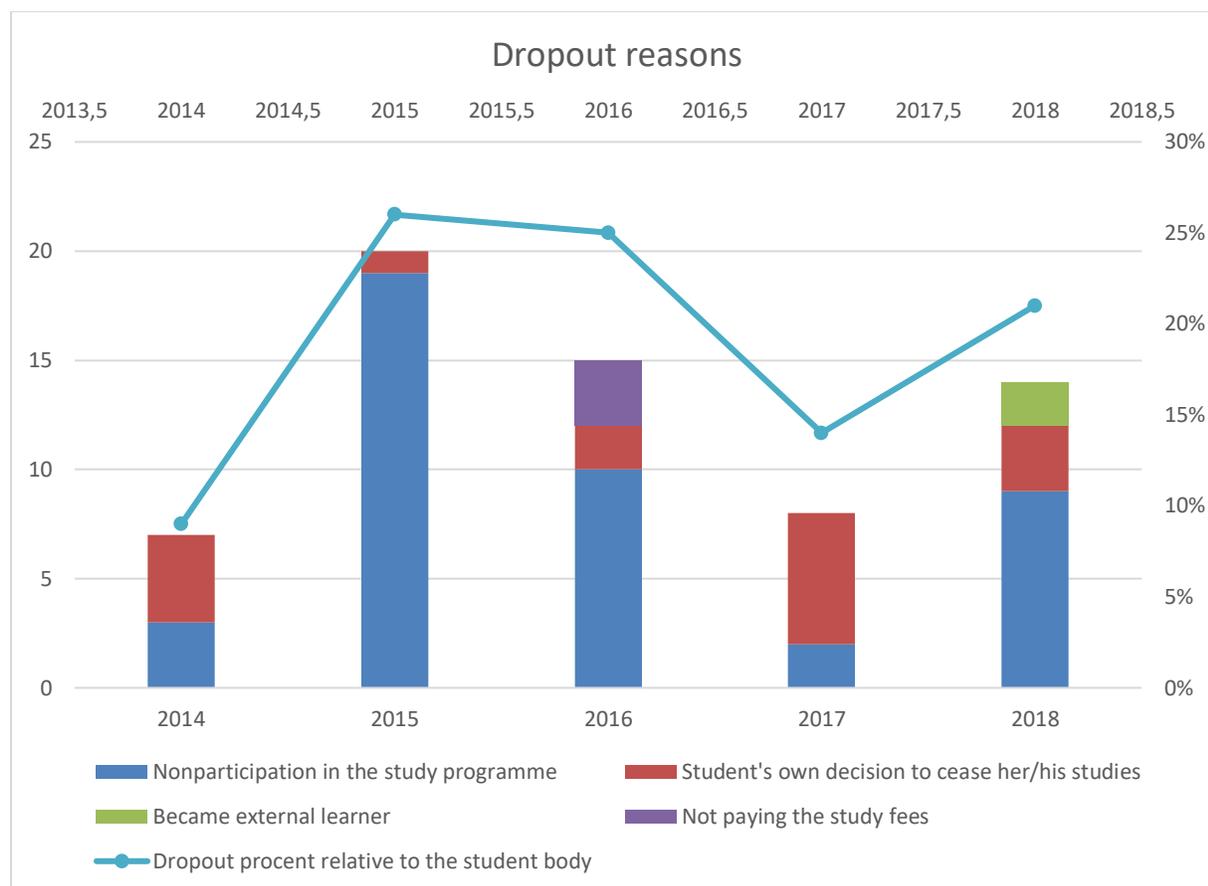
The length of nominal studies in BMTS is 3 years (since 2013/14; before that it was 4 years). As the majority of students are also working parallel to their studies not everyone is able to graduate in the nominal time. Some students chose from the very beginning to study as part-time students and plan their studies accordingly. Between 2014 and 2018 53 students graduated from the seminary. Of these, 32 (60%) graduated in the nominal study period.



*Chart 13 Graduating in nominal time*

We experience similar problems as other Estonian higher education institutions: the percentage of students graduating in the nominal period is not high enough, and every year we have several dropouts for different reasons. However, as the motivation to study at the BMTS is high –

students who come to study know that they need to pay tuition, and the salaries they will get in the future, being employed by church, will not reach the Estonian median salary – the percentage of dropouts is not too bad. We have worked hard to support our students, and in a small school it is easier to offer more personal mentoring to those who have hardships either in their personal life or at work.



