

## EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION DOCUMENTS

### Master in Bible Art

European Christian Academy

Jūrmala, Latvia

**June 2025**

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High Council for the evaluation of research and higher education

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International evaluation and accreditation

## EVALUATION REPORT

**Master in Bible Art**

European Christian Academy

Jūrmala, Latvia

**May 2025**

The European Christian Academy (ECA) has mandated the Hcéres to perform the evaluation of its master programme in Bible Art. The evaluation is based on the “External Evaluation Standards” of foreign study programmes, adopted by the Hcéres Board on September 18<sup>th</sup> 2024. These standards are available on the Hcéres website ([hceres.fr](https://www.hceres.fr)).

In the name of the expert committee<sup>1</sup> :

Mathieu Schneider, President of the committee

In the name of Hcéres<sup>1</sup> :

Coralie Chevallier, President

The High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (Hcéres) is an independent public authority. It is responsible for evaluating higher education and research institutions, research organisations, research units, and training programmes.

<sup>1</sup>In accordance with articles R. 114-15 and R. 114-10 of the Research Code, evaluation reports are signed by the chairman of the expert committee and countersigned by the President of Hcéres.

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## I. STUDY PROGRAMME IDENTITY SHEET

- University/institution: European Christian Academy
- Component, faculty or department concerned: None
- Programme's title: Master Bible Art
- Training/speciality: Fine Arts
- Year of creation and context: 1997 after the independence of Latvia
- Site(s) where the programme is taught (Town and campus): Jūrmala, Latvia

## PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

- Surname, first name: Agnese Sējāne
- Profession and grade: Administrative staff member
- Main subject taught: none

## METHODS AND RESULTS OF THE PREVIOUS ACCREDITATION(S)

- Methodology and agency: Latvian agency
- Results: Quality (4 out of 4), Resources (4 out of 4), Sustainability (4 out of 4), Cooperation (3 out of 4)

## HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES DEDICATED TO THE PROGRAMME

- Human resources:

Teaching staff: breakdown by status (full professor, associate professor, assistant professor, invited professor, lecturer, instructor), full-time or part-time, gender and nationality, degree hold (PhD, Master, other), distribution by campus (if relevant),

No.	Gender	Status	Degree	Full-time/ Part-time	Nationality	Campus
1.	F	Professor	<i>Dr.philol.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
2.	M	Professor	<i>Dr.habil.phil.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
3.	M	Guest - Professor	<i>Dr. art.</i>	Part-time	Romanian	Jūrmala
4.	F	Guest - Professor	<i>Dr. sc. Soc.</i>	Part-time	Lithuanian	Jūrmala
5.	F	Associated guest professor	<i>Dr.art.</i>	Part-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
6.	M	Associated Professor	<i>Dr. art.</i>	Part-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
7.	M	Professor	<i>Dr.theol.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
8.	F	Associated Professor	<i>Dr.theol.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
9.	M	Professor	<i>Dr.theol.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
10.	F	Assistant	<i>Dr.hist. in church history</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
11.	F	Professor, painter	<i>Mag.art.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
12.	F	Associated Professor, painter	<i>Mag.art.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
13.	F	Professor, graphic artist	<i>Mag.art.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala

No.	Gender	Status	Degree	Full-time/ Part-time	Nationality	Campus
14.	M	Assistant Professor	<i>Dr.theol.</i>	Part-time	American	Jūrmala
15.	M	Assistant Professor, iconographer	<i>Mag.art.</i>	Part-time	Russian	Jūrmala
16.	F	Assistant Professor, history of arts	<i>Mag.art. history of arts</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
17.	M	Associated Professor, iconographer	<i>Dr.theol.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
18.	M	Assistant Professor	<i>Mag.theol.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
19.	M	Assistant Professor, Calligrapher	<i>Mag.art.</i>	Part-time	Macedonian, German	Jūrmala
20.	F	Assistant Professor, Iconographer	<i>Mag.sc.sal., Mag.art.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
21.	F	Assistant professor, painter	<i>Mag.art.</i>	Full-time	Russian	Jūrmala
22.	F	Assistant professor, iconographer	<i>Mag.art.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
23.	F	Assistant professor, iconographer	<i>Mag.art.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
24.	F	Assistant professor, iconographer	<i>Mag.art.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
25.	M	Lecturer, liturgical arts	<i>Mag.theol.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
26.	F	Lecturer, history of Latvian arts	<i>Mag.theol.</i>	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala

Non-teaching staff: breakdown by degree hold (PhD, Master, other), status (permanent, under contract), full-time or part-time, gender and nationality, distribution by campus (if relevant).

No.	Gender	Degree hold (PhD, Master, etc.)		Status (permanent, under contract)	Full-time/ Part-time	Nationality	Campus
1.	F	Mag.art.	Study department management and administration	Permanent	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
2.	F	Mag.sc.ing.	Financial accounting and bookkeeping	Permanent	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
3.	M	Mag.theol.	Coordinator of international studies and Erasmus+	Permanent	Full-time	Latvian	Jūrmala
4.	M	Mag.sc.ing.	Computer system administrator, IT specialist	Under contract	Part-time	Latvian	Jūrmala

- Digital resources for steering and monitoring, teaching, documentation and internal/external communication

Adequate IT provision:

Zoom platform;

Moodle platform

Access to scientific databases;

Access to Wi-Fi connection;

Various IT, photo and video equipment necessary for the study process.

- Rooms and technological equipment

Location: Vienības prospekts 23, Jūrmala, LV-2010 (European Christian Academy)

Legal status and purpose of use of the premises: educational institution

Surface: 455,7 m<sup>2</sup>.

The study programme is implemented in beautiful, renovated premises in Jūrmala. The Academy moved to new, renovated premises at Vienības prospekts 23. The infrastructure of the university is adequate for academic work.

In the current premises, on the 1st floor of the university there is a Library (20,9 m<sup>2</sup>), Reading Room (33,1 m<sup>2</sup>), Chapel (auditorium No.1; 62,4 m<sup>2</sup>), an Art Therapy and Iconography Class (auditorium no. 2; 41,2 m<sup>2</sup>); Painting and Drawing classes (auditorium no. 3; 51,9 m<sup>2</sup> and no. 4; 44,3 m<sup>2</sup>). the Senate Hall, and work offices are located on the 2nd floor.

