

31.03.2022

The Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education decided:

to consider the secondary condition set to the assessment decision of the first level of higher education of the Theology Study Programme Group of the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary as fulfilled.

Based on clauses 42 and 42.4 of the document "Quality Assessment of the Study Programme Group at the First and Second Levels of Higher Education," established on the basis of § 53 (3) of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) and § 10 (4) of the University Act and § 24 (5) Statutes of the Education and Youth Authority, the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (hereinafter the Council) states the following:

1. § 53 (1) 2) of the APA provides that *an additional duty related to the principal regulation of the administrative act*, and § 53 (2) 2) and 3) provide that *a secondary condition may be imposed on an administrative act: if the administrative act cannot be issued without the secondary condition or if the issue of the administrative act must be resolved on the basis of the administrative right of discretion*. On 26.02.2019, the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (hereinafter the Council) adopted a decision to approve the assessment report ¹ and to carry out the next quality assessment of the first levels of higher education of the theology Study Programme Group of the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary after seven years, with the secondary condition that the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary submits a report to the Council no later than 01.09.2021² on the rectification of the deficiency referred to in clause 11 of the assessment decision.
2. On 04.10.2021, the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary sent the following document to the Council: 1) *Self-Evaluation Report*

¹ The assessment report is an integral part of the decision and is available on the EKKA website.

²The assessment report is available on the EKKA website.

3. EKKA was involved in the evaluation of the fulfillment of the secondary condition of the following members of the committee of institutional accreditation that took place simultaneously:

Gerrit Immink	Professor Emeritus, Protestant Theological University (Holland)
Jonathan Loose	Director of Learning and Teaching, University of London, UK
Heidi Maiberg	Ph.D. student, Royal Holloway University of London, Estonia
Antti Räsänen	Professor, University of Helsinki, Finland
Aivar Sarapik	Head of development and administration of the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church; a high priest at the Church of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, Tallinn, Estonia

4. EKKA sent a preliminary report to the Seminary on 10.01.2022, to which the Seminary submitted a reply on 24.01.2022. On 04.02.2022, the assessment committee submitted a report to EKKA on the elimination of the deficiency described in clause 11 of the decision of the Council of 26.02.2019. The assessment was as follows:

Deficiency underlying imposition of the secondary condition	Assessment: The deficiency has been completely remedied.
Pursuant to § 6 (7) 2) of the Government of the Republic Regulation "Standard of Higher Education" (SHE), <i>a lecturer (including a guest lecturer) or researcher conducting studies in a specific subject must have the necessary teaching competence and his or her qualification to support the achievement of objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme. According to the students, in some cases, the teaching consists of reading the lecture texts from paper, and there is a lack of group work and discussions. Opportunities for regular development of academic staff, including the sharing of innovative solutions and good practices among lecturers, with the involvement of external experts, need to be developed and enhanced.</i>	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are satisfied with the interactivity of teaching and group work and discussions, including in digital learning. <p>Further development opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To strengthen teaching and research skills of teaching staff in cooperation with Asbury Seminary and universities in Scandinavia and Baltic countries. To promote student-centered teaching methods. To transform existing academic staff development events into a systematic and proactively organized program.

Deficiency underlying imposition of the secondary condition	Assessment: The deficiency has been substantially remedied.
<p>Clause 2.1 of Annex 1 to HEA stipulates that in order to obtain a diploma of professional higher education, a student must <i>be able to formulate problems related to the specialty and analyze and evaluate various solutions and be able to independently collect and critically interpret information using appropriate methods and tools.</i> In many cases, students' graduation theses submitted to the Committee lack a theoretical basis and depth. Students' skills in analysis and critical thinking need to be developed. This, in turn, requires strengthening the research capacity of lecturers and should be based on a clear, documented, and realistic strategy.</p>	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Necessary measures have been taken to improve the quality of graduation theses. Students are satisfied with the supervision. Hiring a research and development director proves that the Seminary understands the importance of the field in functioning as a higher education institution. <p>Areas for improvement and recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is necessary to increase the number and level of scientific publications. <p>Further development opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When hiring new academic staff, the requirement should be a doctorate degree or pursuit thereof. To develop an applied research plan that would increase the scope of domestic and international activities.
Deficiency underlying imposition of the secondary condition	Assessment: The deficiency has been completely remedied.
<p>Clause 5.3.7 of the Regulation "Quality Assessment of the Study Programme Group at the First and Second Level of Higher Education" provides the requirement that the <i>assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent, and objective and supports the development of the learner.</i> In terms of student assessment, lecturers are given a great deal of freedom. However, this leads to inconsistencies in the assessment. It is necessary to develop objective, clear, uniform assessment criteria corresponding to the level of higher education, which would be unambiguously understood and applied by all lecturers.</p>	<p>Further development opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation criteria for practical competencies and skills should be further developed. It is strongly recommended to introduce the methods of anonymous and double evaluation of students.

5. Considering that the deficiencies which led to the imposition of the secondary condition have been fully or substantially rectified, the Council

DECIDED:

To consider that the secondary condition set for the quality assessment decision of the first study level of the Theology Study Programme Group of the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary adopted on 26.02.2019 has been fulfilled and to maintain the decision to carry out the next quality assessment after seven years.

The decision was adopted by nine votes in favor and none opposed.

6. A person who finds that the decision of the Assessment Council has violated his or her rights or restricted his or her freedoms may file a challenge pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Procedure Act. The challenge shall be submitted to the Assessment Council of EKKA within thirty (30) days after the person who filed the challenge became aware of or should have become aware of the contested act.

The Assessment Council shall send the challenge to the challenge committee of the Assessment Council of EKKA, which shall submit a written, impartial opinion to the Assessment Council on the reasoning of the challenge within five (5) days of receipt of the challenge. The Assessment Council shall resolve the challenge within ten (10) days of receipt, taking into account the reasoned position of the appeal committee. If the challenge needs to be further investigated, the Assessment Council may extend the term for reviewing the challenge by up to thirty (30) days.

Challenging a decision of the Assessment Council of EKKA is possible within thirty (30) days of its service by submitting an appeal to the Tallinn Courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Court Procedure Act.

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council