

26.05.2021

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

Consider the secondary condition imposed with the decision on institutional accreditation of the Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary to be fulfilled.

On the basis of Section 38(3) of the Higher Education Act and point 48.7 of the document 'Conditions and Procedure for Institutional Accreditation' established on the basis of authorisation contained in Section 24(5) of the Statutes of the Education and Youth Board, the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council (hereinafter the Council) of Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education states the following:

1. According to clause 53 (1) 2) of the Administrative Procedure Act, a secondary condition of an administrative act is an additional duty related to the principal regulation of the administrative act, and clauses 53 (2) 2) and 3) establish that a secondary condition may be imposed on an administrative act if the administrative act cannot be issued without the secondary condition, or if issue of the administrative act must be resolved on the basis of an administrative right of discretion. On 26.02.2019 The Higher Education Quality Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (hereinafter the Council) adopted the decision to approve the assessment report¹ and to accredit the Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary (EFCTS) for 7 years, subject to the condition that EFCTS shall submit to the Council a report on the elimination of the shortcomings set out in paragraph 11 of the assessment decision² no later than on 26.02.2021.
2. On 26 February 2021, EFCTS sent the following documents to the Council: 1) *Additional requirements*; 2) *A lecturer's report*; 3) *EFCTS Development Plan*; 4) *Plan of Management*; 5) *Research plan*.
3. EKKA included the following members of the assessment committee in the assessment of the secondary condition:

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

² The assessment decision is available on the EKKA website.

Prof. Dr. F.G. Immink	Emeritus Professor of Practical Theology and former Rector of the Protestant Theological University, The Netherlands.
Dr. Ringo Ringvee	Ministry of the Interior, Estonia.

4. A virtual assessment visit to the HEI took place on 19.04.2021.
5. EKKA sent a draft report to the higher education institution on 4 May 2021, to which the HEI submitted a reply on 5 May 2021. On 6 May 2021, the assessment committee submitted to EKKA a report on the elimination of the shortcomings described in paragraph 11 of the Council decision of 26.02.2019. The assessment was as follows:

Shortcoming on the basis of which the secondary condition was established	Assessment
<p>1) As regards the management and staff of the higher education institution:</p> <p>— According to Section 10(1)(1) and (4) and Paragraph 12 of the Universities Act, Sections 21(1) to (3) and (5) of the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act and section 7.1.1.5 of the 'Conditions and procedure for institutional accreditation' established on the basis of Section 14(1)(1) to (3) and (5) of the Private Schools Act, responsibilities at all levels of management must be defined and described and must support the achievement of the objectives of the higher education institution and the coherent functioning of the main processes. It is necessary to delegate and allocate management tasks as much as possible, given the high workload of the Rector and the need of ensuring the long-term sustainability of the seminar. It is necessary to define more clearly the management responsibilities of staff, including the role of lead instructors.</p> <p>— According to point 7.1.2.5. of the regulation "Conditions and procedures for institutional accreditation", employees must</p>	<p>The deficiency has been fully eliminated.</p> <p><u>The assessment committee noted the following positive developments:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The international activities of the higher education institution are active. Cooperation with Swedish and Norwegian higher education institutions will continue, consultations are held with a number of higher education institutions on future cooperation. 2) The management structure of the higher education institution is clear and responsibilities have been defined. 3) The development plan of the HEI for 2021-2027 sets clear and measurable objectives. 4) The mentoring system implemented by leading teachers supports students. <p><u>Recommendations for further developments:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) As the pandemic and travel restrictions continue, more attention should be paid to virtual forms of international cooperation.

<p>participate in international mobility programmes, cooperation projects, networks, etc. It is necessary to support and strengthen international mobility/external exchanges of teaching staff.</p>	
<p>2) Regarding research and development: — According to Section 7.3.1.1 of the Regulation on the conditions and procedure for institutional accreditation, the HEI i must define objectives n the field of RDC and measure their achievement. There is a need to develop a longer-term research plan (5-7 years). The plans, activities and profile of applied research need to be defined more clearly. Research results need to be published in national and international publications. — According to Section 7.3.2.2 of the Regulation on the conditions and procedure for institutional accreditation, the institution must have the financial resources necessary for the development of RDC and a strategy to support their acquisition. More resources are needed for research, and new resources should in particular support the participation of younger staff in conferences and seminars abroad.</p>	<p>The shortcoming has been fully eliminated.</p> <p><u>The assessment committee noted the following positive developments:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A long-term research and publication plan has been developed and validated. 2) A R&D coordinator with 0.4 FTE workload has been recruited to coordinate and support the research conducted by teaching staff. 3) R&D funding is based on the results achieved so far and is motivating. <p><u>Recommendations for further developments:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) It is recommended to develop another research topic characteristic of the identity of the Free Church: the priesthood of all believers. The topic is also mentioned by the Board of Elders and the Board of Trustees. This topic would be largely in line with the EFCTS mission: the comprehensive and life-long development of Christians. It also covers the problems of spirituality and pastoral care.

6. Having regard to the assessment committee’s assessment that all shortcomings have been fully eliminated, the Council

DECIDED:

To consider the secondary condition imposed on the Institutional Accreditation decision of the Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary of 26.02.2019 to be fulfilled and to keep in force the decision to accredit the higher education institution for seven years.

The decision was adopted by 11 votes in favour. Against 0.

7. A person who finds that his or her rights have been violated or his or her freedoms restricted by this decision may file a challenge with the EKKA Quality Assessment Council within 30 days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding. The Council shall forward the challenge to its Appeals Committee who shall provide an unbiased opinion in writing regarding the validity of the challenge to the Council, within five days after receipt of the challenge.

The Council shall resolve the challenge within ten days of its receipt, taking into account the reasoned opinion of the Appeals Committee. If the challenge needs to be investigated further, the deadline for its review by the Council may be extended by a maximum of thirty days.

A legal challenge to this decision is possible within 30 days after its delivery, by filing an action with the Tallinn courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court under the procedure provided for in the Code of Administrative Court Procedure.

Eve Eisenschmidt
Chair of the Board

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council