Academic library (approx. 15,500 items), copying, printing, scanning equipment. The Library of the Academy is a member of the Latvian Library Universal Catalog (LIIS). Nine databases are available through signed cooperation agreements with the National Library of Latvia (EBSCO, Rubicon, Britannica Online, Academic Edition, AkadTerm, Encyclopedia of Religions, Mythica, Central Intelligence Agency, etc.)

Personal computers (5 pcs.) – for information processing.

Copiers (5 pcs.).

## STUDENT POPULATION: EVOLUTION AND TYPOLOGY OVER THE LAST 4 YEARS, INCLUDING NUMBER OF GRADUATES

- Number of applications, number of students enrolled (for each year).

Bible Art Master	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Nbr. of students enrolled	3	4	4	4

- Statistics on students over the last 4 years, breakdown according to:
  - Female/male students
  - Students with grants or funding; in the study program, there are no students with grants or funding; all students pay for their studies privately
  - In and out students (from the area or foreign students)
  - Initial/apprenticeship/long-life learning



Exemple of presentation for a Master program

		2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Year 1	Male			1	1	
	Female	4	3	3	3	4
	Nationals	4	2	3	4	4
	Foreigners		1			
	Students with grants/funding	–	–	–	–	–
	Total	4	3	4	4	4
Year 2	Male				1	1
	Female	3	4	3	3	3
	Nationals	3	4	2	3	4
	Foreigners			1		
	Students with grants/funding	–	–	–	–	–
	Total	3	4	3	4	4
Graduated	Male					1
	Female		4	3	3	3
	Nationals		4	2	3	4
	Foreigners			1		
	Students with grants/funding	–	–	–	–	–
	Total		4 (100%)	3 (100%)	3 (75%)	4 (100%)

Year 1 (19/20) – Year 2 (20/21) – 1 cohort of MA students / graduates

Year 1 (20/21) – Year 2 (21/22) – 1 cohort of MA students / graduates

Year 1 (21/22) – Year 2 (22/23) – 1 cohort of MA students / graduates

Year 1 (22/23) – Year 2 (23/24) – 1 cohort of MA students / graduates

## II. COMPOSITION OF THE EXPERTS PANEL

Chair:

- Mathieu Schneider, full professor, musicology (University of Strasbourg)

Experts:

- Caroline Arnould-Béhar, associate professor in history of art, Institut catholique de Paris
- Antonella Bellantuono, associate professor in history of religions, Université catholique de Lille
- Mathilde Leïchlé, PhD student in history of art, Université Paris-Cité

Hcéres was represented by Nicolas Zorzin, Head of project, Europe and International Department.

## III. EVALUATION PROCESS

### VISIT DESCRIPTION

- Date of the visit: 5-7 May 2025
- Summary of the proceedings: During the on-site visit, the panel met with ca. 40 individuals over a span of three days, following the schedule included hereinafter. Once written by the panel chair, the report was circulated to all panel members for review.
- Organisation of the visit: The visit has been organised by ECA in a permanent dialogue with HCERES.
- Cooperation of study programme and institution to be accredited: The university provided full access to the areas and documents, and answered all the committee's questions.
- People met: See below.
- Any problems: The committee had to explain on several occasions the specific methodology of the evaluation process, particularly the confidential and exclusive nature of the interviews (which do not permit the presence of external observers). This proved somewhat challenging, as real-time translation from Russian or Latvian was frequently required, and not all interviewees were fluent in English.

### PEOPLE MET

Date	Hour	Interviews
5 May 2025	10h00 - 12h30	1/ Opening session with top management  Top Management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor and Rector of the ECA, Vice-rector of the ECA, and Chairman of the Senate</li> </ul> Iconography and Calligraphy teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study program director, study program consultative director, and 8 assistant professors.</li> </ul>
	14h00 – 15h00	Visit of the Jurmala Orthodox Church to see a Master student's icons restorations
	15h00 - 17h00	Display of Bachelor and Master study programme Diploma works in Iconography
6 May 2025	10h00 - 11h30	2/ Presentation of the Bachelor and the Master & Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study program director, professor and graphic painter, associate professor and painter, and assistant professor and painter</li> </ul>
	11h30 - 12h30	3/ Bachelor and Master Teaching staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rector of ECA, 3 professors, 7 assistant professors, and 1 guest professor</li> </ul>
	14h30 – 16h00	4/ Alumni & Employers of the Bachelor and Master programs External actors:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pastor of Ev. Luth Church, priest of Latvian Orthodox Church, bishop of Roman Catholic church in Latvia, cultural un public affairs officer of Embassy of Israel to Latvia, National Museum of Arts, Museum of Foreign Arts (Latvia)</li> </ul> <p>Alumni:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iconographer of Latvian Orthodox Church, iconographer of Latvian Orthodox Church, master study program, and tattoo artist</li> </ul>
7 May 2025	10h00 - 11h30	<p>5/ Quality assurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 academic accreditation representatives, rector, 3 assistant professors, study program director, study department</li> </ul>
	11h30 – 13h00	<p>6/ Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 MA Student</li> <li>8 BA Students</li> </ul>
	13h30 – 14h30	<p>7/ Closing session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professor, Rector of the ECA</li> <li>Vice-rector of the ECA</li> <li>Study program director</li> <li>Assistant Professor</li> </ul>

40 participants were met during the interviews.

## IV. OVERALL PRESENTATION

### 1 – PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The European Christian Academy (ECA) is a private university located in Jūrmala, in the western suburbs of Riga, Latvia. The institution was initially founded in 1993 to address the training needs of icon painters within the context of renewed religious and cultural freedom following the fall of the Soviet regime. Due to its small size, ECA is not divided into faculties, but instead offers three main academic programmes: Theology, Bible Art, and Social work.

The Master's degree in Bible art (MArt) was first accredited in 1997, four years after the Academy's establishment. This two-year programme awards 120 ECTS credits. The Master's degree is the continuation and deepening of the Bachelor's programme in Bible Art, also offered by the ECA. Each year, it trains around 3-4 students in the painting and restoration of icons, addressing the needs of Latvia's three main Christian denominations: Lutheran, Catholic, and Orthodox. The programme combines intensive practical teaching in drawing and painting with a strong theoretical foundation in theology, philosophy, anthropology, and art history. It also provides students with training in research methodology and in-depth knowledge of the religious iconographic heritage in Latvia and neighbouring countries. The programme maintains close and active collaborations with numerous religious and cultural institutions within Latvia, and enjoys privileged partnerships with several universities in neighbouring countries, particularly within the Baltic region.

