



EESTI EVANGEELSE LUTERLIKU KIRIKU
USUTEADUSE INSTITUUT

INSTITUTUM THEOLOGICUM ECCLESIAE EVANGELICO-LUTHERANAE ESTONIAE

THE INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY OF THE ESTONIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

SELF-EVALUATION REPORT FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

JANUARY, 2023



Table of contents

List of tables.....	4
List of figures.....	4
List of appendixes	5
Abbreviations.....	6
1. Introduction.....	7
1.1. Brief history of the Institute	7
1.2. Mission, vision, values and strategic objectives.....	7
1.3. Structure.....	8
1.4. Aggregate data.....	12
1.5. Description of the self-evaluation process and writing the report.....	13
2. Main changes carried out in response to the recommendations made by the previous institutional accreditation	14
3. Self evaluation of the Institute across standards	17
3.1. Strategic management	17
3.1.1. Planning and evaluation of the development of Institute.....	18
3.2. Resources	19
3.2.1. Financial management.....	19
3.2.2. Human resource management	23
3.2.3. Management and development of material resources.....	27
3.2.4. Internal and external communication	29
3.3. Quality culture	31
3.4. Academic ethics	35
3.4.1. General principles and academic ethics in research and teaching.....	35
3.5. Internationalisation.....	36
3.5.1. International mobility of students	37
3.5.2. International staff and mobility of the academic staff	38
3.6. Academic staff	39
3.6.1. Composition and tasks of the academic staff	40
3.6.2. Development of the academic staff.....	41
3.7. Study programme	42
3.7.1. Short description of study programmes and the principles of study programme development	42
3.7.2. Coherence of the study programmes	44
3.7.3. Improvement activities	46
3.8. Learning and teaching	48
3.8.1. Admission of students.....	48
3.8.2. Teaching process and development of students	49
3.8.3. Implementation of a learner-centred approach.....	50
3.8.4. Implementation of digital teaching tools and effective teaching methods	52
3.8.5. Implementation of internship.....	54
3.8.6. Satisfaction of students and alumni with the organisation of studies	55
3.8.7. Satisfaction of employers with alumni	57
3.9. Assessment of students.....	59
3.9.1. General principles of assessment	59



3.9.2. System of recognition of prior learning and work experience (RPL)	61
3.10. Study support systems	61
3.10.1. Student counselling and support system.....	61
3.10.2. Student participation in extra- <i>curricular</i> activities	63
3.11. Research, development and creative activities (RDC)	64
3.11.1. RDC objectives and their implementation.....	64
3.11.2. Connection of RDC activities to the needs of society and labour market	68
3.11.3. RDC support system.....	69
3.11.4. Involvement of students in RDC activities	69
3.12. Service to society	70
3.12.1. Contributions to the society and other public activities	70
3.12.2. Lifelong learning.....	73



List of tables

Table 1. Aggregate data of students.....	12
Table 2. Aggregate data of staff.....	13
Table 3. Activities to ensure the economic sustainability of the Institute.....	20
Table 4. Institute's Budget 2017–2021.....	22
Table 5. Scholarships provided by ESF, 2017–2021.....	23
Table 6. Procedure of recruiting and electing academic staff.....	26
Table 7. Overview of the Institute's infrastructure.....	27
Table 8. Institute's internal evaluation.....	32
Table 9. Institute's external evaluation.....	32
Table 10. Details of the competition for academic staff to be elected.....	40
Table 11. List of partners offering internship bases for students.....	54
Table 12. Organization of gathering feedback from students.....	55
Table 13. Study and career counselling of students.....	62
Table 14. RDC objectives defined in the DP and activities to achieve objectives.....	65
Table 15. Overview of the publications by the Institute's lecturers, 2018–2022.....	67
Table 16. Short overview of the Institute's Contribution to the Estonian society.....	71

List of figures

Figure 1. Structure of the Institute.....	9
Figure 2. Structure of the Faculty of Theology.....	10
Figure 3. Monthly salary of full-time academic staff.....	21
Figure 4. FTE of admin. staff by structural units, 2017–2022.....	24
Figure 5. Employee Satisfaction Survey, 2022 (1).....	24
Figure 6. Employee Satisfaction Survey, 2022 (2).....	25
Figure 7. Employee Satisfaction Survey, 2022 (3).....	25
Figure 8. Employee Satisfaction Survey, 2022 (4).....	25
Figure 9. Institute's library usage data 2017–2022.....	28
Figure 10. FTE of ordinary academic staff all together 2017–2022.....	39
Figure 11. FTE of ordinary academic staff by chairs 2017–2022. Visiting lecturers are not included.....	39
Figure 12. Structure of curricula of Faculty of Theology.....	46
Figure 13. The proportion of students who have taken an academic leave, 2017–2022.....	49
Figure 14. Percentage of students completing studies within the nominal study period, 2017–2022.....	50
Figure 15. Theses supervision satisfaction inquiry among graduates, 2017–2018 (20 respondents).....	51
Figure 16. Supervision of final papers and master theses divided by lecturer position, 2018–2022.....	52
Figure 17. Student feedback survey results. Q: Feedback from the lecturer to the student was... ..	56
Figure 18. Student feedback survey results. Q: Lecture/seminar met the objectives of the syllabus... ..	56
Figure 19. Student feedback survey results. Q: The used methods supported studies... ..	57
Figure 20. Previous education of students of Pastoral Seminary, 2012–2022.....	57
Figure 21. Average grade by curricula, 2018–2022.....	60
Figure 22. Average grade by curricula, 2013–2015.....	60
Figure 23. Statistics of RPL, 2017–2022.....	61
Figure 24. The Institute's lifelong learning opportunities from the perspective of alumni, EELC clergy and congregations (1).....	73
Figure 25. The Institute's lifelong learning opportunities from the perspective of alumni, EELC clergy and congregations (2).....	73
Figure 26. Training volumes of the Department of Lifelong Learning, 2018–2022.....	74
Figure 27. Students taking D and C category courses in the Church Music Department, 2017–2022.....	75

List of appendixes

- Appendix 1. [PHE Theology Curriculum](#)
- Appendix 2. [MA Theology Curriculum](#)
- Appendix 3. [MA Studies in Christian Culture Curriculum](#)
- Appendix 4. [PHE Theology Curriculum With Changes Made in 2018](#)
- Appendix 5. [MA Theology Curriculum With Changes Made in 2018](#)
- Appendix 6. [MA Studies in Christian Culture Curriculum With Changes Made in 2018 and 2021](#)
- Appendix 7. [Statutes of the Institute](#)
- Appendix 8. [Statutes of the Institute's Foundation](#)
- Appendix 9. [Statute of the Faculty of Theology](#)
- Appendix 10. [Development Plan 2022–2026](#)
- Appendix 11. [Action Plan 2022–2026](#)
- Appendix 12. [Statute of Curriculum](#)
- Appendix 13. [Study Regulations of the Faculty of Theology](#)
- Appendix 14. [Conditions and Regulations of Recognition of Prior Learning](#)
- Appendix 15. [Admission Rules of the Faculty of Theology](#)
- Appendix 16. [Rules of Procedures for Ensuring Professional Development for Academic Staff](#)
- Appendix 17. [Procedure and Requirements of Evaluation of the Qualification of the Academic Staff](#)
- Appendix 18. [Regulations for Elections of the Academic Staff](#)
- Appendix 19. [Job Description for the Academic Staff](#)
- Appendix 20. [Recommendation for Designing the Work Volumes of Learning](#)
- Appendix 21. [Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#)
- Appendix 22. [Regulation for Submission, Approval and Defence of a Dissertation](#)
- Appendix 23. [Data of the Academic Staff](#)
- Appendix 24. [International Mobility of the Academic Staff, 2018–2022](#)
- Appendix 25. [International Visiting Lecturers, 2018–2022](#)
- Appendix 26. [International Mobility of Students, 2017–2022](#)
- Appendix 27. [Students Survey Questions After Completion of the Subject](#)
- Appendix 28. [Employees' Participation in the Activities of Social and Professional Associations in 2022](#)
- Appendix 29. [Students' Participation in Social Associations and Activities in 2022](#)
- Appendix 30. [Internship Management of Different Study Programmes](#)
- Appendix 31. [Popularization of the Institute's Activities and Public Services and Endeavors](#)
- Appendix 32. [An Example of the Study Process Throughout Six Semesters, PHE and MA Theology](#)
- Appendix 33. [Achieved Results of the 2018–2021 Action Plan](#)
- Appendix 34. [Results of Student Feedback Surveys, 2020–2022](#)
- Appendix 35. [Results of Employee Satisfaction Survey, 2022](#)
- Appendix 36. [Lifelong Learning Courses, 2018–2022 \(in Estonian\)](#)
- Appendix 37. [Instruction of Compiling Students' Papers and Research Papers \(in Estonian\)](#)
- Appendix 38. [Risk Analysis of the Work Environment of the Institute \(in Estonian\)](#)
- Appendix 39. [EELC Clergy Competency Model \(in Estonian\)](#)
- Appendix 40. [Syllabus of PHE Theology: History of Christianity in Estonia](#)
- Appendix 41. [Syllabus of PHE Theology: Introduction to Theology](#)
- Appendix 42. [Syllabus of PHE Theology: Orthodox Ecclesiology](#)
- Appendix 43. [Syllabus of PHE Theology: Proseminar in Systematic Theology](#)
- Appendix 44. [Syllabus of PHE Theology: Practice of Liturgy and Homiletics](#)
- Appendix 45. [Syllabus of PHE Theology: Supervised Practice in Pastoral Care and Counselling II](#)
- Appendix 46. [Syllabus of MA Theology: Early Christianity and Special Problems in the NT Theology](#)
- Appendix 47. [Syllabus of MA Theology: Johannine Literature](#)
- Appendix 48. [Syllabus of MA Theology: Seminar in Religious Studies](#)
- Appendix 49. [Syllabus of MA Theology: Advanced Seminar in Systematic Theology](#)
- Appendix 50. [Syllabus of MA Theology: The Theology of Religion and Dialogue of Religions](#)

All appendixes are available online at eelkui.ee/institutional-accreditation-2023.



Abbreviations

APDP	action plan of the development plan of the Institute of Theology of the EELC
BA	bachelor's studies
Council of FT	Council of the Faculty of Theology of the Institute of Theology of the EELC
DP	development plan of the Institute of Theology of the EELC
DPCC	Diakonia and Pastoral Care and Counselling
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EELC	Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
EHIS	Estonian Education Information System
ENHCC	European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy
ESF	Evald Saag Foundation
ETIS	Estonian Research Information System
Foundation	Foundation of the Institute of Theology of the EELC
FT	Faculty of Theology of The Institute of Theology of the EELC
FTE	full-time equivalent
FTUT	Faculty of Theology of the University of Tartu
HAKA	Estonian Quality Agency for Education
Institute	Institute of Theology of the EELC
IT	information and communications technology
LWF	The Lutheran World Federation
MA	master's studies
NGO TAT	Non-profit Organisation Tartu Academy of Theology
OCE	Orthodox Church of Estonia
OCE IT	Institute of Theology of Orthodox Church of Estonia
PCC	Pastoral Care and Counselling
PHE	professional higher education
PHEI	professional higher education institution
RDC	research, development and/or other creative activity
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning and Work Experience
SCC	Studies in Christian Culture
SIS	Online Study Information System
ST	Systematic theology
TAT	Tartu Academy of Theology (private higher education institution until 30th of June 2013)
TAT IT	Tartu Academy of Theology of the Institute of Theology of the EELC

1. Introduction



1.1. Brief history of the Institute

The Institute of Theology of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (Institute) has a unique history, which dates from 1946. A tradition that valued classical theological education, published books and research materials, well known among the Estonian intelligentsia, has developed and flourished over a period of more than 75 years. During the last decade, we have experienced many positive developments that have opened new perspectives for the future. The Tartu Academy of Theology (TAT) and the Institute merged in 2013, which added pastoral care and counselling (PCC) teaching know-how, and the *curricula* was complemented with the PCC speciality. In 2014, in co-operation with the Orthodox Church of Estonia (OCE) we opened the Chair of Orthodox Theology with the goal of training priests for OCE. Such co-operation between the Lutheran and Orthodox Church is unique in the whole world.

1.2. Mission, vision, values and strategic objectives

When formulating the mission, vision and values, we regarded it as important to define the foundations of our activities so that, guided by them, we can serve the church and society in the best manner. Since the church by its nature serves society, it is not possible to clearly separate these two. Society expects that the church clearly represents a Christian set of principles, but this requires the training of educated theologians, while integrating theology and practice. We also feel a responsibility to provide opportunities to become acquainted with Christian culture for those who do not wish to work as clergy in the church. For that goal, we have created MA Studies in Christian Culture (SCC), which enables students to gain competency in working in areas demanding knowledge of religion and Christian culture. Considering the present complicated global situation, where one of the important issues is the interface of different cultural and religious systems, the role of this *curriculum* is continuously growing in order to educate Estonian society.

In June 2022, a new development plan for the period of 2022–2026 was adopted. All administrative and academic staff, as well as students through their representative body and the representatives of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC), OCE and Non-profit Organisation Tartu Academy of Theology (NGO TAT) were included in the creation of the development plan. The implementation of the development plan is monitored annually.

Mission

The mission of the Institute is to promote theological competence in Estonia and internationally and to prepare clergy, church musicians and other church workers for the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Orthodox Church of Estonia and other Churches.

Vision

The Institute is a Christian educational and research centre fully recognised by church and state, as well as internationally, and has a positive impact on the development of society.



Values

- Missionary awareness and motivation – we value Lutheran academic theology and other theological traditions and contribute to their further development.
- Academic approach – we emphasise the importance of scientific research in studies and church life.
- Willingness to cooperate and openness – we are a Church Institute for education and research that enjoys ecumenical collaboration with different churches, partners and other target groups.
- Individual approach and attentiveness – the learning environment of the Institute is characterised by person-to-person education, i.e. student-centredness and flexibility.
- Spirituality – we support everyone's personal relationship with God and appreciate its development.
- Professionalism and dedication – the people working in the Institute are church members and experts in their speciality.
- Estonian language and internationality – we develop theological thinking and the written word in Estonian and participate actively in international cooperation networks.

Key results

- Studies and research: the *curricula* and learning methods are updated. The Institute is a recognised research centre with international contacts.
- Economic sustainability: the economic sustainability of the Institute as an education and research centre is guaranteed.
- Institutional reform and recognition: the structure of the Institute has been put in order and the Institute is recognised by state. The future generation of teaching staff is ensured.
- The Institute as a Church training centre: the *curricula* for lifelong learning have been updated and assembled onto a single platform.
- The Institute in society: in society the Institute is a visible education and research centre.

1.3. Structure



The owner of the Institute is the Institute of Theology of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Foundation (Foundation), which holds jurisdiction.

EELC is involved in the Council of the Foundation and the Institute through its representatives. There is also a connection through the rector of the Institute, since in addition to academic theological education and PhD, the rector must also be an ordained minister in the EELC. This condition is important to guarantee closer involvement of daily life with the mission and goals formulated in the *Development plan* (DP) of the Institute.

The specific goals of all the departments are formulated in the *Statutes* (see [Appx. 7](#)) and DP (see [Appx. 10](#)) of the Institute; actions to reach these goals are specified in the *Action Plan of the Development Plan* (APDP) (see [Appx. 11](#)). There are five departments operating as independent units (see [Figure 1](#)) with specific goals. The Faculty of Theology (FT) as the biggest has two subdivisions: TAT IT and the Chair of Orthodoxy. To ensure that the merged institutions are duly represented in the decision-making bodies, the Head of the TAT IT as well as the representative of the OCE belong to the Council of the Institute. To better define the work of TAT IT and the Chair of Orthodoxy, the Council of the Institute has adopted a statute for both of these units. Each Head of Department is responsible for implementing the action plan according to the mission of the school and general strategic goals. The more precise differentiation of labour is defined in the job description of each staff-member.

Rector's Office

The Rector runs all activities of the Institute. The closest assistant in administrative tasks is the Head of the Rector's Office, in house management questions the Managing Director, and of specific daily issues and development actions, Heads of different departments. The Rector is ultimately responsible for questions of financing, although the whole staff is actively working to find different options for funding.

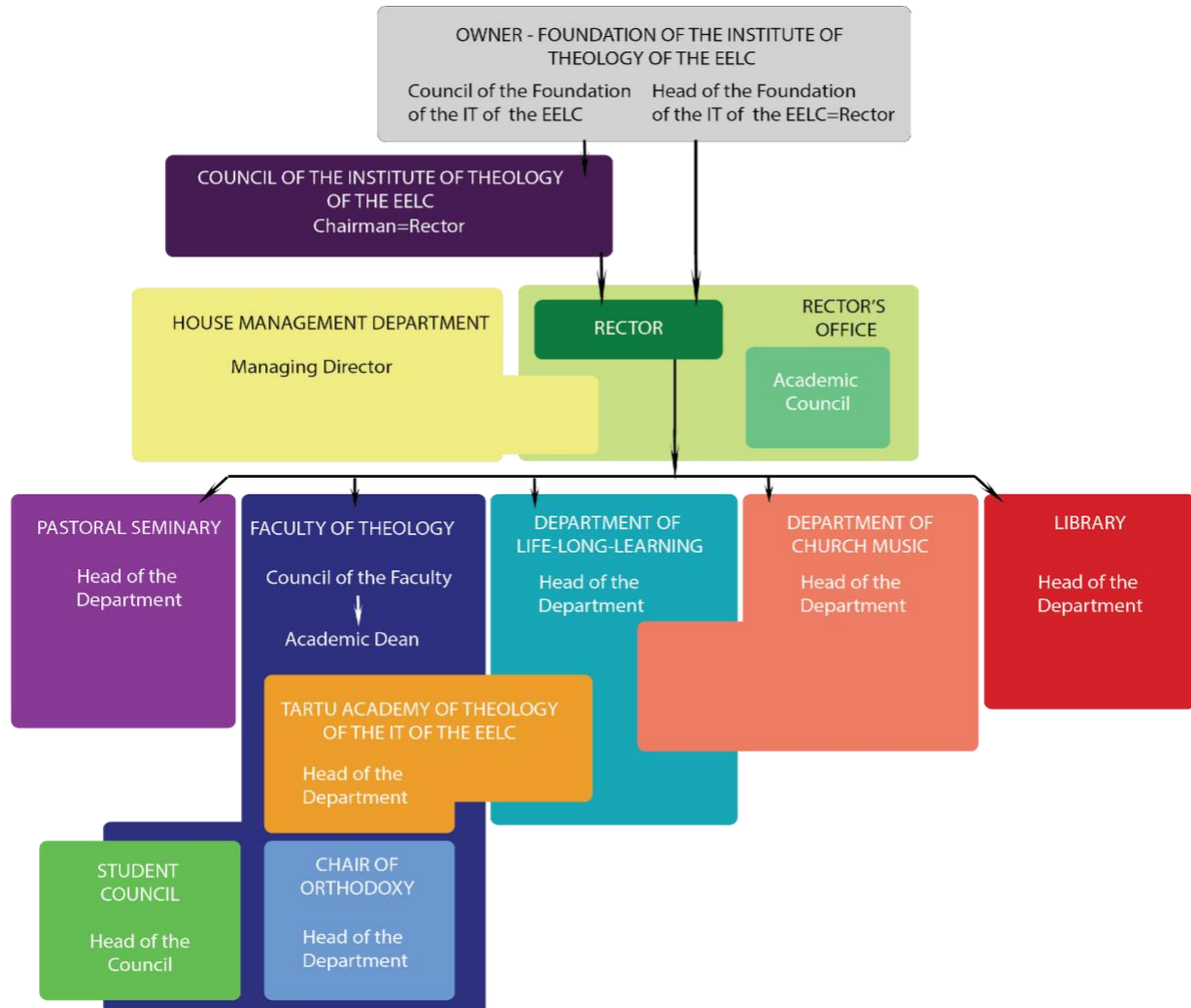


Figure 1. Structure of the Institute.

Faculty of Theology

The biggest structural unit of the Institute is the FT, carrying the main responsibility for fulfilling the objectives set in the DP. The Academic Dean conducts the work of the FT, being responsible for carrying out and reaching the objectives of the actions planned in the APDP. The Head of the TAT IT is responsible for the area of PCC daily issues, as well as daily development activities and participating in the leadership of the Institute along with being responsible for financing of the TAT IT. The coordinator of the Chair of Orthodoxy is responsible for the activities and financing related to the Chair of Orthodoxy.

TAT IT and the Chair of Orthodoxy, being subdivisions of FT, offer various added values to the Institute, which are not only related to offering higher education, but also to creating different opportunities to serve society and to put the knowledge learnt into practice (see Ch. [3.12.1](#)).



Tartu Academy of Theology of the Institute of Theology of the EELC (TAT IT)

The private higher education institution TAT was founded on 16.09.1992 and commenced teaching on 1.02.1993. For 20 years, TAT operated as an independent theological higher education institution. On 1.07.2013, TAT merged with the Institute and continued operating as a separate structural unit. Since the national accreditation standards set strict requirements for higher education, which neither school was able to fulfil separately, institutional cooperation between the two schools was necessary to ensure the sustainability of ecclesiastical theological higher education.

The main goal of TAT IT is to continue providing high-quality training in the field of PCC as a part of theological higher education and also as a part of lifelong learning in cooperation with the Institute's Department of Lifelong Learning. The work of TAT IT as a structural unit is organised by the Head of the Department, Siimon Haamer.

Chair of Orthodoxy

The OCE Institute of Theology (OCE IT) was founded in Tallinn by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Stefanus of Tallinn and All Estonia in 2002 (from 2002 to 2018 it was called the St. Platon Seminary). At first, its lecture days took place once a month and in a free form, but in 2014, cooperation with the Institute began. Now, all those who wish can acquire theological professional higher education (PHE) specialising in Orthodox theology to the total of 60 ECTS.

The aim of the Institute's Chair of Orthodoxy field of study, carried out by OCE IT, is to testify to the rich Eastern Christian Orthodox tradition and spirituality in the Estonian higher education landscape. Everyone who wants to become a clergyman of the OCE or a well-prepared Orthodox church worker in the future is invited to take part in this testimony. But of course, anyone else who wishes to get to know the Eastern Christian way of thinking and theology more deeply is invited as well. Orthodox theological higher education is also required if a clergyman of the OCE wishes to work in chaplaincy (in the defence forces, prison service, hospitals, etc.).

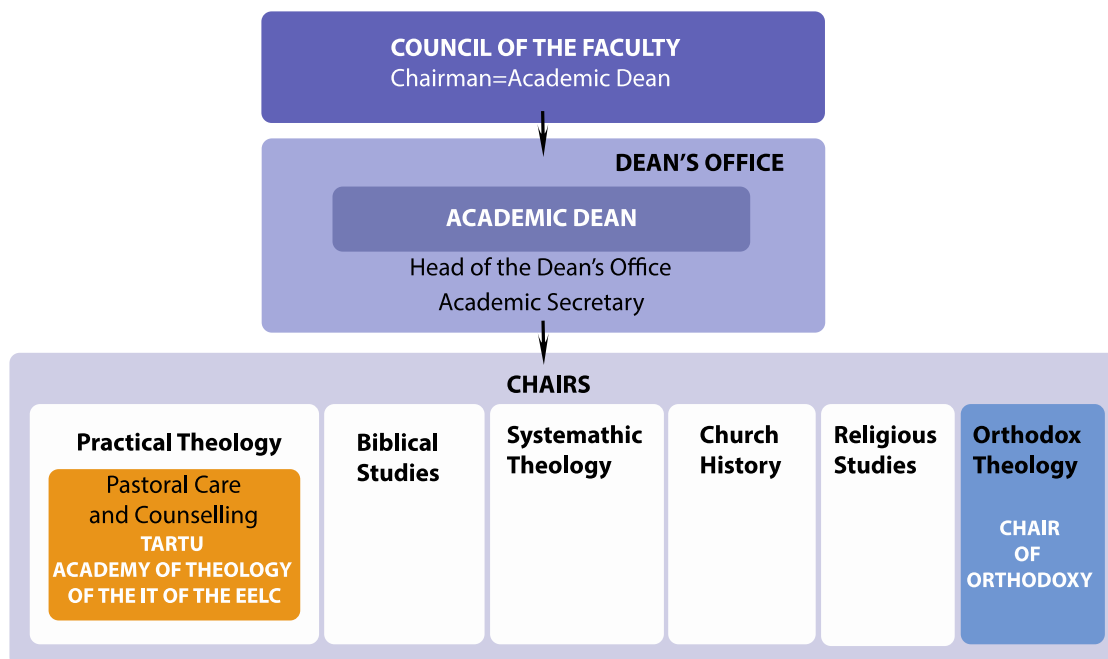


Figure 2. Structure of the Faculty of Theology.

