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FOR HIGHER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

EKKA

Assessment Report

Institutional accreditation. Assessment of Theology study programmes.

Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary

Tartu Theological Seminary

2018

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Introduction

The aim of the international assessment committee was the institutional accreditation and evaluation of the Study Programme Group (SPG) of Theology at the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary and Tartu Theological Seminary. As there is one study programme in both of the higher education institutions, the study programme group assessment report is integrated into the report of the institutional accreditation. The requirements of SPG assessment are combined with the standards of institutional accreditation to cover both the level of institution and the study programme.

Institutional accreditation is external evaluation which assesses the conformity of a university's management, work procedures, study and research activities and study and research environment to legislation and the goals and development plan of the university. This is feedback-based evaluation in which an international assessment committee analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the institution of higher education based on the self-assessment report of the institution and on information obtained during the assessment visit, providing recommendations for improvement and ways of implementing them.

The goal of the process is to support the development of strategic management and quality culture in institutions of higher education. Educational institutions must undergo institutional accreditation at least once every seven years.

Quality assessment of a study programme group involves the assessment of the conformity of study programmes and the studies and development activities that take place on their basis to legislation, national and international standards and developmental directions with the purpose of providing recommendations to improve the quality of studies.

The goal of quality assessment of a study programme group is supporting the internal evaluation and self-development of the institution of higher education. Quality assessment of study programme groups is not followed by sanctions: expert assessments should be considered recommendations.

Institutional accreditation as well as the quality assessment of a study programme group takes place at least once every 7 years based on the regulations approved by EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education.

The assessment committee was asked to assess the conformity of the study programmes belonging to the study programme group and the instruction provided on the basis thereof to legislation and to national and international standards and recommendations, including the assessment of the level of the corresponding theoretical and practical instruction, the research and pedagogical qualification of the teaching staff and research staff, and the sufficiency of resources for the provision of instruction.

The following persons formed the assessment committee:

Gerrit Immink (Chair)	Professor emeritus, Protestant Theological University (The Netherlands)
Jonathan Loose	Director of Learning and Teaching, Heythrop College, University of London (UK)
Trygve Elliv Wyller	Professor, Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo (Norway)
Heiki Haljasorg	Project Manager, Estonian Council of Churces (Estonia)
Ringo Ringvee	Adviser, Ministry of the Interior (Estonia)
Heidi Maiberg	Student, University of Tartu (Estonia)

The assessment process was coordinated by Liia Lauri (EKKA).

After the preparation phase, the work of the assessment team in Estonia started on Monday, 8 October 2018, with an introduction to the Higher Education System as well as the assessment procedures by EKKA, the Estonian Quality assurance organization for higher and vocational education. The members of the team agreed the overall questions and areas to discuss with each interview group. The distribution of tasks between the members of the assessment team was organised and the detailed schedule of the site visits agreed.

During the following days, meetings were held with the representatives of the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary (Tuesday 9 and Wednesday 10 October) and Tartu Theological Seminary (Thursday 11 and Friday 12 October).

On Saturday, October 13, the team held an all-day meeting, during which both the structure of the final report was agreed and findings of team meetings were compiled in a first draft of the assessment report. This work was executed in a cooperative way and the members of the team intensively discussed their individual views on the relevant topics.

This report has 2 parts: institutional accreditation report of Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary and institutional accreditation report of Tartu Theological Seminary. The reports of SPG assessment are incorporated into institutional accreditation reports. Therefore there can be some unevenness between the length of the texts concerning different assessment areas.

1. Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary

Institutional Accreditation

Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary was founded in 1994 with the primary goal of educating clergy for the Methodist Church in the Baltic countries. From the beginning the education was practically oriented, and was operating in three languages: Estonian, Russian and English.

Multi-lingual teaching is a unique trademark of the Seminary. In the beginning of the 21th century BMTS created a more ecumenical atmosphere by cooperation with other religious minorities in Estonia. In 2014 the Seminary started a partnership with the Salvation Army in Estonia and with the Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church. Furthermore, on the international level the Seminary signed a MOU with Asbury Theological Seminary in 2013.

The last five years the number of students is stabilized (average of approximately 60), while the study program was reduced from 4 to 3 years. In 2017 the Seminary received the official unconditional recognition by the Estonian Ministry of Education as an Institute for Higher Education for an unspecified term of study.

Comments:

The Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary is one of the post-Soviet educational institutions in Estonian in the field of theology. It is impressive and promising that the BMTS has achieved its present level within the short number of years and with relatively small resources. It is, at the same time, also obvious that the BMTS represent more evangelical theological traditions, influenced from tendencies in and outside of Estonia.

A unique characteristic of BMTS is teaching in three languages simultaneously. According to the Self-Evaluation report this 'multilingual approach is costly financially and complicated logistically.' The Assessment Committee has found that the high requirements in terms of supporting staff and technical devices are achieved, and that the teaching staff is well equipped for this type of teaching.

The Seminary has created a study environment in which cultural and religious diversity is appreciated positively. The students learn to deal with cultural diversity and with the challenges of integration.

Summary of the institutional accreditation

	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition

Organisational management and performance		**X**		
Teaching and learning	**x**			
RDC		**X**		
Service to society		**X**		

General Findings and Recommendations

The strengths and the challenges of BMTS within the Estonian national Higher Education context.

1. Strengths

The Assessment Committee has identified three main strengths that distinguish BMTS in the Estonian context of Academy, Church and Society.

- A good teaching and learning program that is relevant for the churches.

The Assessment Committee confirms that the quality of the study program conforms the standards of the higher education in Applied Science and has evidence that the program is effective for the professional work in the ministry.

- A strong emphasis on the integration of different cultures and ethnicities in the student body.

The teaching in three languages is carried out successfully and creates an atmosphere of cultural and ecumenical diversity. The translation staff is of high quality and is according to the Assessment Committee a jewellery of the Seminary.

- A dedicated staff that runs a small school in close cooperation with the stakeholders.

BMTS is a small school with limited resources. The Assessment Committee observed a supportive atmosphere between staff and students. Since the study program has a practical orientation, the Seminary also creates networks between churches, Christian organizations and religious denominations. The Assessment Committee sensed a real ecumenical atmosphere and a proper gender balance.

2. Challenges and Recommendations

The main vulnerability of BMTS is its size. As a small school, it is limited in staff, students and finances. The Assessment Committee noticed that the leadership and the stakeholders acknowledge the need of strengthening the research skills

in the area of Applied Science. Initial steps have already been taken. To support the Seminary with respect to its role as an institution for higher education in Estonia, the Assessment Committee highlights four areas for consideration.

- Strengthen and further develop research skills in the area of Applied Science.

Appointing and hiring staff with high level academic degrees (PhD) is essential. The Assessment Committee recommends the cooperation in research projects with national and international partners in order to strengthen research skills and research methodology. The Committee trusts that this way indirectly the quality of the student's theses will be improved. When internationalisation of research improves, it might also lead to a research level more in dialogue with also the critical profiles of international theology.

- Objectify and generalize student assessment criteria.

The Assessment Committee found that a welcome diversity of assessment methods is used in the curriculum. The Committee recommends, however, to introduce a more objective and centralised approach to assessment criteria and that the guidelines are applied consistently.

- Create more transparency in the activities of the Seminary.

The Assessment Committee noticed that in a small school many things are settled in an informal way. The open and constructive atmosphere was evident, but the Committee nevertheless holds that the Seminary's approach to its learning and teaching activities should be less informal and more systematic, strategic and clearly documented.

- Develop strategies to make the Seminary more visible in the public arena.

The academic staff should more actively participate in learned (theological) societies and professional associations. In addition, the Seminary should focus on the publication of popular professional articles and media-materials for the general public.

1.1. Organisational management and performance

Area 1	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
General management		**x**		

Personnel management		**x**		
Management of financial resources and infrastructure	**x**			

General comments:

The Assessment Committee acknowledges that a small seminary is limited in its performance. At BMTS a rather small staff runs the school well and the structures of leadership and management are generally speaking conform the regulations of the higher education in Estonia.
That some areas only partially conform the requirements is related to the limited human and financial resources. The Assessment Committee, however, did apply the objective criteria and believes that also a small seminary can improve and that BMTS has the potential to make progress.

The main challenge of the general management is to hold on to the national and international competitiveness and standing of BMTS in the area of higher education. It is from one side not surprising that the Methodist Church in Estonia has been interested to build a specific seminary for its church and its nearest partners. But, on the other hand, there is always a question whether small church run seminary will have the muscles and the independence that is required for running good and competitive higher research and education institutions.

The partial results of the development and action plan does have an effect on the ranking of the general management and the personnel management. On the other hand, the seminary's leadership did remarkably well in improving its financial stability by getting annual grants from the CCTEF.

1.1.1 General Management

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution has defined its role in the Estonian society.
- ✓ The development plan and the related action plans of a higher education institution arise from the concrete purposes that are built on its mission, vision and core values, and that consider the country's priorities and society's expectations.
- ✓ Key results of a higher education institution have been defined.
- ✓ The leadership of a higher education institution conducts the preparation and implementation of development and action plans and includes the members and other stakeholders in this work.
- ✓ Liability at all management levels has been defined and described, and it supports the achievement of institutional purposes and the coherent performance of core processes.

- ✓ Internal and external communications of a higher education institution (including marketing and image building) are purposeful and managed.

Evidence and Analysis

BMTS has a clear mission statement as an institution for Applied Higher Education in Estonia. The documents and the oral interviews give evidence that in management and performance the Seminary is successful in applying its mission in today's society. The Seminary

- prepares women and men for competent leadership roles in local churches
- prepares for competent leadership roles outside the church structures, for example chaplaincy in military and prisons
- serves a culturally and ethnically diverse student population
- enhances thoughtful reflection on religious practices and beliefs
- seeks ecumenical partnerships
- has an international orientation and cooperation

The Board of Trustees is the official and formal connection with the United Methodist Church in Estonia (holder) and the rector's cabinet is the executive body and runs the School. The Board of Trustees and the rector's cabinet have well-defined leadership roles in the performance of the School.

BMTS signed a MOU with Asbury Theological Seminary (USA) in 2013, with the Salvation Army in Estonia in 2014, with the Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church (ECPC) in 2014. The ECPC have officially decided to educate their clergy in BMTS. According to the Self-Assessment Report and the interviews with stakeholders and alumni this has resulted in an improvement of the quality of the clergy of the Pentecostal Churches and a more positive attitude towards higher theological education. The cooperation with Salvation Army and Missions Committee of Estonian Evangelical Alliance has broadened internship opportunities and mission practicums. Although the student numbers are quite small, the Assessment Committee is convinced by the documents as well as by the interviews that BMTS has a positive social impact on church and society.

In 2017 the curriculum of BMTS received the status of 'unspecified term of study' by the Estonian Ministry of Education.

The multilingual approach is an important characteristic of BMTS and benefits the Russian speaking people in the Estonian society. The Assessment Committee has found that the internal communication with the student body in three languages by means of SIS and Moodle is practiced adequately, with the exception that Russian speaking students experience technical difficulties with SIS. The leadership is taking steps to improve, but is unfortunately dependent upon external parties. That the program is also offered in English makes it possible to receive international students from east and west, and makes international staff exchange possible.

According to the Development Plan (2016-2019) one of the strategic objectives is that 'the Seminary stands for internationally acknowledged level of all fields of study'. Cooperation with different higher institutions is unavoidable and therefore

the Seminary is 'cultivating relationships with theological seminaries in Europe and the USA'. The Assessment Committee judges that reaching and maintaining the international standards of higher education is a main challenge for the Seminary. Cooperation with other institutions in Estonia, Europe and the USA is necessary for the benchmarking the quality of education and research.

The Committee strongly recommends that BMTS continues and further develops the relationship and cooperation with Asbury Theological Seminary. In particular teacher exchanges and research collaboration will provide a significant indicator in terms of the international competitiveness and standing of BMTS. At the same time cooperation with Estonian institutions for higher theological education, e. g. the department of theology of Tartu University, TTS and the Institute of Theology, will be necessary and productive. The Assessment Committee holds that BMTS has to ensure that the research skills of the teaching staff are at the required level before launching a joint master's degree program.

The internal communication with the student body is going on via mailing lists, SIS and Moodle. Leadership and staff are aware of the fact that Russian speaking students face difficulties in the use of SIS, and they serve these students as best as they can.

The Assessment Committee noted, however, both in the Self-Evaluation Report as during the visit that sometimes problems are solved without formal meetings. 'In a small school environment many current problems are solved without formal meetings, and information is shared orally.' Consequently, decisions made are not always formally registered. Because the Seminary is rather small, staff and students feel more like a family, than a school. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the Seminary's approach to its learning and teaching activities should be less informal and more systematic, strategic and clearly documented.

The Assessment Committee found during the meetings and the interviews that BMTS is more open to today's society than the documents show. The integration of different ethnic groups is practiced in teaching and learning and the seminary has also broadened its ecumenical scope. There is a good gender balance among staff and students. The seminary did remarkably well in teaching deaf students with high level sign language support.
The Assessment Committee believes that BMTS can improve its contribution to society by applying its expertise in the area of social development. As many alumni have jobs outside the churches, the communication with the alumni will open doors to today's society.

<u>Commendations</u>

- The Seminary has a strong practice of teaching in three languages simultaneously and leadership and staff have been able to create an open and ecumenical teaching environment.
- The Seminary educates clergy for leadership roles in churches and chaplaincy and improves the quality of the already working clergy.

<u>Recommendations</u>

- In order to guarantee the national and international standards of higher education BMTS must intensify and further develop its cooperation with other institutions of higher education in Estonia and abroad.
- Leadership and staff should increase the sensitivity to the high level of the national and international standards of higher education and maintain these standards in the daily work of the Seminary.
- The Seminary has to develop the approach to its activities in such a way that they are less informal and more systematic, strategic and clearly documented.
- The Assessment Committee believes that the Seminary can strengthen its contribution to society by studying the social and cultural context of Estonia in relation to Christian mission. The Committee advices to reflect more on the reciprocity between Christian mission and the needs and developments of today's society.
- More strategic marketing of the Seminary in the Estonian society is needed.

1.1.2 Personnel Management

Requirements

- ✓ The principles and procedures for employee recruitment and development arise from the objectives of the development plan of a higher education institution, and ensure academic sustainability.
- ✓ When selecting, appointing and evaluating members of the academic staff, their past activities (teaching, RDC, student feedback, etc.) are taken into account in a balanced way.
- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
- ✓ The principles of remuneration and motivation of employees are clearly defined, available to all employees, and implemented.
- ✓ Employee satisfaction with the management, working conditions, flow of information, etc., is regularly surveyed and the results used in improvement activities.
- ✓ Employees participate in international mobility programmes, cooperation projects, networks, etc.
- ✓ Employees base their activities on principles of academic ethics.

Evidence and Analysis

The recruitment and development of academic staff is a main challenge of BMTS. The documents and the site visit show that the leadership and the stakeholders are aware of this and that they take adequate measures to strengthen the quality of the staff.

The Development plan (2016-2019) says that 'the Seminary employs 4 permanent faculty members and 4 part-time lecturers with at least 0.3 workload. Guest lecturers from other Estonian and foreign higher educational institutions are used as well as practitioners from specific fields of study.'