It is aimed at initial students with a Bachelor's degree in Bible Art and at long-life learning profiles trained in canonical painting. It can be taken in three languages: Latvian, Russian and English.

### 2 - PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME'S SELF-EVALUATION APPROACH

The programme's self-evaluation includes several key documents: the Self-Evaluation Report, Identity Sheet, Swot Analysis, and a compilation of annexes gathered in a single file titled "Evidence". The self-evaluation process is thorough and well-documented. The committee was able to obtain further insights through interviews with students, faculty members, top management, alumni, and external stakeholders, as well as various presentations conducted during the on-site visit, and through visits to exhibitions, an art gallery, and the ECA's premises.

### 3 – FOLLOW-UP OF THE PREVIOUS HCERES RECOMMANDATIONS

There were no previous recommendations by HCERES, since it is the first evaluation done by our evaluation agency. Previous recommendations of the Latvian evaluation agency in 2013 were:

1. Student admission criteria should be improved by developing admission regulations;
2. Experts recommend developing wider cooperation with creative associations and art professionals;
3. Develop wider international cooperation;
4. Introduce a church music study program.

Recommendations 1-2 have been taken in account. Recommendation 3 has partially been implemented. Further international cooperation is still expected. Recommendation 4 is for the moment not possible by lack of financial means.

## V. EVALUATION REPORT

### FIELD 1- TEACHING POLICY AND CHARACTERISATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

**The Master study programme in Bible Art is closely aligned with ECA's educational strategy and reflects the core values upon which the institution is founded.**

Building on the foundations laid by the Bachelor's degree, the Master's programme offers advanced technical and artistic training in icon painting. Having acquired proficiency in drawing, painting, and the canonical rules of iconography, Master's students are encouraged to tackle more complex compositions—such as hagiographic icons, in which a saint's portrait is framed by narrative scenes from his life. Students are also guided towards greater creativity and encouraged to develop a personal artistic style. In some cases, they may be entrusted with the design of original iconographic sketches.

The teaching and supervision provided are consistent with the Academy's ethos and the values it upholds, stemming from its founding mission to contribute to the emergence of a new Latvian society rooted in Europe's traditional values. The programme director—a recognized icon painter and Orthodox priest—embodies the strong connection between the programme and the Orthodox Church. Latvian identity is prominently expressed in several dimensions of the programme: inscriptions on icons in Latvian, Saint John of Riga is presented as a model for hagiographic iconography, and a faculty-led initiative is currently engaged in translating the Church Fathers' texts into Latvian.

Nonetheless, the specific aims and distinctive features of the Master's programme, in contrast to the Bachelor's, should be more explicitly stated in the official documentation.

**Although the programme is primarily oriented towards Latvia, it maintains a number of international connections.**

ECA has established partnerships with universities in neighbouring countries, notably the Universities of Klaipėda and Vilnius in Lithuania. These collaborations are reflected in the presence of visiting professors at ECA and through short-term student mobility facilitated by the Erasmus+ programme. For example, three students from Vilnius participated this year in a calligraphy module as part of a short-term Erasmus+ mobility programme. A longstanding and privileged connection with the Holy Land has enabled students to take part in archaeological excavations in Israel and the Palestinian territories, particularly during the first fifteen years of the programme. In addition, a few targeted partnerships exist with institutions in Norway and Greece.

**Research plays a more prominent role at Master's level, although there remains room for further development.**

Students are required to gather comprehensive information on the works they copy/reproduce, both in icon painting and calligraphy. Although the Academy does not currently offer doctoral programmes, it actively supports students wishing to pursue doctoral studies. They may enrol in public universities in Latvia or neighbouring countries such as Lithuania, with which the Academy maintains regular contact, facilitating such academic pathways. On occasion, the Academy encourages students to undertake doctoral studies within its wider network, with the prospect of returning as members of the teaching staff upon completion.

To strengthen the research component of the Master's programme, students could be encouraged to contribute to a blog dedicated to publishing short articles. This initiative would also enhance the programme's visibility within and beyond the academic community.

**The high qualification level of graduates and the Academy's extensive network of partners ensure that Master's alumni integrate seamlessly into the job market.**

The principal source of employment for graduates lies in the creation of canonical icons for churches in Latvia, primarily orthodox, but also Catholic and Lutheran. The advanced technical and theological expertise of graduates enables them to respond to specific commissions, including the production of new iconographic types, particularly following the canonisation of new saints. In addition, opportunities exist in the restoration of icons and ecclesiastical decorations, as well as in cultural mediation, the management of private museums, and the curation of exhibitions. Teaching and consultancy also represent significant career paths. Given their deep knowledge of iconography, graduates are frequently invited to serve on juries across a variety of cultural and artistic fields.

**In conclusion: The study programme is fully aligned with the institution's foundational principles and objectives. It is unique in its ability to foster creativity while training icon painters whose high-level canonical practice is enriched by academic research. The professional integration of graduates is effectively supported by the Academy's strong network of partners. However, greater emphasis should be placed on the research dimension of the programme.**

## FIELD 2 – PEDAGOGICAL ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

**The programme's structure and teaching methods are of high quality, fostering both technical and personal development**

The Master's programme enables students to consolidate their artistic practice by developing a personal style within a 2-years curriculum that effectively combines technical skills and theoretical reflection on iconographic art. Continuous support from instructors promotes a progressively autonomous learning path, while the in-depth study of iconographic traditions and visual composition contributes to the development of a mature and expressive artistic language. This is also of value in educational context.

The pedagogical approach is rooted in strong technical rigour, drawing inspiration from academic traditions such as the St. Petersburg school of fine arts, an increasingly rare model in contemporary art education. This robust foundation equips students with a broad artistic vocabulary extending beyond icon painting to include other disciplines such as calligraphy.

The programme also fosters the acquisition of soft skills such as precision, perseverance, and concentration. However, its high level of specialisation restricts access for students from other artistic backgrounds or bachelor's degrees, due to the absence of bridging or preparatory pathways. Finally, references made during interviews to courses in narrative or art therapy were not clearly reflected in the self-evaluation report. These elements should be either more explicitly defined or formally integrated into the programme documentation.