Pastoral Seminary

The work of the Pastoral Seminary is organized by the Head and the Assistant to the Head of the department. The task of the department is to prepare candidates for ordination, priests and deacons as appropriate, for

work in EELC. The Pastoral Seminary is not a constituent part of higher education; it offers vocational studies to those who have received academic theological education, in order to enable them to continue their studies by acquiring the qualifications of a minister in EELC, which also qualifies them as chaplains. Admission to, graduating from the Pastoral Seminary and ordination are episcopal responsibilities. Admission to the Pastoral Seminary is declared and granted by the Consistory of EELC.

The Pastoral Seminary also provides training for those candidates who apply to become deacons in the EELC. The majority of the students of the Pastoral Seminary are graduates of the Institute.

Church Music Department

The Head and Assistant to the Head organize the work of the Department. The goal of the Department is to give professional church music education to church musicians and practicing musicians (D and C category church musician), to offer elementary preparation in church music to the students of the FT and Pastoral Seminary, and to organize vocational studies and lifelong learning trainings in church music for church musicians, music teachers and ministers.

Department of Lifelong Learning

The work is organized by the Head of the Department, whose duty is to organise lifelong learning training courses for ministers, pastoral care providers and counsellors, lay staff and other specialists of the church. Lifelong learning training courses are not only targeted towards church-related groups, but also aimed at the general public in order to introduce Estonian society to various topics related to theology, pastoral care, Christian values and Christian cultural history.

Library

The work is organised by the Head of the Library. The Library specialises in theological literature, with the goal of supporting the Institute in giving nationally and internationally recognised and quality education, of providing free access to information for readers and of supporting the Institute's education, research, development and creative work. Being the biggest specialised theological library in Estonia, the goal is to secure free access for ministers and other interested parties to theological information, theological thought and the church's cultural heritage and to support theological self-education and lifelong learning in secular society.

House Management department

The House management department takes care of the study building of the Institute and is responsible for renting classrooms and guest rooms between study sessions.



1.4. Aggregate data

The number of students at the Institute has remained stable. When the number of people in Estonia and the study programmes taught at the Institute is taken into account, a student body of about 130 members is optimal (see Ch. [3.8.1](#)).

Table 1. Aggregate data of students.

STUDENTS		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Data of all study programmes	Students	117	117	126	132	131
	of which men	49	51	58	56	57
	of which women	68	66	68	76	75
	Average age of students	47	48	49	48	49
	Admission	14	14	25	28	19
	Dropout	8	6	9	9	8
	overall DO rate acc.	4,5%	5,1%	6,7%	4,7%	-
	first year DO rate acc.	15,8%	23,1%	25%	8,7%	-
	Graduation	20	20	9	13	12
Theology (PHE)	Students	67	56	62	61	65
	of which Lutheran Theology	24	23	23	23	21
	of which PCC	37	24	28	28	34
	of which Orthodox Theology	6	9	11	10	10
	Admission	9	5	14	12	14
	of which Lutheran Theology	2	5	5	6	3
	of which PCC	2	-	5	6	8
	of which Orthodox Theology	5	-	4	-	3
	Dropout	7	4	4	6	5
	Graduation	8	15	4	7	5
Theology (MA)	Students	24	31	31	43	37
	of which Theology	9	9	13	10	10
	of which DPCC	4	11	9	24	18
	of which Religious Education*	4	3	3	3	3
	of which Diakonia*	7	8	6	6	6
	Admission	-	10	4	15	-
	of which Theology	-	3	4	-	-
	of which DPCC	-	7	-	15	-
	Dropout	-	-	1	-	1
	Graduation	9	2	4	3	5
Christian Culture (MA)	Students	26	30	33	28	29
	Admission	5	5	7	1	5
	Dropout	1	2	4	3	2
	Graduation	3	3	1	3	2

*2015 Religious Education and Diakonia specialties were excluded from MA curriculum in the process of study programme development.

Table 2. Aggregate data of staff.

STAFF	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of academic staff (incl. visiting lecturers)	49	26	36	50	35
of which men	34	20	24	34	23
of which women	15	6	12	16	13
of which visiting lecturers*	39	18	27	41	27
FTE of academic staff	8,5	7,5	8,3	8	7,7
Academic staff with PhD (FTE)	4,6 (54%)	4,4 (59%)	4,7 (57%)	4,8 (60%)	5 (65%)
Average age of academic staff	50,3	50,3	52,5	51,8	52,5
Number of international academic staff	2	2	2	3	4
Students per academic staff (FTE)	13,8	16,3	15,2	16,5	17
Number of non-academic staff	22	21	24	16	16
FTE of non-academic staff	17	16,5	13,9	12,1	11,1

*The proportion of guest lecturers is high for the following reasons: **a)** as a small educational institution, it is not possible to offer permanent employment contracts to the lecturers of all subjects, as not all subjects are taught every academic year; **b)** the *curricula* of the Institute contain a considerable amount of optional subjects; **c)** since the *curricula* offer the possibility of specialising in several specialities, the volume of speciality-specific subjects is large; **d)** it is important that each subject is taught by a specialist in the relevant discipline.

The statistics in the tables have been submitted based on the statistics on the 31st of December of every year. Only 2022 is submitted based on 31st of October. Changes in the teaching staff in recent years are described in Ch. 3.6.1.



1.5. Description of the self-evaluation process and writing the report

On 13 of April 2022, the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (HAKA) performed higher education accreditation training for the staff of the Institute. The core group for creating the self-evaluation report met for the first time in May of 2022. The first draft was ready in the middle of October 2022. After that the whole staff of the Institute became involved as well as the student council. The tasks of compiling the self-evaluation were distributed to our staff members according to the appropriate area of responsibility in the Institute's structure. Discussions were held in small working groups as well as with the whole staff of the Institute. The leading of the process of self-evaluation and the compiling of the report itself was delegated to Siimon Haamer, head of the TAT IT.

Since the Institute is a small educational institution with only three study programs, which are all under the administration of the Faculty of Theology, it is not possible to apply a large part of the self-analysis guidelines to only one specific study program. Teaching staff and administrative staff, finances and material resources, study organization and student support systems, and several other aspects to be evaluated are so intertwined across the study programmes. Therefore, the decision was made with the consent of HAKA that the self-evaluation of two *curricula*, PHE Theology and MA Theology, which are selected for evaluation, will be integrated into Chapter 3.

The final document was approved by the Council of Faculty of Theology (Council of FT) on 23rd of January 2023.

Self-evaluation team

Siimon Haamer, Head of the TAT IT – coordinator and main compiler of the self-evaluation report

Ove Sander, Rector	Randar Tasmuth, Head of the Chair of Biblical Studies
Liina Kilemit, Academic Dean	Priit Rohtmets, Head of Development
Mariann Münter, Head of Rector's Office	Kerstin Kask, Head of the Dept. of Lifelong Learning
Tauri Tõlpt, Coordinator of the Chair of Orthodoxy	

2. Main changes carried out in response to the recommendations made by the previous institutional accreditation

The recommendations made by the experts in the institutional accreditation (2016) and the quality assessment (2018) report and the improvement activities carried out by the Institute are presented below.

Recommendation 1. Apply a more systematic approach in the management and administration (including HR management) of the organisation to ensure an appropriate balance between formal and informal.

Action. In the management and administration of the Institute's organisation, working methods have been applied which are appropriate for the size and peculiarities of our educational institution (see Ch. [3.2.4](#) and [3.3](#)).

Recommendation 2. The marketing of the institute should be more systematic. A long-term vision should be developed to improve the Institute's visibility in Estonian society, including the recruitment of teaching staff from the younger generation.

Action. In the DP, we have set out the employment of a communication specialist (see [DP Ch. 6.5](#)), whose task is to develop a website and to handle internal and external communication. The DP also highlights the need to create better opportunities for involving the teaching staff from the younger generation in teaching and research (see [DP Ch. 6.3](#))

Recommendation 3. Action plan to increase the number of students.

Action. 150 students would be the maximum given the current structure and staff. We have not set a goal to significantly increase the number of students. Since the Institute is the only educational institution in Estonia where pastoral care givers and counsellors are trained on the basis of a special professional *curriculum* at the PHE and MA level, the Institute is a strategic partner of the Ministry of Social Affairs in achieving the goals of their Chaplaincy which was established in the beginning of 2020. The goal of the Chaplaincy is that pastoral care becomes a natural part of the medical and welfare system. The increasing expectations of the labour market also have a positive effect on the size of the student body (see Ch. [3.1](#)). We have implemented various ways of promoting the Institute (see Ch. [3.2.4](#) section External communication)

Recommendation 4. In the teaching process, more attention should be paid to the development of soft skills (communication, teamwork, etc.) and research skills.

Action. As part of the development of the *curriculum* planned in 2023–2024, it is intended to take this recommendation into account and introduce the corresponding changes into the *curriculum*.

Recommendation 5. Subject courses should be better aligned with the general learning outcomes of the *curriculum*, and the actual study volume of some courses is not in line with the subject volume.

Action. Teachers of the same and similar areas (e.g. dogmatics, ethics, history of dogma etc) have examined the contents of the subject courses. As a result, the specific emphasis of each subject is better specified, any overlaps are eliminated and the workload of students' reduced.

Recommendation 6. The connections between the learning outcomes that are evaluated and the evaluation criteria should be described more clearly. Situations where only one teacher develops the subject course, teaches the students and evaluates the learning outcomes should be avoided. For the sake of greater objectivity and transparency of evaluation, it is advisable to establish a double evaluation (moderation and/or double marking) system and to involve external evaluators in the evaluation process.

Action. In the circumstances of a small institution such as ours, where the number of basic lecturers and professors is small, the practice of using two members of academic staff for one subject (teaching plus evaluation) is not possible.

Recommendation 7. The study groups for Hebrew and Greek languages are too large.

Action. We have changed the organisation of the teaching of the Hebrew and Greek languages. Previously, the language classes included students from two courses together, because not all language courses took place every year. For three years now, we have implemented the principle that only students of one course are together in a language class. However, this does not eliminate all problems, because learning old languages in the form of sessional learning still remains a difficult task for students.

Recommendation 8. In the interests of equal treatment of students, the Institute should formally establish uniform rules for evaluating and providing feedback on student works, and their implementation should be consistently and systematically monitored.

Action. Council of FT has addressed this topic every year and today lecturers provide written feedback on subjects of basic importance on student homework. However, there is no formal written document.

Recommendation 9. The feedback system should be more formalised.

Action. Feedback system on different levels is described in Ch. [3.3](#), Ch. [3.8.6](#) and [Table 12](#).

Recommendation 10. Feedback from stakeholders should be collected more regularly than before and stakeholders should be involved in the development of the *curriculum*.

Action. Key stakeholders are EELC for Lutheran theology and OCE for Orthodox theology and they are deeply involved in the development of the *curriculum* (see Ch. [3.3](#) and [3.8.7](#)). Due to SARS-CoV-2 pandemic different new initiatives in the field of PCC were launched and alumni of the Institute hired (see Ch. [3.12.1](#)). Both parties have given their feedback about the curriculum based on their recent experiences. This input will be taken into account in the process of *curriculum* development during 2023-2024. The organisation of gathering feedback from students and alumni is described in Ch. [3.8.6](#) and [Table 12](#).

Recommendation 11. An opportunity to give formal feedback about their internship supervisors should be offered to students.

Action. Feedback about internship supervisors is primarily given through the academic mentoring programme (see Ch. [3.10.1](#)). Collecting a more comprehensive dataset: we are planning during 2023 to include a special questionnaire about internship to the SIS.

Recommendation 12. To ensure fair pay to academic staff.

Action. On 01.05.2021, the salary for the position of a professor increased by 33% (€900->€1200) and the salary for the position of a lecturer increased by 38% (€650->€900). Adjusted salaries still do not mean that the salaries are fair, but the increase in salaries is still a sign of an effort to move in the direction of decent remuneration for employees (see also Ch. [3.2.1](#)).

Recommendation 13. It is necessary to increase the number of academic staff with doctoral degrees.

Action. During the year 2022, a public contest resulted in the election of two new doctors – Jaan Lahe (religious studies) and Silja Härm (Biblical studies). Overall 65% of the time academic staff (FTE) has a doctoral degree.

Recommendation 14. All academic staff should be involved in the discussions relating to *curricula*.

Action. Structural reform (see Ch. [3.6.1](#)) that was carried out in 2021–2022 to ensure better involvement of all members of the academic staff relating to *curriculum* development.

Recommendation 15. Systematic development of the internship supervisors' and teaching staff's teaching skills and methods of teaching.

Action. It has been challenging during recent years because of SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Development of the academic staff is described in Ch. [3.6.2](#).

Recommendation 16. Greater involvement of international academic staff in teaching.

Action. See [Appx. 25 International Visiting Lecturers](#) and Ch. [3.6](#).

Recommendation 17. Increasing the international study migration of students.



Action. Because of the high average age of the student body (49), international mobility continues to be a challenge. See [Appx. 26 International Mobility of Students](#) and Ch. [3.5.1](#).

Recommendation 18. Increasing general digital competence.

Action. The Institute turned the distance learning caused by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic into an advantage and opportunity. During the two years of the pandemic, all courses were carried out digitally. 2022–2023 will be an experimental period – on Saturdays, all study work will take place online. In June 2023, the Council of FT will analyse and evaluate the results of the experiment. For more information see Ch. [3.8.4](#).

Recommendation 19. Implementation of a plagiarism detection program.

Action. From the spring of 2021, the plagiarism detection program Ouriginal (formerly named Urkund) has been in use. See Ch. [3.4.1](#).

Recommendation 20. The vocal development of students needs more attention.

Action. Since 2019 the course of Vocal technics is added to the *curriculum* as an elective subject.

Recommendation 21. The dropout rate is high for the PHE study programme.

Action. The average dropout rate in Estonia was 11.7% in 2021, and the dropout rate at the Institute was only 4.7% in the same time period. The dropout rate of the Institute is one of the lowest among Estonian higher education institutions. The dropout rate in the first year of studies is higher (8.7% in 2021). For more information see Ch. [1.4](#).

Recommendation 22. The usefulness of the proposed master's program in English should be analysed.

Action. The council of FT studied and evaluated the programmes of theology in our neighbouring countries and the prospects of possible applicants for our Institute. The conclusion is that there are a sufficient number of good faculties in the North, West and South and most probably not enough potential applicants for the Institute. Although there is a need for theological education in Russia, in practice the potential applicants from Russia are not able to attend the Institute in Estonia. The plan to develop an MA programme in English has been dropped.

Recommendation 23. The distribution of research funds and the involvement of students in research projects must be made transparent and equal opportunities for participation in research must be ensured for all academic staff and students.

Action. All parties have equal opportunities for participation in research. Structural reform (see Ch. [3.6.1](#)) that was carried out in 2021–2022 is ensuring better involvement of all parties in RDC activities (see also Ch. [3.11](#)).

Recommendation 24. The higher education institution should establish the priorities of lifelong learning and, based on this, develop subject courses that reflect the institute's mission, profile and values.

Action. In 2021, we started a series of e-courses in the format of a Public University aimed at the general public, where people interested in theology, church history and the relationship between the church and society can improve their knowledge and exchange ideas with each other. In 2022, a paper titled "Possibilities of lifelong learning of the Institute of Theology from the perspective of alumni, EELC clergy and congregations" was written as a part of a master's examination in SCC programme. The aim of the work was to find out the expectations of these target groups regarding lifelong learning conducted at the Institute (see Figure [23](#) and [24](#)). More information on this topic is available in Ch. [3.12.1](#).

Recommendation 25. Accessibility of the premises in Tallinn for people with special physical needs.

Action. Although it is not possible to build an elevator in the Institute's building in Tallinn, we have found a solution to enable access for people with special physical needs. In the fall of 2022, we accepted a student with special physical needs who uses a wheelchair. To enable movement between different floors, we rented a portable stairlift that transports a person in a wheelchair up and down the stairs.

3. Self evaluation of the Institute across standards

3.1. Strategic management

The Institute is managed and developed based on the mission, vision and values formulated in the DP. The day-to-day task of the Institute's management is to find and implement the best ways to execute these basic principles. Promoting church theological education in a society where church membership tends to decrease, but interest in various spiritual practices is still quite high, is not an easy task. There is a great lack of religious literacy in society, and the Institute contributes to improving this shortcoming.

A rector who reports on his activities to the Council of the Foundation is responsible for managing the Institute. The rector is appointed by the Council of the Foundation. The candidate for rectorship must be an ordained minister in the EELC and have a PhD, because he/she has to demonstrate the capability of ensuring a practical and ecclesiastical learning process and a high academic level.

On 01.01.2020, Rector Ove Sander assumed the position of Chief Chaplain of the Ministry of Social Affairs, and therefore it was not possible for him to continue performing the rector's duties. On 05.05.2020, the EELC Consistory appointed assessor Marko Tiitus as acting rector. In the late fall of 2021, the EELC Consistory announced a competition for the position of the Institute's rector. [Ove Sander](#), PhD, was elected again, and he assumed the duties of the Institute's rector for the next 5-year term on 14.02.2022. Ove Sander's employment with the Ministry of Social Affairs ended on 31.01.2022.

When developing the Institute of Theology, EELC considers it strategically important that the education acquired at the Institute is nationally accredited, and that graduates of the Institute, including future EELC clergy, could find a suitable application for their education outside EELC and, if necessary and desired, continue their education in doctoral studies.

As revealed by the poll "*Elust, usust ja usuelust*" (About life, faith and faith life), conducted in 2020, 63% of the Estonian people feel some closeness towards Christianity. 22% of the population are members of some congregations and of this percentage 44% are part of the Lutheran Church and 35% are part of the Orthodox Church. According to the last census of 2021, 8% of Estonian population are Lutherans. The Institute's target group is certainly not only Lutheran Church members, but all those 63% who feel some closeness towards Christianity. Nevertheless, church members are the primary target group.

The operation of other theological educational institutions is also somewhat of an influencer. Both the Baptist Seminary and the Seminary of the Methodist Church are denominational schools, and their main target groups are their own church members. To some extent, we might be competitors over potential students. The Faculty of Theology of the University of Tartu (FTUT) is likely more attractive to our potential student candidates. Though, FTUT is more focused on Religious Studies, and the students there are often not affiliated to any denomination. The training of clergy and pastoral care givers is not the focus of the FTUT. However, one important advantage when compared to the Institute is that study is without a tuition fee. This has become an especially influential aspect as a result of high inflation and the overall unstable financial circumstances of recent years. We have received information that some people have not come to study at the Institute due to financial issues and that they have decided to postpone their studies. The recent years have been challenging and we have to find suitable ways to proceed in these circumstances. We have to use our strengths. We are targeting more than one denomination and in addition to training ministers for the EELC, one of our important strengths is the PHE specialty to PCC, as well as MA studies in SCC, Diakonia and Pastoral Care and Counselling (DPCC), and Orthodox Theology in PHE. With SCC, we are targeting a wider spectrum of society, not only people who are religiously affiliated. Better outreach regarding the teaching



offered at the Institute could increase the number of students to some extent, but 150 students would be the maximum given the current structure and staff. We have not set a goal to significantly increase the number of students.

Due to the changes taking place in society, we constantly attempt to assess the working mechanisms of the Institute as an organisation suitable for today's society. On 05.05.2020, the EELC Consistory formed the Institute's economic sustainability working group (see Ch. [3.2.1](#)), which found that the processes that have taken place in society in recent years and the resulting need to expand financing opportunities and the allocation of state budget funds to the Institute for the training of pastors, have highlighted the need to create a separate foundation to administer the Institute. The institute has previously been legally owned by EELC, but this has been an obstacle when it comes to receiving funding from outside the church community. Also, the day-to-day management of the Institute has been rendered cumbersome by an overly long decision-making chain. As a result, under the leadership of Rector Ove Sander, the process for establishing a separate foundation was initiated in the winter of 2022, and on 27.06.2022, the EELC established the Foundation. The entire learning environment, together with the material resources necessary for the organisation of learning, and all contracts were transferred to be under the Foundation's administration. The Rector of the Institute also became the head of the Foundation.

The establishment of the Chaplaincy of the Ministry of Social Affairs at the beginning of 2020 is an important aspect of the institute's future prospects. The goal of the Chaplaincy is that people in hospitals and welfare institutions in every age group and target group have access to pastoral care support according to those people's religious beliefs, and that pastoral care becomes a natural part of the medical and welfare system. The Chaplaincy Service also ensures that pastors/chaplains are specialists who meet the educational requirements and are suitable for the job. Since the Institute is the only educational institution in Estonia where pastoral care givers and counsellors are trained on the basis of a special professional *curriculum* at the PHE and MA level, the Institute is a strategic partner of the Ministry of Social Affairs in achieving the goals of the Chaplaincy. As a result, in 2021 and 2022, the Institute has received 80,000 euros (a total of 160,000 euros) as support for the training of pastors in MA studies. Hopefully, this support will continue in 2023 as well. Such partnerships are important from the point of view of the Institute's strategic management, and we have also highlighted it in the DP as one aspect of ensuring economic sustainability.

When planning the DP for the years 2022–2026, the lecturers wanted to include the search for opportunities for the development of doctoral studies as one of the activities to achieve key results (see [Appx. 10](#) Ch 6.1.). A specific goal for the creation of doctoral studies has not been set, but in the APDP (see [Appx. 11](#) Ch. 1.1) it is stated that in the period 2023–2024 the possibilities of creating a joint curriculum with international partners will be mapped out. Subsequently it will be possible to continue the discussion as to whether the taking of such a direction would be meaningful and possible for the Institute.

3.1.1. Planning and evaluation of the development of Institute



Every three to four years, a new DP is compiled for the Institute. All administrative and academic staff as well as students through their representative body are involved in this process. Also included are the representatives of EELC, OCE, ECC, and various chaplaincies, so that the Institute's development planning is in line with labour market developments and expectations. The previous DP period was 2018–2021. The preparation of the current DP for the period of 2022–2026 was delayed until the first half of 2022 due to the disruption of normal working rhythm by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, as a result of which it was not possible to carry out the process of drawing up the DP in the year 2021. The new DP (see [Appx. 10](#)) was approved by the Institute's council on 31.05.2022. The progress of fulfilling the goals set out in the DP is continuously monitored by the Head of Development and the heads of structural units. A fulfilment rate of the goals is brought out by preparing an activity report at the beginning of each year. The results of the report are presented to the Council of the FT and the Institute for consideration, and at the level of these decision-making bodies, the necessary changes will be made in the APDP. Since the new development plan period started in the middle of 2022, we are only now able to provide a summary of the fulfilment rate of the goals

for the 2018–2021 development plan period (see [Appx. 33](#)). We used the goals that were achieved during the previous period as a basis when planning the 2022–2026 development plan.

Strengths

Cooperation with the Chaplaincy of the Ministry of Social Affairs in the training of pastoral carers.

There is a great lack of religious literacy in society, and the Institute contributes to improving this shortcoming.

We are targeting more than one denomination and in addition to training ministers for the EELC, one of our important strengths is the PHE specialty to PCC, as well as MA studies in SCC, DPCC, and Orthodox Theology in PHE.

Areas of improvement

Increasing the student body to some extent.

Planned activities

Better outreach about the teaching offered at the Institute could increase the number of students. 150 students would be the maximum given the current structure and staff. We have not set a goal to significantly increase the number of students.

3.2. Resources



3.2.1. Financial management

The institute's budget has become very tight in recent years due to restrictions related to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and rapid inflation caused by the war in Ukraine. Due to the restrictions, the income earned from the rent of the hostel and the auditoriums has been during 2021 65% lower compared to the income of 2019. Due to general inflation, employees' expectation of wage growth has increased significantly. In 2021 and 2022, there was a noticeable salary increase for the employees of the Institute (see below for more details), however this was outweighed by the high inflation, and therefore real purchasing power has not increased. This puts the budget of the Institute in a very tight situation, because the economic situation of EELC has suffered in the same way due to these unexpected changes. The subsidy for EELC, which increased by 10% in 2022, will remain the same in 2023.

A solution to the economic sustainability of the Institute has been seriously considered in recent years. On 05.05.2020, the EELC Consistory formed the economic sustainability working group of the Institute of Theology, consisting of Archbishop Urmas Viilma (chairman), Chancellor Andrus Möttus, assessor Ove Sander and assessor Marko Tiitus, with the task of developing a funding model for the Institute, which would ensure at least an additional 100,000 euros to the budget every year. The action plan drawn up by the working group was submitted to the Institute's council and the EELC Consistory on 22.09.2020.

The working group's analysis focused on four different possible solutions:

- Moving the Institute to the building located at Tehnika 115 (the building is owned by EELC) and renting out the building located at Pühavaimu 6.
- More efficient management of the building located at Pühavaimu 6.
- Renting out the 3rd and 4th floor and storage area of the building located at Pühavaimu 6.
- Renting out the building located at Tehnika 115 and using the income for the development of the Institute.