The statistics show a gradual growth of the number of combined full-time positions. The appointment in 2015 of a teacher with a PhD in Biblical Theology (London School of Theology) as an associate professor of Systematic Theology and a lecturer with a MDiv degree (Asbury Theological Seminary) of Church History illustrate the strengthening of the BMTS teaching staff.

The documents of the Self-Evaluation report show that in the selection of new staff the academic qualities of research and teaching were decisive matters. At the same time the Seminary was able to hold on to the principle that the new staff matches the identity of the Institution. This was also confirmed by the leadership and the stakeholders during the site visit.

The Committee noticed that BMTS as an institution for Applied Science has not yet developed a profile of Applied Research in theology. The Committee recommends the Seminary to develop a strategy to carry out this type of research in all the theological disciplines. This will strengthen the quality of staff.

The quality of the staff is also strengthened through participation in international programs and projects, especially in cooperation with Asbury Theological Seminary (USA).

The support translation staff is of a high quality. The Assessment Committee has received evidence that the translation staff is sustainable in the near future and the Committee highly values that the translation staff consist of people with theological training.

The Committee has taken notice of the fact that 'the salary level is still not yet satisfactory in comparison with general salary levels in Estonia'.

The Assessment Committee noted that students and alumni are satisfied with the teaching of BMTS. They especially value the practice-oriented teaching and the motivation and dedication of the staff. Students and alumni think, however, that the e-learning can be improved and that the older generation of staff needs to update their technical skills in e-learning. The teaching staff is satisfied with the performance and the leadership of the school.

The outgoing rector has played a prominent role in the international contacts of the United Methodist Church and this resulted in an additional source of income

from the Central Conferences Theological Education Fund. Participation of BMTS's staff in international projects and networks is a necessary condition for the further development of staff.

Commendations

- BMTS is aware of its status as an institution for higher education and was able to recruit qualified staff with academic degrees in its permanent staff.

Recommendations

- In order to maintain good teaching at the level of higher education the Seminary should strengthen the research qualities of the staff.
- Develop strategies for international exchange of staff and students.
- Improve staff competences in the area of Applied Research.
- Develop a strategic plan for Applied Theological Research that fits the mission of the Seminary.
- Improve the e-learning skills of the staff.

1.1.3 Management of financial resources and infrastructure

Requirements

- ✓ The allocation of financial resources of a higher education institution as well as the administration and development of infrastructure are economically feasible, and are based on the objectives of the development plan of an institution of higher education and national priorities (except private institutions).
- ✓ A higher education institution uses information systems that support its management and the coherent performance of its core processes.
- ✓ The working conditions of the staff, and the learning and RDC conditions of students (library, studios, workshops, laboratories, etc.) meet the needs arising from the specifics of an institution of higher education and the expectations of members.

Evidence and Analysis

Tuition and scholarship funds constitute a significant part of income. From 2014-2017 there has been a growth from 33 % to 55 % of the total income. This is partly due to annual grants from the 'Central Conferences Theological Education Fund' (CCTEF) of the United Methodist Churches. This grant is an important factor in stabilizing the budget of BMTS (15-17 % of the yearly budget). The Self-Evaluation Report states: 'Since 2015 Seminary has achieved financial stability, and the sources of financial income are solid and sustainable. This has helped to develop a more reliable prognosis recently.' A positive result of this stability is the raise of salary of 4 % every year from 2016-2018.

The Assessment Committee has found that BMTS is at the moment economically feasible and holds that the grants of the CCTEF will contribute to staff development and make BMTS a more attractive partner in international cooperation. This implies, however, that the Seminary has to strengthen its research capacity in the field of Applied Science. Moreover, the regional and national competitiveness with institutions beyond the Methodist family remains crucial for the academic esteem of the Seminary.

The library of BMTS is limited. The Assessment Committee encourages the cooperation with the library of Tallinn University and stimulates to investigate the idea of a theological e-library for materials on Wesleyan and Methodist theology.

The working conditions of staff and students are adequate.

Commendations

- Being part of the worldwide UMC opens opportunities for external Funding.
- Cooperation with Asbury Theological Seminary creates a platform for international cooperation in research projects.

Recommendations

- Make sure that the strategic plan for Applied Research fits the mission of the Baltic-Nordic UMC for additional funding.
- Create Funds for planned research output of staff.
- Cooperate with institutions of Applied Higher Science in Estonia and abroad.
- Apply for Funding of the Baltic-Nordic UMC and CCTEF funding on the basis of a research plan.
- Use the international platform of the Methodist Church to make the Seminary financially more sustainable.

1.2. Teaching and learning

Area 2	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
Effectiveness of teaching and learning, and formation of the student body	**X**			
Study programme development	**x**			

Student academic progress and student assessment		**X**		
Support processes for learning	**X**			

General comments:

The committee formed the view that the seminary generally conforms to requirements in the area of teaching and learning, and would commend the seminary for the dedication of its staff and leadership, the effectiveness of ethnically diverse teaching and the accommodation of special needs. The seminary has a generally well organised curriculum and students are generally well cared for and satisfied with their experience, being unlikely to drop out. That being said, the committee recognised that in order to continue to conform to requirements and to enhance its performance to be safely above the threshold, there are still some things that the seminary should do. These are given as recommendations below and include ensuring that there is a consistent approach to assessment and that marking processes are reliable and secure.

1.2.1 Effectiveness of teaching and learning, and formation of the student body

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution has defined its educational objectives and measures their implementation.
- ✓ A higher education institution educates students so they are nationally and internationally competitive.
- ✓ The number of student places is planned in accordance with the social need and the potentials and purposes of an institution of higher education.
- ✓ The admission rules are consistent with the mission and purposes of an institution of higher education and support the formation of a motivated student body.
- ✓ Students are provided with opportunities to study at a higher education institution regardless of any special needs.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.
- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.

Evidence and Analysis

As noted in the SED, the seminary's educational objectives are articulated in its mission statement, published on its website (http://www.emkts.ee/statement) and in its curriculum documentation. The objectives are appropriate (include professional objectives, concern for methodology, and for Estonian society as well as practical training for churches). The seminary measures the implementation of these in various ways including through surveys and ongoing informal feedback.

Over time, BMTS has developed a relationship with Asbury Theological Seminary in USA, which has also trained a number of the BMTS staff. The Assessment Committee saw a Memorandum of Understanding, signed in 2013, and lasting for 3 years, that provided the formal context for this relationship during that period and we were assured that even though this Memorandum expired in 2016 it will be updated to enable a continuing relationship into the future. The Memorandum is limited in scope, ensuring that Asbury will provide support to BMTS by covering the costs of travel of academic staff from Asbury to BMTS. The Committee recommends that BMTS seek to continue and develop the formal relationship with Asbury Theological Seminary, ideally adding new forms of engagement such as student and teacher exchanges, research collaboration or other forms of engagement with an intention to align the level of teaching and student achievement as far as possible. The development of this relationship, about which BMTS is clearly enthusiastic, would provide a significant indicator of international competitiveness and standing.

The seminary has an effective applications process, which is discussed elsewhere in this report. However, the Committee concluded from the seminary's descriptions of its admissions process that the seminary would better support achievement that is internationally competitive by providing a more rigorous evaluation of a prospective student's intellectual ability and his or her capacity to develop skills of critical analysis and academic reflection on practical activities. This may involve paying greater systematic attention to the previous academic achievements of prospective students at the point of admission when making decisions to accept or reject students.

The Committee welcomed evidence from both students and college leadership that the level of challenge to students increases through the period of study, that tasks become progressively more challenging, and that students themselves feel challenged by the work they are set. We also welcomed the widespread recognition that the diploma paper is the most extensive and clear marker of a student's achievement at the level of the award. We were pleased to hear that there is a grading commission in place to approve the proposed topics of diploma papers and a tightening up of the advisor's role to ensure that what students can expect of their supervisors is clear. We also welcomed seeing and hearing evidence that controversial topics are intentionally brought up in the curriculum in order to stimulate reflection and critical thinking and that alumni were clear that their critical thinking was developed by their period of study in the seminary.

The Committee agrees with the seminary that it is important that students should be able to study only those topics for which there are academic staff with a

specialist level of competence in the area to enable effective supervision and rigorous assessment. We heard from the Seminary leadership that student research is prioritised over staff research. In order to ensure that the diploma papers and projects are supervised and produced at a nationally and internationally competitive level, the Committee recommends that staff research receives stronger priority and that the seminary develops a research plan. Greater research activity among staff will raise the level of supervision and methodological rigor in student diploma papers and hence contribute to the competitiveness of BMTS awards.

BMTS is hoping to develop teaching at masters level. The Committee welcomes this ambition, but was not given reasons to be confident that the seminary is able to provide internationally competitive masters teaching at this point. The Committee recommends that the seminary first demonstrates and documents a firm and ongoing commitment to the development of staff research in the areas that are subsequently to be taught at masters level. The Committee noticed plans for some intermediate steps in 2019 and 2020 in order to build teaching capacity and develop further collaboration with ATS. The Committee certainly does not intend to make a judgment about plans for the future, but emphasizes the fact that teaching on the master level of Applied Science requires high level research skills of staff.

The seminary trains sufficient students to meet the needs of churches and also trains some students whose careers will not be as professional pastors. We heard from students who entered the seminary with the intention of becoming pastors, but also from those who entered with the intention of exploring their faith and spiritual heritage without having a view to a particular form of church service after graduation. We were satisfied that the seminary takes in sufficient numbers of students.

The seminary has an effective applications process involving a knowledge test and interview. The process ensures that students who enter are motivated in a way that is consistent with the seminary's mission and purpose. The seminary is selective, rejecting prospective students if necessary and having a concern for the student body as a whole and for the potential for success of each individual within that. Students might be rejected because the seminary judges their motivation and capability to be inconsistent with the seminary's mission or (rarely) because it is judged that the workload would be beyond their capacity. The Committee heard that a recent influx of applicants from Africa was thoughtfully and carefully managed to ensure that applicants whose skills and motivation would enable them to be successful in diploma studies were accepted while recognising the limited capacity of the school to accept a large, distinctive group in a single year.

The Committee welcomed the significant weight that is placed by the seminary on the interview element of the application and on the motivations and commitments of prospective students. The Committee recommends a more rigorous evaluation of a prospective student's intellectual ability and capacity to develop skills of critical analysis and academic reflection on practical activities. This may involve paying greater systematic attention to the previous academic

achievements of applicants at school or elsewhere when making decisions to accept or reject. Where students are rejected due to insufficient academic background or intellectual ability, the seminary may wish to consider ways in which students can prepare themselves for a subsequent application by demonstrating success in further studies at pre-diploma level, either in the seminary or elsewhere. In addition, the admissions process should ensure fairness for all students and transparency. The Committee recommends that the systematic application of the admissions system be monitored internally.

The Committee was impressed by BMTS's commitment to address students with disabilities, including facilitating diploma level studies for a number of deaf students. We were also pleased by the high quality of the work done by sign language and other translators in the seminary to ensure that classroom teaching is easily accessible to an impressively wide range of students.

We noted that the seminary building has wheelchair access to the upper floor, and that there have not been any cases of the seminary being unable to accommodate a student due to particular special needs. Overall, the Committee would commend the seminary for its provision in this area.

The most striking, positive feature of the learning and teaching at the seminary is the intentional support of students whose first language is Estonian, English or Russian through simultaneous translation of lectures and classroom discussion and the provision of all academic resources in three languages. This supports not only the ongoing academic development of students from different language and ethnic groups, but also the social development of individuals from each group through ongoing interaction with others.

The seminary is a model of good practice in the area of simultaneous language translation of classroom teaching in theology and the Committee commends the seminary in this area. Translation facilities are of a high standard and the technical aspects are supported effectively. We were particularly impressed with the translators themselves, who are extremely competent not only in their languages but are also theologically qualified. This combination of skills ensures that translators can provide students with a clear sense of what is being said despite potentially sophisticated and technical language being used by lecturers. The seminary minimises barriers to communication through the technical, linguistic and theological skills present in its translation arrangements.

A further positive influence on the social development of students at the seminary comes through the involvement of students from different denominations including not only Methodist and Pentecostal students but also non-denominational churches and others (SED, p. 67) besides. It is clear that alumni value the exposure they have had to a range of denominational perspectives through their studies and that this enables them to contribute more effectively in Estonian society.

It is clear that the seminary works hard to provide consistent learning opportunities for students from these different language groups as far as possible. The Committee heard from students and staff at the seminary that the low number of theological books in the Estonian language is a concern and so

Estonian-language students often also read English. The situation for non-English speaking Russians is not so clear. We also heard that it is also the case that the extent of freely available good quality resources online is not the same in the different languages. The Committee recommends that the seminary monitors and reviews the combinations of languages spoken by its students and continues to work to ensure that no student is at a disadvantage with respect to learning resources.

The Committee found that teachers are dedicated to their teaching activities and to their students, giving many engaging and highly informative lectures and that students are enthusiastic about their learning in the seminary. The use of simultaneous translation is a mature and well-managed practice in the institution and the translators themselves are of a very high quality, having expertise both in their languages and the theological material that is being taught.

The seminary works with a pattern of student attendance that is common in Estonian higher education, but one which also presents significant challenges and the seminary should aim continually to enhance the effectiveness of the way it addresses these challenges. Students may be registered full-time while also working full-time and typically students also have family and other responsibilities in addition to their academic and paid work, so there is a significant pressure on time management in order to find time for learning. In order to accommodate these activities, students are present at the seminary for only a few days of intensive lectures each month. The Committee heard from students that this pattern of learning presents challenges. For some, a whole day of lectures is extremely tiring and the amount of information that can be taken in later in the day is limited. Two important issues highlight the importance of this concern: lecturing style and the proportion of a student's time that is spent outside the seminary.

First, with respect to lecturing style, the Committee heard from students that teaching sometimes consists of lectures that are read from a script and the extent of constructive group interaction and discussion is low in some cases. The students said that they become tired more quickly in this environment and the Committee recommends that the seminary take an intentional approach to the ongoing professional development of the pedagogical practices of its lecturing staff. We also heard that while the system of translation is excellent, it is inevitably more tiring to listen for long periods to translated material and so the aim to teach in multiple languages reinforces the importance of all lectures being of the highest pedagogical standard.

In light of this issue, the Committee recommends that the seminary should work to develop and enhance its formal systems for regular academic staff development, including sharing of innovation and good practice among lecturers and also presentations from experts outside the seminary. Staff development activities should apply in all subject areas and to all academic staff, irrespective of level of experience. The purpose of these activities is to develop further the existing high-quality teaching by ensuring that the student's experience of their intensive days of lectures are well managed and that lectures throughout the day are engaging and accessible for students.

Second, with respect to time spent outside the seminary, students are in the seminary for only a few days each month and so a very high priority should be placed on setting and documenting clear expectations of how students should be engaging with their studies during the majority of their time when they are not at the seminary. A strategic approach should be taken to developing the off-campus student experience. This mainly consists of the use of e-learning and the Committee welcomed the e-learning activities that are already taking place in the seminary and the developing use of the Moodle platform to provide this. We heard from students and alumni that they appreciate the existing provision, but it would be an advantage if all lectures could be recorded and provided through e-learning as a matter of course. The principal reason for doing this is not to enable students to avoid attending classes, but to ensure that students have an opportunity to review material after intensive lecture days have taken place. It is suggested that the existing excellent facilities for providing simultaneous translation of lectures and discussions be developed to enable the simultaneous recording of lectures in multiple languages so that these can be made available to students.