**The pedagogical approach is grounded in the teaching team's strong commitment to fostering each student's academic growth through continuous guidance and personalised support.**

Courses are delivered in Russian, Latvian, or English, depending on the linguistic background of the students. This multilingual approach ensures broader accessibility and supports an inclusive learning environment. It is embedded within a student-centred pedagogical framework that includes flexible scheduling and customised learning pathways, aimed at accommodating individual progress rates and specific educational needs.

The quality of the learning environment is reinforced by the availability of dedicated materials and resources, which ensure suitable conditions for hands-on artistic training. Continuity in learning is supported through regular home assignments and structured feedback, enabling steady individual progression. To enhance accessibility, especially for theoretical components, the programme also integrates hybrid teaching modalities. This model of personalised support was positively evaluated by three international students from the St. Ignatius Loyola University of Applied Sciences in Vilnius, who reported a high level of academic supervision and practical assistance with housing and day-to-day logistics.

**The international accessibility of the programme could be strengthened.**

At present, the programme demonstrates limited international integration and lacks a clearly defined strategy for promoting student mobility. Participation in Erasmus+ exchanges remains low (2 outgoing students per year, no incoming students) and is not actively encouraged, despite students expressing interest in exploring opportunities with institutions in Western Europe. While members of the faculty may offer informal guidance, there is currently no formalised framework, linguistic preparation, or structured orientation to support outgoing mobility. Establishing a transparent and accessible mobility system—including dedicated sessions on partner institutions and available opportunities—could significantly enhance international participation.

Likewise, the programme does not yet adequately accommodate incoming international students. There are no targeted initiatives, such as English-language courses or short-term training modules, which could support their integration. This is primarily due to the high level of specialisation within the curriculum, which limits its flexibility in adapting to broader international exchange formats. Nevertheless, promising opportunities do exist. For instance, the Scriptorium, which offers calligraphy courses, could serve as a foundation for targeted exchanges with institutions working in related artistic disciplines.

Expanding partnerships beyond existing links with institutions in Vilnius or Crete—especially to include institutions with a focus on contemporary art—could offer Master's students with valuable exposure to a broader range of

artistic contexts. Access to specialised training modules in disciplines such as woodwork or mosaic, provided by other European art academies, would enrich students' technical and theoretical skill sets. Such initiatives would not only diversify the educational offering but also support students in building robust international networks for future academic or professional development.

### **The programme effectively responds to lifelong learning and socio-economic needs.**

The Master's programme in Bible Art primarily welcomes graduates from the ECA's Bachelor in Sacred Art who wish to deepen their expertise in a specialised and rigorous context. At the same time, it remains open to a broader range of learner profiles (provided they are already trained in canonical painting), thereby contributing to lifelong learning opportunities. The training is characterized by a high level of technical and conceptual rigour, in line with the standards required by ecclesiastical institutions—to which icons are often destined—and must meet precise canonical criteria. Concurrently, the programme prepares students for further academic advancement, including doctoral studies, as well as for teaching roles in education settings.

The programme also plays an important ecumenical role by admitting students from various Christian denominations. Some participants are even sent by their churches specifically to acquire iconographic skills. This diversity promotes mutual understanding between Orthodox, Catholic, and Lutheran traditions, particularly in the context of creating icons of recently canonised saints. These works, produced according to canonical norms, are often commissioned by religious institutions and private patrons alike.

From the outset, students are encouraged to engage professionally through participation in public exhibitions, which help to develop both artistic visibility and entrepreneurial competencies. Beyond sacred art, the programme engages with wider European socio-cultural contexts. This is exemplified by the participation in seminars organised by the European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA), which foster dialogue around key social issues including labour mobility, migration, education, equal opportunity, and youth engagement.

Expanding international collaborations could further enhance the programme's relevance, extending its reach beyond the Baltic region and fostering synergies with similar initiatives at the European and global levels.

**In conclusion, the Master's study programme BArt offers a technically rigorous and pedagogically attentive training that successfully integrates artistic practice, theory, and spiritual engagement. Rooted in a highly specialised tradition, it equips students with the skills required by ecclesiastical institutions while also preparing them for academic or teaching careers. The programme cultivates transversal competencies and encourages personal artistic expression. It stands out for its student-centred approach, strong faculty commitment, and high-quality facilities. However, the programme's high level of specialisation and limited international integration currently constrain broader accessibility and student mobility. Enhancing international partnerships, clarifying ancillary course offerings, and expanding training opportunities in related artistic techniques could significantly increase its reach, relevance, and long-term impact, both within sacred art and in broader contemporary artistic contexts.**

## **FIELD 3 – STUDENTS' PATHWAY**

**The Master's study programme in Bible Art enjoys a strong national reputation, which significantly contributes to its appeal. However, its public visibility could be further improved through more targeted promotional efforts.**

Building on the solid foundation of the Bachelor's degree, the Master's programme in Bible Art further is particularly well-suited for those seeking to specialise in icon painting, teach in the field, or pursue doctoral studies. It benefits from strong institutional support, particularly from Rector Professor Skaidrīte Gūtmane and the teaching staff, who actively promote it through media appearances and robust connections with Latvia's religious and cultural communities.

It is common for students to take a one- or two-year break between completing their Bachelor's and enrolling in the Master's programme, often to gain professional experience or to mature artistically. However, admission into the Master's programme can be challenging for candidates who have not completed the rigorous undergraduate training offered by the ECA, as the curriculum assumes in-depth familiarity with the Academy's specific spiritual framework and technical practices.

The programme's reach could be significantly broadened through greater involvement in Erasmus+ exchanges and by offering scholarships or financial aid. To facilitate access for students from diverse academic backgrounds, the introduction of a preparatory summer school could provide essential grounding in the programme's core disciplines. Such initiatives could be supported through private donations, fundraising



campaigns, or the establishment of a philanthropic foundation linked to the Academy. These efforts would enhance inclusivity and attract a more diverse student body.

**Student success is fostered through highly individualised academic support and the ready availability of both teaching and administrative staff.**

Faculty members play a key role in helping students integrate into the programme, offering personalised guidance throughout their studies. Practical instruction is also adapted to meet diverse learning needs, including accommodations for left-handed students or those who require privacy to concentrate. A defining feature of the programme is the frequent and direct engagement with artworks. Instruction takes place not only within the ECA but also in museums and archives, where students develop their skills in drawing, painting, calligraphy, and art history—nurturing a sophisticated visual sensibility.

Theoretical courses are often shared between Bachelor's and Master's students, with small seminar groups of around ten participants. These settings promote peer learning, where students are expected to regularly present their work, participate in discussions, and critically reflect on their assignments.