As a result of the discussions held in the working group and the consultations held by the EELC's Chancellor with the specialists of the Church's Asset Management, the working group came to the following conclusions:

- Ordering an independent expert assessment from one or several real estate companies to determine the market value of Pühavaimu 6 and Tehnika 115 buildings is not necessary or practical at the moment. Even though the market value of the properties, i.e. the estimated sale price, would be ascertained as a result, at the moment, the working group does not consider it practical to sell either property.
- Renting out the entire building at Tehnika 115 is currently not considered reasonable by the management group, because according to the specialists of the Church Asset Management, when taking into account the costs of moving and repairs and the current general situation of the real estate market, the profitability of this transaction would only have a significant positive effect after several years.
- Renting out the entire Pühavaimu street 6 building is not currently considered reasonable by the working group, neither from the economical side, considering the current general decline of the real estate market, especially in the old town, nor when taking into account the risk of destruction of the established infrastructure of the Institute of Theology (cultural-historical memory, vicinity of Pühavaimu Church, good conditions for organs and the library).
- The working group considers it reasonable to continue the activities of the Institute of Theology in the Pühavaimu 6 building, with the goal of more efficient management of the building and increasing the income from the rental of guest rooms and auditoriums.
- The working group considers it reasonable to find an operator to rent out the rooms on the 3rd and 4th floors of the Pühavaimu 6 building. This would release the Institute of Theology from the responsibility to deal with the daily management and rental relations of these premises. In order to find an operator or a tenant, the minimum level of income from renting out the 3rd and 4th floor must be determined, because the income cannot be less than the income that the administrative department of the Institute could earn by renting out the premises independently and separately. In order to find an operator or tenant, personal negotiations have to be conducted and ads on real estate portals have to be published.

Activities to ensure the economic sustainability of the Institute agreed by the working group are presented in the table below.

Table 3. Activities to ensure the economic sustainability of the Institute.

Recommendation	Action
Approval of the action plan by the Institute's Council and confirmation by the EELC Consistory.	The action plan was approved on 29.09.2020.
Publishing advertisements and conducting negotiations to find an operator/tenant for the rooms on the 3rd and 4th floors of the Pühavaimu 6 building.	Due to the restrictions caused by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the rental and accommodation market changed, and finding an operator or tenant was no longer economically feasible.
Increasing the income arising from the activities of the administrative department of the Institute of Theology.	We have used €60,000 to improve the building, which gives us the opportunity to increase our earned income.
Conducting negotiations with the OCE to increase support for the operations of the Institute.	Negotiations are ongoing, and the goal is to increase OCE's support in 2023.
Conducting negotiations with the EELC Consistory to increase support for the operations of the Institute.	In 2022, the support allocated for the operations of the Institute increased by 10%, and it will remain at the same level in 2023 as well.

Analysis of the statute and legal entities of the Institute of Theology.	The analysis highlighted the need to create a foundation to manage the Institute. Therefore, on 27.06.2022, the EELC established the Foundation.
Action plan for the development of the Institute's Department of Lifelong Learning along with the creation of EELC's unified training platform.	In 2021, we started a series of e-courses in the format of a public university aimed at the general public, where people interested in theology, church history and the relationship between the church and society can improve their knowledge and exchange ideas with each other.
Preparation of the action plan for the development of research at the Institute of Theology.	The Academic Dean has held development interviews with the academic staff, which has enabled him to find out lecturers' personal interests in their academic development, as well as formulate a unified understanding of the research, development and/or other creative activity (RDC) strategies of the Institute (see Ch. 3.11.1).
Conducting negotiations in order for the Institute to receive offers to carry out national training.	Already in 2021 and 2022, the Ministry of Social Affairs has allocated a total of €160,000 to support master's level PCC studies, but the possibility and deadline of reaching an offer to conduct national training cannot yet be predicted.
Analysis of the profile and activities of the Pastoral Seminary and preparation of a DP.	The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic slowed down the preparation of the DP, and at the same time, the global crisis caused changes in church life, which created new challenges and areas of focus, to which an action plan containing the appropriate responses has not yet been prepared.
Analysis of the activities and possible developments of the church music department.	Future prospects regarding a possible change of location have been analysed. However, since it was decided to continue operating at Pühavaimu 6, it was not necessary to realize these plans.
Preparation of a new DP for the Institute of Theology.	On 31.05.2022, the Institute's DP for the years 2022–2026 was approved.
The programme for adjusting the structure and salaries of the academic and support staff of the Institute of Theology.	On 01.05.2021, the salary for the position of a professor increased by 33% (€900->€1200) and the salary for the position of a lecturer increased by 38% (€650->€900). On 01.05.2022, the salaries of administrative workers increased by an average of 50%. Adjusted salaries still do not mean that the salaries are fair, but the increase in salaries is still a sign of an effort to move in the direction of decent remuneration for employees. The adjustment of the structure for academic and support staff was completed on 09.03.2022 (see Ch. 3.6.1).
Preparation of ordinary rector elections of the Institute of Theology.	The process of choosing an ordinary rector has been completed. Rector Ove Sander took office on 14.02.2022.

The [Table 4](#) shows that thanks to different financial sources, the Institute does not directly depend on one source of finance. It is certainly necessary to continue diversification of the finance sources and thus it is necessary to not only pay attention to carrying out studies, but also to contribute to the development of our specialities in society.

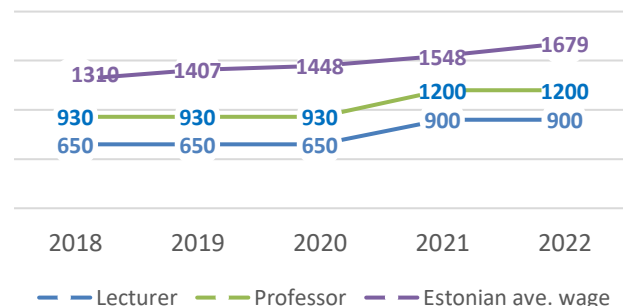


Figure 3. Monthly salary of full-time academic staff.



Hereby are presented some good examples of how we have been able to diversify income resources:

- During 2021 and 2022, the Institute received in total €160 000 (€80 000 each year) funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs for pastoral caregivers training at a master's level.
- *Support Fund of Pastoral Care and Counselling* was established by the Institute in the spring of 2018 with the objective of supporting activities that help make the PCC service more readily available to those in need and develop the PCC area in Estonia more comprehensively. This also includes the financing of the studies and the establishment of better employment opportunities for the alumni of the PCC studies. A fundraiser was organised for launching the Support Fund of Pastoral Care and Counselling on 11.05.2018, where the amount raised was €35 199. A second fundraiser took place on 12.04.2019, where the amount raised was €17 103. Due to SARS-CoV-2 restrictions, we were forced to pause those events.
- *The Paul-Gerhardt and Sieghilde Hoerschelmann Support Fund* was established in May 2018 with the objective of supporting the activity of the Pastoral Seminary of the Institute by granting scholarships and bonuses and financing research programmes.
- *The Evald Saag Foundation* (ESF) was established in 2013, with the objective of supporting the research-work of the academic staff and to pay for students' scholarships. During the last five years, only scholarships for students have been provided (see [Table 5](#) below).

Table 4. Institute's Budget 2017–2021.

INCOME	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Tuition fees	102 348	87 695	77 620	93 122	105 186
EELC budget support	100 000	100 000	100 000	100 000	100 000
NGO TAT support	73 794	82 082	90 000	82 721	77 037*
OCE support	787	1 211	0	2 000	1 000
Targeted financial supports and donations	67 222	70 410	63 690	51 277	75 254
Projects	25 400	20 800	22 200	46 100	95 400
Revenue from lease of premises	64 722	59 898	75 690	35 101	25 571
Other revenue	11 010	11 080	24 642	7 553	3 153
Mediation of services	11 713	9 834	12 180	8 184	8 093
Target financing to the next periods	0	0	-40 283	-103 251	-151 235
The revenue from previous periods	0	0	0	90 446	29 185
TOTAL	456 996	443 010	425 739	413 253	368 644
EXPENSES	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Salary of the admin. staff	89 435	91 108	82 528	87 842	82 835
Salary of academic staff	104 213	112 345	102 543	112 380	117 275
Salaries of departments (Church music, Pastoral Seminary, Lifelong learning)	56 168	53 134	52 841	55 397	51 940
Salary of other employees	57 969	43 922	45 017	36 203	14 104
The staff's lifelong learning (except in-house training)	1 226	400	0	450	0
Research and development, incl additional pay for research	21 856	12 098	10 868	19 798	5 535
Scholarships, grants, donations	10 534	6 829	4 500	6 500	6 350
Organisational costs of study sessions	16 633	19 020	18 351	10 230	17 257
Publishing, incl additional pay for publishing	8 960	4 507	1 699	6 141	157
Textbooks and periodicals to the library	2 207	2 048	2 775	2 102	1 972

Advertising	2 344	2 717	1 277	993	2 589
IT, communication and registry expenses	17 860	17 105	22 328	20 435	28 997
Management and representation	21 092	18 244	20 381	4 723	3 772
Transport and vehicle	16 776	20 120	14 816	10 505	9 586
Utilities and maintenance	25 446	22 839	26 449	19 746	10 980
Real estate	6 072	5 345	5 609	8 853	5 793
Other expenses	2 421	4 636	2 291	2 771	733
Mediation of service	11 713	9 774	11 466	8 184	8 769
TOTAL	472 925	446 191	425 739	413 253	368 644
Profit/loss	-15 929	-3 181	0	0	0

*The support of NGO TAT was smaller during 2020 and 2021 because the Support Fund of Pastoral Care and Counselling fundraiser did not take place due to SARS-CoV-2 restrictions and the workload of TAT IT's administrative staff was reviewed and reduced.

Table 5. Scholarships provided by ESF, 2017–2021.

	Presented applications	Approved applications	Funds provided
2017	11	11	4 300 €
2018	7	5	2 194 €
2019	-	-	-
2020	4	4	2 000 €
2021	4	4	1 850 €

The set tuition fee for studying in the Institute is 1223€ per semester, with certain distinct elements recognising good results in studies and support those who wish to make a career in church work:

- Members of the EELC and OCE are eligible for a 25% discount on their tuition fee if they present a recommendation from their parish pastor. In order to maintain the discount, it is necessary to complete at least 75% of the necessary study volume in each semester.
- During 2021 and 2022, the MA students of the DPCC specialty have received a 50% discount on their tuition fee due to a donation given by the Ministry of Social Affairs for pastoral caregivers and counsellors training.
- There are no discounts for students studying on the MA SCC programme.

3.2.2. Human resource management



The fact that all the staff work with a sense of mission while sharing Christian values creates a very good starting point for fruitful co-operation, even in a situation where the salary is not the most competitive motivator, if compared to the average salary-level of other higher education institutions. The head of each Institute's unit is responsible for the proper administration of the structural unit. The heads of different units meet monthly to discuss management and administration questions. Any problems that arise reach the management and are handled fast, because with such a small number of employees, everyone is able to communicate without an intermediary. TAT is located in Tartu, but despite this, there is frequent contact with the staff there. Different online communication channels are in use. The general information about studies moves smoothly thanks to the Online Study Information System (SIS).

Requirements and procedures for hiring administrative and academic staff are established by different documents (see [Appx. 7 Statutes of the Institute](#), [Appx. 9 Statute of the FT](#)).

People with higher education and people who recognize the Christian set of principles are preferred as administrative staff. 80% of all administrative staff have higher theological education. As we are a theological

school, hiring people with specialised skills and know-how is purposefully directed. In order to guarantee that the staff manages to fulfil their duties and to increase the quality of their work, different lifelong learning trainings and academic studies are paid for by the Institute. All staff members are able to study at the Institute without a tuition fee. The Institute favours its workers' participation in different co-operation networks and activities, which give a wider perspective to the subject field as a whole.

As the study process is organised in sessions, flexible working hours are allowed for. Working from home is also accepted if the nature of work allows it. During the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, working from a home office and having meetings in Zoom became normal. As the Tallinn building has guest rooms, the staff from Tartu can comfortably participate in trainings and work meetings in Tallinn that last for more than one day. A guest apartment is also available in the Tartu facility.

Job descriptions are drawn up taking into consideration the current work organisation and environment. In September 2021, *Risk Analysis of the Work Environment of the Institute* (see [Appx. 38](#) only in Estonian) was adopted.

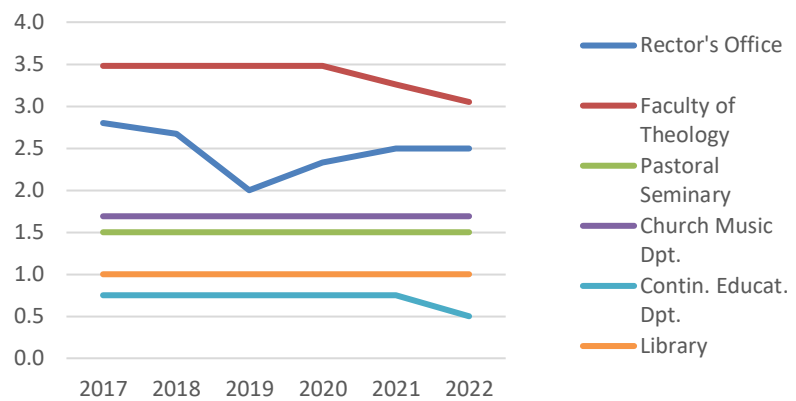


Figure 4. FTE of admin. staff by structural units, 2017–2022.

The salary level of employees and the general financial perspective are described in more detail in Ch. [3.2.1](#).

The results of employee satisfaction surveys

The results of the satisfaction survey conducted among the Institute's employees (administrative staff and full-time lecturers) at the end of 2022 give a good overview of how the Institute's employees evaluate the development and career opportunities and working conditions offered by the Institute, what is the satisfaction with the work organization, working atmosphere, salary and motivation system and to what extent are the employees motivated to fulfill their work obligations. The survey was sent to 24 people, of whom 15 responded. Filling in the questionnaire was anonymous and took place in an electronic environment. Below is a brief overview of the results of the survey, but all results can be found in [Appx. 35](#).

How satisfied are you with your physical work environment (e.g. work spaces, means of work)?

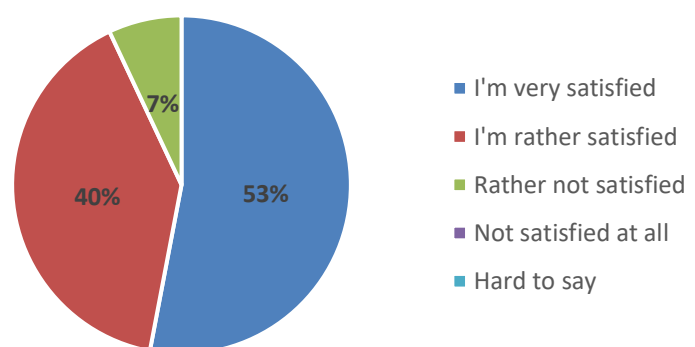


Figure 5. Employee Satisfaction Survey, 2022 (1).

The staff of the Institute found that, in general, they can use their professional knowledge and skills in their workplace. The work was also found to be challenging. 80% of respondents are rather satisfied with how their abilities are used. Here, the academic staff pointed out the following areas of improvement: 1) a large administrative burden, which somewhat inhibits commitment to research; 2) low receptivity of today's students; 3) restrictions on the possibilities of applying for research funds.

Although more than half of the employees consider that compared to similar positions in other organizations, their salary is not equivalent, motivation is found in other aspects: 1) the possibility to regulate their working hours and workload; 2) work in the home office or abroad; 3) friendly working environment and atmosphere; 4) relatively good working conditions.

The employees of the Institute are very enthusiastic and dedicated in their work and consider their work important. At the same time, there is

also some danger here: too many people cannot disengage with work thoughts at home, and the workload is sometimes high and overtime is needed. The further challenge is to provide employees with opportunities so that they can apply their professional knowledge and skills at the Institute more (and more versatily) than before. Some employees need to be more involved.

To what extent do you feel that your work is paid equally compared to similar positions in other organisations?

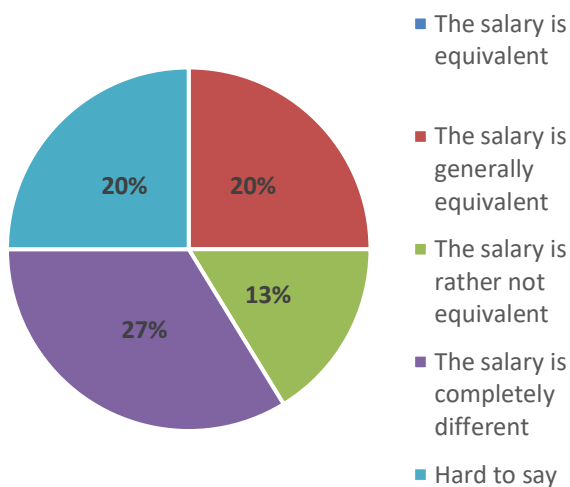


Figure 7. Employee Satisfaction Survey, 2022 (3).

How satisfied are you with how your abilities are used?

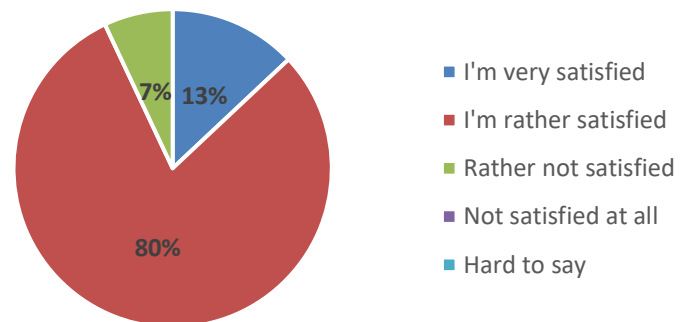


Figure 6. Employee Satisfaction Survey, 2022 (2).

To what extent do you feel that your work has clear objectives?

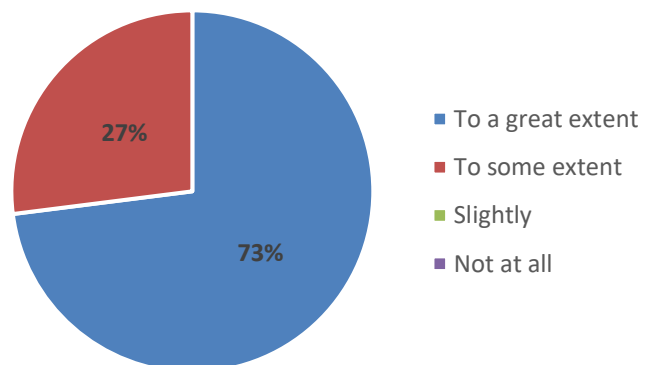


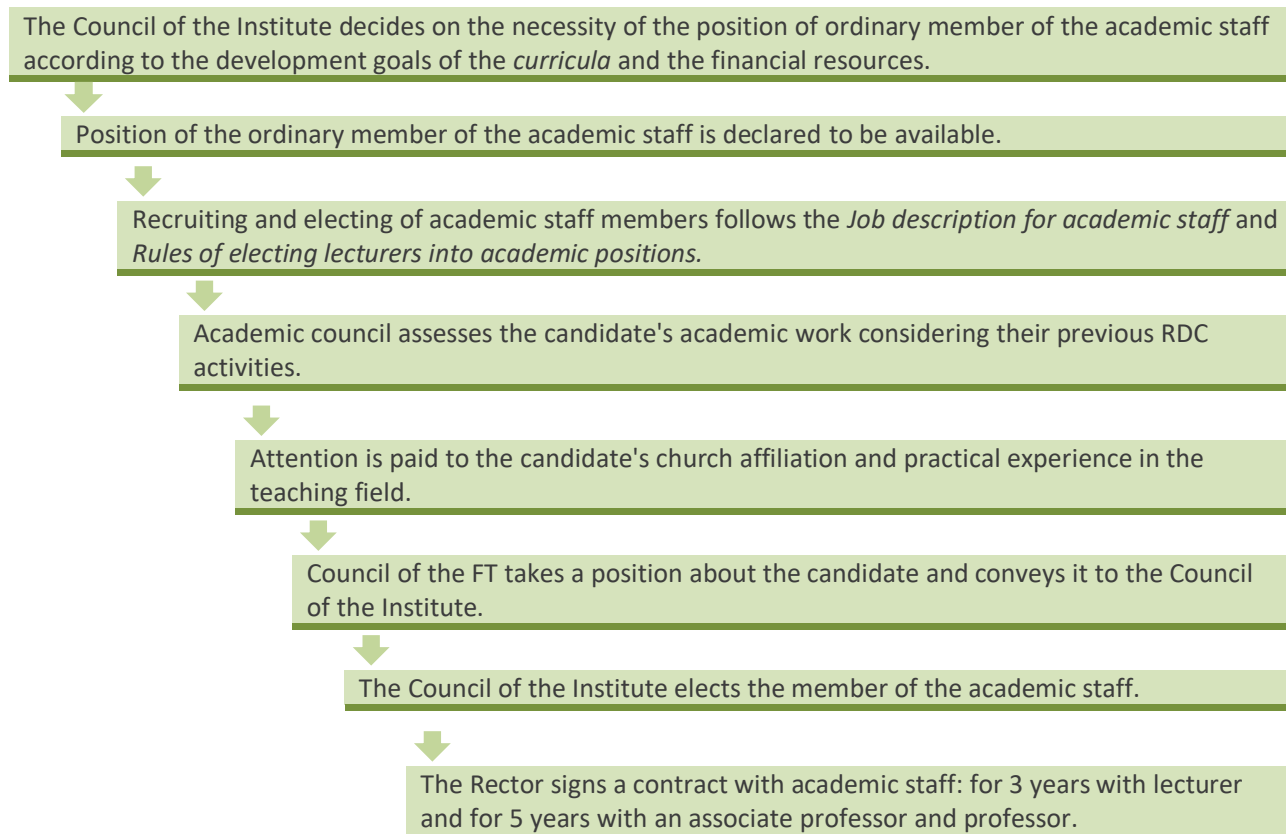
Figure 8. Employee Satisfaction Survey, 2022 (4).

The process of recruiting, developing, and motivating the academic staff is described in three documents:

- Regulations for Elections of the Academic Staff ([Appx. 18](#)).
- Procedure and Requirements of Evaluation of the Qualification of the Academic Staff and Research Fellows ([Appx. 17](#)).
- Rules of Procedures for Ensuring Professional Development for Academic Staff and Research Fellows ([Appx. 16](#)).



Table 6. Procedure of recruiting and electing academic staff.



To ensure the sustainability and quality of the academic staff, we help our ordinary lecturers to raise their qualification and support potential future academic staff members to continue their educational pathways:

- The faculty supported S. Härm in completing her doctoral thesis and applying for a permanent position in Old Testament studies (2021–2022). S. Härm completed her doctoral thesis and was elected in 2022.
- In 2019, the faculty successfully supported MA alumni K. Kallas-Põder in receiving scholarships for her doctoral studies.
- The MA alumni A. Süvari was encouraged and assisted in receiving a Lutheran World Federation (LWF) scholarship to start her doctoral studies. A. Süvari received the LWF scholarship in 2021.
- Research fellow E. Naab, a PhD from 2017, supervised by R. Tasmuth and J. Lahe, has worked in the department of Biblical studies (teaching and reviewing of final papers) since 2018.

The academic staff has recently received new younger members. In 2022, the two-year restructuring process of the FT was completed, which included three elements:

- Successful external attestation of three professors and two lectors (attestation process is described in the section below and results are described in Ch. [3.3](#)).
- The retirement of two professors who received the status of emeritus-professor.
- An open application for three positions that resulted in the evaluation and election of one new professor and two lectors (see Ch. [3.3](#)).

Attestation process of the academic staff

The attestation of ordinary FT staff after every five years is prescribed by Estonian higher education standards. The rules of the procedure are fixed by every individual institution. In our Institute similar criteria were applied as to the applicants for new academic posts.

The attestation process in spring 2022 was planned in parallel with a new employment policy (see Ch. [3.6.1](#)). During the process, the academic dean and rector had interviews with everybody concerned. Two elderly members of our academic staff, senior professors, decided to retire and the rest passed attestation.

During the attestation, three areas were assessed: teaching activity, academic activity and development and organization work in the relevant field of responsibility. Every person prepared a self-analysis that contained these three criteria plus plans for the next 5 years. A board of three external evaluators prepared a joint report and submitted it to the rector of the Institute.

3.2.3. Management and development of material resources



As the research and learning topics of the Institute belong to a humanitarian subject field, the important infrastructural assets are the library, classrooms, working rooms for academic and administrative staff along with their technical support (computers, Internet, multi-media devices etc.). The merger with the TAT in 2013 and the establishment of the Chair of Orthodox in 2014 in co-operation with the OCE have significantly increased the number of facilities and technical equipment base that the Institute has. The current infrastructure and material resources fully meet our needs and are relevant to the specifics of the *curriculum*.

In 2019, TAT established a new learning environment in Tartu (Riia 22a), where a Pastoral Care Centre has been created in addition to the rooms necessary for conducting studies. This offers students the opportunity to complete an internship in the speciality of pastoral care and to find employment in this field (see more Ch. [3.12](#)).

The teaching of students who have chosen to specialise in Orthodox Theology takes place mainly at the OCE centre in Tallinn at Wismari 32.

Table 7. Overview of the Institute's infrastructure.