The recording of lectures is but one small part of the way that the use of Moodle can be developed to ensure that the off-campus student learning experience is as supportive as possible. While the Committee is not making a firm recommendation about which further e-learning activities the seminary should engage in, other possibilities might include taking a systematic approach to ensuring that the key readings in all courses and all languages are available electronically to support students during periods when they cannot access the library when needed; we support the use of discussion forums to maintain ongoing off-campus discussion of course materials and recommend to use it as frequently as possible to support on-going dialogue among students; and the monitoring of student use of Moodle so that disengagement with learning can be detected and followed-up. The Committee recommends ongoing innovation and development in this area as part of a documented strategy for supporting student learning off-campus and including a strategy for effective training of students and maintaining effective systems and technical support.

The Committee welcomed the seminary's practice of taking a register at classes and requiring students to attend a high proportion of lectures in order to succeed in their studies.

We heard from students that theoretical and practical work are connected, but the extent of reflection on practical work varies and so it is not clear that there is always a deep integration of theoretical and practical concerns. Many graduates in Estonia will have another job outside the church or parachurch organisations in order to support their church work as volunteers. The seminary should continue to support its good work in the development of students as theologically reflective practitioners in roles within the church and parachurch organisations. The seminary should also enable students to engage in constructive theological reflection within their other, non-church roles and thereby develop the breadth of its application of theoretical and practical concerns.

The Committee saw examples of final year project and dissertation work and concluded that while attention is given to research methodology, in several cases it lacks the theoretical foundation and depth expected at this level. For this reason a deeper connection between theory and practice should be forged in this area. The Committee recommends that the seminary publish and implement a plan for the support and development of staff research so that a greater sophistication in staff research will feed into a greater concern for methodology in student research.

In general, practical work is well-organised and supports the learning outcomes of the courses. We noted that both stakeholders and alumni were content with the effectiveness of practical training to prepare students for subsequent roles in the church. The alumni also noted that they were satisfied with the connection of theory and practice in their final thesis work and that they were not hampered in their subsequent steps beyond the seminary by any limitation in this area.

The students were clear that they would be active within the local church and involved in proclamation to wider society, but they were less sure that they would be required to engage in theological reflection or involvement with wider social concerns or with other practical contexts, finding it difficult to give examples. The Committee recommends that the seminary ensures and demonstrates that practical training, while focused on the local church context, also extends to the other contexts of employment that are likely to be experienced by graduates.

Commendations

- *Satisfied Students and Committed Staff:* The seminary is commended for the dedication of teachers and leadership to their students as reflected by the enthusiasm of students about their learning in the seminary.
- *Ethnically diverse teaching:* The very highly effective use of classroom translation to ensure that different language groups can be taught together and can discuss together, including well equipped and effectively maintained learning spaces and translators who are not only highly skilled in the appropriate languages but also qualified in theology and thus able to minimise barriers to effective communication of technical material.
- *Accommodation of special needs:* The Committee commends the seminary's general concern to ensure that students are able to study despite having special needs. In particular, the seminary is commended for the effective use of sign language translation and other support to ensure that deaf students can study successfully at the seminary. The use of sign language presents particular challenges to an institution of professional higher education that has a practical focus to its training and BMTS has demonstrated a deep commitment to its deaf students in providing a high quality student experience for them.

Recommendations

- *Transparency:* To develop the Seminary's approach to its learning and teaching activities so that they are less informal and more systematic, strategic and clearly documented, for example in the student support processes.

- *Admissions:* To enhance the applications process by monitoring its application and use and supporting achievement that is internationally competitive by providing a more rigorous evaluation of a prospective student's intellectual ability and his or her capacity to develop skills of critical analysis and academic reflection on practical activities.
- *Internationalisation:* To continue and to develop the formal relationship with Asbury Theological Seminary and other schools, enhancing it if possible with new forms of engagement to enable Asbury to function more effectively as a benchmark for BMTS' academic standards.
- *Multi-Language Teaching:* To continue current efforts to present a comparable learning experience for students with different first languages, including in the area of books and other learning resources, and to monitor and review the combinations of languages spoken by its students to ensure that no student is disadvantaged with respect to the learning resources they can access.
- *Academic Staff Development:* To develop and enhance existing opportunities for regular academic staff development, including sharing of innovation and good practice among lecturers and also presentations from experts outside the seminary.
- *Academic Management:* To ensure that all academic staff are aware of what activities are mandatory for them as part of their roles and that staff comply with these requirements, being fully supported to do so. It is particularly important to show that this is the case with respect to e-learning.
- *Research:* To strengthen staff research through a clear, documented and implemented strategy to increase research activity resulting in publications among staff in order to enrich the supervision of diploma papers and to increase their methodological rigor as a greater sophistication in staff research feeds into a greater concern for methodology in student research.
- *Teaching at Masters Level:* The Committee recommends that the seminary develop its staff research activity prior to engaging in masters level teaching.
- *Practical Preparation Beyond the Church:* The Committee recommends that the seminary ensures and demonstrates that in addition to the majority of practical training that is focused on the local church context, there are also opportunities to develop in theological reflection on the contexts of employment outside the church that are likely to be experienced by graduates.

1.2.2 Study programme development

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution bases its new study programmes on its purposes and the needs of the labour market, and takes into account the strategies of the country and expectations of the society.
- ✓ Development activities related to study programmes are systematic and regular, and different stakeholders are involved in the development of

study programmes.

- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
- ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ Graduate satisfaction with the quality of instruction and employer satisfaction with the quality and suitability to the requirements of the labor market of graduates are surveyed and analysed; the results are considered in the development of study programmes.

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Committee was impressed by the obvious satisfaction expressed by alumni with the education they had received and its relationship to their purpose in attending the seminary and their subsequent roles in churches and related organisations. The close relationship between the seminary and its principal employer – the Methodist church – was clear in many ways and it was clear from meetings with stakeholders that there are many examples of the practical activities of the seminary providing students with direct, reflective experience of the activities of the church.

The Committee read that curriculum development takes account of stakeholder requirements reflecting the needs of the labour market, while seeking internal coherence and practical relevance (SED, 37) of the programme. Curriculum development has taken into account (a) the international requirements for an UMC pastor, and (b) the skills required for a pastoral caregiver by the Estonian Qualification Authority. The internal coherence of the programme is clear from the description given to the Committee (SED, section 6.1 and curriculum spreadsheet linked from SED) and we found that the different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole. It is clear to the Committee from meetings with students, alumni and stakeholders that this is the case. The work of development is focused on faculty as it should be, with the Academic Council further considering and approving decisions. It was confirmed to us by the dean that the ultimate responsibility for approving changes to study programmes rests with the Academic Council, as it should. The effectiveness of development activities is demonstrated by the recent transition from a 4-year to a 3-year curriculum (see curriculum spreadsheet linked from SED).

We heard that the availability of theological books and other learning resources is different in each language. If the learning opportunities and resources available to students from one or other language group cannot be broadly similar to those available to another language group, then it is advantageous that the seminary has had to register each language group as a separate curriculum and the seminary should *consider* whether it would be advantageous if its syllabi and curricula were further and more clearly differentiated by language than they are

at present. This might enable students to see clearly where what is being offered and expected differs from language to language. This is important because at times equivalent readings cannot be given in different languages. Also, sometimes there are not enough teachers for supervision and assessment work in a particular language. (We heard from the seminary leadership that more fluent Russian speakers are required for mentoring and supervision work and would encourage these issues to be addressed as of first importance to ensure that students are not disadvantaged.) These language-related differences raise questions about the equivalency of learning outcomes and thus suggest that the seminary should consider separating its descriptions of the programmes more clearly, while maintaining its excellent practice of integrating classroom teaching and other activities as far as possible.

We heard from students and alumni that levels of satisfaction with the curriculum are high and this is reflected in the feedback gathered from graduates each year (see SED, p. 38). It was clear to the Committee that the study programme includes significant elements of practical training and that the content and scope of this training is based on planned learning outcomes. However, alumni do suggest that internships and practical study opportunities could be improved (p. 39) and the Committee formed a view through its meetings that the seminary should develop its understanding of what it means to reflect theologically on practical activities and how such reflection should be assessed. The Committee recommends that the seminary's leadership and academic staff engage in a process to consider their work in this area.

Commendations

- The seminary has produced a curriculum that is in general well organised and has proven its ability to enhance and develop the curriculum in response to student needs and a changing context.

Recommendations

- To consider an increased differentiation of the curriculum and syllabus documentation for programmes in different languages so that student expectations better reflect the different opportunities for study available in different languages.
- To engage in a process to consider what it means for students to reflect theologically on practical activities and how the encouragement and assessment of this can be enhanced in the institution.
- To establish a formal body for alumni and employers in order to engage more in the institutions activities and to give feedback to curriculum.

1.2.3 Student academic progress and student assessment

Requirements

- ✓ Student academic progress is monitored and supported.
- ✓ Student assessment supports learning and is in line with learning outcomes.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ A higher education institution has an effective system for taking account of prior learning and work experience.

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Committee read and saw that students' academic progress is monitored by a formal Student Information System, which supplements the strong informal knowledge of each student that staff believe they have in a small institution. We welcomed the use of the Student Information System and concluded from its meeting with students that its inability to present information in Russian is a difficulty for Russian students. It is clear that this difficulty is not of the Seminary's making, but the situation has persisted for four years and it is important that the Seminary continues to press for the Russian-language provision and, if possible, considers alternatives that are capable of supporting its Russian students. While the problem is not of the seminary's making, the Committee would like to see a Student Information System available to students in all of the languages in which it teaches provided as a priority and by the time of any future review.

It is clear from the syllabi provided to the panel by BMTS that there is a welcome diversity of assessment methods used in the curriculum, an appreciation of the learning outcomes methodology, and a recognition of the different information required to describe assessment tasks. However, the seminary's approach of giving relatively unconstrained freedom to academic staff to determine assessment tasks and criteria leads to an unwelcome diversity and lack of clarity and consistency with regard to the qualities needed for a piece of work to be awarded a given mark. The Committee recommends that the seminary considers in a collegiate fashion the creation of assessment criteria for different task types as well as other centralised requirements and guidelines for assessments that are then applied consistently. This criteria and requirements should apply to written tasks, examinations as well as any other types of task through which students receive credit at a given level. We welcomed the suggestion that was made in a meeting that the seminary could introduce a Faculty Handbook as a place to specify these requirements. The Committee recommends that the seminary look at approaches made to assessment elsewhere within Estonia and internationally

in order to enhance its existing approach to assessment and to make it more coherent.

The Committee noted that the majority of assessment is done by a module teacher without systematic reflection on the marking from other members of the faculty. While the use of multiple markers for assessed work is not as common in Estonia as elsewhere, the Committee recommends that the seminary increase the number of assessments that involve more than one marker judging the quality of the work, whether this is through double marking in which two markers mark independently or through a moderation process in which a second assessor considers the marked work to confirm that the assessment criteria have been consistently and properly applied.

The Committee read and was satisfied that the seminary makes use of APEL to enable a student's prior learning to be incorporated into the course of study (E.g. see SED, p. 61).

Recommendations

- To ensure that a Student Information System is available in Russian as soon as possible.
- To increase the number of assessments that involve more than one marker judging the quality of the work.
- To introduce a more centralised approach to assessment criteria and marking requirements and guidelines to ensure that students experience consistency across the curriculum.
- *Off-Campus Student Expectations:* To set explicitly the expectations for students and staff activity during the long periods that students are not present on campus, and to develop continually the off-campus experience of students in terms of the consistency and extent of e-learning provision. A very high level of support should be present in all courses. It is expected that this will include providing electronic versions of key readings, taking full advantage of what is allowed by Estonian copyright law. It is also expected that audio recordings of all lectures in all languages would be provided as a matter of course in order to ensure that students have an opportunity to review material after intensive lecture days have taken place.
- *Consistency:* To develop assessment criteria for student work that are clear, appropriate to educational level, and clearly understood and implemented by all staff.

1.2.4 Support processes for learning

Requirements

- ✓ The organisation of studies creates an opportunity for students to complete their studies within the standard period.

- ✓ A higher education institution provides students with counselling related to their studies and career.
- ✓ A higher education institution supports student international mobility.
- ✓ Modern technical and educational technology resources are used to organise educational activities.
- ✓ Students are periodically asked for feedback on learning and support processes (the organisation of studies, assessment, counselling, etc.); the results of surveys are taken into account in improvement activities.

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Committee was generally satisfied that the organization of studies creates an opportunity for students to complete their studies within the standard period. However, as mentioned above, we read with concern that, consistent with many institutions in Estonia and for reasons largely outside its control, BMTS is operating in 4-day study sessions, 11 sessions a year to facilitate simultaneous registration as a full-time student and full-time paid work alongside. We were not surprised to hear in interviews (including interviews with students, who talk about the difficulty of completing homework and assessments) that the main reason for dropout is poor time management due to the pressures of balancing academic, family, work and other responsibilities. This emphasizes the importance of continuing intentionally to enhance the support for students when off-campus through e-learning and to ensure that students are given the best possible support to help them find time and structure their time to enable studies to be completed. It also emphasizes the importance of attending to the student learning experience when students are at the seminary. Recommendations related to this are included above.

The Committee read that the support services for students include both formal and informal components, which is inevitable for a small school. We read that, formally, students have access to psychological counselling, faith-based spiritual guidance, academic counselling from the academic dean and registrar, academic mentoring for practicums and diploma papers and annual career counselling (SED, 42-43). We heard in interviews that some aspect of this are works in progress and some has been introduced recently and is not yet fully operational or in a position to be evaluated. This is, in part, due to the change of leadership. We welcomed developments in the area of formal student support, but gained the impression that there is at present a strong reliance on informal support for students and a need for these developments to be implemented systematically and effectively as a matter of priority. We found from interviews that Russian students in particular are in need of greater support and that it is not clear how the seminary can assure itself that all students receive the necessary personal, academic and spiritual support that they need in the course of their development.

The Committee read of examples of the early development of international student exchange (SED, p. 43). It is clear that the institution supports student international mobility and the Committee would encourage an increase in internationalization and student mobility in future. We suggest exploring the

possibility of such exchanges as part of a renewal of the relationship with Asbury Theological Seminary, and/or with other institutions who would provide useful benchmarks for academic quality and standards for BMTS.

The Committee found that BMTS is making use of modern technical and educational technology through the use of online systems including the Student Information System and Moodle for e-learning. Furthermore, the seminary maintains effective technical support for its work in simultaneous translation. The Committee would encourage BMTS to develop its strategic approach to e-learning provision and its enrichment of the online student learning experience through ongoing innovation and enhancement of its use of Moodle. As noted above, the seminary should also require that there is a consistent, high-quality resource available in the online space for all courses and this is particularly important given the amount of time that students spend outside the seminary. Recommendations in this area are listed in a previous section. Here it is noted that the seminary should ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly identified to ensure that all academic staff can meet the requirements of providing e-learning resources to students.

We heard from students that online resources are typically provided in a timely way, but that materials from previous years are left up for students to access, and these materials can contain confusing information that does not apply to the current year. Furthermore, we heard that when a new course is produced it can be the case that e-learning resources are not available to students in a timely way. The Committee recommends that processes take these concerns into account.