A key feature of the programme is a research-based assignment centred on the icon creation process, supervised by professors who remain available throughout the year for guidance. The ECA upholds strict standards of academic integrity and actively works to prevent plagiarism. At the Master's level, the compositions become more complex, often integrating narrative scenes that require reflection on the symbolic, liturgical, and spiritual significances of the work. This academic and artistic depth is reinforced through regular presentations and group discussions.

Thanks to small cohorts and a mission focused on student wellbeing—captured by the motto “We believe in the power of students”—the programme allows for flexible scheduling. Most students combine their studies with professional activities, and the ECA accommodates this by offering adaptable course hours. Students can access studios spaces throughout the day and request extended access through administrative channels. An online Moodle platform supports learning by providing course materials, remote learning, and direct communication with instructors.

The ECA staff is approachable and responsive, and the school physical layout fosters a strong sense of community—underscoring its commitment to a collegial and supportive environment.

**Graduates of the Master's programme in Bible art demonstrate strong employability and are well-prepared for further pursuits, including doctoral studies, should they choose to continue.**

The programme's alignment with professional practice is ensured through high-quality instruction and sustained engagement with contemporary artistic and cultural environments. Students regularly participate in exhibitions, offering them opportunities to showcase their work, build visibility, and connect with potential clients and collaborators.

Professional integration is further supported by a robust network, especially within religious institutions, museums, and the broader cultural sector. Thanks to the long-standing commitment of Rector Skaidrīte Gūtmane, key initiatives such as the annual Career Day have been established, connecting students with religious communities and private patrons seeking commissioned iconography. Graduates are trained in both icon creation and restoration, which makes them suitable for a variety of roles, including curatorship or educational positions in museums, or teaching in schools or religious institutions.

Many graduates maintain close ties with the Academy and continue to seek guidance or references from former instructors. The ELEUSA Alumni Association supports this network by compiling alumni portfolios and promoting them to potential patrons, helping graduates secure commissions and expand their professional reach.

**In conclusion, the Master's programme in Bible Art is distinguished by its academic depth, artistic specialisation, and strong integration into broader intellectual and professional networks. It provides an ideal environment for students to refine their craft, engage in research, and pursue careers as iconographers, teachers, curators, or doctoral researchers. Its attractiveness could be further enhanced by introducing private scholarships, establishing a philanthropic foundation, or launching targeted crowdfunding initiatives—measures that would broaden access and promote greater diversity within the student body. To facilitate entry into the programme for students from diverse academic backgrounds, a preparatory summer school could provide structured grounding in the core disciplines of sacred art and iconography.**



## FIELD 4 – ACADEMIC PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

### **The study programme benefits from extensive and high-quality support**

A total of 26 teachers are involved in the study programme, including 8 professors (two of whom are visiting professors), 16 associate or assistant professors, and 2 lecturers. This sizeable teaching team ensures close, individual supervision, with an exceptional teacher-to-student ratio of 6.25 to 1. This unusually high ratio reflects the specific nature of the teaching, which is both artistic and scientific and therefore requires tailored, one-to-one mentoring.

The faculty is composed of both academic and professional experts, all holding at least a Master's degree, underscoring the programme's deep integration with the professional world. The quality of the scientific content is further ensured by the annual evaluation of full professors according to State regulations, which require a minimum of two peer-reviewed publications per year.

Roles within the teaching team are clearly defined, and collaboration is guided by a culture of subsidiarity and trust, in line with the ECA's internal quality assurance framework (LOGOS platform).

### **The premises and equipment available to students and staff are of a high standard and fit the programme's objectives and teaching methods**

The ECA is committed to supporting the career development of its faculty and to renewing its teaching body. The institution encourages outstanding Master's students to pursue doctoral studies at other universities across the Baltic region. These graduates then acquire the necessary qualifications to return as instructors in the highly specialised Bible Art programme (at both Bachelor's and Master's levels), which requires a small but expert teaching pool.

In addition to the 26-teaching staff, the Academy employs a non-teaching staff of four individuals. Located in close proximity to the classrooms, they are readily accessible to students, ensuring regular and fluid interaction. The ECA's premises are located in a single building in Jūrmala, fostering a high degree of communication and collaboration. This physical proximity facilitates both formal and informal exchanges among students and faculty. Although relatively modest in size—comprising two floors of a villa and an annex with three flats for visiting professors—the facilities are located in an idyllic setting in the heart of the residential town of Jūrmala. The building is open to students from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., with occasional evening hours until 9 p.m.. It includes several classrooms adapted to different types of instruction and a library specialising in art and theology, which is particularly valuable for Master's students conducting research for their final essay. The Academy also provides students also with essential materials for art and calligraphy classes (e.g., pencils, brushes). The environment is conducive to learning, reading, contemplation, and artistic practice. Master's students, though few in number, share the premises with Bachelor's students, forming a close-knit, supportive community. The Academy's strong affirmation of Christian values further strengthens this sense of community.

The teaching team is both international and multilingual. If a student struggles with the primary language of instruction, teachers routinely translate key concepts or sections of the lesson into one of the Academy's three common languages. On average, five visiting professors are invited each year to deliver specialised lectures.

Going forward, attention must be paid to the Academy's financial sustainability. The former ECA building, which belongs to the founding rector, was recently vacated due to high maintenance costs. The Academy has since relocated to a smaller building with lower operating expenses. Nevertheless, the previous building has yet to be sold, leaving the institution on a financially delicate position. This situation may impact tuition fees, currently set at €2,200 per year, a high rate by Latvian standards. In any case, indicators are already in place to monitor training costs and guide future decisions regarding property and resource allocation.

### **The programme benefits from quality management tools, which are used to gather suggestions for improvement from students and lecturers**

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, ECA implemented a comprehensive Quality Charter, published on the institutional LOGOS platform. This document outlines in detail the university's core values, strategic vision, partnerships, and governance structure. Serving simultaneously as internal regulations and a procedural reference, the charter ensures transparency and consistency across the institution's operations.

The Master's degree in Bible Art is overseen by a dedicated study programme council, which is responsible for monitoring and continuously improving the curriculum. This council comprises the head of the study programme,

three faculty members, and a student delegate elected by his or her peers. Latvian State law allows curricular adjustments of up to 5% annually and up to 30% over an accreditation period. Both students and faculty have expressed satisfaction with this flexible yet structured approach. Given that many faculty members are active professionals in their respective fields, the council is well-positioned to integrate external perspectives and labour market expectations. The principle of subsidiarity, clearly defined in the ECA's internal documentation, ensures that the council can submit well-informed proposals to the University Senate through the head of the study programme.