Facility in Tallinn (Pühavaimu 6) 1002 m ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 classrooms with 125 seats. - 2 rooms for the use of the academic staff. - 3 office rooms. - Library. - All classrooms are equipped with multimedia systems. - 1 classroom is equipped with permanent video-conferencing system. - 1 portable video-conferencing system. - 6 guest rooms for 22 students, permitting an overnight stay(the guest area is equipped with kitchen facilities). - Chapel. - The closest base for internship is the Church of the Holy Ghost, which is situated next door to the Institute and is used mostly during sessions. There are many more places all over Estonia where we have internship bases for students (see Ch. 3.8.5).
Facility of TAT in Tartu (Riia 22a) 450 m ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 classrooms with 76 seats. - 2 rooms for the use of the academic staff. - 2 office rooms. - Chapel. - All classrooms are equipped with multimedia systems. - 2 classrooms are equipped with permanent video-conferencing system. - Guest apartment with two rooms and kitchen for students and lecturers.



Facility of Orthodox department in Tallinn (Wismari 32) 250 m ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 classroom with 35 seats. - 2 rooms for the use of the academic staff. - 1 office room. - Library. - Chapel.
Church Music Department	Two organs and two pianos. In addition to that, there is an agreement for use of the concert organ of the Church of the Holy Ghost for both practice and lessons.
Library	<p>The Institute's library is the biggest library of theological literature in Estonia (ca 67 000 units). The area is 187 m² including the work-area for visitors. Considering the needs of the school, the library is well-stocked. Additional necessary literature is acquired continuously.</p> <p>The Orthodox department has their own library in their facility with ca 3000 units. The library is open for public use every Tuesday and Wednesday. There are three tables for visitors and an opportunity to make copies.</p>

Library developments

Due to the social distancing requirements caused by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, it was necessary to offer the possibility for digital rental as well. In 2020, the Moodle Library was created, which contains digitised and scanned learning materials, links to video and audio materials, links to databases and instructions on how to use them, links to useful academic and ecclesiastical websites, lists of theological diploma and degree theses that have been defended at the Institute and elsewhere, and other materials. One of the reasons for the decrease in the number of rentals is probably the active use of the Moodle Library and the downloading of materials there.

The academic staff considers the supply of study literature to be good. Since the Institute has funds in its budget for buying textbooks every year, teachers can submit their requirements for acquiring literature to the head of the library, who will order the textbooks.

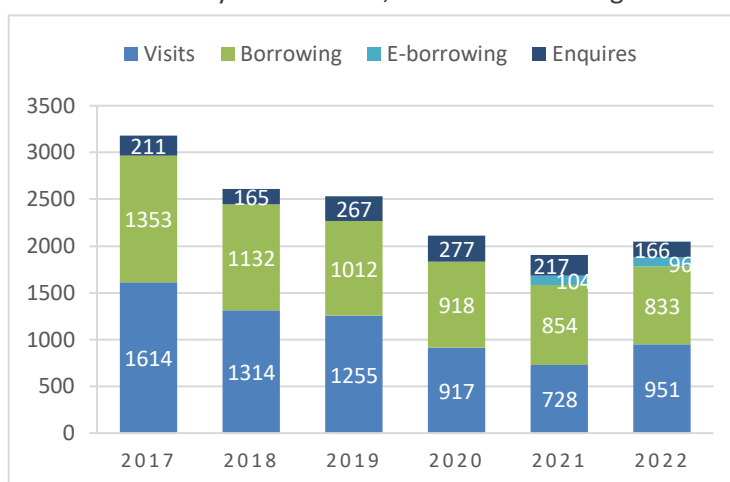


Figure 9. Institute's library usage data 2017–2022.

Information systems

Online Study Information System [Tahvel](#) (SIS)

The Institute has been using SIS from the autumn of 2014. SIS is administered and developed by the Information Technology Foundation for Education. Since autumn 2019, the new SIS software “Tahvel” has been in use. Using SIS favours the learner-centred approach. The students have a real-time overview of their study results and they can access data on their user account through the Internet. It also gives the staff of the FT a considerably quicker overview of the progress of the students, as well as allowing faster action in case of problems the students might have. The staff has access to all information they need for their work through SIS and they don't need to depend on anyone else's info exchange. Using SIS expands the possibility of distance working and helps to use the staff's resources better. From fall of 2015, Recognition of Prior Learning and Work Experience (RPL) applications have also been processed in SIS.

Databases

The Institute's students have access to various databases through Estonian National Library. The Institute's budget has not yet allowed it to acquire independent access to licensed databases.

Electronic document management system [EKIS](#)

The Institute has been using the electronic document management system EKIS since 2019.

Internet-based application center for student card minukool.ee

The Institute has joined the Internet-based student card application centre www.minukool.ee which offers students a flexible opportunity to apply for a student card that meets their needs - either an international ISIC or an Estonian student card. From the same centre, the lecturers can apply for the international teacher's card ITIC.

Estonian Education Information System [EHIS](#)

The Institute uses EHIS, to where info about our students, learning processes, lecturers, graduation documentation and *curricula* is routinely forwarded.

Plagiarism detection software [Ouriginal](#) (formerly Urkund) – see Ch. [3.4.1](#).

Information security

The Institute has developed information security and data protection rules, which are available on the [website](#) and which guide the handling of all data under the Institute's administration

3.2.4. Internal and external communication



Internal communication

Communication with students is simple on the one hand, as the student-body of around 130 students is a relatively small unit and this allows personal communication. At the same time, our studies are organised in sessions, so good communication in between sessions is equally important. For that purpose, a mailing-list for the whole student-body as well as for students from each year has been created. According to the students, the fastest and most direct communication channels between them are various chat environments (Messenger, WhatsApp, etc.). In these environments, students have created chat groups for students of a certain year or for students attending a certain subject to support each other in the learning process. A joint Google library (in the Google docs environment) has also been created, where students upload study materials and study notes. Such internal communication channels have become especially important considering the movement restrictions of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic when all teaching took place only as distance learning.

Due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, communication through web channels became more widely used and this has made the communication between students and academic staff of the Institute more flexible. Now, it is much easier for students to connect with academic staff through web channels outside of study sessions as well.

Students have elected a student council with members both from PHE and MA level students. The members of the student council belong also to decision-making bodies (such as the Council of FT and Council of the Institute). They actively represent the students' opinions. However, it is not simple to involve students in different activities, as the average age of students is 49. Students have families and work, therefore it is difficult to get involved with school-life in addition to their studies. Also, studies are organised in sessions and the actual session-days are packed with lectures.

To ensure exchange of information amongst the staff, the following measures have been implemented:

- Once a month, a meeting involving the management and the whole administrative personnel will take place.
- Different mailing lists and SIS.
- Academic staff will hold meetings involving the members of their chair. It is also possible to hold meetings involving other staff, depending on the subjects that need to be discussed. If possible, visiting lecturers will also be involved.



- Meetings of the Council of the FT take place at least four times a year.
- Participation in meetings is always possible through Zoom as well.

It must be acknowledged that these measures alone are not sufficient to ensure that the exchange of information between the lecturers is great and that the visiting lecturers are involved, since the lecturers are in different parts of Estonia. Due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, all meetings were held on Zoom and even today, it is normal to participate on all meetings via Zoom. Although this opportunity allows for better use of time and more flexibility, sometimes people can become frustrated since it is rare to hold meetings where everyone is able to meet each other in person.

External communication

Better implementation of various external communication activities is also objective of the APDP (see Ch. 2.3 in APDP [Appx. 11](#)).

We advertise our study opportunities annually in all Estonian-wide newspapers and their online channels. The rector of the Institute regularly shares information about the Institute in different radio stations: Vikerraadio, Kuku, Pereraadio. The lecturers actively express their opinions on social media and in various media channels regarding topical issues of social life, as well as experts addressing questions related to their specialties. The Institute's website also has a [separate section](#) with such media coverage. In the summer of 2022, we carried out a campaign on social media, using short video clips featuring our students to introduce the fields of study taught at the Institute and how they can be practically applied. An overview of the various popularisation activities of the Institute is presented in [Appx. 31](#).

Information spreads relatively well within the EELC. The paper "*Eesti Kirik*" (Estonian Church), and communication channels of EELC and local congregations play an important role there. In addition to that, information is shared every year during the Church Council spring session and conferences of deaneries, as well as during different mass-events of the church (Church Day, Church Song day, Summer Festival of Church Youth, Diaconia Day etc.). Also, the Institute's [Facebook](#) and [homepage](#) help to spread information. Every spring (except during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic) we organise an Open Day of the Institute. Recommendations given by the Institute's students and graduates are important as well.

One interesting way of spreading information is the recording of the Institute's Christmas service by the Estonian National Broadcasting Company, which is broadcasted on Vikerraadio radio station on Christmas morning.

We lack the financial means for broader advertisement campaigns directed towards different target groups. Probably we would benefit from such a campaign, since looking at those students who are admitted, we see that most of them come from EELC connections.

It is also worth mentioning some of the other activities that we carry out to raise the general awareness of the Institute's essence and the opportunities it offers: **a)** Different RDC activities, through which our lecturers participate in different projects and conferences that attract public attention (see [Appx. 31](#) and Institute's [website](#)); **b)** publishing theological literature (see [Table 14](#)); **c)** lifelong learning courses addressed to the general public (see Ch. [3.12.2](#)); **d)** activities that aim to serve society (see [Appx. 28](#)).

Strengths

During 2021 and 2022, the Institute received in total €160 000 (€80 000 each year) funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs for pastoral care givers training on a master's level.

The Institute does not directly depend on one source of finance, but we still have to work constantly to ensure economic sustainability.

All the staff work with a sense of mission while sharing Christian values. 80% of all administrative staff have higher theological education.

Communication between students in various chat groups using communication software such as Messenger, WhatsApp, etc.

During the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, distance learning tools were operationally introduced, and this has made communication between different parties much more effective and direct.

In 2020, the Moodle Library was created in order to enable better access to study literature. This is especially important when social distancing requirements are set.

Infrastructure with facilities in three different locations equipped with modern technical equipment (see [Table 7](#)).

The lecturers actively express their opinions on social media and in various media channels regarding topical issues of social life, as well as experts addressing questions related to their specialties.

Areas of improvement	Planned activities
We lack financial means for larger advertisement campaigns to involve different target groups. We would probably benefit from such a campaign, since looking at the students we have admitted, we see that most of them come from EELC connections.	Better use of various communication channels within the available financial possibilities. More effective involvement of both students and alumni when communicating information on social media channels.
The Institute's economic sustainability working group analysed the Institute's economic sustainability and recommended actions to ensure the economic sustainability of the Institute.	Planned activities to ensure the economic sustainability of the Institute are described in Table 3 .
The salaries of the Institute's employees are not fair compared to the Estonian average wage.	In 2021, the salaries of academic staff increased by an average of 35% and the salaries of administrative staff by 50% in 2022. All actions described in Table 3 are meaningful in the process of mitigating the issues with salaries.
Promoting Institute's learning opportunities.	Implemented new methods of advertising on social media, and this needs to continue.

3.3. Quality culture



The quality culture of the Institute is defined as a unified perception of core values, mission and vision, as well as the practices (e.g. internal assessment and improvement-oriented process management, self-evaluation) to ensure the quality of the Institute. It is a shared responsibility of the entire Institute. The implementation of quality management principles and practices has been devised with the aim of successfully supporting the accomplishment of the Institute's goals and the smooth implementation of processes.

Different procedures that are part of the quality management system are defined in the following regulations of the Institute: **1)** [Appx. 16](#) *Rules of Procedures for Ensuring Professional Development for Academic Staff and Research Fellows*; **2)** [Appx. 17](#) *Procedure and Requirements of Evaluation of the Qualification of the Academic Staff and Research Fellows*; **3)** [Appx. 18](#) *Regulation for Elections of the Academic Staff*; **4)** [Appx. 19](#) *Job Description for the Academic Staff*.

The Institute constantly analyses its structure and work organisation to ensure that the goals of the DP are fulfilled and to guarantee the implementation of quality culture principles and practices that are suitable for the specifics of our school. The DP preparation and monitoring process is described in Ch. [3.1.1](#) and an



overview of the results of the working group formed to analyse the future prospects of economic sustainability and to plan the necessary activities is presented in Ch. [3.2.1](#). The system for collecting feedback from students is described in Ch. [3.8.6](#). The results of employee satisfaction surveys are described in Ch. [3.2.2](#).

Table 8. Institute's internal evaluation.

Internal evaluation	Frequency	Responsibility	Use of results
Institute's annual report	Annually	Rector, Academic Dean, Heads of different departments	Analysis of the fulfilment of the goals described in the action plan of the DP and assessment of the organization's functioning. The report contains an analysis of all structural units' activities.
Staff meetings	Monthly	Rector	Employees have a good overview of the functioning of the Institute as a whole and the planned development activities.
Performance appraisals with academic staff	Annually	Academic Dean	Development discussions are held with the academic staff, where the results of feedback surveys and issues related to the content and quality of the subjects are discussed. The results: clearer mutual understanding of tasks, responsibilities, future plans and possibilities.
Performance appraisals with administrative staff	Annually	Rector, Academic Dean, Heads of different departments	Monitoring the institute's daily work organisation and planning possible changes in personnel.
Attestation of the academic staff	According to the attestation schedule	Evaluation committee	Academicians themselves and the institute officials received an updated and clearer picture of the present level of teaching, research, development, and future goals. Also the needs for future recruitment became clearer.
Feedback surveys regarding every subject	Regular	Head of Dean's Office, Academic Dean	Based on the feedback received from the students, development activities regarding the learning process and <i>curriculum</i> are carried out.
Study programme internal evaluation	Annually	Academic Dean	Development activities regarding the learning study programme are carried out based on the feedback received from the students.
The Institute's economic sustainability working group	One-time working period during May to September 2020	Committee	The working group mapped both internal and external factors affecting the economic sustainability of the Institute. As a result, an action plan for risk mitigation and economic sustainability was prepared (for more information see Ch. 3.2.1).

Table 9. Institute's external evaluation.

External evaluation	Frequency	Responsibility	Use of results
Institutional accreditation by HAKA	At least once in 7 years	Staff	Evaluation of the strategic management of processes and compliance with legislation. Input for improvement activities.
Quality assessment by HAKA	The last one took place 2018	Staff	Evaluation of the strategic management of processes and compliance with legislation. Input for improvement activities.

Involvement of the academic and administrative staff in internal quality assessment procedures

The head of each Institute's unit is responsible for proper administration of their structural unit. The heads of different units meet monthly to discuss management and administration questions. The quality of the study programmes is guaranteed by regular reviews by students and the results of the feedback surveys (see Ch. [3.8.6](#)).

The Dean holds performance appraisals with all members of the academic staff at least once a year. One of the aims of these meetings is to gather feedback on the teaching process as a whole, and identify the topics concerning organisation of the studies and development of the study programme. It gives a good input into the development of the work environment and more effective job distribution. It also allows better assessment of the process of the APDP.

The Institute's internal regulations have been updated regularly to ensure the quality and sustainability of the Institute. The drafts and changes to regulations to be implemented are first submitted to the relevant units (chairs) and staff for opinions. In this way the academic and administrative staff are involved in the process. Subsequently the Council of FT and/or Council of the Institute (depending on the regulations) discusses the changes. The students, as well as the owner's representatives as members of these bodies are also involved in the evaluation, discussion and endorsement process. The main regulations are available on the Institute's [website](#).

Feedback from alumni, employers, and other target groups (see also Ch. [3.8.6](#) and [3.8.7](#))

We have used different measures for monitoring how our graduates are managing and making practical use of their education in their professional career:

1. Institutional connections:

- a. Representatives of the EELC are members of the Institute's Council and give their input to the *curricula* development.
- b. Deans and supervisors give feedback on the success of their trainees and graduates.
- c. OCE has close connections with all the students studying Orthodox Theology during their study period and continue to support their personal spiritual growth after graduation.
- d. Meetings with chaplaincies (defence forces, defence league, police, prison, hospital) to clarify their specific needs and satisfaction with the quality of our education. Particularly strong contact has developed with Chaplaincy of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Due to SARS-CoV-2 pandemic different new initiatives on the field of PCC were launched and alumni of the Institute hired (see Ch. [3.12.1](#)). Both parties have given their feedback about the *curriculum* based on their recent experiences. This input will be taken into account in the process of *curriculum* development during 2023-2024.
- e. The Pastoral Care Centre in Tartu is leading a network of pastoral care givers and is collecting their proposals for *curriculum* developments. The main resources for collecting information are the following two events:
 - PCC summer days every year in August.
 - Estonian PCC consultation will be launched in February 2023 and the goal is to organize this event annually as well.
- f. Feedback from the representatives of the contracted internship partners.

2. Personal contacts:

- a. There are about 200 clergy in the EELC, the lecturers and leadership of the Institute form a part of it and have contacts with the clergy.



- b. The circle of PCC workers is still quite small, the Institute's lecturer Naatan Haamer is conducting supervision over them after graduation as well.
 - c. Employers of PCC are also internship partners and involved in *curriculum* development.
 - d. Different activities for graduates.
 3. Lifelong learning courses, conducted by the Department of Lifelong Learning to where the graduates are invited:
 - a. When planning courses, the needs of the graduates for self-education and professional growth are considered.
 4. All the graduates wishing to become ordained ministers in the EELC have to go through a year-long programme in the Pastoral Seminary, where the learned material will be put into practice through supervised internship. During this study programme, the possible shortcomings in their studies will become clear and the Head of the Pastoral Seminary will draw the attention of the FT to them.

We use the co-operation network of EELC to collect the information that is needed for the development of our *curriculum*. Through this network we will have an output to society and the employers' segment. The Institute's employees are active in many public and professional organisations (see [Appx. 28](#) *The Institute employees' participation in the activities of social and professional associations in 2022*), which widens the network even more. All of these different outputs guarantee a good awareness of the developments taking place in society and give a good starting point from which to best plan the Institute's *curriculum* to meet the needs and expectations of society and of employers.

During the academic year 2017/18 the main changes in the PHE Lutheran Theology and MA Lutheran Theology curricula (see Ch. [3.7.3](#)) were introduced by taking into consideration the feedback received from the owner and first employer, the EELC. The changes in the PHE Orthodox Theology were influenced by the feedback from the OCE.

Results of the attestation of the academic staff

1. Academicians themselves and the institute officials received an updated and clearer picture of the present level in teaching, research, development, and future goals.
2. The needs for future recruitment became clearer.
3. Structural changes in the areas of Systematic Theology (ST) and Church History were completed – one professor in both areas (Th.-A. Pöder and P. Rohtmets).
4. The retirement process of senior academic workers is regulated (A. Hiob, R. Saard).
5. The relationship between Biblical Studies and Religious Studies was clarified (Religious studies became an independent area and not any more supervised by the department of Biblical studies).
6. The contest for professor in Religious studies was announced and realised (Prof. J. Lahe became elected).
7. The work load in Biblical studies was calculated anew and the contest for two lecturers announced (V. Ehasalu and S. Härm became elected).

Attestation process of the academic staff is described at the end of Ch. [3.2.2](#).

Strengths

The Pastoral Care Centre, located in the Tartu facility, leads a network of pastoral care givers and collects their proposals for *curriculum* developments.

The Institute's employees are active in many public and professional organisations which provide a good overview of the developments taking place in society and a good starting point from which to plan the Institute's *curriculum* and meet the needs and expectations of society and of employers.

Areas of improvement	Planned activities
We have not researched the satisfaction of graduates and employers with any formal questionnaire on regular bases, because feedback is collected in different ways.	The formulation of a questionnaire for graduates and employers which could be an additional tool in obtaining regular feedback.

3.4. Academic ethics

3.4.1. General principles and academic ethics in research and teaching

The Institute relies on the principles of Christian ethics, which the staff follow in their daily work. We also honour the principles agreed upon in the *Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity* (see [Appx. 21](#)). The Institute considers academic integrity and research ethics together with openness, academic freedom, unity and professionalism as the cornerstones for teaching and research. The Institute does not have any internal document regulating specifically ethical issues.

Especially in the field of PCC, student research often faces ethical questions (interviews, personal data etc.). So far, the Institute has managed to handle these questions *vis-à-vis* between the respondent and the author, using the help of the supervisor and the Academic Dean. As lately there has been more cases where ethical questions have arisen, the Institute is planning to establish an Ethics committee.

PHE *curriculum* within the course of *Introduction to Academic Writing* (3 ECTS) and in MA a course *Planning a Research Paper and its Methods* (2 ECTS) introduce the principles of academic ethics. Students' general moral perception and ethical reasoning are supported by special ethics courses, namely the PHE subject Ethics (4 ECTS) and the MA subject Seminar in Ethics (3 ECTS). In addition to that, the introduction and follow-up of academic ethics begins with the monitoring and evaluation (including in the form of a formative assessment) that the first homework that the student prepares has been prepared with honesty. The rules of academic ethics are described in the Institute's instruction which defines the requirements for students' papers and research papers (see [Appx. 37](#) the document is available only in Estonian). In this instruction, the purpose of source references is described. The instruction states that if any thoughts, ideas, or data has been taken from other authors, this must be properly referenced. Otherwise, it is considered plagiarism. The *Study Regulations of the FT* (clause 164–171) (see [Appx. 13](#)) regulates how to deal with plagiarism and sets out possibilities for the students to appeal. During the last five years, we have not had any cases of plagiarism.

As the Institute is a rather small institution and the supervision of student papers is done in the form of academic research seminars, it limits the possibility of plagiarism.

To enhance plagiarism recognition and prevention, we joined the plagiarism recognition system [Ouriginal](#) (formerly Urkund) in May of 2021. This software combines text-matching with writing-style analysis and helps detect and prevent plagiarism regardless of language. Ouriginal does not specify whether or not the text is plagiarised. As a result of text comparison, Ouriginal prepares a report showing to what extent the analysed text coincides with other texts (incl. properly cited quotes). The report also shows which parts of the text coincide with other texts. Since we joined Ouriginal, we have tested all final papers and Master theses and have not found any plagiarism so far.

In the case of disagreement between a student and a lecturer, the Council of FT is the forum where topics are handled; the council has the right to make decisions in order to resolve the situation, if needed. Personal matters are dealt with the help of the Academic Dean, but there have not been any personal issues needing special attention.



Strengths

Supervision is organised in a manner which makes plagiarism unlikely.

There is training for students regarding ethics and how to recognize plagiarism.

Areas of improvement

Establishment of an Ethics committee.

Planned activities

An ethics committee will be established in 2024. Lately there has been more cases where ethical questions have arisen especially in the field of PCC when students are facing ethical questions while compiling their thesis (interviews, personal data etc.).

3.5. Internationalisation



Part of the mission of the Institute is to promote theological competence in Estonia and internationally. One of the values of DP is to develop theological thinking and the written word in Estonian and participate actively in international cooperation networks. And one key result of DP is that the Institute is a recognised research centre with international contacts. The following actions with expected results are planned in APDP (see [Appx. 11](#) Ch. 1.2) in order to achieve the set goals:

Action	Result
The establishment of contractual relationships with partner organisations whenever necessary.	The academic staff participates more actively in international cooperation (research projects, researches, lectures are held by lecturers of partner institutions, etc.).
Supporting the mobility of the academic staff.	For the purpose of professional development and modernisation of the subjects, the lecturer has to go to an international research center or a partner institution at least once (stay up to a semester) within five years.
Organisation of international scientific conferences in priority research areas.	In cooperation with international partners, a research seminar or conference has taken place once a year.

The establishment of international relations meets serious challenges due to the fact that the Institute is a small educational institution, which makes it quite difficult to be a partner for large universities. However, it is possible to cite positive examples, e.g. in November 2022 church historians and liturgists from the University of Helsinki visited the Institute and this formed a basis for discussions on deepening our cooperation. Also, cooperation negotiations have been held with the University of Eastern Finland, bearing especially the Orthodox speciality in mind.

Chapter [3.5.2](#) describes how the objectives set in the strategic plan will be fulfilled regarding internationalisation of the academic staff.

The Institute has study programmes only in Estonian and hence foreign students cannot participate in the studies without a knowledge of Estonian. Therefore, the Institute also does not have any corporate study programmes or modules with any foreign educational institutions. Naturally, there is diverse collaboration with different theological higher education institutions and networks internationally.

We have good co-operation with the Faculty of Theology of VID Specialized University in Norway. They have offered Master programme scholarships opportunities for our students through their department of Diaconia and Leadership Studies. As of today, no one has used this offer.

A co-operation memorandum was signed with the Private Theological University STH Basel (Switzerland) in 2019, which allows for a variety of academic exchanges depending on the requirements of each side and the mutual benefits. Within the framework of co-operation, it is also possible for a student to, for instance, complete their doctoral studies in English, if there is mutual interest and the student is prepared for this. This would take place to a large extent in the form of distance learning. There has been a mutual exchange of guest lecturers, information about which can be found in [Appx. 25 International Visiting Lecturers](#) and [Appx. 24 International Mobility of the Academic Staff](#).