The Committee read that the seminary gathers both institutional and course-level feedback. (SED, p. 44). We heard that the results of surveys are taken into account in the improvement of activities. The strong seminary ethos, small size and informality of BMTS encourages students to provide informal feedback, but we read that the seminary is confident that, "In a small school, most students dare to approach faculty and staff informally with their questions and concerns". (2.4.2). However, the seminary should be able to assure itself that the voice of even quieter and more diffident students would be heard and responded to in its formal feedback processes.

<u>Commendations</u>

- The seminary shows great concern for individual students and students are generally satisfied with their experience. The seminary has a caring ethos and there is strong informal support for students.
- The seminary has low dropout rates.

<u>Recommendations</u>

- To support informal care for students with the full implementation and ongoing monitoring of a formal system or systems that provide all students with the required academic, personal and spiritual support required in the course of the programme.

- To continue to develop student international mobility with institutions whose academic quality and standards provide excellent benchmarks for BMTS. Also create more opportunities for students to engage with research, such as provide opportunities to take part at conferences.
- To ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly identified to ensure that all academic staff can meet the requirements of providing e-learning resources to students.
- To ensure that there are effective processes for (i) updating e-learning resources each year to ensure that all required materials are available in a timely way and out of date materials are removed, and (ii) ensuring that new courses are supported by e-learning materials from the start date.

1.3. Research, development and/or other creative activity (RDC)

Area 3	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
RDC effectiveness		**x**		
RDC resources and support processes		**X**		
Student research supervision		**X**		

General comments:

The BMTS is an ambitious and result-oriented institution. This is a positive and important asset of any higher education institution. With rather small resources the Seminary has been able to build an institution that has education for an increasing number of students as their first priority. The challenge is, of course, that good higher education institutions need, at the same time, to be research driven. With poor or no research institutions in this field are not able to give the teaching quality the students can expect.
Against this background it is obvious for the Committee that the leadership of the BMTS is very well aware of this challenge. But to build a well-functioning research context and an increase of the research quality needs time, resources and competence. This is the general challenge for all higher education institutions. In

the case of the BMTS one needs to add the extra ambition of developing a profile of an Applied Research institution.
With the limited access to written material (very few articles published in English and almost all student research in non-English languages) the Committee recognizes that the BMTS has initiated long term strategical plans to pursue its research ambition. Therefore is can be no surprise that the grading in all three categories below are only "partial". This grading means that the Committee recognizes the ambition presented in plans and practices, but concludes at this stage, that there is more organized quality work and individual work that remains to be done before the top level is reached. It will be interesting to see whether the situation changes when the next future assessment takes place.
In the field of theology and church related research the ambition to deliver specific contributions within the area of Applied Research is both interesting and promising. The committee will advise BMTS to focus on discussions on what Applied Research means in theology and church related research. The challenge is to combine practical cases or empirical data with hermeneutical and critical interpretation. The balance between hermeneutics and pure "biblical" interpretation and how the insights can lead to future practical skills and knowledge production will be the core challenge to approach in the years to come.

1.3.1 RDC effectiveness

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution has defined its RDC objectives and measures their implementation.
- ✓ A higher education institution monitors the needs of society and the labour market, and considers them in planning its RDC activities.

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Committee saw that in the period 2014-2018, 9 publications are listed in the high level scientific publications of the Estonian Research Information System. It is remarkable that 7 out of 8 publications are written by one person (Meeli Tankler), the outgoing rector of BMTS, one monograph by Külli Toniste, and one by Ingmar Kurg (a retired professor). The Committee noticed that there are quite a few publications level 6. The Self-Assessment Report mentions several activities relevant for these levels: Different staff members participate in national and international conferences and in joint trainings of theological schools sponsored by the Estonian Ministry of Interior. Some of the staff are also invited to give presentations at different partner universities abroad.

The Committee is aware of the fact that the research of BMTS is in the area of Applied Science and that not all the research-output might be listed in the category 'high level scientific publications'. However, the Committee holds on to the principle that Applied Research should at least meet the following criteria:

- Theory based research
- Methodological adequate research
- Practice related research

The fact that not all the publications of BMTS are listed in the Research Information System does not automatically imply that they would fit in the category of Applied Research. The Committee recommends BMTS to reflect on Applied Research in theology and to mark the distinction between publications in Applied Research and Popular Practice-related Publications.

It is a weakness of the Seminary that so few faculty members publish. The Development plan seems to have been developed in order to address this situation. The Committee realizes that the interest for and priority of Applied Research is a real challenge for the Seminary and it might be that the results are not well mirrored in the national publication list. The Committee recommends that the Seminary pays full attention to the concept of Applied Research and finds a strategy to carry out this type of research in all the theological disciplines. The Committee suggests that the results of solid Applied Research could perhaps in the future be more visible in the national lists of scientific publications. To prioritize the content and profile of Applied Research in the context of church and theology is an important and urgent challenge for BMTS. The Committee believes that the strengthening of the research will improve the quality and standing of the Seminary.

Commendations

- The activities plan for 2016-2019 is good and shows ambitions on a realistic level.
- There are positive contributions into national and international networks.
- There is an obvious awareness in the leadership group to enhance and increase the research activities in the Seminary.

Recommendations

- The activities plan should be developed further into a more long reaching research plan for the next 5-7 years. The Seminary has to select areas of preference in research and has to allocate resources in order to achieve concrete output results.
- Professional publications and research output need to be an expected outcome for all faculty staff
- In order to achieve more publications, the Seminary has to secure research-time and research-resources) for staff members.

1.3.2 RDC resources and support processes

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution has an effective RDC support system.

- ✓ A higher education institution has financial resources needed for RDC development and a strategy that supports their acquisition.
- ✓ A higher education institution participates in different RDC networks.
- ✓ RDC infrastructure is being updated and used effectively.

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Committee saw that BMTS has a good and detailed development and implementation plan for 2016-2019. The plan addresses specific parts of the plan to be implemented during the years to come. The Self-Assessment Report shows that Euro 3000 is so far allocated to support faculty in travel and conference fees. Some faculty members participate in national and international research networks and some get invitations to present and to publish in journals. The MOU with Asbury Theological Seminary has an important plat in the future research planning.

The Committee saw that MBTS has initiated relevant measures in the Development plan to enhance the research quality. The Committee heard that the leadership inspires and stimulates staff members to develop relevant research. We also heard, however, that, although there is verbal support, there is not really a strategy how to make it work in practice. The Committee believes that the alliance with Asbury Seminary is promising for the further development of the research quality of the Seminary's staff.

The Committee recommends that leadership and staff reflect more on the nature and the content of the Seminary's research. We read in the Implementation Plan (2016-2019) that the Seminary strives for 'active participation in discussions regarding church and society […] from the theological perspective'. The Committee believes that the contribution of BMTS will be more specific and valuable when it coheres with the identity of the Seminary and proceeds from practice oriented Applied Research. The Committee recommends to strengthen the plan for future research development and to create additional funds for making progress in research.

The Committee realizes that the leadership has to decide whether it is possible or desirable to give priority both to academic and Applied Research. The Applied Research seldom shows in the national lists of publication. But the Applied Research is necessary, both from the church and the affiliated congregations and from society at large. The research that is visible in the national lists, however, is at the moment mostly academic and classical.

Out of the staff of 8-9 faculty, two have a PhD, the others have a Master. This is a good average level, even if 1-2 more with a PhD would have improved the quality a lot. The Committee suggests that the Seminary gave priority to one or two staff-members to pursue a PhD within a realistic amount of time. The institution would benefit if the new PhD's did select topics related to the question what Applied Research implies on a PhD level. The intra-linguistic and cultural situation in the Seminary itself could also be a field of research. Hermeneutical and social scientific issues belong to this field and should be included.

Commendations

- MBTS has a realistic and relevant development plan.
- Two, out of 8/9 staff with a PhD is very positive.
- The ambition to develop Applied Research is interesting.
- The increased activity in national and international networks is promising.

Recommendations

- More resources need to be allocated for individual research
- The Seminary could initiate a mentor system by bringing excellent international Methodist scholars to supervise junior staff and co-author articles
- The leadership should encourage and expect 1-2 more faculty to pursue a PhD
- The issue of Applied Research needs to be more seriously reflected, methodologically and hermeneutically.

1.3.3 Student research supervision

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution includes students of all academic cycles in research, creative or project activity; and systematically surveys student satisfaction with their supervision.
- ✓ Professionalism, effectiveness and the workload of supervisors are reasonably balanced, which ensures the quality of research papers and positive graduation rates.
- ✓ Students are guided to recognize plagiarism and to avoid it.

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Committee saw evidence that the support process of diploma papers has been improved the last years. The whole process has been planned in more detail and the students receive more guidance (1) during the research and writing process and (2) with choosing topics that are practical and relevant for the churches. In cooperation with the library of Tallinn University the Seminary gave instructions to their students on the use of library and online databases. The Seminary also offered a training in empirical research methods and academic writing. The Committee heard that the students have received these improvements with positive responses.

There has also been a larger number of short time exchanges for students. A Methodist based network is planning to engage in this field.

In 2017 the number of diploma paper was all time high (14 out of a total of 48 the last five years). The level of BA is a challenging level when it comes to diploma paper. The Committee realizes that one cannot expect too much of methodological and theoretical reflections on this level. Moreover, the Committee

could only read papers written in English. We got the impression that students have developed good papers, both historically and practically. What lacks, however, is reflections on how the papers really can impact practice and whether the collected materials are relevant and critically analyzed at the same time. In general, the Committee recommends to strengthen two elements in the diploma papers: (1) the theoretical foundation of the research, (2) the analytical and critical skills of the student's research. These elements are relevant and necessary for a diploma paper on the BA level.

The Committee believes that it will also be in the interest of the church to give more priority to a reflected and critical competence of the students in the field of Applied Research. The Committee is significantly impressed by the ambition to deliver good applied research to the congregations and to the society. To improve this quality further, there is a need to combine competence development among faculty and stronger supervision of the supervisors. All this should be further developed in a new research plan.

The Self-Assessment Report gives good evidence for procedures to avoid plagiarism.

Commendations

- The initiative, taken in 2016, to improve and enhance the quality of the diploma thesis, is good and seems to give initial results.
- The cooperation with different academic and church bodies to introduce diploma students to libraries, practical issues and also to build networks among themselves are very positive.

Recommendations

- The development plan is good and relevant, but the Seminary should also develop a new Research plan for the next 5-7 years, addressing the fields and the competence that are expected to improve.
- When Applied Research and research relevant for the churches is given priority, there could be developed a specific course on the hermeneutics and methodology of Applied Research.
- Junior staff should be more encouraged to do own research and in this way become more competent also as supervisors.
- The distinction between mentor and academic supervisor seems not to be fully clear, at least not in the documents. The leadership should address this challenge in their future planning.

1.4. Service to the society

Area 4	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition

Popularization of its activities and involvement in social development		**x**		
In-service training and other educational activities for general public		**x**		
Other public-oriented activities		**x**		

General comments:

The Assessment Committee has the overall impression that BMTS confirms partially to requirements set for the service to the society section. BMTS has a system for popularising its core activities in a formal level. However, use of social media is not as active as it could be. BMTS is recognized in its integration work as there are students with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. BMTS is integrates also deaf students to the educational system. As in BMTS there are students not only from Methodist churches but also from other denominations it fosters ecumenism and religious cohesion in society. At the same time there are not much public oriented activities. Participation of the employees of the BMTS in professional associations is low. The in-service training has possibilities to be developed further as a system of measuring the needs of the target groups is developed.

1.4.1 Popularization of its activities and involvement in social development

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution has a system for popularising its core activities.
- ✓ Employees of an institution of higher education participate in the activities of professional associations, and as experts, in other social supervisory boards and decision-making bodies.

Evidence and Analysis

The Self-Evaluation Report states (p. 10) that the BMTS has a special emphasis on mission that is defined 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." During the interviews the Assessment Committee heard that the alumni were satisfied with practically oriented theological studies of the BMTS.

The Committee saw evidence that BMTS contributes to the development of Estonian society in the following areas: integration, ecumenical relations, and from 2016 onward, education of people from deaf community. The BMTS is the only theological institution in Estonia where education in provided in four languages (Estonian, Russian, English, sign language). The Committee saw evidence that the multilingual approach brings together people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and provides an environment for integration in the educational framework. BMTS is the only institution where the theological education is provided in Russian and from 2016 onward in sign language. BMTS efforts were recognized in 2007 with the award for integration by the Estonian Council of Churches as "activities have supported the cooperation and integration of different national and cultural communities in Estonia." (Self-Evaluation Report, p.11). In the interview with the staff it was mentioned that one of the English speaking staff members is responsible for English speaking Methodist ministry in Tallinn to accommodate the needs of foreigners in Estonia.

The Commitee believes that BMTS has a positive impact on Estonian ecumenical life and religious cohesion as it brings together students from different denominations and provides a friendly environment for personal interaction. The Committee welcomes that fact that BMTS has formalized partnerships with the Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church, the Salvation Army in Estonia and the Estonian Evangelical Alliance, a Protestant Christian ecumenical association (Self-Evaluation Report, pp. 6, 9, 11). BMTS belongs to the network European Evangelical Accreditation Association (Self-Evaluation Report, p. 22)

The BMTS has developed a system for popularising its core activities in a formal level. As stated in the Self-Evaluation Report (p.55): "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." The Report list also other communication channels: twice a year appearance in two Christian radio-stations in regard with open house event in spring and recruitment of new students in August, occasional participation in different television programs etc. BMTS has been present at information event "Teeviit" (Signpost) where most higher education institutions promote themselves and recruit potential students. In 2017 a video presentation for recruitment purposes was used in congregations. It was broadcasted also in Christian TV-channel TV7. Self-Evaluation Report (p.55) mentions that the video was put together by the BMTS alumni. The BMTS Facebook account has the latest post from 14 August 2018. BMTS webpage does not have a link to BMTS Facebook page. The Committee heard during the interviews that alumni are involved in these activities and that the alumni also believe that still some improvement can be made. .

According to the Estonian Research Information System only rector Külli Tõniste is member of professional associations (Society of Biblical Literature, Institute of Biblical Research, Wesleyan Theological Society). However, the Self-Evaluation Report (p.26) mentions one staff-member to be a board member of the Estonian

Bible Society. Some employees participate in the activities of professional associations, e.g. the former rector Meeli Tankler (EEA, NEECC, ECC, EBS). The faculty members output to public discussion is modest and the Self-Evaluation Report shows that the articles are mostly published in denominational journals (both at a national and international level).

The Committee believes that the research done in the diploma papers could be uploaded to the seminary's homepage. It makes the student's research accessible for the wider society.

Commendations

- Integration of the Estonian and Russian speaking people in local level (Estonian context). Impact on general integration in Estonian society.
- Integration of different ethnic group. Creating possibilities for social coherence.
- Have promoted their seminary by organizing the Open House event
- Have participated and introduced their seminary in the national youth information event "Teeviit" (Signpost) to potential new students.
- Positive impact on ecumenical work and interaction (students from different denominations). Graduates work in different churches. Ecumenical networking.
- Integration of the deaf into the professional work-life of churches and religious groups.
- Formalized partnerships with the Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church, the Salvation Army. Member of the Estonian Council of Churches and the Estonian Evangelical Alliance.
- The former rector of BMTS is actively involved in many international institutions.
- Creates possibilities for graduates to work with different language groups.