The programme has undergone several external evaluations as part of the national and international accreditation process. The most recent accreditation was granted in 2013 and extended by three years in 2020. Notably, this extension marked the first time the ECA engaged an international agency, reflecting its commitment to aligning with broader European standards.

**The university's quality assurance approach is transparent and known to its users. It is based on strong moral values and high ethical standards.**

All quality-related processes, as previously outlined, are publicly accessible via the ECA website and the LOGOS platform. While students may not always be fully familiar with the platform itself, they are consistently informed of the core values and rules that underpin their study programme. Additionally, students benefit from individualised career guidance through the so-called 'Landmark route', a personalised portfolio.

The Moodle platform ensures that students are notified in advance of assessment procedures and kept up to date in real time regarding any modifications or announcements relevant to their courses. Teaching and staff performance are evaluated at the end of each semester through anonymous student questionnaires. The results inform the continuous improvement of the programme in conjunction with the recommendations from the study programme council.

Finally, the LOGOS platform also outlines the ECA's ethical framework, which places particular emphasis on respect for others, freedom of conscience, and adherence to scientific and educational integrity. To uphold these values, the institution employs anti-plagiarism software and maintains internal procedures for identifying and sanctioning academic misconduct or breach of integrity.

**To conclude, the Master's degree in Bible Art is supported by a large and highly qualified teaching staff, reflecting the ECA's commitment to academic excellence and pedagogical rigour. The institution actively promotes the career development of its faculty members and ensures the renewal of its teaching pool. While the premises are modest in size, they are well-equipped, well-maintained, and well-adapted to the specific needs of the programme. The library holds a significant collection of specialised books and journals that supports both coursework and research. Shared facilities across different programmes foster a close-knit academic community, encouraging frequent and meaningful interaction between students, faculty, and top management. Since 2022, the ECA has implemented a comprehensive quality assurance across the institution, reinforcing a culture of continuous improvement and open dialogue among all stakeholders. However, In the years ahead, particular attention must be paid to the institution's financial sustainability, which may directly impact the Master's programme in Bible Art. Tuition fees, currently high by national standards, pose a potential barrier to access for some students. Preserving affordability without compromising quality should remain a priority to ensure the programme's long-term viability and inclusiveness.**

## VI. CONCLUSION

The overall impression of the Master's degree in Bible Art is very positive. It is a niche programme, unique in the Baltic region and even in Europe. It responds to a clearly identified demand from Latvia's three main Christian denominations (Lutheran, Catholic, and Orthodox) for trained icon painters and restorers, particularly in the post-Soviet context, where much of the national religious heritage was destroyed or damaged. The programme is also based in the broader academic need to deepen understanding of national heritage through scholarly research, and in a wider societal and political ambition to educate a select group of undergraduate and postgraduate students in "classical European values in modern society". The moral and spiritual commitment of students enrolled in the BArt Master's degree is both acknowledged and shared within the academic community. The curriculum is highly specialised, focusing primarily on the development of new pictorial forms within the canons of sacred art, grounded in advanced painting and drawing techniques. These technical skills are acquired during the Bachelor's degree in Bible Art at the ECA. Like the Bachelor's degree, the Master's degree combines intensive artistic training with interdisciplinary instruction in theology, anthropology, and art history. This theoretical is distinctive in that it is grounded in direct engagement with primary sources and heritage materials delivered through on-site workshops in archives, libraries, and museums. As a result, the Master's degree in Bible Art is deeply embedded in a dynamic professional network in Riga and throughout in Latvia, encompassing churches, cultural centres, and professional associations.

The Master's degree programme spans two years and comprises 120 ECTS credits. It is a direct continuation of the Bachelor's degree in Bible Art offered by the ECA. Due to the near disappearance of classical academic training in drawing and painting from most European art schools, the ECA Bachelor's degree in Bible Art is one of the very few recognised pathways into the Master's programme. This explains the very limited number of students admitted to the Master's level. In contrast to the Bachelor's programme, which emphasises the acquisition of foundational artistic skills, the Master's degree places greater emphasis on research, creativity, and the development of personal artistic expression. Students are expected to produce a thesis that combines academic research methodology with their own artistic practice.

Although the Master's degree in Bible Art is truly unique in Europe, there is potential for the programme to strengthen its international partnerships beyond the Baltic region (currently limited to Lithuania, Latvia, and Norway). Expanding these collaborations would encourage greater creativity and openness of mind among students. In particular, in the development of short-term mobility opportunities, both incoming and outgoing, could enable art and design students from other parts of Europe to engage with the programme. This is especially important given that the programme claims to be rooted in "classical European values", yet currently lacks sufficient integration of the cultural traditions of Western or Southern Europe.

The small size of student cohorts allows for close individual supervision and personalised teaching adapted to each student's level and language proficiency. The programme can be followed in Latvian, Russian, or English. The high academic calibre of the teaching staff, combined with their linguistic and intercultural skills, ensures a rich diversity of cultural perspectives while respecting the personal beliefs and identities of all students. The facilities and equipment provided offer optimal conditions for study, research, and artistic creation, in an environment that is both pleasant and intellectually stimulating. However, the high cost of living and tuition in this region of Latvia must be taken into account. It is essential that any future financial developments do not result in higher fees for students, which could undermine the accessibility of the programme.

The continuous improvement of the study programme is ensured by clearly structured governance framework within the ECA, complemented by regular formal and informal exchanges between students and teachers, as well as among students themselves. Steering and monitoring tools are in place, with key performance indicators drawn from the self-evaluation report or those identified during the visit.

In conclusion, this is a high-quality and highly distinctive study programme. It demands both artistic and scholarly rigour from its students, while responding to the needs and expectations of religious institutions and the broader artistic and cultural circles across Latvia.