The activities of the Chair of Orthodoxy are supported by the international network of researchers of the Volos Academy for Theological Studies (Greece), with whom OCE IT has also entered into a co-operation agreement. In addition, professors from the University of Athens, University of Balamand in Lebanon and the Department of Orthodoxy at the University of Eastern Finland also hold lectures at the Chair of Orthodoxy.

The Institute's membership at the European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy ([ENHCC](#)) is an important partnership that enables the Institute to keep abreast of PCC developments in Europe. ENHCC involves practitioners and scholars across Europe and is a good resource for educational and research co-operation. ENHCC helps leaders and managers of health care organisations and faith communities to better understand the role and vision of health care chaplains. It also informs other health care and faith community workers about the breadth of health care chaplaincy and its trends across Europe. During 2016–2022, Siimon Haamer was a member of the ENHCC committee.

The following co-operation agreements belong to the framework of the Erasmus+ mobility programme, which involve the international mobility of academic staff and students, either signed or in the signing process:

- KU Leuven (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), Leuven, Belgium – signed 2017.
- Innovative Religious Education Network: educating to the religious diversity (IRENE) – signed in November 2020.
- Babes-Bolyai University (Universitatea Babes-Bolyai), Cluj-Napoca, Romania – signed in August 2022.
- University of Eastern Finland (Itä-Suomen Yliopisto), Joensuu, Finland – co-operation agreement is planned to be signed during 2023.

Considering the number of the academic staff and overall size of the Institute we can be satisfied with our international connections and activities.

3.5.1. International mobility of students



Because of the high average age of the student body (49), international mobility is not very wide-spread. Therefore, the Erasmus+ mobility programme has not been used, as the minimum stay abroad must be three months or more. The DoRa+ programme 1.1 is more suitable for our profile, since it offers the opportunity for MA students to go on shorter study trips (conferences, visits to universities abroad etc.). Detailed overview of international mobility of students is given in the [Appx. 26](#). Lecturer Naatan Haamer and Head of TAT IT Siimon Haamer regularly involve students in the consultations of the ENHCC that take place every other year.

The Institute cannot accept foreign students who do not speak the Estonian language, because our teaching takes place only in the Estonian language. Therefore, we have not had foreign students participate in our studies.

3.5.2. International staff and mobility of the academic staff

Good co-operation with foreign teachers mainly arises from international networks or personal acquaintances. There are remarkably more opportunities for involving foreign teachers, since the Erasmus+ programme creates a very good framework for that, but we have to maintain a proper balance and place an emphasis on quality. Lecture courses delivered by foreign teachers should not make up too large a proportion of the total studies. Due to SARS-CoV-2 pandemic participation of international lecturers has been negatively affected. [Appx. 25](#) *International Visiting Lecturers* shows an overview of the involvement of foreign teachers.

In order to achieve the objectives set out in the strategic plan it is important to encourage and support the international networking of the academic staff, because it is also necessary to enhance their professional competence. We have provided such opportunities during the last three academic years, when two lecturers (T.-A. Pöder and P. Rohtmets) had an opportunity to focus on research and international communication for most of their working time during the course of one academic year. During this period the teaching load was reduced to a minimum. In 2023 the same work organisation will be implemented in the case of J. Lahe.

It also must be recognised that internationalisation affects only part of the academic staff and, as a rule, professors. The internationalisation of lecturers and other academic staff still needs to be promoted. The descriptions of international relations presented in Ch. 3.5 show that the circle of opportunities is expanding. Participation by the Institute's academic staff in international networks and research groups is presented in [Appx. 28](#).

In addition to the Erasmus+ programme, the visiting lecturers have also been financed by the relevant sending institutions or organisations. The Institute's academic staff have been able to use different sources of finance for their trips abroad (see [Appx. 24](#)). NGO TAT annually allocates special funds to finance international visits for our academic staff.

The Institute participates in following networks which are necessary to support the base-research and practical activities:

1. British New Testament Society – Prof. of Biblical Studies R. Tasmuth.
2. Finnish Exegetical Society – Prof. of Biblical Studies R. Tasmuth.
3. ENHCC – Lecturer of Practical Theology N. Haamer, Head of TAT IT S. Haamer.
4. Center for Protestant Theology in Eastern Europe (ZETO, Sibiu/Romania) – Prof. of ST T.-A. Pöder is a co-chair of the Advisory Board.
5. Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE, head office in Vienna, Austria) – Prof. of ST T.-A. Pöder coordinates pan-European theological study processes and ecumenical dialogues as the study secretary of the CPCE.
6. International Association for Semiotic Studies – Prof. of ST T.-A. Pöder
7. Nordic Society for Philosophy of Religion – Prof. of ST T.-A. Pöder
8. Sociological and legal data network on religions in Europe and beyond (EUREL) – Prof. of Church History P. Rohtmets is the representative of Estonia.
9. International Network for Baltic Church Historians (INBCH) – Prof. of Church History P. Rohtmets is a Member of the Network.

Strengths

The staff of the Institute has many international connections and they participate in various international professional associations.

Co-operation with universities internationally is growing within the framework of the Erasmus+ mobility programme.

Areas of improvement	Planned activities
Involvement of international lecturers.	Due to SARS-CoV-2 pandemic participation of international lecturers has been very modest and we need to involve them more through the Erasmus+ mobility programme in the years ahead.
Internationalisation of the academic staff.	Creation of international partnerships through the Erasmus+ programme. Completion of initial negotiations and looking out for additional opportunities.

3.6. Academic staff



To find data regarding all academic staff, see [Table 2](#) and [Appx. 23](#).

Different manuals have been adopted for determining the qualification, teaching skills and professional development of the academic staff that are compiled in co-operation with the teachers and jointly approved (see Appx. [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [19](#)). The teachers actively participate in professional and social activities outside the Institute in Estonia as well as internationally (see Appx. [28](#), [24](#)) and also involve students, if appropriate (see Ch. [3.11.4](#)). Good co-operation between the academic staff and linking the broad network of contacts of the Institute's development activities is a good indicator of the effective operation of the teaching body.

Figure 11 below shows the proportion of ordinary academic staff by chairs and Figure 10 shows the change of the ordinary academic staff's FTE over the last six years.

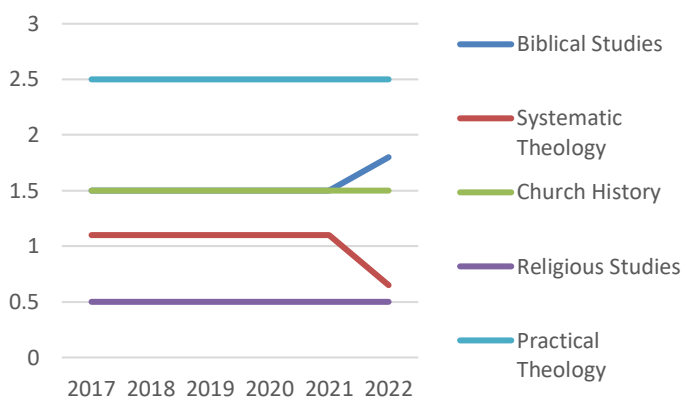


Figure 11. FTE of ordinary academic staff by chairs 2017–2022. Visiting lecturers are not included.

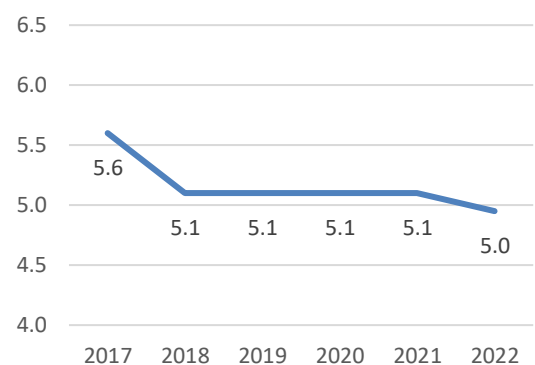


Figure 10. FTE of ordinary academic staff all together 2017–2022.

The proportion of the academic staff with a PhD is 65% (considering FTE) (see [Table 2](#)). The fast changing conditions and diverse character of subjects also require the hiring of visiting lecturers (numbers of visiting lecturers during period of 2018–2022 and explanations are presented in the [Table 2](#)), in selection of whom, the deciding factor is the competency in the given subject field and correspondence to qualification demands.

Table 10. Details of the competition for academic staff to be elected.

ACADEMIC STAFF	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
	Posit ions	Cand idate s	Posit ions	Cand idate s	Posit ions	Cand idate s	Posit ions	Cand idate s	Posit ions	Cand idate s	Posit ions	Cand idate s
Elections of ordinary faculty staff	5	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Lecturer	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Professor	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Ordinary faculty staff in office (FTE)	5,6		5,1		5,1		5,1		5,1		5	
Lecturer	2,0		1,5		1,5		1,5		1,5		2,3	
Professor	3,6		3,6		3,6		3,6		3,6		2,7	

Ch. 3.6.1 describes the changes that have taken place among the teaching staff. In the end of Ch. 3.2.2 describes the recent attestation process of the academic staff. Ch. 3.3 explains also the organisation of internal quality management and involvement of the academic staff in this process. Ch. 3.8.6 describes how feedback is collected from students regarding subject courses taught by lecturers.

3.6.1. Composition and tasks of the academic staff



78% of the full-time professors are EELC clergy, and the professors teaching PCC all work as pastoral caregivers themselves. Such composition of the teaching staff is important for the carrying out of the Institute's mission. At the same time, it ensures coherence between theory and practice and good preparation for those students working in the field of their chosen speciality. The duties and rights of academic staff are described in the *Job Description for the Academic Staff* (see Appx. 19).

An average age of the academic staff is 52. It has been more or less the same for years (see Table 2). We consciously monitor the age composition of the academic staff and endeavour to replenish the teaching staff. To that end, mature scholars with a splendid academic record, T.-A. Pöder and P. Rohtmetts have all been employed within the last seven years. In 2022, J. Lahe was elected as a permanent professor. From the year 2018, a promising doctoral student Karin Kallas-Pöder has been working as a part time assistant of ST, and we support her doctoral studies. Also, a new doctor S. Härm has been elected as a permanent lecturer in Old Testament studies.

The action plan drawn up by the Institute's economic sustainability working group in 2020 (see Ch. 3.2.1) set out as one of the action-points the task of analysing and re-organising the staff of the Institute and carrying out structural reform. During 2021, the management of the Institute conducted discussions with all parties to develop a solution that is economically viable and ensures good teaching quality. In the first stage, the dean and the development manager held interviews with ordinary lecturers, then with non-ordinary lecturers. Their satisfaction with working in their current position became clear, including their willingness to go through the process of attestation. Three of the five ordinary professors wanted attestation (see the end of Ch. 3.2.2) and two wanted a reduction in responsibility and transfer to an emeritus position. In two chairs (Systematic Theology and Church History), two lecturers expressed their willingness to change their level of responsibility to a higher level than before. At the second stage, the satisfaction, wishes and willingness to change the workload of three non-ordinary lecturers with increased responsibility was determined. These lecturers wanted to apply for an ordinary lecturer position. On 09.03.2022, the Council of the Institute approved all the proposed changes, which are explained below.

Professorships. At each Chair of the Institute, one undivided professorship was created with a part-time (0.5) to full-time (1.0) workload, but with one person in charge. This ensures that all teaching, research and development taking place at the Chair is all under the management and responsibility of one person.

When planning the workload of the professorships, the total volume of subjects taught in each Chair was taken into account.

Lecturerships. In addition to one professor position, there is also a lecturer in each of the Chairs. Workloads are based on the total volume of subjects taught in the Chair. The lecturers' positions can be flexibly divided between several lecturers, if necessary. If there is one lecturer position at the Chair, it can be divided between two persons. It is also possible to create a full-time (1.0) lecturer position.

Contract lecturers. In addition, it is possible to use non-ordinary, i.e. contract-based lecturers for some subjects. This need is the greatest in the SCC *curriculum*, because there are more subjects that do not fall clearly under any Chair.

As the main features of the learner- and learning-centered approach, the lecturers emphasize interactive and student-engaging lectures, in which the seminar format plays a large role. It is also very important to support students by structuring independent work between study sessions (specific tasks, deadlines, etc.) and to ensure that the best modern educational literature is continuously added to the Institute's library.

3.6.2. Development of the academic staff



The Head of the Chair and the Dean introduce the study programmes, objectives, and outputs to the novice teachers. Also, the academic staff support each other. Based on the needs of the teachers, and development activities of the Institute, we organise lifelong learning courses for the academic staff. The topics since 2017 have been as follows:

- October 2017 – *Academic writing and mentoring.*
- November 2018 – *Integration of teaching methods and assessment methods for ensuring the quality culture.*
- September 2019 – *training regarding the use of the new learning information system software Tahvel.*
- May 2020 – *Principles of distance learning and best practices. Using distance learning software.*

Personal development is supported by financing participation in international conferences and, if appropriate, ordering the flight tickets directly by the Institute (see [Appx. 24 International Mobility of the Academic Staff](#)).

Academic staff receives support upon publishing, which is evidenced by a large number of publications and proceedings of the Institute (see Ch. [3.11.1](#) and Estonian Research Information System [ETIS](#)). Based on the feedback received from students and teaching staff during the course of studies, it becomes clear which study literature topics and which proceedings of the Institute need to be obtained. Specific publishing plans are discussed with Heads of Chairs and then targeted funding sources are found.

Full time academic staff's salary levels depend on their position: lecturer and professor. Visiting lecturers are paid hourly wages according to their academic degree and/or their position in their home school. The Institute is continuously looking for additional finances in order to ensure continuous increase in salaries (see Ch. [3.2.1](#)).

Some of the lecturers have difficulties with using different digital resources in the study process. We have offered individual counselling, which is provided by the head of the Dean's office. However, the Covid pandemic changed this situation quite a lot. Due to social distancing restrictions, distance learning was the only way to carry on the study process and everyone was forced to get used to different digital resources.

According to the results of performance appraisals, the staff is satisfied with the study rooms, organisation of studies, and the good atmosphere. The staff also appreciates the publishing activities of new study materials



that the Institute continuously carries out. However, the publication activity between chairs is uneven. Once a year, the Council of FT discusses publication matters and encourages colleagues by making good examples known and by giving advice on how to compose them. The Dean encourages the original writing of suitable materials rather than the use of translations. The Dean helps to identify opportunities for the publication of study-related materials written by the teachers as creative scientific work.

The new dean Liina Kilemit, who took office on September 1, 2022, conducted development discussions with the heads of all Chairs in the autumn. During the discussions, the future perspectives and current status of the teaching and research work of the Chairs, issues of academic succession and questions related to the professors' personal workload and academic goals were discussed. This time the discussions were planned with a slightly longer time-line in mind than the usual annual development discussions. Namely, based on the discussions, the new dean wanted to come to an understanding herself of the upcoming tasks during her four-year term. As one specific example, the question of changing the name of the Chair of Comparative Religious History came up during the discussions. This issue was also discussed at a meeting of the Council of FT in November 2022, and it was decided to proceed with the process of changing the name of the Chair and to complete it in the spring of 2023.

The participation of the academic staff in RDC activities is described in Ch. [3.11.1](#).

As one example of academic cooperation and the sharing of practice, the regular meetings of the academic staff related to the Systematic Theology chair (including academic staff with hourly fees) can be elucidated. The chair currently has professors from the older, middle, and younger generations who represent both the Lutheran and Orthodox approaches. Under the leadership of Systematic Theology lecturer Karin Kallas-Pöder, the Systematic Theology method seminar was launched in e-form in 2021, where almost all Estonian-speaking practitioners of systematic theology will participate, including PhD students. The goal is to develop auxiliary materials in Estonian for students writing theses in Systematic Theology. It has been a good platform for cooperation.

Strengths

Good co-operation between the academic staff and linking the wide contact network to the Institute's development activities is a good indicator of the effective operation of the teaching body.

The proportion of the academic staff with a PhD is 65% (considering FTE).

78% of full-time professors are EELC clergy, and the professors teaching PCC all work as pastoral caregivers themselves.

During 2021, the management of the Institute conducted discussions with all parties to re-organise the staff of the Institute in a way that is economically viable and ensures good teaching quality.

Areas of improvement

Some of the lecturers have difficulties with using different digital resources in the study process.

Planned activities

We are continuing to offer individual counselling.

3.7. Study programme



3.7.1. Short description of study programmes and the principles of study programme development

All study programmes of the Institute (see Appx. [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)) belong to the theology study programme group and the FT of the Institute is responsible for carrying out the studies. To find aggregate data of the student body see [Table 1](#).

Current self-evaluation includes following study programmes:

PHE Theology	MA Theology
Specialties: Lutheran Theology Pastoral Care and Counselling Orthodox Theology	Specialties: Theology Diakonia and Pastoral Care and Counselling
Objectives of the curriculum: Acquire basic education in main disciplines of Christian theology with specialization in Lutheran theology, Orthodox theology or PCC; Create prerequisites for working in positions requiring theological knowledge in the EELC, other churches and other social professions; Acquire professional knowledge and skills to work as a pastoral carer and counsellor in hospitals, social welfare institutions, crisis centres and elsewhere; Create preconditions to obtain the specialist education at Master level.	Objectives of the curriculum: Obtain specialist education in the field of Christian theology or DPCC, which is a prerequisite to work in positions requiring appropriate education and to continue studies at doctoral level; The main objective of the major studies in Theology is to acquire specialist competence in the basic disciplines in theology and to establish preconditions for applying to the Pastoral Seminary; Objective of DPCC minor specialisation is to obtain professional and specialist training in ecclesiastical social work and in various fields of PCC.

The Institute's PHE and MA theology *curriculums* form a whole. If the student begins their studies with the PHE *curriculum* and continues at the master's level, then the student can acquire the highest quality education that is well suited to the needs of the labour market. The structure of the MA theology *curriculum* is based on the Institute's PHE *curriculum* and enables the acquisition of in-depth knowledge of the chosen speciality.

The preparation of the master's level *curriculum* in Theology is based on both the needs of the EELC (training of clergy) and the needs of society (training of diaconal workers and pastoral care givers). The EELC has set a master's degree as the requirement for the qualification of clergy. Also, having a master's degree is becoming more and more important for pastoral care givers on the labour market, and it is not possible to qualify for 7th level of Occupational Qualification Standard of Pastoral Counsellor without a master's degree.

All *curricula* have been developed according to the regulations and standards which regulate the higher education system in Estonia. The goal that we have determined in the DP is that the study programmes support ecumenical cooperation, the spiritual growth of students and entry into ecclesiastical service and service to society based on the needs of the labour market. The *curriculum* is based on the occupational requirements of the EELC (defined in *EELC Clergy Competency Model* [Appx. 39](#) only in Estonian) and OCE clergy and also the *Occupational Qualification Standard of Pastoral Counsellor* level 6 and 7. To assess the level of achievement of our goals and the degree to which the quality of education complies with presented expectations, the staff of the Institute are the members of different decision-making bodies of EELC and OCE and are involved in the development of PCC speciality through different organisations (see [Appx. 28](#) *Employees' Participation in the Activities of Social and Professional Associations in 2022*).

In the health and social-care system, the need for PCC workers is constantly increasing. This need grew to a phenomenal extent because of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic during 2020–2022 (see Ch. [3.12.1](#)). On the labour market, new opportunities for PCC workers are constantly emerging, and this also has a positive effect on the numbers of entrants. When coming to study, student candidates often already have the prospect of a professional job or even a job waiting until the relevant education is acquired. 78% of graduates of PHE PCC and MA DPCC speciality during 2017–2022 work as pastoral care givers and counsellors.

To collect the corresponding information, the Institute's employees have been included in EELC's working groups that deal with different areas. The co-operation network of the EELC is used to collect the information that is needed for the development of the *curriculum*. Through this network we will contribute to society and the employers' segment. OCE leadership as a whole is involved in the development of the *curriculum* of the Orthodox theology. The Institute's employees are active in many public and professional organisations (see



[Appx. 28](#)), which widens the network even more. All of these different outputs guarantee a high awareness of the developments taking place in society and give a good starting point from which to plan the Institute's *curriculum* to meet the needs and expectations of society and employers. Current *curriculums* of the Institute demonstrate the effectiveness of this development strategy:

- PHE Lutheran Theology serves first of all the interests of the owner (EELC), PCC needs of the society and Orthodox Theology ecumenical co-operation.
- MA Theology specialty is directly ordered by the EELC and DPCC corresponds to the needs of the labour market and needs of the society (see Ch. [3.1](#)).
- MA SCC corresponds to the objectives of the Institute as well as the expectations of society in the area of culture and ethics. MA SCC status compared to other *curricula* is different, as it is not in direct service to any concrete organization or field. According to students' feedback, one of the main reasons for studying is a desire to widen one's perspective and use this education in their profession and personal development.

In addition to analysing the needs and expectations of society and the labour market, we have collected feedback about *curricula* from the students and lecturers (see Ch. [3.8.6](#) and [3.6.2](#)).

Students' data by curriculum is presented in [Table 1](#). Requirements and development principles of *curricula* are formulated in the *Statute of Curriculum* (see [Appx. 12](#)).

Changes in *curricula* are accepted by the Council of the FT, confirmed by the Council of the Institute and the Consistory of EELC. Then the changes are submitted to the Ministry of Education and Research.

3.7.2. Coherence of the study programmes



The relevance of the *curriculum* to the needs of the labour market and its compatibility with the changes taking place in society is described in Ch. [3.1](#).

Research and development activities that support the *curriculum* are described in Ch. [3.11](#).

The participation of the Institute's students in the studies of other Estonian higher education institutions and vice versa is regulated in the *Study Regulations of the FT* sections 44-48 (see [Appx. 13](#)). Ch. [3.5.1](#) describes the international mobility of students and a detailed overview of international mobility of students is given in the [Appx. 26](#).

Ch [3.8.2](#) describes the study load of students, which is regulated both in the *Study Regulations of the FT* (see [Appx. 13](#)) and in the manual *Recommendations for Designing the Work Volumes of Learning* (see [Appx. 20](#)).

Being an institution of professional higher education, it is important to bear in mind that by passing the study programme, the student will acquire the high level of knowledge and skills that are necessary for working in the acquired profession. Internship is an important part of the study process (see Ch. [3.8.5](#)).

PHE Theology

There are several subjects in the *curriculum* which aim to develop the general competencies of students. Module *Introduction to the Study of Theology* gives basic knowledge in academic writing (3 ECTS) and correct language use (3 ECTS). The subject *Use of Media* (2 ECTS) teaches communication with the public. We provide *Project writing and management* (3 ECTS), *Basics of Social Entrepreneurship* (3 ECTS) and *Social Psychology* (3 ECTS) as elective subjects (see [Appx. 1](#) *PHE Theology Curriculum*). We direct the students to choose these subjects as the skills and knowledge of the social entrepreneurship area are necessary in specialities taught here. The Institute does not place emphasis on the development of digital competencies since generally the capability of students is already good in that area.

A good example of the innovative learning method is the module *Pastoral Care and Counselling and Crisis Intervention* (see [Appx. 1](#) PHE theology *curriculum*) in the PHE study programme's speciality studies of PCC that is conducted in 4-day training cycles performed five times. Group dynamics and self-reflection form an important part in that learning process. The learning process undergoes regular group supervisions in between the learning sessions that handle the topics that have emerged during the internship. In addition the students get to know themselves as care givers. The practical tasks of liturgy are performed either in the environment of the Lutheran or Orthodox Church according to the speciality selected. The EELC Clergy Competency Model is used as a basis for the development of the courses „Introduction to practical religious science“ and „The practice of spiritual guidance“.

The learning outcomes are described in the *curriculum* based on the module, and the specific learning outcomes of each subject are described in the description of the subject (see Appx. [40](#), [41](#), [42](#), [43](#), [44](#), [45](#)).

Collecting feedback from different target groups is described in Ch. [3.8.6](#) and [3.8.7](#). One example of changes made because of feedback received from students is the organization of teaching the Hebrew and Greek languages. Initially, the language classes included students from two separate years together, because not all language courses took place every year. For three years now, we have implemented the principle that only the students from one year are together in a language class. However, this does not eliminate all problems, because learning old languages in the format of sessional learning remains a difficult task for students.

It is important to master English or German in learning theology, but at least one third of the students have problems with it. Since the majority can cope with at least one of the indicated foreign languages, the existence of the relevant mandatory subject is not justified. But as the problem is still serious, *English* (3 ECTS) has been added as an elective subject to raise students' level of English language.

MA Theology

The learning outcomes are described in the *curriculum* by different modules, and the specific learning outcomes of each subject are described in the description of the subject (see Appx. [46](#), [47](#), [48](#), [49](#), [50](#)).

There are several subjects which aim to develop the general competencies of students:

- The *Base module* includes the subject *Management of the Church and Third Sector Organizations* (3 ECTS), which gives an overview of management theories and general principles of personnel management, understanding of similarities and differences between church and secular organizations and also analyses the conflict behaviour in various organizations, including the church.
- The DPCC speciality includes a whole module *Interdisciplinary Connections in Diakonia and PCC* (10 ECTS), which deals with pastoral care as social entrepreneurship, interdisciplinary contacts in pastoral care and the role of pastoral care in public life.
- Elective subject *Church and Society* (3 ECTS) analyses the role of the church's in the society and how the church is able to support the balanced and healthy development of society.