Recommendations

- The seminary employees should more actively participate in the activities of professional (theological) associations (e.g. Academic Theological Society, Estonian Society for the Study of Religions).
- The seminary should create a functioning system for popularising its core activities (for example a more active use of Facebook and other social media channels).
- Employees are to be encouraged to write more articles, both scientific articles and popular scientific articles.

- All the articles, even the popular scientific ones, should be published on the Estonian Research Information System (ETIS) homepage.
- Increasing the presence in media.
- Diploma papers could be uploaded to the seminary's homepage in order to make the student's research accessible.

1.4.2 In-service training and other educational activities for general public

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution has defined the objectives regarding in-service training and measures their implementation.
- ✓ In-service training is planned in accordance with the needs of target groups as well as with the potentials and purposes of an institution of higher education.
- ✓ Participant satisfaction with the quality of in-service training is regularly surveyed and the results are used in planning improvement activities.

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Committee noticed that the Self-Evaluation Report does not define the objectives of in-service training and saw that the in-service training is conducted mostly as short courses or seminars on practical topics in local congregations (p. 57). However, according to the additional material "In-service training is organized in three primary modes: as special courses organized in the BMTS, as seminars organized in churches at the invitation of the congregation and as biannual Estonian Methodist clergy training sessions jointly organized by the BMTS and church leadership." As a novelty, in 2018 Methodist clergy training session included BMTS students who were invited due to their potential. The participation in in-service training has varied from 75 persons in 2014 to 121 in 2016, and 109 in 2018.

The Committee noticed that these seminars are open to general public. However, the Self-Evaluation Report does not indicate how the results of trainings are measured, and whether there is any feedback possibility from participants. The additional materials, however, explain that goals and content of the in-service trainings are set by the Church leaders and as the target group (i.e. Methodist pastors) "is a small tight knit community" the feedback is informal and easily given. The feedback in the additional material clarifies that "In-service training organized in the Seminary as special courses are evaluated in terms of quality and results on the same basis as other Seminary courses using Lime Survey questionnaires of the participants." In-service training themes, as indicated in the additional material, are relevant for acting clergy in present day Estonia. Thus in 2017 in-service training seminar for Methodist clergy "How to renew the church

in order to speak to Estonians today?" had 30 participants which is almost 100% of the Methodist clergy in Estonia.

The Committee noticed that the problem with promotion of these events is recognized by the BMTS (Self-Evaluation Report p. 58). While the BMTS notes that "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," the seminary also agrees that, "Communication to other denominations as well as to the society could be better." (Self-Evaluation Report pp. 58-59)

Commendations

- BMTS organizes different types of in-service trainings and the content and goals are set taking into account the needs of the target group (Methodist clergy) as defined by the UMC leadership.
- BMTS has offered young people, who work with troubled children to audit their Inductive Bible Study introductory course.

Recommendations

- The summarizing feedback to the in-service trainings organized by the seminary should be made public.
- The seminary should have a systematic plan on how to map out the needs of the target groups. The objectives of the in-service training should be defined in the documents of BMTS.
- The Seminary should evaluate the results of the in-service-training activities periodically.
- Seminary staff should present more clearly the professional affiliation with the seminary while interacting with media.

1.4.3 Other public-oriented activities

Requirements

- ✓ Public-oriented activities are purposeful, the results of the activities are periodically evaluated, and improvements are introduced based on those evaluations.
- ✓ A higher education institution contributes to the enhancement of community welfare by sharing its resources (library, museums, sports facilities, etc.) and/or by organising concerts, exhibitions, performances, conferences, fairs and other events.

Evidence and Analysis

Some public-oriented activities have taken place, but the Committee noticed that there were only a few and in a narrow field, e.g. the Churches Night in Tallinn, Wesley Memorial Day in Paide and an art exhibition in BMTS building (Self-Evaluation Report, p. 58).

The Committee noticed that the diploma paper of one of the graduates gives good advice how to organize public-oriented activities better. The diploma paper pointed out and advised that the seminary should be involved in charity work, organize blood donations, concerts and other community activities (Self-Evaluation Report, diploma paper of Kaire Lotamõis). The Committee recommends that the Seminary should take notice of these suggestions and broaden the public-oriented activities.

Commendations

- BMTS has participated in the Churches Night in Tallinn and Wesley Memorial Day in Paide.
- The seminary library is accessible to the public.

Recommendations

- The information that the seminary library can be used by the public, should be on the homepage.
- The Seminary should reconsider and broaden the public-oriented activities.

2. Tartu Theological Seminary

Institutional Accreditation

Tartu Theological Seminary is the private professional higher education institution, owned by The Union of Free Evangelical and Baptist Churches of Estonia (UFEBC). It serves the needs of evangelical Protestant Churches and Christians, with a special focus on Free Church Theology. The UFEBC consist of approximately 85 churches. The Seminary has about 50 students studying at the university level of Professional Higher Education. The Union of Seventh Day Adventists sends their students to the Seminary and the school also harbors some students from Pentecostal Churches.

The predecessor of TTS, The Estonian Seminary for Baptist Preachers, was opened in the Spring of 1922. The school was the first free-church educational institution in Estonia. The school was closed between 1940 – 1989. After re-opening the school gained the status of government-acknowledged professional higher education institution. After re-opening more than 100 students have graduated. The present Higher Education Curriculum of the Seminary is called: *Free Church Theology and Leadership*, and received full government recognition in 2017.

Comments:

TTS is rooted in a relatively long tradition of Free Church theology and practice within the Estonian society. It is both visible and obvious that staff and leaders are very much aware of the historical role the Seminary played before and under the soviet time. This experience is a crucial and important part of the profile and reliability of the Seminary. The experiences of the past and the challenges of today have created a strong awareness of Free Church identity and a concern for today's society.

The activities of the Seminary are well-organized and the teaching is carefully planned and carried out with keen theological reflection on church practices. In accordance with the characteristics of higher education, the students learn to reflect analytically and critically on religious and social practices.

Summary of the institutional accreditation

	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
Organisational management and	**X**			

performance				
Teaching and learning	**X**			
RDC		**x**		
Service to society	**X**			

General Findings and Recommendations

The strengths and the challenges of TTS within the Estonian national Higher Education context.

1. Strengths

The Assessment Committee has identified six main strengths that distinguish TTS in the Estonian context of Academy, Church and Society.

- The Seminary realizes that analytical and critical skills are characteristic for higher education.
- The Seminary developed an interesting and good mentoring system that is also used outside the seminary.
- A noticeable clarity and strength in the leadership of the Seminary.
- Staff and students have a noticeable awareness of the mission of the Seminary in today's society.
- A well-developed usage of e-learning to support the students when they are not on campus.
- Increasing number of young students and of the younger generation in the governing bodies of the church.

2. Challenges and Recommendations

As a small school, TTS is limited in staff, students and finances. The Assessment Committee noticed, however, that the work in the Seminary is done in close connection with the churches and that the churches support the Seminary. The intended move to Tallinn is sustainable because the churches guarantee adequate housing facilities. The Assessment Committee has identified five areas that need special attention.

- Since the daily practices of the Seminary are free and informal, the leadership should ensure that the decisions are less informal and clearly documented, for example in the area of curriculum development and in the contact with alumni.

- The Assessment Committee encourages the Seminary to further develop research in the area of Applied Science and to make a long-term research plan for the Seminary as a whole.
- The Assessment Committee encourages the Seminary to further develop ideas of research in the area of mission and social outreach in combination with Free Church Theology.
- For the sustainability of the leadership, delegate tasks and continue to distribute areas of responsibilities.
- Develop a strategy and create opportunities to make TTS more visible in secular Estonian society and media. Use the move to Tallinn to present the Seminary to the general public.

2.1. Organisational management and performance

Area 1	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
General management		**X**		
Personnel management	**x**			
Management of financial resources and infrastructure	**x**			

General comments:

The Assessment Committee has the overall impression that TTS is a well-managed small Seminary with clear leadership structures. The rector and the leader of studies are fulltime staff members and very qualified for their positions. The leadership has a clear vision on research-based education for the benefit of the churches and society. Over the last five years the budget has grown remarkably and financial stability has been achieved. The Seminary operates in close contact with the Union of Free Evangelical and Baptist Churches of Estonia (UFEBC), the owner of the Seminary. The UFEBC shares in the financial responsibilities and planning of the Seminary and the rector meets on a regular basis with the leadership-team. For the long-time sustainability of the Seminary young staff-members should be prepared for leadership responsibilities.

2.1.1 General Management

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution has defined its role in the Estonian society.
- ✓ The development plan and the related action plans of a higher education institution arise from the concrete purposes that are built on its mission, vision and core values, and that consider the country's priorities and society's expectations.
- ✓ Key results of a higher education institution have been defined.
- ✓ The leadership of a higher education institution conducts the preparation and implementation of development and action plans and includes the members and other stakeholders in this work.
- ✓ Liability at all management levels has been defined and described, and it supports the achievement of institutional purposes and the coherent performance of core processes.
- ✓ Internal and external communications of a higher education institution (including marketing and image building) are purposeful and managed.

Evidence and Analysis

The Self-Evaluation Report and the interviews show that Tartu Theological Seminary has clearly defined its role in the Estonian Society and marked its own position in the field of religion and religious education.

The Seminary supports the comprehensive and lifelong development of individual Christians and congregations, and carries the motto: "For the good and the growth of the congregations". One of the challenges for the near future is to be more present and visible in the society at large. After the Soviet time, the Seminary and the churches needed time to reconstruct their own identity and their role in the Estonian society. One of the strategic objectives of the Seminary is that 'the influence of the school is theologically prominent in the free church context and that the school is meaningfully present in the "secular" society'. During the interviews with the leadership, stakeholders and staff, the Assessment Committee found evidence that on the basis of the self-consciousness of the longer tradition of the Baptist Churches in Estonia the Seminary will generate and stimulate theological reflection on new and more holistic views on mission and on the social impact of church-practices in today's society. The list of the organizing of and the participation in conferences shows that the seminary's staff is present in networks which address societal issues.

Since 2016 the board of the Seminary is called 'Supervisory Board'. The most important decisions are made by the owner of the Seminary: The Board of Elders of the UFEBC. The daily management consists of Rector, Head of Studies and the Head of Development. The school operates according to the Development Plan for 2016-2020, which holds the vision that the school functions as the Free Church Educational Centre. The Seminary makes a clear distinction between the

university-level program and the Adult education (continuing education) program, although classes are sometimes combined. The five key-words for the new period of the Development Plan are in line with the identity of the Seminary and show at the same time the innovative ideas of the leadership. The Assessment Committee appreciates the Seminary's awareness of the requirement of the national and international benchmarking of the school.

The documents and the interviews show that leadership and stakeholders have a keen view on the needs of the churches and the challenges of today's society. The Assessment Committee believes, however, that the Seminary can make progress by developing a more reflective and critical approach to the relationship between church and society. As the School exists for the benefit and the growth of Churches in Estonia, one of the learning outcomes will be that churches have a clear understanding of their identity and of their role in society. The interviews made clear that there are different traditions within the Estonian Baptist and Free Churches. Some traditions are more emotional, some more intellectual. In teaching and the research the Seminary deals with these challenges. Controversial questions in the churches (such as the ordination of woman) are openly discussed and studied in the Seminary and the Assessment Committee observed an open and free atmosphere among students and staff. The Seminary has an average gender balanced student body and 33 % of staff is women.

The rector oversees the quality assessment of staff and gives feedback and advice on specific issues. The competence of the academic staff is stimulated and strengthened by participation in the international Baptist network of institutions in Amsterdam (formerly in Prague).

Commendations

- Tartu Theological Seminary has defined its role in the Estonian society and seeks to develop its understanding of the role of churches in today's society.
- The Seminary has a strong leadership in terms of management and vision.
- Leadership and staff have an adequate estimation of the quality of teaching and research on the level of Higher Professional Education.

Recommendations

- Maintain formal leadership roles in the daily performance of the Seminary.
- Delegate and distribute leadership responsibilities as much as possible (because of the workload of the rector and the long term sustainability of the Seminary).
- Develop a long term research plan for the Seminary as a whole.
- Raise funds for research activities of staff.
- Initiate and plan research activities (of Applied Research) in the area of the intersection between church and society.
- Observe that the daily decisions are made less informal and clearly documented.

2.1.2 Personnel Management

Requirements

- ✓ The principles and procedures for employee recruitment and development arise from the objectives of the development plan of a higher education institution, and ensure academic sustainability.
- ✓ When selecting, appointing and evaluating members of the academic staff, their past activities (teaching, RDC, student feedback, etc.) are taken into account in a balanced way.
- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
- ✓ The principles of remuneration and motivation of employees are clearly defined, available to all employees, and implemented.
- ✓ Employee satisfaction with the management, working conditions, flow of information, etc., is regularly surveyed and the results used in improvement activities.
- ✓ Employees participate in international mobility programmes, cooperation projects, networks, etc.
- ✓ Employees base their activities on principles of academic ethics.

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Committee noticed that the recruiting and maintaining of qualified staff is a permanent concern for a small Seminary like TTS.

Most of the staff positions are small part-time functions. Only the rector and the leader of studies have fulltime positions. The leader of development has a 0,7 position. The coordinator of the mentoring network has a 0,4 position. In 2018 the school appointed an educational technologist on a 0,4 position.

The formal leadership team of the Seminary consist of the rector, the leader of studies and the leader of development. To carry out the academic leadership they cooperate with the five lead teachers of the school (who are selected by the rector and approved by the Board of Elders). Visiting lecturers are chosen by the leadership team and the lead teachers. Their teaching quality is assessed periodically, and when they fail they are not hired again. Most of the visiting

lecturers, however, have a long term relationship with TTS. The Self-Evaluation Report says that 'the situation has improved, but to run the school with a small number of and mostly part-time faculty and staff requires a lot of creativity'. The Assessment Committee is convinced that the leadership in hiring visiting lecturers is handling a fair balance between professional and academic skills.

From 20154 – 2018 academic staff with PhD has steadily been growing. At the moment eight staff members have PhD. In order to strengthen the academic quality of staff, the leadership made an agreement with professor Nigel Wright from England as a visiting professor. 'He is going to consult, publish and teach during the next three years.'

An older generation of teachers is about to retire. The next generation of teachers and leaders has taken position now. For the sustainability and growth of the Seminary a new generation of scholars and teachers must be selected and educated. Young talents should be attracted and gifted younger staff should get opportunities for further academic training. International cooperation in the circle of Baptist and Free Churches – as the Seminary already does – is a promising way of making progress. The Committee recommends to intensify the international exchange of staff.

The Assessment Committee found that the once-a-year development interviews of the rector with the members of the leadership team functions well.

Leadership and staff play active roles in the local churches and in the Union. This has a positive effect on the communication between the UFEBC and the Seminary. However, it also increases the workload of the academic staff. The rector and the Board of Elders should evaluate on a regular basis the profit of the churches relative to the academic output of the Seminary.

<u>Commendations</u>

- The Seminary has a qualified staff for teaching and research.
- The leadership team, staff and Supervisory Board operate in mutual understanding.