## STRENGTHS

- A virtually unique study programme in Europe, grounded in a strong identity and openly proclaimed Christian values
- An undeniable reputation in Latvia and neighbouring countries, largely due to the high quality of teaching

- A curriculum that effectively meets the needs and expectations of both ecclesiastical institutions and the cultural sector
- A high academic standard and pedagogical rigour that are recognised and appreciated by both students and faculty
- Highly individualised instruction, fostering the development of personal skills such as patience and spirituality
- Strong commitment and availability of the teaching staff
- Remarkably high rates of student success and professional integration
- A transparent and structured quality assurance system, explicitly aligned with the ECA's values, strategy vision, and student life

## WEAKNESSES

- A lack of overall strategic vision in the area of international relations and partnerships
- Limited openness of research activities to international scientific standards and practices
- High tuition fees, which may act as a deterrent for potential students
- Structural difficulty in creating academic bridges with other programmes, as enrolment in the Master's programme requires specific skills and targeted training which are offered in very few curricula, except the Bachelor's degree at the same academy

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop strategic partnerships with universities in other European countries involved in icon painting or heritage preservation (e.g., Romania, Florence)
- Launch a preparatory summer school to facilitate access to the Master's programme for students from diverse academic backgrounds
- Open the Academy's journal to contributions from international scholars and align it with European academic publishing standards (e.g., open science principles, peer review). A co-publication partnership with the University of Klaipėda's journal could enhance international visibility for both institutions
- Ensure the long-term future sustainability of the programme and the academy by planning the succession of the current Rector, especially to preserve the networks she has established around the Academy and its training courses
- Consolidate the Academy's financial stability by securing the sale of the former Academy building. This would help avoid tuition fee increases and maintain broad social accessibility
- Establish a "Friend of the ECA" association to encourage sponsorship and philanthropic support.

## VII. COMMENTS OF THE INSTITUTION



ORA ET LABORA

## EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

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### In JŪRMALA

11.06.2025., No. 2-9/12

**To Coralie Chevallier,  
President of the Hcéres**

We are writing to express our sincere gratitude for time and expertise in Evaluation of our study programs: Bachelor in Bible Art, and Master in Bible Art – done by Experts' panel team.

We thank you for administrative activities done by Head of Europe and International Department Dr. Nicolas Zorzin, and Chair of the Experts' panel Dr. Matthieu Schneider!

We appreciate the thoroughness and insights provided in Evaluation report!

As part of quality policy, quality culture and quality assurance process development at ECA, the Evaluation and our mutual discussions during the expertise were crucial for our development as institution and regarding Study programs.

Research, Strategy, International Practice Committee of the Senate and Senate Academic Quality Unit, and me personally, carefully reviewed your findings and we are committed to implement valuable recommendations for continuous improvements of our education and research process at Academy as a whole and particularly in the mentioned Study programs.

We didn't find errors regarding facts, however we would like to point to some misunderstandings and omissions.

Regarding Evaluation report of the **Master study program "Bible Art"**, we are writing to express our gratitude for valuable ideas, support and expertise. Experts' contribution to Master in Bible Art made a positive dynamics for development of the Program in the future.

The components of holistic evaluation give for us analytical guidelines, in which the quality of academic value of Study program and its performance on multiple dimensions will develop the higher standards for education of students and research in unity.

We have carefully reviewed Evaluation's findings and recommendations for sustainable implementation of the Study program. We are appreciating Experts' remarks regarding positive sides of the Study program, mainly uniqueness of the Program in Europe, grounded in a strong identity, and openly proclaiming Christian values. We appreciate that in short time Experts understood the reputation of Academy in Latvia and neighboring countries due to the high quality results of teaching. We are very pleased that Experts saw that the curriculum effectively meet the expectations of ecclesiastical institutions and cultural sector in Latvia. Also, the pedagogical rigor we have been paying to the development of Study program was appreciated by Experts. Also, it is pleasant to hear that Experts praise our Quality assurance system, being explicitly aligned with ECA's values, strategy, vision and student life.



Regarding comments on international relations and partnerships, which Experts see as weakness, we would like to stress that already for years it is being increasingly important topic as well as the component of competition between HEIs in Latvia.

Our development in networking was driven by the growing demand for mobility.

Internationalization and platform building takes place, on the one hand, through mobility, and on the other hand, through research.

In 2022, we have received from the Latvian Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – “Certificate Agreement on Good Practice of Attracting Foreign Students in Providing Studies”. Only a few HEIs received such a Certificate, which states the good development of internationalization vision in a relatively short time and implementation of consortial research (although more in the field of social work than in art), which the Academy leads. And it positively evaluates implementation of international Intensive Programs that take place at the Academy and bring together students from different European universities. Perhaps we did not highlight these serious internationalization results enough.

In December 2024, we received the ERASMUS+ annual quality award “Wings 2024” in the nomination “Mobility of Persons in the Higher Education Sector” from the Agency of the Ministry of Education and Science, which is responsible for internationalization in connection with Intensive Programs that brings together students from different European countries.

We agree that strategic vision always can be fulfilled more qualitatively, which we are going to improve in following years.

Serious remark for “limited openness of research activities to international scientific standards and practices” – is the purpose, which we are going to fulfil together with Klaipeda University EBSCO cited Scientific Journal “Tiltai”, which will be accepted in EBSCO database this year, in which Academy’s rector is also a deputy editor, for sure will point out for the Study program’s professors and teachers the significance of results of the Study program and related work to be done for improvement of collaboration and fostering more effective knowledge transfer in Europe.

We agree that icon painting is very rare study program, therefore Experts are right that we have “structural difficulties in creating academic bridges with other programs”, as enrolment in Master’s program require specific skills and targeted training, which are offered in very few curricula throughout Europe. Therefore, signing Erasmus+ interinstitutional agreements is sometimes complicated, although partners corresponding to the Program’s profile are actively sought for.

To facilitate entry into the programs for students from diverse academic backgrounds, a suggestion of Preparatory Summer School from experts is a great idea, which provide structured grounding in core disciplines in sacred art and iconography and will unite applicants from different art training programs.

We thank you again for the valuable insights of Experts’ team and guidance we fully trust in! We look forward to further collaboration and continuous improvement of the study programs and research.

We appreciate Hcéres commitment to ensure the future steps and quality of our Program!

Rector of European Christian Academy

prof.



Skaidrīte Gūtmane

International evaluation and accreditation

## ACCREDITATION DECISION

**Master in Bible Art**

European Christian Academy (ECA)

Latvia

**June 2025**



## SCOPE OF THE ACCREDITATION GRANTED BY HCERES

Hcéres has based its evaluation process on a set of objectives that higher education institution study programs must pursue to ensure recognised quality in France and Europe. These objectives are divided into four areas common to both the evaluation framework and the accreditation criteria.