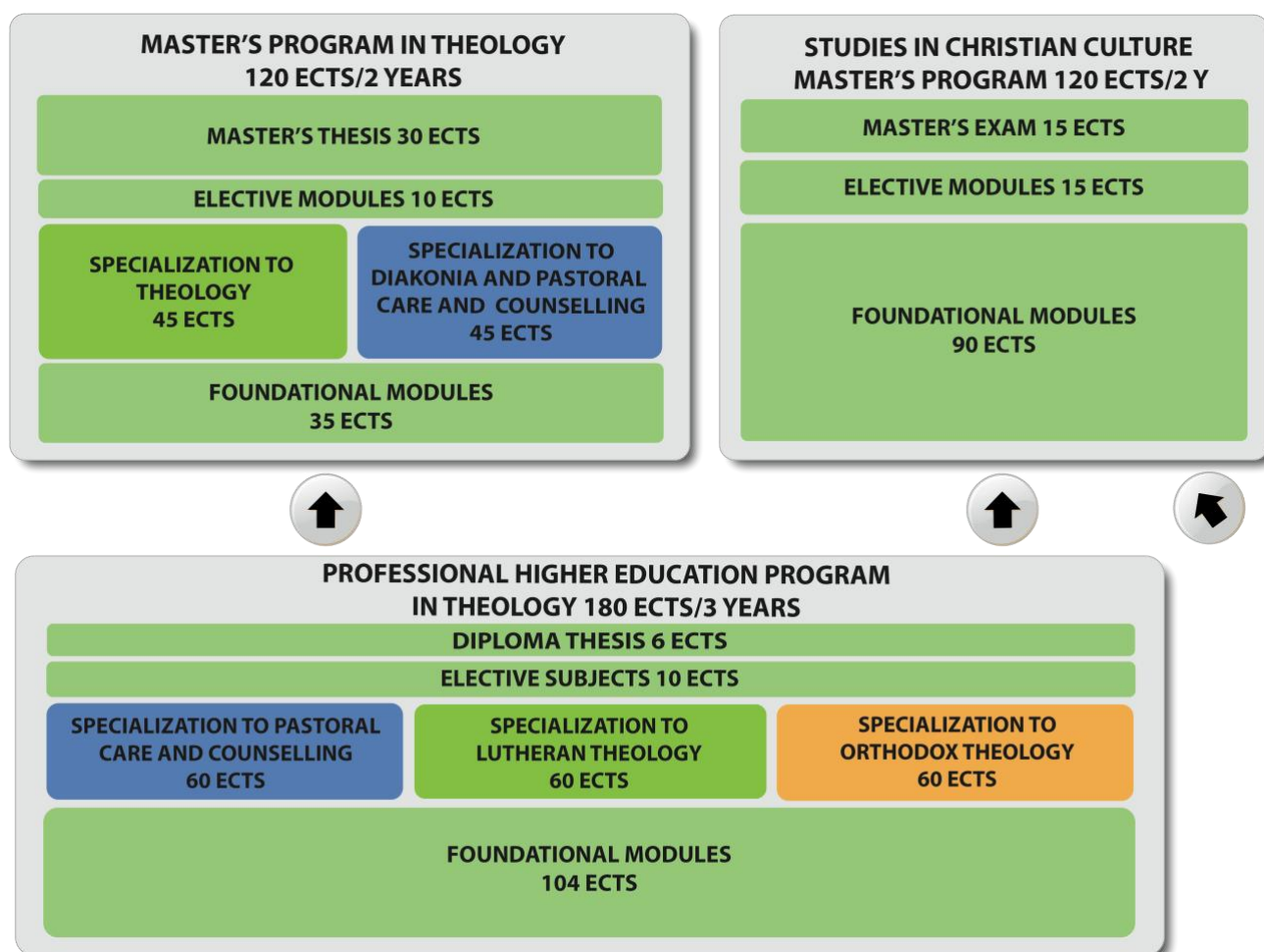


Figure 12. Structure of curricula of Faculty of Theology.

3.7.3. Improvement activities



The process of development of the study programme is carried out via three main activities which are a natural part of the work organization of the FT on annual bases:

- The Academic Dean's office analyses students' feedback and presents the results to the Council of the FT for discussion.
- The Academic Dean analyses the objectives of the *curricula* and subjects, the status of the study process, feedback from students, alumni and employers of alumni separately with all Chairs.
- The results are discussed by the Council of the FT where the decision is made whether and how to continue with the *curricula* development process. If it is decided to continue, the discussions take place in different working groups including also representatives of the labour market and student body.

Following activities mentioned above, a large-scale development process of *curricula* was planned for the period of 2019–2020. This was obstructed by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and we were forced to postpone the process to the period of 2023–2024. Some changes were made in the *curricula* already in the spring of 2018 (for details see Appx. 4, 5 and 6).

Here are some explanations of the changes from 2018:

1. On PHE and MA studies in Theology, based on the initiative of Th.-A. Pöder, changes in structure and subjects' descriptions of ST were made.
 - a. In the general studies of PHE, systematic theology was only represented by lectures worth 4 ECTS, where the students were in the somewhat passive role of learning „pre-prepared“ knowledge. It was necessary to create a systematic theology proseminar in the general studies - at the beginning of the studies - where the most basic working methods of independent reading and writing of systematic theology are recognized and practiced, and where the use of basic aids for systematic theology is studied.
 - b. The students gave feedback that there were a lot of excess topics in the subject „Scientific theory, research methods and research planning“ worth 5 ECTS in the basic modules of MA. The subject in question was reduced to 2 ECTS and now focuses on the planning of a master's thesis after a scientific theoretical introduction.
 - c. Given that students who have chosen pastoral care and diaconia majors only receive systematic theology subjects within the general modules (so far only 4 ECTS), the Ethics seminar was transferred from the systematic theology subjects of the MA Religious Studies specialty module to one of the general modules, where mainly texts that are directly relevant to pastoral care and to the profession of diaconate are read and discussed together.
 - d. In place of the Ethics seminar, a seminar on the main texts of Newer Systematic Theology was created in the systematic theology specialty module of the MA curriculum, because one of the major problems of the students was that they did not have enough space to read and discuss classic text examples of Newer Systematic Theology.
 - e. Since there were disproportionately few theses written in systematic theology (since 2009), the elective subject Systematic Theology Research Seminar (3 ECTS) was created to support the writing and supervision of theses for both PHE and MA students. As a result, the number of theses in systematic theology has grown significantly.
 - f. For students who wish to deepen their knowledge in the field of systematic theology, an elective subject Systematic Theology Individual Course (3 ECTS) was created, which can be taken at both the PHE and MA levels.
2. On PHE level, based on the initiative of R. Tasmuth, a new 4 ECTS combined subject *Biblical studies and New Testament era* was developed for the first-year students. Based on the formative assessment of older students and discussions with them, as well as the feedback given on the exams, shortcomings became clear. The first-year students have poor knowledge of the Bible and its Antique environment. We developed **(a)** a full electronic course for them to learn the main contents of the Bible and **(b)** a subject on the New Testament environment. An original printed article in the Institute's Publications comprises basic knowledge for the New Testament environment.
3. On PHE level, based on the initiative of N. Haamer, changes in structure of PCC specialty were made.
4. On PHE level, based on the initiative of T. Tölpt, the whole structure of the Orthodox specialty was analysed and many changes were made. The speciality of Orthodox Theology was added to the *curriculum* of the Institute in 2014, and when analysing the experience of four years of teaching work, the need to make large-scale changes clearly emerged.
5. Many optional subjects were added to PHE and MA of Theology *curricula*.

Some minor changes were also made in June of 2021 to the SCC *curriculum*. Until now, 12 elective subjects were divided between six modules, but now one elective module was created and all subjects were consolidated in this one module.



The effects of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic have led to changes in society and church life, which also places new demands on education. In particular, the status of PCC has changed, because the public and the field of social and mental health have begun to value the contribution of this profession in helping people in crisis situations. Expanded possibilities and increased expectations have caused the need to analyse the *curriculum* and to make changes to meet society's expectations.

Strengths

As a small educational institution, flexibility in making changes to the *curriculum*.

The *curricula* meet the needs of the labour market as *curricula* are developed in cooperation with representatives of Institute's target group.

The status of PCC has changed, because the public and the field of social and mental health have begun to value the contribution of this profession in helping people in crisis situations.

Areas of improvement	Planned activities
The planned large-scale development process of <i>curricula</i> during the period of 2019–2020 was obstructed by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.	We have postponed the process to the period of 2023–2024.
Expanded possibilities and increased expectations on the field of PCC have caused the need to analyse the <i>curriculum</i> and to make changes to meet society's expectations.	<i>Curricula</i> development process is planned during the period of 2023–2024.

3.8. Learning and teaching



3.8.1. Admission of students

Admission rules are publicly accessible on the Institute's [website](#) and described in the [Appx. 15 Admission Rules of the FT](#). As the first objective of the Institute is to prepare ministers and to ensure the continuity of theological education, Bible knowledge and the ability to express oneself in written and spoken form are evaluated during the admission procedure. Holding interviews has helped to clarify the candidate's motivation and goals. One important factor is the candidate's awareness of how to use the desired education in their work and personal development, as well as what new possibilities the diploma may offer in their career and personal development.

Overall information about the Institute's admission is described in Ch. [3.8.1](#). Admission rules are publicly accessible on the Institute's [website](#) and described in the [Appx. 15 Admission Rules of the FT](#).

Admission requirements are the following:

PHE Theology	MA Theology
Nationally recognised certificate of the secondary school education or document certifying the relevant qualification.	Bachelor's degree or diploma of higher education on the basis of PHE <i>curriculum</i> or some other relevant qualification in the field of Theology or Bachelor's degree or diploma of higher education on the basis of PHE and certified theology studies for 60 ECTS.
Entrance exams are a Bible test, an essay and an interview.	Entrance exams include a comprehensive test regarding the materials of the main disciplines in theology, and an interview.

The Dean of the FT gives an order to form 3-5-member reception committee. The committee carries out entrance tests and, based on the results, they compose a statement about the reception. Entrance test results are recorded and a statement is presented to the Dean's office within one day from the last test. During the conversation, the purpose of the committee is to discern the student candidate's capacity for coping with the studies and their motivation in the speciality they want to study.

During 2021 and 2022, the MA students of the DPCC speciality have received a 50% discount on their tuition fee due to a donation given by the Ministry of Social Affairs for pastoral caregivers and the training of counsellors. In the case of applicants who apply to study with a tuition fee discount, the entrance tests also take into account previous study results and the grade of the thesis.

Actions to spread information about the learning opportunities in the Institute is described in Ch. [3.2.4](#).

Most of the students come from EELC connections, and have been aware of the Institute for a long time, but only now decided to enter the school. By the time they decide to attend the Institute, a vast majority of the students already have a clear vision of how they want to implement their education in their daily life. Having students like this is our strength and the specialities we teach are better acquired and implemented by more mature personalities. The profile of student candidates is described in more detail in Ch. [3.1](#).

The number of students at the Institute has remained stable. When taking into account the number of people in Estonia and the study programmes taught at the Institute, a student body of about 130 members is optimal (see Ch. [3.8.1](#)). Based on the current number of staff members, it would be possible to increase the student body up to 150, but we have not set a goal to significantly increase the student body at this time. Other operating theological educational institutions also influence student numbers to some extent. This topic is described in more detail in Ch. [3.1](#).

3.8.2. Teaching process and development of students



The average age of students is 49, so they are mostly working family people. Therefore, it is only possible to organize studies in sessions. From September to June, there are 12 3-day sessions for MA SCC (from Thursday to Saturday) and 11 4-day sessions (from Wednesday to Saturday) for PHE and MA Theology programme. The Head of the Dean's office compiles the class schedule. The studies take place mostly in Tallinn, but for PCC students also in Tartu in the 2nd and 3rd year. The last study year has a smaller lecture-load, so that the students could have more time to concentrate on their theses and internship.

1 ECTS means 26 hrs of work, corresponding to 5 hrs of in-class work and 21 hrs of independent work, which is described in detail in the syllabi of every subject. In-class work is either a lecture or seminar depending on the goals of the specific course. Resources supporting independent work are described in Ch. [3.2.3](#). In order to ensure harmonisation of the amount of independent work given within the subjects, the Council of FT of the Institute adopted on 22.03.2017 the guideline *Recommendations for Designing the Work Volumes of Learning* (see [Appx. 20](#)). The guideline is used by the lecturers in their work, but it is also necessary for students to be able to assess whether the amount of independent work provided within the subject meets the requirements.

In the [Appx. 32](#) is given an overview of the study process throughout six semesters.

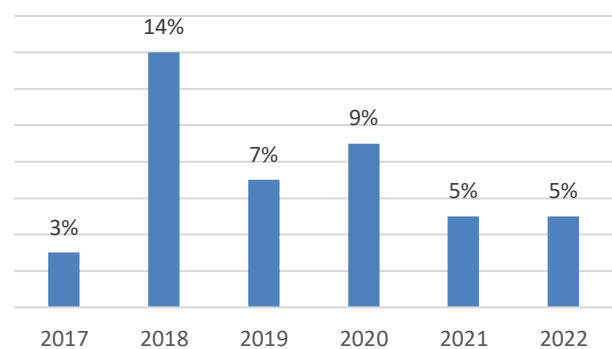


Figure 13. The proportion of students who have taken an academic leave, 2017–2022.



Regardless of the flexible study process, there is a likelihood that the nominal study period is prolonged, considering the profile of our students. We counsel and support our students by different means (see Ch. [3.10.1](#)), but it is clear that managing their daily life and fulfilling obligations to their families sometimes requires extra attention and studies won't always be a priority. Thanks to strong motivation, the percentage of students graduating within the nominal study period is quite good during most years (see Figure 14). In 2021, the overall dropout rate was only 4,7% and first year dropout was 8,7% (for more statistics see [Table 1](#)). The percentage is much lower than the average in Estonia – overall dropout rate in 2021 was 11,7% and first year dropout 18,4%. Also, the number of students who have taken an academic leave of absence is not very high (see [Figure 13](#)).

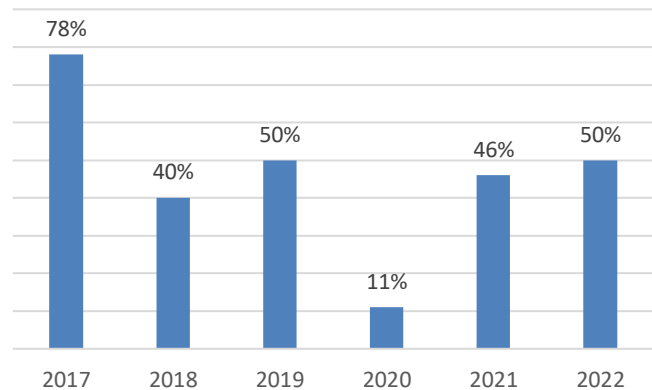


Figure 14. Percentage of students completing studies within the nominal study period, 2017–2022.

3.8.3. Implementation of a learner-centred approach



The goals of learning include supporting the student in setting a personal objective, time usage, activeness and social skills. This focus on students has been checked and supported by means of the academic mentoring programme which is also a good example of a learner-centred approach (see Ch. [3.10.1](#)).

As PHE *curriculum* consists 27 ECTS and MA Theology *curriculum* 5 ECTS of internship (see Ch. [3.8.5](#)), then in addition to learning from one another's experience, this *curriculum* offers many opportunities for personal direct learning, supported by the faculty, mentors and supervisors, so that the experience gained can be analysed through dialogue and effectively applied in the process of acquiring professional competence.

The implementation of digital and modern teaching tools is described in Ch. [3.8.4](#).

The teaching process is described in Ch. [3.8.2](#).

Involvement of students in RDC activities is described in Ch. [3.11.4](#).

The study programme improvement activities that are presented in Ch. [3.7.3](#) under the explanations of study programme changes from 2018 describe some of the changes implemented in the curricula, which implement the learner-centred approach. The following are some examples of how lecturers consider the needs of students in the learning process:

- New Testament subjects use a lot of written homework and formative assessment, where skill gaps and special needs are quickly identified. The wording of the feedback given in the Moodle environment has been designed by the lecturer in such a way that it mainly serves the specific student, but also provides advice and encouragement to a more advanced student. As an exception, weaker students are allowed, if they wish, to submit the work a little later than the deadline, but still before the final assessment or exam. Consequently students see more of their peers' work and can learn from the feedback.
- In addition to compulsory literature, lecturers also introduce recommended literature within the subjects to give students an opportunity to acquire more knowledge than is required to pass the subject.
- Students have different levels of English (or German) language skills. Therefore, for example, systematic theology lecturer T.-A. Põder requires in the first subject of the PHE curriculum that new students read one research article with a mandatory foreign language literature requirement and then move on to a larger volume from semester to semester.

- Students with special physical needs usually let us know how they want and can participate in the studies, and appropriate methods are found based on this.

Thesis supervision

Even though the PHE and MA student satisfaction survey of 2017–2018 on thesis supervision demonstrated good results (see Figure 15 below), there were still situations in which the student did not manage to defend their thesis because the student incorrectly estimated the time needed to write the thesis. One complication at supervision is the session-based form of study, since finding a suitable time for meeting requires good time planning from the teacher as well as the student. During the sessions, both parties are very busy and it is very difficult to find time for personal meetings between lecturer and student. Though, because of SARS-CoV-2 pandemic all parties have more actively learned to use different online communication resources like Zoom and other software.

We decided to implement new practices in the PHE and MA levels that would help to better build the cooperation process between the student and the lecturer in the tutoring process. We started research seminars based within different Chairs, where students can give feedback on the supervision process, as well as receive regular direct support from the supervisor in the process of writing their work. The seminars take place outside the study session times, and participation is also possible via Zoom.

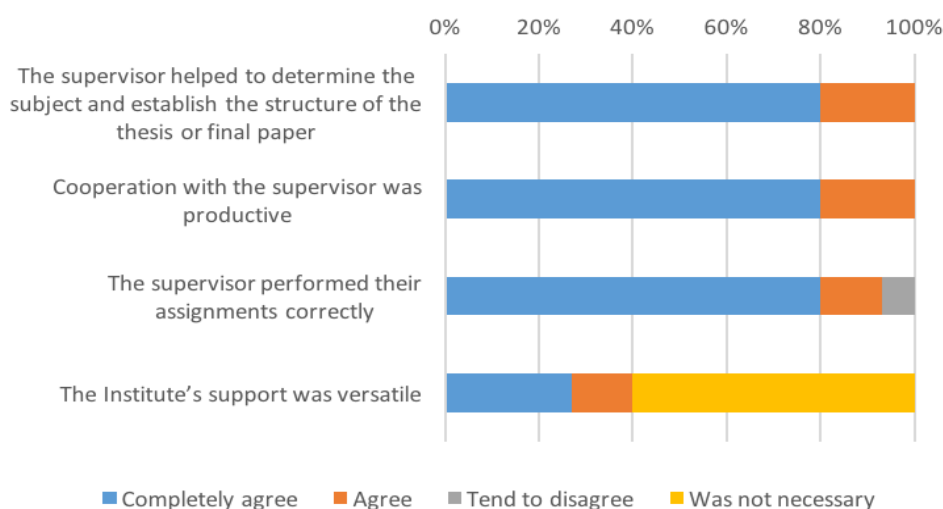


Figure 15. Theses supervision satisfaction inquiry among graduates, 2017–2018 (20 respondents).

At the moment seminars are conducted in two Chairs, but two more will be added in 2023:

- In Biblical studies, seven years ago a pilot project called the New Testament Forum was launched, and it has successfully continued until today. The NT Forum takes place 6 times a year, each time for 2-2,5 hours. In some cases, a member of the academic staff gives a short lecture (25 minutes) at the beginning and then students present their work, others ask questions and professors give feedback. Often two members of the academic staff are present. As the average number of students is between three and seven, they together with the academic staff form a kind of small additional community, who help each other in composing final papers, but also in passing examinations. Those MA students, who act as minor reviewers during the whole year and give feedback to their companions, receive an additional 2 ECTS points in June. Younger students who do not prepare final papers are also encouraged to participate as listeners and often they do so. As a result the number of participants may grow up to nine. The students feel safe and supported, they are confident and receive high grades.



- In ST, research seminars have been active for five years, they take place twice a year and the students and supervisors spend the whole day together and share a common meal. Another difference to the NT Forum is that they are organized as joint seminars both for the students of the Institute and Tartu University. Sometimes doctoral students take part of these seminars. As it is with the final papers in Biblical theology, final papers in Systematics also usually receive high grades.
- Based on this practice, Chairs of Church History and Religious Studies plan to start with similar seminars in 2023.

Supervision agreements, signed by the supervisor and the student, have been introduced within the last two years. Supervisor and student prepare the system of cooperation based on mutual rights and responsibilities. These agreements diminish misunderstandings between the student and supervisor and regulate workload by distributing it to reasonable portions. The students are also informed about supervision details within the framework of PHE subject *Introduction to Academic Writing* and MA subject *Planning a Research Paper and its Methods*.

The vast majority of thesis are supervised by ordinary or visiting lecturers, but specific subjects sometimes require supervisors outside the Institute (see Figure 16).

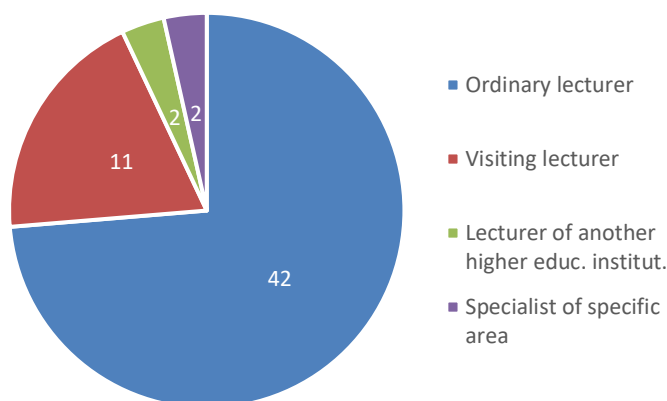


Figure 16. Supervision of final papers and master theses divided by lecturer position, 2018–2022.



3.8.4. Implementation of digital teaching tools and effective teaching methods

Digital teaching tools

The restrictions caused by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic led to major changes in the organisation of teaching since the spring of 2020. Until now, lectures at the Institute were held only during study sessions at the classroom. Due to SARS-CoV-2 mandatory social isolation, it was no longer possible for students to gather for study sessions from March 2020. Studies at the Institute were transferred to distance learning. This process was not very smooth at the beginning, because the technical equipment and digital competence of both students and lecturers were not uniform. The Institute's technical base was also not sufficient for conducting quality studies in this form. Thanks to the flexibility of all parties in organizing the studies and the willingness of the students to help each other, it was possible to solve the bottlenecks in a couple of months and get the distance learning system working. The Zoom platform has mainly been used.

Starting from May 2022, it has been possible to organise studies more or less normally, but the distance learning experience has led to changes in the organisation of studies and a noticeable development in the technical readiness of the Institute:

1. In the new educational building in Tartu (see tartupastoraat.ee) completed in December 2019, distance learning capability has been guaranteed in all lecture rooms from the beginning
2. From September 2021, the largest auditorium of the Institute has been equipped with a high-quality video conference system.
3. In the winter of 2022, a portable video conferencing system was acquired to be used in classrooms that do not have a stationary system.

4. From the autumn of 2022, the last day of each study session (Saturday) has been held using distance learning. This is a trial period. In the spring of 2023, we will analyse the experience gained and make decisions for the future.
5. The digital competence of the teaching staff has improved significantly, and everyone is able to conduct distance learning lectures.
6. Hybrid lectures are also held, which have significantly reduced lecture cancellations due to unexpected situations (the lecturer can conduct the lecture remotely if necessary) and given the opportunity to participate for those students who could not be in the auditorium for health reasons.
7. The technical solutions of distance learning have created a more flexible way for students and teaching staff to communicate with each other outside of studies.
8. Academic mentoring has continued to function via Zoom despite the restrictions caused by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

Distance learning cannot be used on a large scale for all the subjects taught at the Institute, but it is still possible to a certain extent. We analyse the degree to which learning outcomes are fulfilled on an ongoing basis and have identified those subjects in which distance learning can only be used in a crisis situation or is ruled out altogether. This is especially true for the subjects of the PCC speciality, which include learning how to help a person in a crisis situation, and the disciplines of practical theology, during which the practical skills of clerical work are acquired.

Adaptation to distance learning has raised the expectation among the student body that all lectures should be available as hybrid lectures. At the same time, it is the most problematic method for the lecturer and the least rewarding for the student. Therefore, we have decided that hybrid learning will only take place in very exceptional and mainly unexpected cases. Studying takes place either as classroom or distance learning.