<u>Recommendations</u>

- The Assessment Committee advices to clarify the leadership responsibilities within the staff, in particular the role of the Lead Teachers.
- Train and recruit a new generation of teachers and scholars.
- Initiate fundraising for scholarships.
- Support and intensify the international exchange of staff.
- Promote the importance of theological education in the local churches.

2.1.3 Management of financial resources and infrastructure

Requirements

- ✓ The allocation of financial resources of a higher education institution as well as the administration and development of infrastructure are economically feasible, and are based on the objectives of the development plan of an institution of higher education and national priorities (except private institutions).
- ✓ A higher education institution uses information systems that support its management and the coherent performance of its core processes.
- ✓ The working conditions of the staff, and the learning and RDC conditions of students (library, studios, workshops, laboratories, etc.) meet the needs arising from the specifics of an institution of higher education and the expectations of members.

Evidence and Analysis

'Financial stability has been the biggest challenge of the Seminary over the years. As the School is small and tuition cannot be high either, there is a constant need for additional support. However, the budget has grown remarkably during the last five years and the financial stability has been achieved.' The Seminary has prestige in the churches of the Union and that is one of the reasons that 'the amount of income from local churches has grown every year'. Although the finances are quite small, they are stable and are sufficient to run the school well. There is a risk management fund of 190.000 € and moreover the Seminary owns (through the UFEBC) the building in Tartu.

The Seminary has decided to move to Tallinn. The Assessment Committee has been informed about the new housing facilities in Tallinn and there is full evidence that this operation will not jeopardize the Seminary's performance. On the contrary, the UFEBC guarantees new and adequate housing facilities and the students welcome the move to Tallinn (easily accessible). Tartu will remain one of the regional centers for adult education and the like.

The financial backup of the Union makes the Seminary sustainable for the years to come.

The library facilities in Tartu are not optimum. The Seminary should use the move to Tallinn as an opportunity to reconsider the place and the function of the library in a modern institute of Higher Professional Education. Some older books might be removed and access to a digital theological library should be studied.

Commendations

- Moving the Seminary to Tallinn is supported and facilitated by the Union and guarantees sustainability during the transition

- The transition to Tallinn will benefit the majority of the students in terms of accessibility

Recommendations

- Observe that the housing facilities in Tallinn are conform the needs of a modern institute for higher professional education.
- Explore the possibilities of the access to a digital theological library.
- Explore the possibilities of access for staff and students to the library of Tallinn University.
- Keep investing in the relationship with the UFEBC.

2.2. Teaching and learning

Area 2	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
Effectiveness of teaching and learning, and formation of the student body	**X**			
Study programme development	**X**			
Student academic progress and student assessment	**X**			
Support processes for learning	**X**			

General comments:

The committee formed the view that the seminary conforms to requirements in the area of teaching and learning, and would commend the seminary for the commitment of its staff and the high satisfaction levels of students, as well as its effective use of learning technology, the way that practical and theoretical studies are interconnected and the ongoing development of research-informed teaching. That being said, the committee recognised that the seminary should seek to

enhance its performance to be safely above the threshold. The committee's recommendations are given through the discussion below.

2.2.1 Effectiveness of teaching and learning, and formation of the student body

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution has defined its educational objectives and measures their implementation.
- ✓ A higher education institution educates students so they are nationally and internationally competitive.
- ✓ The number of student places is planned in accordance with the social need and the potentials and purposes of an institution of higher education.
- ✓ The admission rules are consistent with the mission and purposes of an institution of higher education and support the formation of a motivated student body.
- ✓ Students are provided with opportunities to study at a higher education institution regardless of any special needs.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.
- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.

Evidence and Analysis

As noted in the SED, the seminary has specified its educational objectives clearly by providing strategic and short-term institutional objectives, a concept of education, and a plan for development. The Assessment Committee heard in meetings that the institutions objectives are clearly understood by staff, students and alumni and that there has been a process of educational development over recent years while the seminary has been in Tartu, leading to its current plans to move its facilities to Tallinn in the near future. The seminary measures the implementation of these objectives in various ways including through surveys as well as through the ongoing informal feedback that is characteristic of a small seminary that nurtures a sense of family among staff and students.

The Committee read and heard that the seminary places significant weight on the final diploma paper, which is a 9ECTS paper rather than the more usual 6ECTS. Thus, the requirement that students produce a more sustained and detailed piece of work at the level of the diploma award is helpful in assuring nationally competitive standards. We heard that TTS would like to develop its teaching to a

higher level, but that it recognises the importance of developing its staff research first. The Committee welcomed this approach and would encourage ongoing development of staff research as a means to develop teaching as Masters level.

We also heard from the management team that both teachers and management have studied internationally and have various types of international higher education experience. The International Baptist Theological Study Centre in Amsterdam has served as in informal benchmark for international competitiveness. We also noted that the ambitions and developing research activities of the seminary feed through into teaching, especially at the diploma level, raising the level of student achievement. This is underpinned internationally by an agreement with the ex-principal of Spurgeon's College, UK. The Committee heard from a student who had studied first in UK and then at the seminary, who recognised the comparability of levels, while noting the distinctive academic strength of the UK experience and the practical effectiveness of the teaching at TTS. We also noted from its various meetings that there is a concern for rigorous academic discussion of issues that are controversial within an ecclesiastical context, such that level of free academic discussion is not lowered by an implicit doctrinal restriction on reflection. In general the Committee was satisfied that students are nationally competitive and persuaded that the seminary is working effectively to maintain and increase the level of international competitiveness of its students, principally through its commitment to research.

The Committee recognised at an early stage that the seminary has an experienced and capable rector who has enabled much of the seminary's development in a range of areas, including the academic area. We noted that this strong core to the seminary's leadership has enabled much change, but also recognised that the continued distribution of responsibilities across the institution and formalisation of activities into written strategy and policy is required if the seminary is to expand in future while maintaining its existing strengths.

The Committee met with stakeholders and noted that the number of student places is broadly in line with the need for staff in the Churches served by the seminary and in wider society, and were reassured that the seminary takes in sufficient students to meet this need. We heard from alumni who were engaged in church-based ministry, but also from those who were engaged in other significant roles in business and other areas, that the seminary's numbers need not be limited by the requirement for full-time pastors in the churches the seminary serves. The Committee welcomed the seminary's plans to maintain and increase student numbers over time. Overall we were satisfied that the seminary takes in sufficient numbers of students.

The Committee read only brief details about the admission procedure in the self-evaluation document and noted the policy stated there to accept all students who fulfil the requirements. However, exploring the knowledge test and interview process through its meetings with the seminary staff, the panel was subsequently assured that the admissions system is used effectively and that there have been cases in which students have been rejected because they have not been judged academically strong enough. It is clear that the admissions system is used carefully in order to ensure that a motivated student body can be formed and the

mission and purposes of the institution can be met. However, we heard from one alumnus that there had been a significant drop out of students at one stage because of the difficulty of keeping students with widely divergent academic backgrounds together. For this and other reasons it was noted that the admissions system could nevertheless be enhanced to provide a more rigorous evaluation of a prospective student's intellectual ability and his or her capacity to develop skills of critical analysis and academic reflection on practical activities and that attention should be given to the breadth of previous academic attainment in the admissions process and early stages of teaching.

The Committee found that the seminary buildings are accessible for those with special needs and that the plans for Tallinn are also accessible, being set on the first floor. The seminary has to date been able to provide its programmes to all students who have been accepted for study, accommodating all special needs. We heard that there is an individual approach to students and flexibility in providing tailored study schedules as well as accommodating any health problems.

The Committee heard that the seminary seeks to impart knowledge and skills within the context of its distinctive Christian ethos with the aim of forming students for successful future life and ministry in a range of contexts. The small size and distinctive ethos of the seminary enable it to address the individual needs of learners because individuals are well known to staff and because they participate in a shared life together, which also facilitates social development. For example, we heard from a non-Estonian alumnus who had been given effective individual help to address difficulties in reading Estonian theological texts and thus enabled to be successful on the programme. The individual needs and social development of students are also addressed through a mentoring system, described elsewhere in this report. Individuals should be supported to reach the level of diploma studies, involving preparing students to consider research methodology and critical analysis. The Committee welcomed the honest remarks of the seminary that there is more to be done in this area and also the obvious steps that have been taken to make progress, including providing methodology courses and beginning to develop critical thinking earlier in the programme than had previously been the case.

The Committee was impressed by the planned approach and competent delivery of e-learning provision in the seminary, in particular given its small size. This is an important dimension in Estonia, where students are expected to be in the seminary only a few days each month and to be studying while also carrying a wide range of additional responsibilities. We saw an effective demonstration of the e-learning provision and noted the systematic and well supported way in which lectures are captured for students to review after the sessions. The Committee agreed with the seminary that the use of audio recording is particularly important to give students the opportunity to listen back to what has been taught in a wide range of contexts and students clearly appreciated the quality of e-learning in this area, noting that the provision is already "very good". The Committee commends the seminary for its intelligent and competent use of e-learning.

Given the great potential of technology to enhance the student experience while students are off campus, the Committee would encourage the seminary to continue to innovate in this area. For example, we heard from students that some would like better ways to track their progress and developing transcript. We formed the impression that the staff at the seminary continues to engage with students through e-learning when the students are off campus and would encourage the seminary to continue this practice while also considering the potential of e-learning to identify levels of off-campus student engagement in order to ensure that students who are struggling with the combination of academic workload and other responsibilities can be identified early and helped to remain on track with their studies.

The Committee heard from students that across the teaching staff there are sharp distinctions in teaching style. We consider a diversity of approaches to teaching to be a good thing. However, the we also noted that not all staff find it easy to engage effectively with e-learning and it is recommended that sufficient support staff time be made available to ensure that as far as possible there is a consistent and high level of e-learning support for courses across the seminary. This is important because of the high proportion of their time that students spend away from the campus.

The Committee formed the view that that the integration of practical and theoretical studies at TTS is of a high and commendable standard. This view arose from a combination of all that had been read and, in particular, the combined impact of all of the meetings that the Committee had with people at the seminary. It became clear that practical work that is aligned with the professional activities students will engage in later, that is methodologically informed, and that involves a well-understood process of theological reflection is a significant theme within the institution. We heard this from students and alumni and recognised it through meeting with staff and looking at student work. The interconnection is in part due to the fact that many teachers are also practitioners and have a good understanding of the working environments that their students will go on to experience. It is also because of the seminary's intention and aspiration that its staff become more accomplished in research in practical theology, which encourages ongoing reflection on practice in the seminary, raising practicums and other practical studies above the level of mere "work experience". We heard that there have been instances in which students have found it difficult to engage with all of the practical work, and the Committee suggests that the seminary considers looking again at the ways in which it ensures systematically that all students are effectively supported in practical activities. However, in general, the depth of practical integration is an important distinctive of the seminary's provision and worthy of commendation.

In general the Committee welcomed the organised approach and relevant content of practical training. Learning outcomes are in general clearly articulated within the programme specification and syllabus documents and we heard that stakeholders are very positive about the practical skills and understanding of

students. However, some alumni noted that academically higher performing students were at times wanting to be stretched further. This issue of the wide range of academic ability of the student body arose at a number of points during the visit and the Committee recommends that the seminary consider how it might use its flexible approach to enhance the opportunities for academically able students to demonstrate their full potential.

Commendations

- *Satisfied Students and Committed Staff:* The seminary is commended for the dedication of teachers and leadership to their students as reflected by the enthusiasm of students about their learning in the seminary.
- *Use of Learning Technology:* The seminary makes competent and effective use of learning technology to support the student experience and provides effective support for learners during periods when they are not on campus.
- *Interconnection of Practical and Theoretical Studies:* The seminary is effective in integrating practical and theoretical studies, providing significant levels of practical experience to students while also enabling serious reflection on practical activities.
- *Development of research-informed teaching:* The seminary demonstrates a maturity in its approach to higher education, recognising the importance of developing staff research for the sake of enhanced teaching and continuing to take steps to extend the seminary's effective activity in this area.

Recommendations

- *Integrating a Diverse Student Body:* The seminary is encouraged to consider ways in which it can develop its admissions system and teaching to address the wide range of academic ability of its student body to ensure that all students are challenged and enabled to reach their full potential through their study programme.
- *Formalising and Distributing Responsibility:* The seminary is encouraged to consider ways in which the rector's effective leadership can continue to be distributed across the staff and formalised in written policies and processes. This will ensure sustainability and will be necessary as the seminary grows.

2.2.2 Study programme development

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution bases its new study programmes on its purposes and the needs of the labour market, and takes into account the strategies of the country and expectations of the society.
- ✓ Development activities related to study programmes are systematic and regular, and different stakeholders are involved in the development of study programmes.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme

support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.

- ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
- ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ Graduate satisfaction with the quality of instruction and employer satisfaction with the quality and suitability to the requirements of the labor market of graduates are surveyed and analysed; the results are considered in the development of study programmes.

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Committee saw the seminary has planned its programme "Free Church Theology and Leadership" intentionally to address the needs of the Churches, and the Committee heard from stakeholders that they were satisfied with the knowledge and skills of graduates. We read that the seminary has structured its programme in such a way as to encourage Adult Education courses to be taken, which promote the degree programme and enable the seminary to make a wider contribution. The programme is built around a concept of theological education that is articulated clearly and which, we heard, is intended to emphasise an effective relationship between theory and practice. We were satisfied that the seminary prepares students to address a need in the labour market that it takes into account national considerations and expectations.

The Committee heard from alumni and students that a significant portion of their time is taken up in other employment that provides the additional financial support required. In some cases this alternative employment is full-time and an end in itself for the students. We heard from alumni that their formative experience in the seminary also prepared them for these role, and the panel would emphasize the importance of preparing students intentionally to be theologically reflective practitioners in relation to all of their work and engagement with Estonian society.

The Committee read that the curriculum has been reviewed regularly and saw that the most recent revision in 2015 took a systematic approach to ensure that the seminary's teaching would engage with a broader range of students through an emphasis on Adult Education courses and that in this way it might increase the number of students on the diploma programme. The Committee saw that stakeholders are involved in curriculum developments. Students were asked to explain their relationship to curriculum development processes and they were able to talk about ways in which their concerns had been addressed by the seminary, such as in the development of assessment criteria. We were assured that the seminary takes the student voice into account and that students are consulted in curriculum development, but we recommend that the seminary formalises the process of curriculum review and formally involves students as members of review development groups.

The Committee recognised the effective and systematic use of learning outcomes methodology in the curriculum documentation that was provided and could see how students are supported to achieve those outcomes through teaching and assessment activities. It is also clear that the curriculum is quite coherent, with programme outcomes being identifiable in the module descriptions and an overarching purpose and concept of education that governs the programme as a whole. We were encouraged to read that staff meet to co-ordinate the content of modules to ensure that this does not overlap and that individual teachers and courses combine to provide the students with a coherent programme overall. The Committee recommends that the seminary continue and develop the practice of bringing teaching staff together to consider module and programme developments.

The seminary should maintain its concern to enhance the programme through regular review and to formalise the process and timetable to provide assurance of this. Review should consider not only content but also structure, aiming to maintain and develop the flexibility and simplicity of the structure wherever possible.

The Committee saw that the curriculum contains practical training of various types and noted the importance of the practical element of training in its meetings with staff, stakeholders, students and alumni. It is clear that practical concerns pervade the curriculum and the student learning experience. We were pleased to see that there is a concern for reflection and critical analysis so that students can become theologically informed reflective practitioners rather than simply students who have some practical training and experience. The seminary is encouraged to continue to focus on this approach and to develop it, ensuring that theologically informed reflective practice is something that students can engage in whether working in the local church context or elsewhere.