The Accreditation Commission issues an opinion on the accreditation of the program after examining the application. The Hcéres President takes the decision based on this opinion and the final evaluation report of the program. This accreditation decision, taken in plenary session, is the result of a collegial and reasoned process.

The decision issued by Hcéres regarding the accreditation of the program corresponds to the award of a label, on behalf of Hcéres, to the evaluated entity.

This decision is independent of the accreditations carried out by the French State and therefore does not entail recognition in France of the diplomas delivered by the institution.

## **Decision n° EI-2025-09 on the accreditation of the Master in Bible Art delivered by the European Christian Academy (ECA), Latvia**

### **The President of the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education,**

Considering the Research Code, in particular Articles L. 114-3-1 to L. 114-3-6;

Considering the Decree No. 2021-1536 of 29 November 2021 on the organisation and operation of the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education;

Considering the Board's deliberation No. 2022-5-02 of 29 September 2022 on the accreditation criteria for international study programmes (Except for doctorates/PhDs);

Considering the Decision No. 2023-9 of 16 March 2023 on the international accreditation procedure of the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education;

Considering the agreement No. DEI\_2024\_CONV17 – European Christian Academy (ECA) – Latvia for the evaluation/accreditation of Master in Bible Art;

Considering the opinion issued by the Accreditation Commission on June 27<sup>th</sup> 2025.

### **Decides:**

#### **Article 1**

Having determined that the Master in Bible Art delivered by the European Christian Academy (ECA), Latvia meets the four accreditation criteria, voted by the Board of the High Council on 29 September 2022, as follows:

#### **ACCREDITATION CRITERION 1: TEACHING POLICY AND CHARACTERISATION**

The study programme is fully aligned with the institution's foundational principles and objectives. It is unique in its ability to foster creativity while training icon painters whose high-level canonical practice is enriched by academic research. The professional integration of graduates is effectively supported by the Academy's strong network of partners. However, greater emphasis should be placed on the research dimension of the programme, which is not backed by a formal research unit and which does not offer students to pursue in doctoral studies at ECA. It would be worth to more clearly delineate the specific features and added value of the Master's programme's in comparison to the Bachelor's programme. The Academy maintains a clearly Latvian orientation but has established cooperative ties with universities in neighbouring countries, particularly Klaipėda and Vilnius in Lithuania. Nonetheless, broader international engagement could be beneficial. This may be achieved through expanded academic partnerships with institutions in related fields, increased faculty contributions to international journals, or the organisation of thematic workshops that bring together researchers from different countries to explore shared areas of interest

#### **ACCREDITATION CRITERION 2: THE PEDAGOGICAL ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAM**

The Master's study programme in Bible Art offers a technically rigorous and pedagogically attentive training that successfully integrates artistic practice, theory, and spiritual engagement. Rooted in a highly specialised tradition, it equips students with the skills required by ecclesiastical institutions while also preparing them for academic or teaching careers. The programme cultivates transversal competencies and encourages personal artistic expression. It stands out for its student-centred approach, strong faculty commitment, and high-quality facilities. However, the programme's high level of specialisation and limited international integration currently constrain broader accessibility and student mobility. Enhancing international partnerships, clarifying ancillary course offerings, and expanding training opportunities in related artistic techniques could significantly increase its reach, relevance, and long-term impact, both within sacred art and in broader contemporary artistic contexts. Due to the Master's niche positioning, bridges and reorientations to other Master's degrees are almost impossible..

### ACCREDITATION CRITERION 3: STUDENTS' PATHWAY

The Master's programme has a limited attractiveness due to its pre-requirements of being trained in academic and canonical painting. Its attractiveness could be further enhanced by introducing private scholarships, establishing a philanthropic foundation, or launching targeted crowdfunding initiatives—measures that would broaden access and promote greater diversity within the student body. To facilitate entry into the programme for students from diverse academic backgrounds, a preparatory summer school could provide structured grounding in the core disciplines of sacred art and iconography. Because of the relatively limited size of the country and of the student cohorts, ECA has precise information about the situation of the students after graduation. The success rates are very high due to the high level of requirements to enter the programme.

### ACCREDITATION CRITERION 4: MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAM

The Master's degree in Bible Art is supported by a large and highly qualified teaching staff, reflecting the ECA's commitment to academic excellence and pedagogical rigour. The institution actively promotes the career development of its faculty members and ensures the renewal of its teaching pool. While the premises are modest in size, they are well-equipped, well-maintained, and well-adapted to the specific needs of the programme. The library holds a significant collection of specialised books and journals that supports both coursework and research. Shared facilities across different programmes foster a close-knit academic community, encouraging frequent and meaningful interaction between students, faculty, and top management. Since 2022, the ECA has implemented a comprehensive quality assurance across the institution, supporting the continuous improvement of teaching quality, research integrity and ensuring ongoing dialogue between all stakeholders. However, In the years ahead, particular attention must be paid to the institution's financial sustainability, which may directly impact the Master's programme in Bible Art. Tuition fees, currently high by national standards, pose a potential barrier to access for some students. Preserving affordability without compromising quality should remain a priority to ensure the programme's long-term viability and inclusiveness.

#### Article 2

The Master in Bible Art delivered by the European Christian Academy (ECA), Latvia is accredited for a period of five years from the date of this decision.

#### Article 3

The decision is accompanied by the following recommendations:

- Develop strategic partnerships with universities in other European countries involved in icon painting or heritage preservation (e.g., Romania, Florence)
- Launch a preparatory summer school to facilitate access to the Master's programme for students from diverse academic backgrounds
- Open the Academy's journal to contributions from international scholars and align it with European academic publishing standards (e.g., open science principles, peer review). A co-publication partnership with the University of Klaipėda's journal could enhance international visibility for both institutions
- Ensure the long-term future sustainability of the programme and the academy by planning the succession of the current Rector, especially to preserve the networks she has established around the Academy and its training courses
- Consolidate the Academy's financial stability by securing the sale of the former Academy building. This would help avoid tuition fee increases and maintain broad social accessibility
- Establish a "Friend of the ECA" association to encourage sponsorship and philanthropic support.

#### Article 4

This decision will be published on the Hcéres website.

Paris, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025




19 rue Polssonnière  
75002 Paris, France

**Coralie Chevallier**  
Présidente

President

signed

Coralie Chevallier 

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are available online: [www.hceres.fr/en](http://www.hceres.fr/en)

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