E-study platform Moodle is used. It is a good tool to support the learning process outside the session period. Moodle also provides a good opportunity for structuring students' independent work in order to compensate for the limited amount of contact learning and to support students' independent theological thinking, speaking and writing skills. During the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the importance of Moodle became even more evident and the activity and quality of its use increased significantly. However, not all lecturers are active Moodle users, but 68% of subjects have support on Moodle. In 2018, this figure was 47%. The Head of the Dean's Office offers help with using Moodle both for the students and staff.

Effective teaching methods

Both seminars and lectures are conducted in an interactive format, where students can ask important questions and express their thoughts. In this way, it is possible to always take into account the specific students participating in the course when developing the course. If the lecturers and students are not yet sufficiently familiar with each other, a meeting is held at the beginning of the course in order to become more familiar with the background of the students and their expectations for the course. There is a lot of seminar work in various subjects, where in addition to homework submitted and commented on in Moodle, homework is presented and discussed face to face. The form of group work is not used much, because the courses often have a small number of students. The goals and content of each course are discussed with the students right at the beginning of the course. Students become aware of the significance and proportion of activities performed in contact learning, homework reading and writing, and seminar work. In this way, they acquire an overview of the function of a specific subject both in terms of the curriculum and considering future professional competence.

In order to discuss the feedback of the academic staff and to optimise the content and methods of teaching, meetings of the chair's academic staff are held at the beginning of the academic year or each semester, where they coordinate each other's activities and the possibilities of optimising teaching are discussed.

3.8.5. Implementation of internship

The Institute has a sufficient network of partners for internship (see [Table 11](#)) and we are able to guarantee that all students receive a quality and mentored/supervised internship that meets the learning outcomes of the *curriculum*. The Head of the Dean's Office (Lutheran Theology), Head of TAT IT (PCC) and the coordinator of the Chair of Orthodoxy (Orthodox Theology) help to find the most suitable place for internship and conduct the necessary preparations. If none of the existing internship bases suit the student for an internship, staff members in cooperation with the student will find a suitable internship base and create the necessary connections and arrange the internship. During the practice, both the student and the supervisor follow the instructions for conducting the internship (see as an example [Appx. 45 Syllabus of Supervised Practice in PCC](#)). The student must keep records and present a report of the internship during the internship seminar. It is also the best source for students' feedback, based on which it is possible to make changes in the organisation of internships. The pastoral students have given particularly high evaluations to the regular supervision during the internship and the possibility of partaking in the life of the clergy in all its versatility.

PHE Theology

According to the higher education standard, the PHE study programme must comprise 15% internship. On this basis, the PHE study programme of the Institute includes internship to the total of 27 ECTS that the students must pass according to their choice of speciality (see [Appx. 30 Internship Management of Different Study Programmes](#)).

There is no internship during the first academic year because it is necessary to acquire sufficient theoretical basic knowledge (see [Appx. 32 An Example of the Study Process Throughout Six Semesters](#)). Internship may start from the spring of the second year, but the main execution period of the internship is in the third year. Studies take place in parallel with the internship. The emphasis of the studies is placed on increasing professional competence through the speciality subjects.

MA Theology

Students who have chosen the Theology speciality perform various practical tasks within the *Practical Theology I and II* modules. For example, within the subject *Liturgy Seminar*, students must prepare a service and a sermon, conduct the service and analyse their entire performance with a lecturer afterwards and also prepare and analyse sermons given at funerals, baptisms and other occasional offices. *Professional Internship* (5 ECTS) is also an elective subject that must be passed by students wishing to be ordained after acquiring the MA degree.

The *Supervised Internship* (5 ECTS) is compulsory for the DPCC students. Since we expect our prospective students to have previous experience in the field of pastoral care, internships do not form such a large proportion of the master's programme. If the student candidate has little previous practical experience in the field of PCC, but wishes to work as a pastoral care giver after obtaining a master's degree, we recommend participation in basic PCC training, which includes practice and supervision, either beforehand or in parallel with the master's studies. Participation in the the training is not a prerequisite for admission to or graduation from the master's programme. However, we consider it important to inform prospective students that the internship completed in the amount of 5 ECTS is not sufficient to acquire the 6th and 7th level of Occupational Qualification Standard of Pastoral Councillor.

Table 11. List of partners offering internship bases for students.

Curriculum and specialty	Partner
PHE Lutheran Theology and MA theology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EELC Haapsalu St. John's Congregation • EELC Rakvere Holy Trinity Congregation • EELC R�pina St. Michael's Congregation • EELC Tallinn St. John's Congregation • EELC Viljandi St. John's Congregation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EELC Tallinn Holy Ghost Congregation • EELC Tallinn Kaarli Congregation • Tallinn Cathedral School
PHE PCC and MA DPCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tartu University Hospital • Nursing Care Centre of the North Estonia Medical Centre • Tallinn Cathedral School • East-Viru Hospital • Pastoral Care Centre in Tartu • Kalda Social Centre in Tartu
PHE Orthodox Theology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home congregations of the students of the Chair of Orthodoxy • OCE Tallinn Congregations
Pastoral Seminary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EELC Tallinna Bethel Congregation • EELC Haapsalu St. John's Congregation • EELC Rakvere Holy Trinity Congregation • EELC Tartu St. John's Congregation • EELC Tartu St. Paul Congregation • EELC Tallinn St. Mary's Cathedral



3.8.6. Satisfaction of students and alumni with the organisation of studies

Students

Table 12. Organization of gathering feedback from students.

Channel of feedback	Form of feedback	Frequency	Responsibility	Objective and use fo results
Online Study Information System	Questionnaire about the lecturer and performance of teaching	After every subject, once students have taken their final test	Heads of Dean's office, Head of Rector's office	Lecturers receive ongoing feedback, which is discussed in the Chairs and in development discussions with the Dean.
Academic mentoring progr. (see Ch. 3.10.1)	Mentor group meetings	At least once per semester	Mentors	To support students' progress in studies. Opportunity to present personal concerns. Mentor finds an appropriate way to address the topics raised.
Student Council	Oral or written statement	At least once per 3 months	Head of the student council	To receive students' opinions and proposals. The parties involved will discuss the issues and take the necessary measures.
FT's and Institute's Council	Oral or written statement	According to the Council's work order	Representatives of the Student body (1/5 of the council)	To receive students' opinions and proposals. The parties involved will discuss the issues and make decisions.
Administrative and academic staff	Oral or written statement	On an ongoing basis	Admin. and academic staff	Opportunity to present personal concerns of students. Staff will take the necessary measures.

Since the student body is so small, the students prefer to submit their questions, opinions and problems directly to the teaching and administrative staff. A more official way is to submit their corporate opinion through the decision making bodies, as student representation is at least 1/5 of the FT's and the Institute's Council. Students choose their representative body every year in secret elections. This body will appoint



representatives to decision making bodies. Student representation is an important part of communicating the students' opinions and feedback to the leadership and other responsible people.

If students see any problems or areas needing development regarding support services, they will provide their observations through the Student Council, or communicate directly with the employee who has competence over the topic. The feedback received was one of the reasons why we started the academic mentoring program (see Ch. [3.10.1](#)) at the beginning of 2017. The students felt the need for a trustee to whom to turn to with issues and problems concerning the studies.

Average feedback percentage through SIS is around 30% and is mostly very positive (some results are presented on Figures 17, 18 and 19 below; [Appx. 34](#) includes all results of SIS feedback surveys during 2020–2022). Unfortunately, the feedback collected in this way is not very helpful in planning development activities. Rather, feedback received from the student body's representative and mentor groups can be used to provide better input for the development of the *curriculum* and to improve the organisation of studies. Of course, collecting a comprehensive dataset of feedback given to subject courses and lecturers is important, and that is why we will change the SIS survey in 2023 in order to involve students in the feedback process in a more satisfactory way. This also requires academic staff to emphasise the importance of feedback and to regularly analyse the information received.

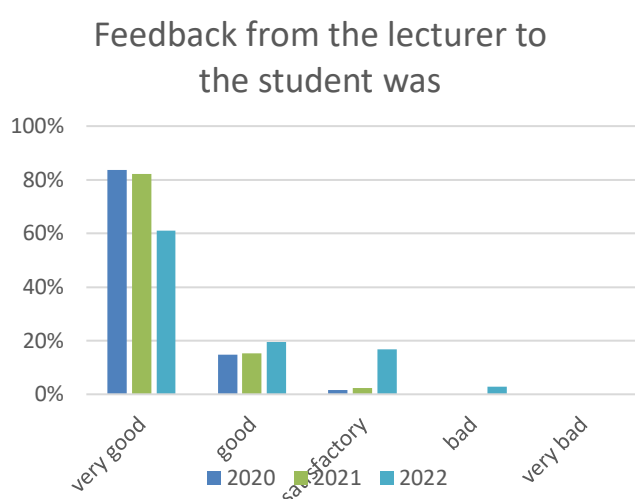


Figure 17. Student feedback survey results. Q: Feedback from the lecturer to the student was...

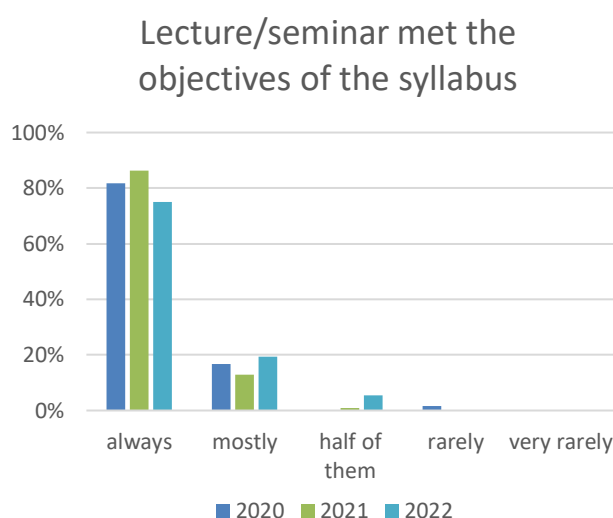


Figure 18. Student feedback survey results. Q: Lecture/seminar met the objectives of the syllabus...

As evidenced by the survey conducted in 2017–2018, students considered the feedback from lecturers to be very good in 45% of cases, however in 2020–2022, the students gave a much better rating (see Figure 17).

As positive aspects, the students indicate the following: **1)** a sense of community that provides an opportunity to share concerns and joys with companions; **2)** active use of different communication platforms to keep in touch with each other and offer support to each other even in distance learning conditions **3)** joint prayers (also through Zoom); **4)** enriching joint events; **5)** common lunches; **6)** general spirit and ecumenicity; **7)** helpful and professional employees; **8)** learning facilities (very cosy environment in the Tartu facility);

9) infrastructure and location of the school buildings in Tartu and Tallinn that are close to the public transport hubs 10) favourable accommodation opportunity provided in the study building.

Alumni

About 80% of the Institute's alumni work in the same field that they came to study. Such a high level of employment in a specialised field shows that sufficient preparation for working in this profession has been acquired during the course of studies, as well as professional skills at a level that employers are satisfied with. One important factor is, of course, the fact that the vast majority come to study at the Institute with the specific goal of starting a job in the field in which they are studying. A vocation to this particular field of work has often already developed earlier.

We have not conducted formal surveys among alumni to clarify their satisfaction with the applicability of the acquired education to their field of work, but we have various ways of collecting feedback. It is described in more detail in Ch. 3.3.

The used methods supported the studies

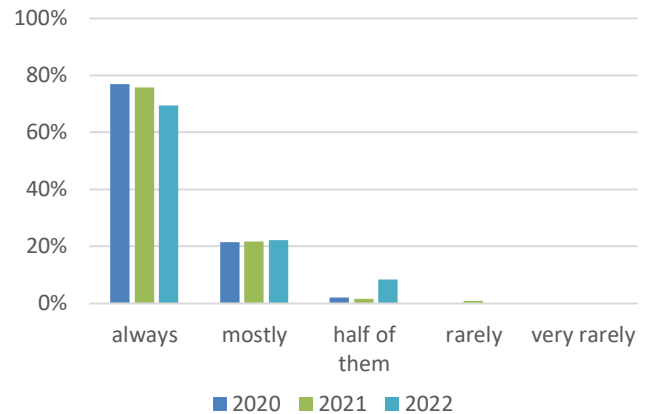


Figure 19. Student feedback survey results. Q: The used methods supported studies...

3.8.7. Satisfaction of employers with alumni

The Institute does not have a set system for assessing the competitiveness of the graduates, as we train people in fields where today there is no competition in the labour market. The Institute is the only school in Estonia that offers specialist studies at PHE and MA level for pastoral care givers and counsellors. There is a clear lack of competent workers in the PCC area, but as we manage to prepare qualified PCC workers, this sector is growing. The crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic brought along a significant increase of job opportunities in the field of PCC (see Ch. 3.12.1 for more information).

After Estonia regained its independence at the beginning of the 1990's, the EELC has received ministers from the Institute, FTUT, TAT, Seminary of the Estonian Methodist Church, and in small volumes also from elsewhere. All the graduates from these schools have had to go through the Pastoral Seminary, which is an opportunity offered by the Institute after the completion of academic studies that promises to raise the level of competence and offer continuing development in the chosen field. As Figure 20 shows, the importance of the Institute in preparing ministers for the EELC is very high (in Ch. 3.1, this topic is described in more depth). The Institute's graduates also work in the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church in exile in Europe and North-America.

Graduates of PHE PCC and MA DPCC have found work in the social and health care system (especially in hospitals and nursing homes), in local government as mental health specialists, pastoral care telephone

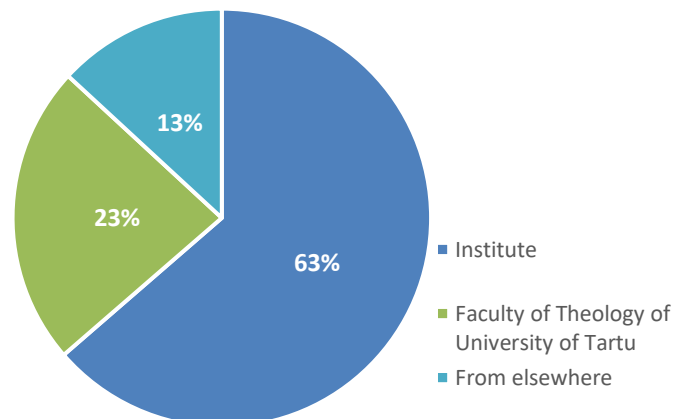


Figure 20. Previous education of students of Pastoral Seminary, 2012–2022.



helpline workers, but also in local churches and prisons. During 2017–2022, 81% of the graduates of PHE and MA Theology have found specialised work. In case of CCS, it is not so clear how to determine what is considered specialised work, therefore the statistics are not available. During 2017–2022, 43% of PHE graduates, namely 20, have started their studies in the Master's programme – 14 of them in the Institute. Two MA Theology graduates are studying in the Doctoral Programme.

15 pastoral care givers (all of them alumni of TAT and the Institute) were hired by the 24/7 PCC telephone helpline, which was launched in June 2020 due to the situation caused by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The people calling the helpline and the Ministry officials have been very satisfied with their work. The helpline became truly popular and received an average 800 calls per month throughout 2021. This exceeded all expectations. The helpline has been operating under the Social Insurance Board since April 1, and alumni of the Institute continue working there (see also Ch. [3.12.1](#)).

Since June 2020, the Ministry of Social Affairs has funded the hiring of caregivers in nursing homes. Today there is a caregiver offering services in 40 nursing homes across Estonia,. The vast majority of these caregivers are alumni and students of TAT and the Institute. The Ministry first started funding the work of caregivers in 25 nursing homes in 2020, but the results were very satisfactory, and therefore it was decided to increase the funding.

From May 1, 2021 until the end of the year, NGO TAT, carried out a pilot project of pastoral care services for people in home care. This was done on the orders and funding of the Ministry of Social Affairs. 16 pastors were involved, the vast majority of whom had acquired education at the Institute, and those who had not obtained a PHE, had completed the basic training for pastors organised by the Institute's Department of Lifelong Learning. Within the framework of this project, pastoral care givers from all over Estonia cooperated with local government. The satisfaction with the quality of the work was evidenced by the fact that the municipality of Saarde hired a caretaker following the end of the project, so that the work could continue. The Tartu city government was so satisfied with the work of the pastoral care givers that in August 2022 it signed a cooperation agreement with the Tartu Pastoral Care Centre and involved pastoral case-givers who are all TAT and Institute master's students and alumni, as partners in the provision of mental health services to the residents of the city of Tartu.

Also, alumni of the Institute have been actively involved in the provision of crisis aid during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, and are still helping war refugees from Ukraine today. They are very satisfied, and therefore the demand for the work is larger than the workers can offer.

Strengths

Supervision is productive in the chairs where research seminars take place. The offering of supervision strongly supports the completion process of research. We will try to implement it in other chairs in the new year as well.

By the time students decide to come to study at the Institute, the vast majority of the students already have a clear vision of how they want to implement their education in daily life. The specialities we teach are better acquired and implemented by more mature personalities.

We have started research seminars based within different Chairs, where students can give feedback on the supervision process. In addition, they can receive regular direct support from the supervisor in the process of writing their work. The seminars take place outside the study session times, and participation is also possible via Zoom.

The distance learning experience during SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has led to changes in the organisation of studies and a noticeable development in the technical readiness of the Institute.

During the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the importance of Moodle became even more evident and the activity and quality of its use increased significantly.

The Institute has a sufficient network of partners for internship and we are able to guarantee that all students receive a quality and mentored internship that meets the learning outcomes of the *curriculum*.

The pastoral students have given particularly high evaluations to the regular supervision during internship and to the possibility of partaking in the life of the clergy in all its versatility.

About 80% of the Institute's alumni work in the same field that they came to study.

The crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic brought along a significant increase of job opportunities in the field of PCC. Employers have been very satisfied with pastoral care givers work and therefore several new job opportunities will continue even after the end of the crisis.

Alumni and students of the Institute have been actively involved in the provision of crisis aid during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.

Areas of improvement	Planned activities
Regardless of the flexible study process, there is a likelihood that the nominal study period will be prolonged when required by the profile of our students.	We counsel and support our students by different means (see Ch. 3.10.1).
Continuing to build better cooperation between the student and the lecturer during thesis supervision process.	Also the Chairs of Church History and Religious Studies plan to start with research seminars in 2023, based on the practice of the Biblical Studies and ST Chairs.
Not all lecturers are active Moodle users, but 68% of subjects have support on Moodle. In 2018, this figure was 47%.	The Head of the Dean's Office offers help with using Moodle both for the students and staff.
Average feedback percentage through SIS after every subject is around 30%.	We will change the SIS survey in 2023 to better involve students in the feedback process. This also requires academic staff to emphasise the importance of feedback and to regularly analyse the information received.

3.9. Assessment of students



3.9.1. General principles of assessment

The Institute's *curricula* are outcome-based, and all syllabi contain information on the knowledge, skills and competences gained by the student upon completing a course, i.e. learning outcomes. The syllabus lists assessment criteria and methods, final assessment and conditions for eligibility to take the exam and resits. Assessment criteria are formulated and the methods are chosen according to the learning outcomes. The main assessment methods are a written exam, essay and report. Sometimes the assessment methods can also be in the form of a portfolio, creative work, group work, research and case-study. In very few cases, an oral exam is partly used. Final assessment is either differentiated (A, B, C, D, E and negative F) or non-differentiated (positive, negative). Assessment procedures are regulated in *Study Regulations of the FT* clause 72–109 (see [Appx. 13](#)).

The task of management of the learning process is shaping the spiritual and safe learning environment. Attention is paid to clarity of the learning objectives, assessment methods and assessment criteria of each subject and their presentation to the students at the beginning of the teaching of each course. Achievement of learning objectives has improved through learning awareness and the integrity of the teacher's received assessment.

The matching of the study and assessment methods with the objectives and outputs of the study programme and subjects is assessed annually in discussions at the various levels (see Ch. [3.3](#)). An important input in handling these topics is also the feedback regularly collected from the students on the subject courses via SIS (see Ch. [3.8.6](#)).

For written papers, the feedback from lecturers can differ to some extent. Some lecturers give thorough and informative feedback even during the process of writing. Some lecturers pay more attention to interactive



classroom work in order to give students feedback on their various performances during the learning process. Lecturers are also available for consultations outside the study session, so those interested can receive additional individual feedback if desired. Currently such meetings mainly take place via Zoom.

There have been cases where the student has submitted a complaint, that the teacher has not been fair in their assessments. In such cases, we have involved an external expert from another educational institution, who has made an assessment based on the learning outcomes and assessment criteria described in the course annotation. In such cases, the student has received a grade based on the evaluation given by an external expert.

As seen from the Figure 21, the average grade of students of different *curricula* during the period 2018–2022 is quite even. Comparing results from period of 2013–2015 (see Figure 22) we see positive developments. Since the number of students is small, individual failures may lead to a noticeable change in the average grade. Keeping almost the same level of average grade throughout the last five years demonstrates the even level of the student body and also that the study process is overall well managed.

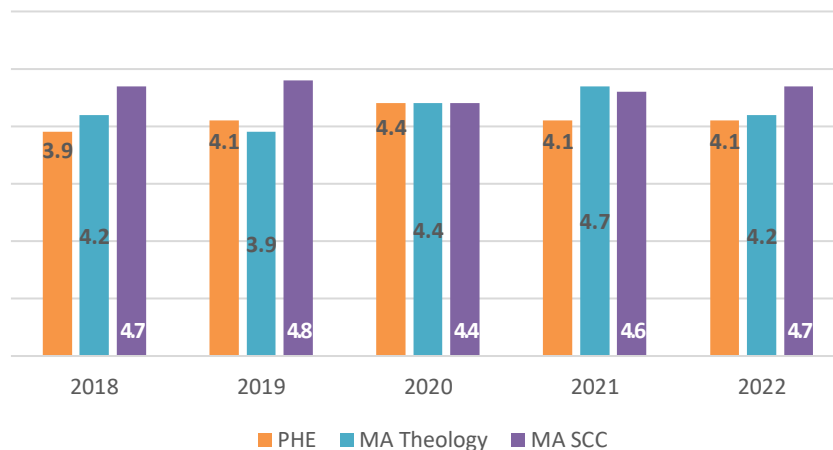


Figure 21. Average grade by curricula, 2018–2022.

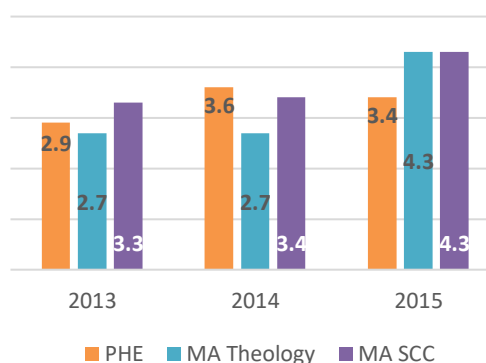


Figure 22. Average grade by curricula, 2013–2015.

Appropriateness of assessment methods

The applied assessment methods are in line with the learning outcomes of the subject. When formulating the questions of the written exam, the student's ability to see connections and their critical reasoning skills predominate. Often, the exam does not constitute 100% of the grade, but during the semester, an assessment is made regarding the preparation of summaries of independent reading assignments or other homework, or of participation in seminar discussions, etc. In this way, the assessment methods support the student's consistent active cooperation throughout the semester.

In addition to discussions held in the Council of the Faculty of Theology, faculty meetings are held at least once a year within the chairs, where the contents of the curriculum, teaching and assessment methodology, as well as topics related to written works and theses are reviewed. Such meetings provide a good opportunity to correct the teaching and research work of one chair as a whole.

At the beginning of a course, the lecturer asks about the students' expectations for the subject and tries to take this into account during the course. The syllabus and how to teach, learn and evaluate are also discussed together. Exams often include a task where the students discuss what they learned in the course or what they would like to learn more about, what were they satisfied with or what did they struggle with. It is standard practice of the lecturers that after each course they evaluate their cooperation with specific students and adjust the subject based on this analysis and student feedback.

3.9.2. System of recognition of prior learning and work experience (RPL)



RPL takes place according to *Conditions and Regulations of RPL* (see [Appx. 14](#)). Feedback given from students through the mentoring programme shows that students are satisfied with RPL management. Since 2015, all applications have been processed only through SIS, which is simplifying and speeding up the process. The Learning Management Specialist, the Head of Dean's Office and the Head of the TAT IT advise the students in case of any questions. RPL applications are assessed by a Committee, which is designated by the Dean of the FT, and involves the administrative workers and ordinary teaching staff. If necessary, the Committee may involve experts from outside the Committee. Figure 23 shows the versatility of RPL activities.