The Committee heard from alumni that they were satisfied with the education they had received and that they had been well prepared for their subsequent Church-based roles. The seminary provides a theological education that is appropriate to the Free Church context and that has the necessary practical emphasis to ensure that its graduates are able to make an effective contribution, and so the connection between the training at the seminary and the needs of the labour market are very close in this respect. In addition, each of the graduates that the Committee met had a further role outside of the local church context. We heard that the training at the seminary had had a formative influence that was indirectly useful to them in these other roles. The Committee welcomed this indication of the seminary's effectiveness outside the local church and recommends that it address this intentionally through its study programme.

Alumni were aware that they were able to give feedback through formal and informal means, but were not aware of formal involvement of alumni in curriculum development processes. The Committee thus recommends that the curriculum development process be formalized and a process and timetable be produced. The process should include a role for alumni in curriculum development. The Committee recognises that many of these things happen

informally in a successful, small institution, but curriculum development processes should be governed to provide assurance.

Alumni also recognised that their relationships with the seminary could be developed more intentionally, for example through the formation of an alumni association and regular formal communication with alumni.

Commendations

- *Developing Reflective Practitioners:* The seminary is commended for its concern to demonstrate and develop effective theological reflection on practice and to integrate practice with theological study as a preparation for professional practice.

Recommendations

- *Formalising Processes:* The panel recommends that the seminary continue to engage in regular programme review, formalising and publishing in advance its processes and timetable. Also, create a formal channel for alumni to give feedback to the curriculum.

2.2.3 Student academic progress and student assessment

Requirements

- ✓ Student academic progress is monitored and supported.
- ✓ Student assessment supports learning and is in line with learning outcomes.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ A higher education institution has an effective system for taking account of prior learning and work experience.

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Committee read that the progress of students is monitored by the seminary's two full-time staff: the rector and the leader of studies, and this was confirmed in meetings. The seminary is also in the process of introducing a Student Information System to support this work. We saw evidence of this development and expect the seminary to introduce this in 2018 as planned, and recommend that it meet this planned timetable.

The Committee was impressed by the effective work of the rector and leader of studies, but recognised that work load is very high and recommends that in order to ensure sustainability over time the approach to student support be widened to

ensure that all students are effectively supported without requiring the direct oversight of the rector.

The Committee read the seminary's documentation including curriculum, syllabi and assessment guide, noting some strengths in the use of learning outcomes methodology (see below). We recognised the value of enabling academic staff to align their content and assessment methods in designing their courses and thus to allow some diversity of assessment. However, from its reading, the Committee formed the view that in order to enhance its support for student learning the seminary should increase the level of consistency in its assessment practices and in its documentation of those practices.

The Committee recommends that the seminary continue to develop its rules for assessment to apply across courses and that it do so in a collegial manner, working with all teachers. In particular, the seminary should consider approving, publishing and implementing: (i) a consistent design for assessments of a particular type across courses (e.g. for each of the common methods of assessment mentioned in the SED (p. 18), namely essay, practical exercise, report, written or oral exam); (ii) a consistent approach to the number and magnitude (e.g. number of words) of tasks allowable within courses carrying particular credit values.

The Committee also recommends that the seminary consider: (i) increasing the consistency in the presentation of course syllabi, with a focus on assessment criteria, to enable students to see the consistency in requirements and the reasons why certain courses may diverge from what is normal due to the nature of the learning outcomes; (ii) create a formal approval process for course syllabi to ensure that all centralised assessment rules are followed and the presentation of syllabi is in an appropriate format; (iii) allocate to a member of staff the responsibility of monitoring assessment practices, developing assessment rules, and approving syllabus documents.

The Committee asks the seminary to reassure itself that the use of non-differentiated assessment is appropriate and that any use of it is properly taken into account in the granting conditions for the diploma *cum laude*.

The Committee welcomed the systematic focus on learning outcomes in the curriculum documentation. Different types of teaching and assessment are incorporated into the curriculum in ways that align with the content of the modules. It was clear to us through both its reading and discussion with seminary staff that courses have been designed to enable students to meet both the practical and academic learning outcomes specified for the course. Furthermore, it was clear to us that the seminary is developing well in providing students with the support they need to achieve learning outcomes that are appropriate to the upper level of a diploma. This development can be attributed to the seminary's concern for staff research, critical analysis and reflection, and for research methodology. Through its reading and meetings the Committee formed the view that the seminary should continue on its present track to bring to fruition its ambitions to connect research to teaching effectively. The seminary is developing well in this respect and is encouraged to continue.

The Assessment Committee read that the seminary has a committee for the recognition of higher learning and through its reading and meetings we formed the view that the seminary is able to evaluate the prior Church-based practical experience of prospective students as well as their prior learning.

Commendations

- *Enabling Effective Completion:* The Assessment Committee commends the seminary for enabling students to study for four years so that workload can be distributed evenly.
- *Lecture Recording:* The systematic provision of recorded lectures for student review and wider use.
- Students have been involved in assessment of study criteria and learning outcomes (student example from the meeting)

Recommendations

- *Student Information System:* That the seminary complete its introduction of the Tahvel Student Information System within the expected timeframe to enable staff and students to monitor progress more effectively.
- *Broader Approach to Student Support:* That in order to ensure sustainability, the seminary broaden its approach to student support to ensure that all students continue to be supported effectively without requiring the direct oversight of the rector.
- *Developing Centralised Assessment Rules and Documentation:* To continue to develop rules for assessment to apply across courses to ensure the consistent design of assessment types, and consistency in the number and magnitude of tasks that courses can employ given their credit weighting. To increase the level of consistency in the presentation of course syllabi and to document a formal process for approval of course syllabi according to the assessment rules that is implemented systematically by a member of staff.
- *Develop Regulations:* To develop the study regulations to include clear regulations related to the process of taking and retaking examinations.
- *Use of undifferentiated assessment:* That the seminary reassure itself that its use of non-differentiated assessment is appropriate, making changes if it decides this to be necessary and ensuring that any use of non-differentiated assessment cannot cause students to be unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged in the awarding of diploma *cum laude.*

2.2.4 Support processes for learning

Requirements

- ✓ The organisation of studies creates an opportunity for students to complete their studies within the standard period.
- ✓ A higher education institution provides students with counselling related to their studies and career.

- ✓ A higher education institution supports student international mobility.
- ✓ Modern technical and educational technology resources are used to organise educational activities.
- ✓ Students are periodically asked for feedback on learning and support processes (the organisation of studies, assessment, counselling, etc.); the results of surveys are taken into account in improvement activities.

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Committee read that the seminary is aware of the challenges for students of completing their studies in 3 years and has adjusted the standard period of study to 4 years to enable students to distribute their workload more evenly and to fit all contact hours in effectively to the study sessions. Given the way that the Estonian system encourages students to be working and to be at the seminary for only a few days each month, the Committee welcomed this approach of ensuring that there is sufficient seminary time to enable students to succeed without being put under excessive pressure. We also noted that as internships are introduced later in the programme the amount of academic credit for which students are studying is reduced to ensure that students are not overloaded if possible. Despite the challenges, addressed elsewhere in this report, of studying in the Estonian system in which contact time is limited and students are expected to be working full-time while studying, the Committee saw and heard that the students do have the opportunity to complete their studies within the standard period.

The Committee read that the seminary has a mentoring system that has been carefully designed and developed to provide holistic support for students. We met with staff and students involved in this system and formed the view that the seminary should be commended for the care and effort that has been directed towards ensuring that mentoring is an activity that is well understood and carefully implemented within the seminary. The mentoring system gives students an opportunity to receive personal and academic support that is clearly defined and effective in the overwhelming majority of cases. The mentoring system has a holistic approach and is thus relevant to the academic, personal and professional development of students. We heard in meetings with staff and students that the mentoring system is generally effective for those who engage with it and that there is regular feedback to ensure that it can be enhanced in the future. The Committee heard evidence that the students value the mentoring system, although some engage with it more fully than others.

Students are able to put forward people to act as mentors for them. This ensures that the relationship is likely to be successful. Mentors must have certain skills, such as some expertise in practical theology and students must put forward a number of possible candidates to be their mentor so that the seminary can ensure that only those with suitable skills are able to take on the role. The Committee welcomed this approach.

The Committee also welcomed the way that students are able to feedback to the seminary about their mentors and that if a mentoring relationship is not effective, the mentor can be changed. However, we also noted that the mentoring scheme is designed in such a way that the seminary requires a student to meet regularly with a person who may be otherwise unconnected with the seminary. In order to ensure that the seminary does all it can to safeguard students in this situation, the Committee recommends that the seminary vet and approve all mentors by requiring evidence of good character and a consideration of any rules that might be introduced to ensure the safety of students in mentoring contexts.

The Committee read that the seminary has effective support and met with the psychologist. We formed the view that psychological support services are of a high standard.

The Committee read that the Seminary has several international partners including theological schools, unions and individual congregations and its agreements with other institutions, notably the International Baptist Theological Study Centre (IBTSC, seated in Amsterdam, the Netherlands) as well as other partners in Austria, Romania and Bulgaria.

The Committee met non-Estonian students studying in the seminary and seminary students who had studied internationally. We also noted the significant influence of the international Baptist seminary in Amsterdam and a wider network of Baptist institutions as well as the seminary's engagement with Nigel Wright, ex-principal of Spurgeon's College, UK. The Committee welcomed the intention in the seminary's development plan to continue to develop its international activities and were satisfied that, so long as this approach continues, the seminary can be said to support student international mobility.

The Committee saw a demonstration of the seminary's educational technology resources including classroom technology, e-learning resources and the yet-to-be-introduced student information system. In the area of the organisation of educational activities it is clear that the seminary has significant competence in the implementation of the student management system and that the use of technology in the seminary in general is of a high and competent standard. The demonstrations offered to the Committee were effective. We commend the seminary for its technological competence and innovation and would encourage the seminary to continue to innovate in this area since the use of technology can enable a small seminary to provide learning and administrative resources that would otherwise only be available in a larger institution.

The Committee read about the use of surveys in the institution for various purposes, including the development of learning support processes and it recognises that surveys are taken into account in the iterative improvement of activities over the years. We also noted that there is an effective system of feedback that operates through the availability of the rector and the leader of studies to each of the students and their ability to respond to individual needs in a small institution. This system works effectively and reflects the evident high level of competence of the current leadership in managing a very substantial workload. However, the Committee would encourage the institution to develop

its survey approach and more distributed feedback systems over time to ensure the sustainability of its processes. At the moment, it may rely too much on the current rector.

Commendations

- *Mentoring System:* The seminary has developed significant expertise in the area of mentoring and commend the seminary for this work as well as the ongoing process to continue to develop the system in light of student and other feedback.
- *Technology:* The competent and innovative use of technology in teaching and learning.

Recommendations

- *Evaluating Mentors:* That the Seminary develop a system to ensure that all mentors are vetted so that the seminary can reassure itself that it has done all it can to ensure that mentors are not only skilled appropriately but can be reasonably expected to behave appropriately and safely.
- *Internationalisation:* To continue to enhance international links and the opportunities for students to study internationally.
- *Feedback:* To encourage to institution to develop their feedback system so that it will not rely so much on the rector, but it is sustainable in case there is a change in personnel.

2.3. Research, development and/or other creative activity (RDC)

Area 3	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
RDC effectiveness		**X**		
RDC resources and support processes		**X**		
Student research supervision		**X**		

General comments:
The TTS is an ambitious and result-oriented institution. This is a positive and important asset of any higher education institution. With rather small resources the Seminary has been able to build an institution that has education for an

increasing number of students as their first priority. The challenge is, of course, that good higher education institutions need, at the same time, to be research driven. With poor or no research institutions in this field are not able to give the teaching quality the students can expect.

Against this background it is obvious for the Committee that the leadership of the TTS is very well aware of this challenge. But to build a well-functioning research context and an increase in the research quality needs time, resources and competence. This is the general challenge for all higher education institutions. In the case of the TTS one needs to add the extra ambition of developing a profile of an Applied Research institution.

With the limited access to written material (very few articles published in English and almost all student research in non-English languages) the Committee recognizes both the relatively high number of publication among the faculty staff and the awareness that there is still a way to go. Therefore is can be no surprise that the grading in all three categories below at this moment are only "partial".

This grading means that the Committee recognizes the quality already achieved, but concludes, nevertheless, at this stage, that there is more organized quality work and individual work that remains to be done before the top level for the institution as such is reached. We feel confident that there are good chances for a move to better grading when the next future assessment takes place. The optimism is connected both to the quality of the established faculty and the ambitions that we could register among the younger generation of teachers.

In the field of theology and church related research the ambition to deliver specific contributions within the area of Applied Research is both interesting and promising. The committee will advise TTS to focus on discussions on what Applied Research means in theology and church related research. The challenge is to combine practical cases or empirical data with hermeneutical and critical interpretation. The balance between hermeneutics and pure "biblical" interpretation and how the insights can lead to future practical skills and knowledge production will be the core challenge to approach in the years to come.

2.3.1 RDC effectiveness

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution has defined its RDC objectives and measures their implementation.
- ✓ A higher education institution monitors the needs of society and the labour market, and considers them in planning its RDC activities.

Evidence and Analysis

The main objective of Tartu Theological Seminary is to be the competency center of Free Church Theology and church planting. The Assessment Committee noticed

that the RDC-activities vary from developing training courses to video lectures and documentary movies (p. 22). The feedback system shows that the UFEBC are satisfied with the published materials and the theological learning.

In addition, the Committee noticed a substantial output in terms of academical and popular publications. We observed that the classical research has a dominance in topics related to Biblical studies and studies of Estonian church history. In the period between 2014-2018 TTS has 31 publications in the Estonian Research Information System. More than 60% of them is in the levels 1-4. Most (but not all) of these publications are written by a few faculty members. Most authors also have an affiliation with Tartu University

The Committee found that the number of publications per member of teaching staff is difficult to assess. The reason is that (as stated in the SER) the Seminary only has 2 full time faculty. The other members of academy are part time teacher with only a very small percentage of their work load in their seminary (from 0,1 to 0,5, most often 0,1-0,3). If one takes all staff into account, there is an average of almost 1 publication for each staff member during the 2014-2018 period. But more concrete, one faculty member (Toivo Pilli) is the only author of 8 of the publications and the co-author of one of the others and Peeter Roosimaa is the only author of 11 publications. The Committee appreciates the research output, but recommends a better spread of publications over all faculty members. In addition the Committee recommends that the research output stands in closer relationship to the Seminary's research objective: church planting and Free Church Theology.

An interesting added value is that professor Pilli seems to comment and use experiences and results from his BA students in his publications. This is a fruitful way of using education into a research material, very relevant for the Seminary.

Summing up, the Committee finds the research quality in the Seminary to be in a good development with many positive aspects and contributions. With an ambitious and realistic research plan and more resources to support research, the Committee expects the Seminary to be on the "conforms" level in the next assessment.

<u>Commendations</u>

- The most frequently publishing faculty are on a good level.
- The applied research profile seems to be good and relevant for both church and society.
- The conferences are relevant, both socially and theologically, and gather a good number of participants.