In comparison with other seminaries, we have found that the cost of a student place in TTS is around 2200 euros; in BMTS it is ca 2450 (higher due to the translation costs). The tuition is currently 1700 euros. Even as the tuition has been raised in recent years, the possibility of partial scholarship is available. As this is related to the learning performance (at least 75% of the completion of the curriculum in semester) the learning performance in general has improved.

We have discussed the possibility to tighten up the admission requirements but have not yet decided to do it as we have seen during the years how students who have modest grades would mature and develop their learning skills, gain academic excellence, graduate successfully, and even continue their studies at the master level.

The percentage of graduates who have been employed according to their acquired profession is also quite good as we take into account the general situation of churches as employers. Some graduates have also given feedback to the BMTS how the education they got from us has been helpful in professions not directly connected to the church.

## **6.6. Summary and Plan for Action**

Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary that was founded in 1994 will celebrate its 25 years of operating in 2019. Since 1998 the seminary has state accreditation as a private applied higher education institution. As for today, 235 people have graduated the seminary (20 graduate classes). Our graduates serve as pastors; youth ministers; chaplains in military, police and prison; teachers of religions; leaders of NGO-s etc. The BMTS is a structural unit of UMCE. The mission of the seminary is to prepare Christian workers and leaders for churches, Christian organizations and charity organizations by offering theological education relevant to the needs of church and society and supporting the Christian spiritual formation in the course of studies.

We believe that the leadership structure including people from different countries who represent various spheres of life is relevant to our mission. The leadership has been indirectly supported also by the professional mentoring that the seminary rector has received since October 2012. Financially the seminary has reached stability in recent years, and the ability to put together a valid financial prognosis has improved.

The curriculum structure is based on so-called classical scheme of theological education but is flexible enough to allow new approaches and developments in theological thought to be introduced. The main criteria in curriculum development are internal coherence of the curriculum and meeting the needs of actual Christian ministry in the area, both inside and outside the churches. The key to our curriculum development has been the growing attention to the ministry needs of the Church as we have been mapping these needs in the UMC context, and at the same time strengthening the connections with other denominations.

In recent years the organization of practicums has improved as we have specified the syllabi and searched for new practicum bases in cooperation with SA and other organizations.

Our student body is multinational, multilingual, and comes from different cultural and denominational backgrounds. In the beginning of June, we had 60 students – 13 of them have

now graduated. We have already admitted 12 international students, and the admission continues till August 15. We are glad that our student representatives have become more active in participating the discussions about curriculum development at the academic council meetings, and also more active at the BOT level.

Our faculty is strong, and their participation in planning and carrying out the learning process has increased. The special feature of the BMTS is teaching and learning in three languages (+ sign language since 2016). The representatives of Estonian Ministry of Science and Education who visited the BMTS in November 2012 made sure that this unique model of teaching through simultaneous translation is sustainable and valid.

The BMTS is currently in the transition period as the rector Meeli Tankler is leaving after 9 years of service, and the new rector Külli Tõniste is taking over from August 1, 2018. Thus some delay with the APDP for 2019-2022 is normal in this situation. Some issues from the current APDP are still in the process:

Activities	Proposed time	Planned for
6.2. Organizing seminars to enhance team-work	2017 and onward	August-September 2018
6.3. Developing a life-long learning program targeting (and involving) alumni	2018	2018/19
6.4. Organizing training for internship mentors	2017 and onward	2018/19
6.4. Publishing articles from faculty and alumni online	2016 and onward	2018
6.4. Creating supportive conditions for permanent faculty for research and writing articles in co-operation with ATS	2018 and onward	2019
6.4. Gathering and systematizing materials on seminary history	2019	2019
6.9. Advancing the dialogue with the church in order to identify and define research areas of common interest	2018	2018
6.9. Organizing joint lectures with other theological schools	2017	2018

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6.11. Creating a scholarship fund at the seminary (dedicated to Ljudmilla Voltshihhina), and defining its statute	2018	2019
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