<u>Recommendations</u>

- Develop a research-plan with an analysis of the profile, allocation of resources, milestones and goals for the next 5-7 years.
- Develop and prioritize a specific plan for how to increase the research level among the junior staff members.

- Analyse the Applied Research profile and describe the activities.
- A better distinction between pure reporting and research (which implies methods and some theoretical aspects) should be developed and pursued, the initiative possible among the five Lead teachers.
- Strengthen the research in the field of contemporary theology.
- Strengthen the research output through national and international publications.

2.3.2 RDC resources and support processes

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution has an effective RDC support system.
- ✓ A higher education institution has financial resources needed for RDC development and a strategy that supports their acquisition.
- ✓ A higher education institution participates in different RDC networks.
- ✓ RDC infrastructure is being updated and used effectively.

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Committee noticed that the last years there have been good initiatives to enhance and improve the research quality. The Committee welcomes the scholarship applications for Applied Research in 2017 and believes that the biannual award of research projects will benefit the research output. A weakness is the very small amount of money that is available for the improvement of the research skills of the staff members. The Committee recommends to raise funds for Applied Theological Research and suggests that the UFEBC and the international Baptist community might be willing to donate money for research funds. In addition, the Seminary should encourage and financially support younger staff members to participate in conferences, seminars and other academic activities abroad. The Committee believes that this will have a positive effect on creating contacts. Academic networking increases the possibility of cooperation in projects and this may lead to new publications.

The Committee has taken notice of the appointment of professor dr. Nigel Wright from the UK. He will join the Seminary regularly and the Committee believes this is a good step forward. Dr. Wright might serve as an inspiring advisor and colleague for the junior staff. The Committee recommends to integrate dr. Wright smoothly in the Seminary and to evaluate the results of his presence on a regular basis.

Based on the Seminary`s main objective to serve the free churches and especially the Baptist church, the research focus has two, sometimes competing, goals. On the one hand there is a strong tendency to develop practical Applied Research. On the other hand, the Seminary also expects and develops classical

academic research. Both these goals are necessary for the Seminary. But there seems to be a strong need to plan and prioritize among these two goals so that the total research quality of the institution is increased. To achieve this, the Seminary (rector and Lead teachers) should develop a research plan where the priorities and the allocations of resources are explicitly mentioned.

Commendations

- The competition for research projects has developed a positive activity
- The agreement with dr. Nigel Wright is a good step forward.

Recommendations

- More resources need to be allocated for research purposes.
- New resources should be prioritized for supporting younger faculty to participate in research workshops, seminars and conferences abroad.
- Younger faculty should be encouraged and supported to develop research.

2.3.3 Student research supervision

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution includes students of all academic cycles in research, creative or project activity; and systematically surveys student satisfaction with their supervision.
- ✓ Professionalism, effectiveness and the workload of supervisors are reasonably balanced, which ensures the quality of research papers and positive graduation rates.
- ✓ Students are guided to recognize plagiarism and to avoid it.

Evidence and Analysis

During the last five years the number of graduates have been 20. The annual number has increased since 2013, this year the number is 8. This development is very positive and is probably the best verification that the supervision system is functioning. The Self-Assessment Report distinguishes between mentors and supervisors. Both are important contributions to the quality of student level, both academically and psychologically. The Committee finds, however, that the distinction between the two roles is still confusing. The mentor system seems to be very well developed and in general in a very good shape. But it is not always transparent when the mentor responsibility ends and the supervisor begins. This could have been more clear, both in the documents and in the interviews.

What is obvious, is that the role of the supervisor is crucial when it comes to academic writing. Since the ambition in the TTS on the BA level first of all is applied research, the question is whether the Seminary pays enough attention to

the qualifications of the supervisors for this kind of research. Applied research is not an easier way of research, may be more the contrary. The Committee recommends therefore that the research plan for the coming years reflects how the competence in applied research shall be increased among the teaching staff. Methodological, hermeneutical and ethical issues are involved here, as well as competence for scholars trained in social science practice and methodology.

The material provided for the Committee regarding the titles and the supervisors for the diploma thesis is not available. An assessment of them would be important to evaluate tendencies and trends. What is clear is that the many faculty staff publish or plan to publish, even if the numbers are not very high. But the relatively broad publication practice is a good evidence for the quality of supervision. It would be interesting to see whether the faculty that publish is the same as the faculty that supervise.

Commendations

- The number of graduates is increasing, a very good sign.
- The potential academic supervision quality among staff is relatively good.
- The Lead teachers seem to have a strong say in the distribution of supervision staff.

Recommendations

- Make a stronger distinction between mentors and supervisors.
- Reflect on and develop the supervision quality in the research plan.
- Participate in and further develop training seminars for supervisors in the Seminary and also for those outside.
- Describe what the supervision competence implies in the area of Applied Science - methodologically, practically and hermeneutically.

2.4. Service to the society

Area 4	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
Popularization of its activities and involvement in social development	**x**			
In-service training and other educational activities for general public	**x**			

Other public-oriented activities	**x**			

General comments:
The Assessment Committee has the overall impression that TTS confirms to the requirements set for the service to the society section. TTS is active in popularizing its activities in society in different forms. TTS uses in-service training and social media purposefully for both popularizing of TTS activities as well as participating in social development. In-service training is understood also as a recruitment tool. Also other public-oriented activities help to serve the society. Employees of the institution are active in society, participate in professional associations, and are or have bene members of different supervisory boards as the Estonian Research Information System indicates.

2.4.1 Popularization of its activities and involvement in social development

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution has a system for popularising its core activities.
- ✓ Employees of an institution of higher education participate in the activities of professional associations, and as experts, in other social supervisory boards and decision-making bodies.

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Committee noticed in the documents as well as during the interviews that TTS has a clear vision on its mission: "The seminary is a nationally and internationally recognized evangelical free-church education center, which through its activities empowers local churches and has a positive impact on society." (Self-Evaluation Report (p. 39) "The seminary supports the comprehensive and lifelong development of individual Christians and congregations". The Seminary's activities are structured in such a way that training and development are two interconnected parts (p.4).

The Committee also noticed that staff members (1) have organized, participated and contributed to conferences both in Estonia and abroad, (2) participate in professional learned organizations, both nationally and internationally, and (3) have contributed to activities of local churches and local communities (p. 28-30).

The Committee believes that the seminary lecturers are more known than the seminary itself. Some lecturers are very famous opinion-leaders in Estonian society (Tõnu Lehtsaar, Meego Remmel), whose articles have been published in the main Estonian newspapers and news portals (source: ETIS, ERR, Postimees,

Delfi). Some lecturers have been invited as experts to the Estonian Parliament e.g. Meego Remmel and Peeter Roosimaa (source: the webpage of Estonian Parliament).

The Committee noticed that quite a few lecturers of the seminary are members of several international institutions and contributed either academically or helped to organize conferences in Paris, Amsterdam, Vienna, Prague, Oslo, Vancouver, Copenhagen, Durban, Bangkok and other places. (source: ETIS & Self-Evaluation Report p. 28)

According to the Estonian Research Information System (ETIS) the faculty members belong to the following professional associations: Estonian Bible Society, Academic Society of Theology, Mother Tongue Society (Emakeele Selts), Estonian Society of Church History, Estonian Academic Pedagogical Society, The European Society for the Study of Science and Theology, Society of Biblical Literature, Estonian Society for the Study of Religions, European Association for the Study of Religions, Union of Estonian Psychologists, Estonian History and Civics Teachers Association. According to the Research Information System 9 of the 28 faculty members belong to the associations mentioned above. One faculty member is a member of the editorial board of three international Baptist publications: Baptist Quarterly and Journal of European Baptist Studies, Baptistic Theologies. One faculty member belongs to the editorial board of a journal "Kristlik kasvatus" (Christian Education), one is editorial board member of the Usuteaduslik ajakiri (Journal of Theology). Faculty members are also board members of the TTS's journal Via Theologica. One faculty member is also member of Estonian Council of Bioethics and member of ethics committee of Estonian Health Information System. Some of the faculty members have positions in boards of international associations, both Baptist organizations as well as ecumenical bodies.

According to the Self Evaluation Report (pp. 75-76) there were 14 academic articles published between 2014-2018 where the TTS faculty member was author or co-author. At that time period there were also three books published by the faculty members.

"The seminary has a positive impact on ecumenical work and interaction, as students from different denominations can study at the seminary and the seminary has a cooperation agreement with the Estonian Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church (source: Self-Evaluation Report, p. 4).

Commendations

- The lecturers of the seminary are members of several international institutions and contributed either academically or helped to organize conferences in Paris, Amsterdam, Vienna, Prague, Oslo, Vancouver, Copenhagen, Durban, Bangkok and other places.
- The Seminary has invited foreign professor to help to write scientific articles or to be a co-author to such articles.
- The seminary has a new website since 2018.
- There are video-lectures available on the seminary homepage.

- Diploma papers written within the last years are available on seminary's website.
- Partnership between the TTS and the Estonian Conference Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Estonian Council of Churches.

Recommendations

- TTS should encourage students after their graduation to write articles on the theme of their diploma thesis.
- TTS should stress the importance of updating the profile and publications list of their faculty members in the ETIS (Estonian Research Information System). There is a high risk that the membership of academic associations is not reflected in this database.
- The seminary should consider possibilities and strategy to make TTS more visible in secular Estonian society and media. The move from Tartu to Tallinn could be one of these possibilities.

2.4.2 In-service training and other educational activities for general public

Requirements

- ✓ A higher education institution has defined the objectives regarding in-service training and measures their implementation.
- ✓ In-service training is planned in accordance with the needs of target groups as well as with the potentials and purposes of an institution of higher education.
- ✓ Participant satisfaction with the quality of in-service training is regularly surveyed and the results are used in planning improvement activities.

Evidence and Analysis

The seminary has defined the objectives of the in-service training (adult training) and according to the Self Evaluation Report (pp. 30, 39): "The Seminary supports the comprehensive and lifelong development of individual Christians and congregations." The Assessment Committee noticed that the information from the Self Evaluation Report and web-site, as well as the interviews shows that the activities support the objectives.

The in-service training is in accordance with the needs of the target group. This is reflected in high number of people participating in these trainings. The Self-Evaluation Report (p. 30) states that TTS has 8 to 12 in-service training (adult education) courses every year with 400-500 participants. According to the Report and evidence from the TTS website there are two types of courses: short

trainings up to two days in length and/or 3 ECTS and courses that last up to one-and-half years.

In 2016 there were held 17 different training courses on different subjects with 486 participants, in 2017 the numbers were 11 training courses with 456 participants respectively. The topics of in-service courses are wide-ranging (Bible-related themes, development seminars for churches, marriage seminars) and are organized in various parts of Estonia (Self-Evaluation Report pp. 72-74). These in-service trainings include a specific form the Bible School (or Kutse Kool; School of Calling) that is also organized regionally. The participants in this form of learning are from different denominations. Except the members of the UFEBC congregations, also Methodists, members of other free churches, Lutherans and Pentecostals join these meetings (Self Evaluation Report p. 42).

Since many people take part in the in-service training, the participants are seen as possible future students of TTS. The in-service training is seen by the TTS as a tool for the outreach activities of the seminary as stated in the Self-Evaluation Report (p 29): "Adult Education is one of the best marketing tools for the university-level program. And these help us to grow more to the Free Church Education Centre – something what the concept of Education of UFEBC sets as a goal for us." In this regard the Bible School (Kutse Kool) is considered important as the credit points from the Bible School can be used in the TTS studies (http://www.kus.tartu.ee/kutse-kool/).

The Committee noticed that the rector plays an important role concerning the organization of the in-service trainings. Although this will contribute to the large scale and the high level of the in-service training, the Committee recommends that a broader basis of assistance might be desirable for the sustainability of the program.

The Committee noticed that some of the in-service training courses are available for study via internet-based video courses (Self Evaluation Report p. 43; TTS web-site: http://www.kus.tartu.ee/materjalid/avalikud-loengud/)

Commendations

- Systematic in-service training (called as adult training), *which is in accordance with the needs of UFEBC.*
- Seminary is active in social media (both internally in the seminary as well as on grass roots level of the churches). Information about in-service training is promoted on the seminar's website.
- In-service training is open for public. In-service training is used as a recruiting tool for the seminary.
- Has clearly defined the objectives and focus: strengthening identity, social activity (church-planting), open to society (materials useful for other denominations as well as to the society at large).
- Empowering social activism (work with and for socially/economically vulnerable).

Recommendations

- In line with the areas of improvement of the Self-Evaluation report (p. 31), the Committee recommends the seminary to develop a systematic plan in cooperation with the local churches and the UFEBC to make an inventory of the needs of the target groups.

2.4.3 Other public-oriented activities

Requirements

- ✓ Public-oriented activities are purposeful, the results of the activities are periodically evaluated, and improvements are introduced based on those evaluations.
- ✓ A higher education institution contributes to the enhancement of community welfare by sharing its resources (library, museums, sports facilities, etc.) and/or by organising concerts, exhibitions, performances, conferences, fairs and other events.

Evidence and Analysis

According to the Self-Evaluation Report (pp. 30-31), "The seminary is practising what it is teaching about serving public good both as a higher learning institution as well as a learning community of students and teachers participating in the life of society." And adds that TTS's has "focus on creating social cohesion between younger and older generations and increasing social capital through a growing trust in relationships in Estonian society and beyond in the globalising a network world." From the materials presented as well as from the interviews the Assessment Committee noticed that the active participation in society is understood by the Seminary as important. The Rector of the TTS is well known adult educator in Estonia and in a recent interview she said that she has a principle to have at least one educational event in a month for the secular audience. The Committee noticed that his sense of the importance of public-oriented activities is present also with some other faculty members.

The alumni are involved in chaplaincy and other paid or voluntary services, e.g. the Estonian Defence Forces, police, prisons, social and medical care system, education, media, NGO:s, business etc. (Source: Self-Evaluation Report, p. 30, interviews with the alumni). The seminary library is open to public and it is mentioned on its webpage. Library has also on-line catalogue (Source: http://www.kus.tartu.ee/raamatukogu/).

The Self-Evaluation Report does not mention whether the TTS itself has organized any public-oriented activities like exhibitions, concerts, fairs, sport-activities, or events in the local community. On the other hand the Action Plan indicates that the TTS is well aware of the areas that should be developed. The

main question, however, would be, does the TTS have enough paid human resources.

TTS Facebook page indicates public-oriented activities like "Leadership Club" (Juhtimisklubi) and young leaders development program "Futuurum" for people between the age of 16 to 24 that would start in January 2019 (https://et-ee.facebook.com/KUSTartu). The Facebook page shows also that the TTS has organized a jazz concert in Tartu Town Hall (https://et-ee.facebook.com/events/236501493695010/). The TTS participated also in the World Clean Up Day in 2018. Some of the public oriented activities are organized in cooperation with other denominations.

Commendations

- The seminary library can be used by the general public.
- Active participation in society is encouraged and the faculty members are good examples in it.
- There are different kind of public oriented activities (concerts, seminars) that were not mentioned in the Report but were found from the TTS Facebook page.

Recommendations

- There should be periodical evaluations on the public-oriented activities. As they were not mentioned in the Report it remains unclear what kind of evaluations are used if any, and if there is evaluation system how the results are evaluated. This includes also question who is responsible for the public-oriented activities provided by the TTS.