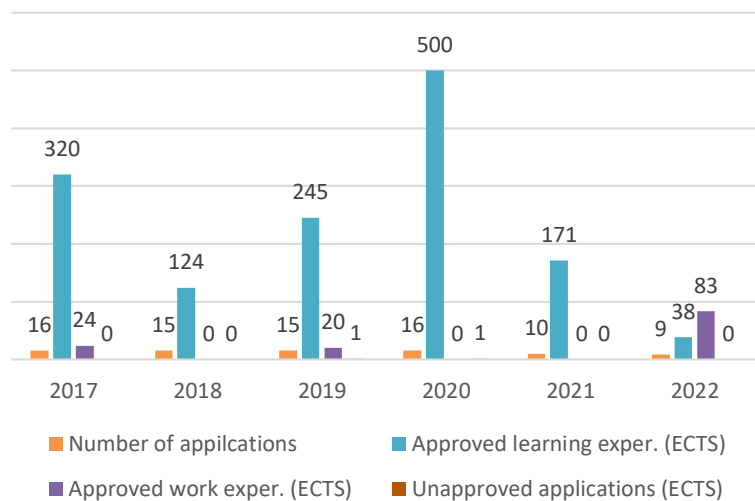


Figure 23. Statistics of RPL, 2017–2022.

Strengths

Average grade of students of different *curricula* is quite even. Comparing results from the period 2012–2015 we see positive developments during the last seven years. Maintaining almost the same level of average grade throughout the last five years shows an even level within the student body and also demonstrates to good management of the study process overall.

Areas of improvement

For written papers, the feedback from lecturers can be quite different. Some lecturers give thorough and informative feedback even during the process of writing.

Planned activities

In order to give better feedback to written works, it is necessary to pay attention to this fact when planning the workload of teaching staff. The changes implemented with the structural reform that started in 2021 (see Ch. [3.6.1](#)) also help to improve the level of cooperation between lecturers and students. Ensuring continued wage growth is also important here.

3.10. Study support systems



3.10.1. Student counselling and support system

The size of the student body (131 students as of 31.10.2022) enables good monitoring of academic progress. Staff of the Dean's Office know all the students by name and face. They can quickly act, should they notice someone being absent from school. Generally, the student is then contacted to find out the reasons for their absence. Help and support is offered to find the best possible solution. Using SIS makes monitoring the



academic progress of the students very easy. It is also very convenient for students to monitor their progress and results.

To help those who cannot attend all the lessons to keep up with the studies, the Institute has put energy and money into publishing study-books in Estonian and replenishing the library. The lecturers also use Moodle, SIS or mailing lists to share materials, and they also allow individual exams. Distance learning is described more in Ch. [3.8.4](#).

The students' study and career counselling has been divided between several staff members of the Institute, with regard to their area of responsibility in the school's structure. The following table gives an overview.

Table 13. Study and career counselling of students.

Position	Tasks related to students counselling	Student group
Learning Management Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions about learning management • monitoring of the learning progress • possibilities for lifelong learning • RPL counseling • DoRa and Erasmus coordinator • SIS counselling 	students from all <i>curricula</i>
Head of Dean's Office/Head of the Department of Lifelong Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions about learning management • Moodle e-learning platform • distance learning platforms • possibilities for lifelong learning • possibilities for lifelong learning • internship counselling • labour market perspectives • feedback inquires in SIS 	students from all <i>curricula</i>
Head of TAT IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions about learning management • internship counselling • distance learning platforms • possibilities for lifelong learning • labour market perspectives • RPL counseling 	PHE PCC specialty
Head of TAT IT office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions about learning management • SIS counselling 	PHE PCC specialty
Coordinator of the Chair of Orthodoxy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions about learning management • labour market perspectives • work practice counselling • possibilities for lifelong learning 	PHE Orthodox Theology specialty
Head of the Pastoral Seminary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • labour market perspectives concerning EELC 	students from all <i>curricula</i>
Head of Rector's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study contracts • Institute's and other scholarships (except DoRa and Erasmus) • study info e-mail lists • SIS administrator 	students from all <i>curricula</i>
Head of the Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helping to find study and research literature • counselling of students 	students from all <i>curricula</i>

80% of the staff who counsel the students have higher theological education, all of them are members of the Council of FT and are fully competent in dealing with any questions about the Institution more widely.

Academic mentoring programme

A significant increase in the student body in 2012–2014 highlighted the need for more effective personalised counselling. Based on the feedback given by the students, it became clear that we need to cope better with the difficulties that arise in the learning process. Considering the feedback given, and to support the students' progress in studies, the Institute launched the academic mentoring program in January 2017. The training for the teachers called *Academic mentoring* took place in 2016 and *Academic writing and mentoring* in 2017 to prepare the programme.

Mentors were selected from among the Institute's teachers and employees who passed the relevant training. Since we did not have the capacity to involve the whole student body at once, we started with the PHE 1st year students and divided them into mentor groups with 3-4 members. The set goal determined that the mentor meetings take place at least once a semester. In September 2017, we involved the new 1st year students into the programme and thus we increased the number of the students involved in the mentoring system. By the end of 2018, all PHE students were involved in the mentoring programme. Until now, due to the lack of mentors, it has not been possible to extend the mentoring programme to Master's students as well, however we will try to achieve this in the coming years.

The mentor groups enable a faster response to study-related problems. For example, lots of questions are asked about the speciality subjects and practical work which are quickly addressed in the interest of common understanding. The topics emerging in the mentor groups are very versatile: **(1)** the use of time, how to reconcile work, family and studies; **(2)** the further use of knowledge gained; **(3)** making choices within the study programme; **(4)** personal development related topics. There is also a need for individual mentoring of students, who have returned, for example, from parental leave, or are enrolled again and have to draw up their study plan themselves by following the class schedule of different courses.

The mentor looks for a suitable way to deal with the issues raised in the mentoring groups that need to be resolved outside the mentoring group. But this is only done if moving the topic outside the group is agreed upon by all group participants.

After fulfilling the requirements of the PHE *curriculum*, it is possible to continue studies in the MA programme and thereafter in the Pastoral Seminary, which offers a one-year programme concentrating on practical issues of priesthood in the EELC. For those desiring to prepare for priesthood, the learning process and essence is introduced by the Seminary staff already during the PHE study period. The Seminary staff are also familiar with the spiritual life and academic progress of the student. Today in the EELC, there is a continuously growing need for ministers. At the same time, the salaries offered are not competitive, which sets limits to the amount of possible students.

For assisting students in their spiritual growth and professional competency, we provide regular small group supervision for PCC students. In OCE, the spiritual and academic growth of the priest candidate is guided by the lecturers as well as the spiritual father and the bishop. They help to build connections between theoretical knowledge and the practical spiritual life of the church. They also keep students informed about the practical needs and opportunities of priesthood in OCE.

In mentor groups, we collect information from students about the quality and effectiveness of support services. As one example, we can point out that the students are very satisfied with the work of the Head of the Library and especially with the fact that educational literature was made digitally available during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and that the Head of the Library has a theological education and knows how to recommend literature.

3.10.2. Student participation in extra-curricular activities



95% of the Institute's students are members of some Christian denomination operating in Estonia and are generally actively involved in the work of their home church and thus also in improving the quality of life of the local community. Also, most of the students of the PCC speciality are already acting as voluntary pastoral



care givers during their studies and help people in various crisis situations. Since it would be very difficult to collect regular information from all students about their extra-curricular activities, and the collected data would be so voluminous that it would be difficult for the evaluators to get an overview of it all, we asked 12 students (that's about 10% of the student body) to write down their social activities in order to give a cross-section of our students' contribution to social life (see [Appx. 29](#)).

Strengths

Students are very satisfied with the work of the Head of the Library and especially with the fact that educational literature was made digitally available during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and that the Head of the Library has a theological education and knows how to recommend literature.

To help those who cannot attend all the lessons to keep up with the studies, the Institute has put energy and money into publishing study-books in Estonian and replenishing the library.

Academic mentoring programme.

95% of the Institute's students are members of some Christian denomination operating in Estonia and are generally actively involved in the work of their home church and thus also in improving the quality of life of the local community.

Most of the students of the PCC speciality act as voluntary pastoral care givers already during their studies and help people in various crisis situations.

Areas of improvement

Due to the lack of mentors it has not been possible to extend the academic mentoring programme to Master's students as well.

Planned activities

We will try to achieve this in the coming years.

3.11. Research, development and creative activities (RDC)



3.11.1. RDC objectives and their implementation

In November of 2022, the rector of the Institute signed the *Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity* (see [Appx. 21](#)). The aim of the Code is to support knowledge about acceptance and entrenchment of research integrity in the Estonian research community. The Code describes the conduct expected from researchers and the responsibility of research institutions in ensuring research integrity, thus contributing to the increased credibility of research in the eyes of the individual and the public.

From the RDC areas mentioned in [Table 14](#), the first two areas are academically well-established in the Institute and these two areas create a basis for other disciplines and practical theology. The interdisciplinary approach is characteristic of Biblical and Systematic research, and the recognised academic results are the following: the amount of domestic and international publications, number of proceedings and study materials.

Practical Theology is an area that needs to be further developed in the Institute from the academic point of view. The profile of practical theology is different and its sub-areas of PCC and Diakonia are highly valued in Estonian society, and by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Therefore, practical theology is also an area of strength that fulfils many elements of the Institute's mission.

Table 14. RDC objectives defined in the DP and activities to achieve objectives.

Objectives of DP	Activities
Proceedings of the Institute and Study Literature of the Institute are published	<p>The Institute composes and publishes Proceedings and other educational literature to promote research, uses these materials in the study process, and makes them publicly accessible in society. Students from other theological institutions and people representing other professions related to theology use our publications. Proceedings are original creations of our academic staff. The themes and contents meet the needs of EELC, society, and students.</p> <p>Latest Proceedings (1-6) and other planned study literature are: No XXVII <i>Usukultuur evangeelses luterlikus vaatevinklis</i> (The Culture of Faith in Lutheran Perspective) (2018; T.-A. Pöder).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No XXVIII <i>Vaadates armastuse silmadega</i> (Looking with the eyes of love) (2019; O. Sander and others). 2. No XXIX <i>Contextual Theology of the New Testament</i> (2020; R. Tasmuth). 3. No XXX <i>Verbum Domini manet in aeternum</i> (2020, J. Lahe, E. Naab). Includes articles by the students and alumni of the Institute as an example of supervised student's research activity. 4. No XXXI <i>Jesus, Kingdom, and Mission</i> (2020; R. Tasmuth, I. Kurg). 5. No XXXII <i>Church Together, Vol 1: Church-Scripture-Eucharist-Ministry</i> (2020, T.-A. Pöder and others) 6. Study Literature 15 is intended for diakonia, pastoral counselling and theology students as well as pastors. The book contains ethical guidelines of the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe on issues related to infertility treatment and medical assistance in dying : UI 15. <i>Viljatusravi ja suremisabi eetika</i> (2019; T.-A. Pöder and others).
<p>In the field of research and development, the cooperation with EELC sub-institutions and other churches will be extended to provide scientific support to conduct basic and applied research.</p> <p>Research projects are initiated in cooperation with other research centres and international church and ecumenical organisations.</p>	<p>Based on previous research development, taking achievements into consideration and conforming to the needs of the EELC and society, the Institute more precisely determined three priority areas during the years 2018–2022: (1) Biblical Studies; (2) ST; (3) Practical Theology. We have an understanding of the results now: (a) Synergy between these areas is easier to monitor; (b) Other disciplines are included in these areas when necessary and possible; (c) Interdisciplinary approaches have been more frequent within and between these three areas.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biblical Studies, including Studies of Antiquity that lay the basis for ministry and every other theological competence. Orthodox exegesis and Jewish studies are included here. High publication activity (No XXIX and XXXI). Plans for the future: project to create study material regarding Early Christian social activity and to implement the project with students. 2. Systematic Theology, which includes Ethics and Lutheranism, is adjusted to meet the requirements of the EELC's clergy competence model and to prepare for its application in the Pastoral Seminary. Frequent publication activity and international participation in ecclesiastical networks is directly channelled into teaching activity (No XXVII and XXXII). 3. Practical Theology, including Sociology of Religion, PCC and Diakonia. Sociology of Religion, a branch of practical theology, assesses public trends in society and helps to adjust the activities of the Institute and Church. The Institute's Academic Dean L. Kilemit permanently works in the ecumenical expert group "Life, Faith and Faith-life" in Estonia together with PhD I. Kurg. The new period 2020–2023 has started and activities will continue after that as well. Several publications are ready and new ones are about to be published. Lecturers use these publications as study materials. This long-lasting study provides the Institute and the entire Estonian Council of Churches with continuous information about the religious attitudes, preferences and convictions of Estonian people. The students and other research fellows are involved in the implementation of the project. The conclusions of the project are used as input to our future development strategy.



The Academic Dean has held development interviews with the academic staff, which has enabled him to discover lecturers' personal interests in their academic development, as well as formulate a unified understanding of the RDC strategies of the Institute. Every year, the Institute has received financial aid from *Uniproject* to carry out assignments, and also external funding from the Nordic Church in Germany (3 500 Euros a year) has been received. Funding helps to cover the costs of attending international conferences, congresses, and publication activity.

Development activities of three important RDC areas during last five years:

1. Biblical Studies, including Studies of Antiquity.
 - a. Regular New Testament forums six times a year provide additional supervision and feedback for final papers. In 2017, one MA thesis was awarded with a letter of thanks from the Estonian Research Council (ETAG).
 - b. Proceeding No XXIX, a monography by Prof. R. Tasmuth on New Testament Theology, was published in 2020 and is in good use as a study book that is designed for the context of Estonia and the Estonian Church. Fresh Proceeding No XXXI by R. Tasmuth and PhD Ingmar Kurg (Jesus, Kingdom, and Mission, 2022) pays attention to Mission, involvement in society, and the character building of Church workers in general and of the clergy in particular. The books are basic study materials both on PHE and MA levels. External funding (8 700 Euros) was received from the German National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation (DNK des LWB) for implementation of this project (2021–2022).
 - c. For the students, full electronic Moodle environment has been introduced and works well for the first year students in Bible study.
2. Systematic Theology, Lutheranism, Ethics.
 - a. The research direction "Reformation Theology". In 2015–2018, in cooperation with the School of Theology and Religious Studies (STRS) of the University of Tartu, the focus was on Reformation theology and its relevance today. In 2019, the University of Tartu nominated T.-A. Põder as a candidate in humanities for the Research Prize of the Republic of Estonia with the cycle of works "Resources of the Lutheran Reformation in support of the coherence of a pluralistic society".
 - b. Research direction "Semiotics of Religion". Since 2018, in collaboration with the STRS of the University of Tartu, research aiming at the development of cultural theosemiotics. Two international conferences have been organised; in 2020–2021, the Head of the Chair conducted research at the University of Helsinki. 2021 "Sign, Method, and the Sacred. New Directions in Semiotic Methodologies for the Study of Religion" (DeGruyter, "Semiotics of Religion" series). A special issue of Sign Systems Studies, one of the world's leading semiotics journals, on "Religion in the Semiosphere" is forthcoming in 2023.
 - c. Continuation of the research direction "Ecumenical Theology" from 2020 onwards. Participation as an expert in various international ecclesial and academic ecumenical cooperation bodies; participation in international research processes ("Christian discourse on God", "Church unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity"), a two-volume collection of Estonian translations of ecumenical documents (ca. 1000 pages) (Part 1, 2022, Part 2, 2023).
 - d. Research direction "Speaking of God (The Theology of the cross and Trinitarian Theology)" since 2022.
 - e. Development of systematic theological literature in Estonian: in 2018, a subseries of the UI's proceedings series "Forum for Systematic and Ecumenical Theology" was launched in cooperation with the University of Rostock (third volume in preparation).

- f. Supporting academic offspring: since 2017, the Chair has launched a Research Seminar in ST in cooperation with the University of Tartu. The number of BA, MA theses has increased exponentially. Four of the seminar participants currently pursue a PhD either in Helsinki or in Tartu (three of them in Tartu are supervised by T.-A. Pöder).
 - g. The development of cooperation among Estonian-speaking systematic theologians. The Chair has launched a Methods Seminar in ST (2020) in cooperation with the University of Helsinki, which aims to develop Estonian-language support materials for BA and MA thesis writing in ST and in which for the first time a vast majority of Estonian-language ST specialists of three generations from Estonia and abroad are participating.
 - h. The Chair has continuously developed research contacts with chairs of systematic and ecumenical theology from all over Europe (Germany, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Great Britain, France, Hungary, Romania, Switzerland, Russia), as well as (since 2022) from the United States of America.
 - i. The Chair has cooperated continuously with the library in compiling study literature in ST and has paid particular attention to ordering English-language study literature.
3. Practical theology, including Sociology of Religion, PCC and Diakonia (see also Ch. [3.11.2](#)).
- a. The ecumenical expert group “Life, Faith and Faith-life” in Estonia is central to the area of the sociology of religion. In addition to already existing publications, PhD I. Kurg, our lector of Missiology, and L. Kilemit are editing a special issue of Theological Bulletin (ETIS classification 1.1.) which will be published in 2023. The expert group will continue work even after 2023 and the Institute’s academic staff will be included in the group, funded by the Estonian Council of Churches. This is an important part of our RDC development plan.

Table 15. Overview of the publications by the Institute's lecturers, 2018–2022.

According to classification numb.	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
1.1.	4	4	-	-	-	8
1.2.	3	-	1	-	-	4
2.1.	4	2	1	1	1	9
3.1.	-	3	-	4	1	8
Total	11	9	2	5	2	29

The total number of all kinds of open access publications, on paper and/or on the web, is 540. This contains the highest ranking articles, monographs, book reviews, popular articles, editions of books, short research papers, conference papers, and short Bible commentaries for Sunday preaching. These publications, which have been published during 2018–2022, are connected to the Institute and registered in the [ETIS](#) as of November 2022. The effectiveness of RDC activities is characterised by all these publications, and in addition to that, the Institute has managed to also include research workers from other institutions (University of Tartu and Tallinn University) through grants and cooperation projects. Participation in the Institute’s grants has also significantly improved the research work of our partners.

According to the classification of publications in ETIS, publications of the highest ranking are 1.1., 1.2., 2.1. and 3.1. Scholars usually record all their publications, however we have included here only the highest-ranking ones, since these 29 publications are weighed by submitting applications for research fundings and applying for professorships.

More information on publications and grants is found in [ETIS](#).

Through institutional relationships and travel support given by the Institute, academic staff has been able to participate in the work of international networks, conferences, and congresses. In recent years, the procedure for recognition of lecturers and granting of honorary titles has been developed. Two professors



received the title of Professor Emeritus in 2022, and several members of academic staff were awarded with letters of thanks.



3.11.2. Connection of RDC activities to the needs of society and labour market

The objectives of the RDC activities originate from the needs and expectations of the EELC, serve the needs of the EELC and also of society and the wider labour market. The following activities express our endeavours:

1. EELC is interested in the research of the Institute. T.-A. Pöder as a supervisor is leading a research seminar for PHE and MA students. In addition, PhD students from Tartu University are included. Topics are chosen that are as close to the needs of the Church and society as possible and to the partners involved. Doctoral students A. Süvari and J. Toivonen represent the new generation of theologians. See ST section in the [homepage](#) of the Institute. Prof. Pöder has been awarded by the publicly known journal 'Academia'.
2. The PHE final papers of PCC students are used as tools to research different aspects of the PCC work, also to explore the role of PCC in the hospital and social care system.
3. Through MA DPCC master theses, the key questions and practices of Diakonia and PCC are studied. If necessary, theology and social science are combined.
4. For five years (2018–2022), J. Lahe, V. Ehasalu, E. Naab and R. Tasmuth have published many open-access Biblical textual commentaries. These commentaries are regularly used ecumenically by pastors who prepare Sunday sermons. The writing of the commentaries as part of activities directed to wider audience and society continues.
5. Theological and cultural two-year project „Mission, Ethics, Character“ by R. Tasmuth, funded by DNK des LWB, was completed in 2022. Students have been included in the discussions through regular New Testament Forums. In November of 2022, the public presentation of the proceeding No XXXI (Jesus, Kingdom, and Mission) took place. The book contains basic knowledge about Missiology in Estonian and has an ecumenical impact for all pastors in Estonia.
6. The Institute continuously participates in the ecumenical expert group “Life, Faith and Faith-life” by L. Kilemit and I. Kurg. In cooperation with FTUT, changes in the faith of the Estonian population - views are clarified and compared to earlier research results. The results are utilised by state officials and referred to by public media (see in detail Ch. [3.11.1](#)).

One important research co-operation on the field of PCC is with the European Research Institute for Chaplains in Healthcare ([ERICH](#)) which is hosted by the Academic Centre for Practical Theology of KU Leuven. ERICH was founded in 2016 by ENHCC to promote research by chaplains into chaplaincy practice, and, in doing so, to encourage reflection on its theoretical underpinning. As there is currently no generally recognised measure of the impact of chaplain interventions and consequently the clinical and strategic worth of chaplaincy is difficult to articulate, ERICH launched a research project based on the Scottish patient reported outcome measure (PROM). PROM has been specifically designed and tested to provide evidence of the outcomes of chaplaincy interventions. This type of evidence is especially important as it offers policymakers a better opportunity to understand the role and function of pastoral care workers in hospitals and to see their unique impact. Under the leadership of the Head of TAT IT S. Haamer, we are in the process of becoming partners of PROM research led by ERICH. The goal is to conduct PROM questionnaires also in Estonian hospitals and nursing homes. We started preparations in 2019 already, but SARS-CoV-2 pandemic postponed the entire process. Hopefully, we are able to continue with this research project soon. The goal is to involve the Institute's students and alumni in this research project.



3.11.3. RDC support system

The following instruments form the RDC support system:

1. A four member research group (professors Randar Tasmuth, Thomas-Andreas Pöder and Priit Rohtmets, and Academic Dean Liina Kilemit) plan research-development and publishing. For the years to come, newly elected professor Jaan Lahe (2022), who has outstanding international academic contacts that enrich us with new prospects, will be included.
2. Research topics and directions are monitored during the implementation with the Academic Dean.
3. The Institute's budget has a line for funds to support research work. Technical aid is provided that includes computer technology, printing facilities etc. Today an agreement with the Nordic Church in Germany provides Institute with a permanent grant called „Uniproject“. 3500 Euros is used for research, including travelling expenses, for projects by academic staff who present projects and report the results. In addition to professors, a younger research fellow E. Naab has been supported.
4. Consistory helps to submit applications to international partners for funding projects that have a lasting importance for the Church. Project „Mission, Ethics, Character“ by R. Tasmuth received 8700 Euros from the German national Committee of LWF. These kinds of focused projects would be submitted to the partners in the future.
5. Institute's library is permanently supplemented by the Institute, and supported by co-operation agreement together with info-exchange with the University of Tartu Library. Both libraries are available for the academic staff and according to the co-operation agreement, access to the valuable databases EBSCO, JSTOR Arts & Science is also granted.
6. In co-operation and in consultation with the FTUT, the Institute determines the principles of ordering literature, considering the profile of both faculties. This helps to avoid any duplication. Firstly, the needs of the Chairs are mapped and compared. The heads of the three development areas of RDC take care of communication and decision making (see Ch. [3.11.1](#)).
7. The profile of the ESF, established to support research-work of the academic staff and pay for the students' scholarship, is changed. The students receive scholarships on regular basis (see Ch. [3.2.1](#)), academic staff rely more on Uniproject and apply for funding of their projects.
8. NGO TAT annually allocates special funds to finance international visits of academic staff.

3.11.4. Involvement of students in RDC activities



During Master's degree studies, lecturers from different Chairs will introduce methods of research of their particular field of study as part of the module *Theory of Science, Research Methods and Thesis Design*. The module creates possibilities for cooperation between areas and lays a basis for inter-disciplinary projects. The module is a place for the introduction and development of projects for strategic RDC areas (see Ch. [3.11.1](#)).

Involvement of master's students as co-authors of the Institute's own publications has been started:

- In Biblical studies, R. Tasmuth conducts New Testament forums. The students choose research topics themselves (their interests), based on the needs of the Church, and projects of prof Tasmuth.
- In ST, a specific joint research seminar by T-A. Pöder involves students from Tallinn and Tartu, including doctoral students. Some of the research topics partly overlap with the supervisor's own research areas and help to formulate new results.



- In practical theology, L. Kilemit involved 15 MA students in an international project „Religion and Gender Equality. Baltic and Nordic Developments“. Students from Tartu University were included, and instructed to perform interviews and analyses. This project is still on-going. Kilemit also included MA student T. Svedko into the process of her own doctoral project „Reasons for joining Christian Churches“. Svedko developed his own research skills and received data for his MA final paper „Individual Integration to the Church“

During 15–19 June 2018, lecturer Naatan Haamer, lecturer Annika Laats and Head of TAT IT Siimon Haamer with two MA students Saima Sellak-Martinson and Kai Jõemets participated in a consultation of the ENHCC *Nurturing Spirituality in Healthcare Chaplaincy* in Blankenberge (Belgium). In 2016, the ENHCC established the European Research Institute for Chaplaincy in Healthcare (ERICH) to promote research by chaplains into pastoral care practice and in doing so, to encourage reflection on its theoretical underpinning. The head of TAT IT Siimon Haamer was a member of the committee of the ENHCC during 2016–2022. The Institute's strong connection with ENHCC and ERICH keeps us informed about current developments and research topics in the field of PCC.

Strengths

High standards of research and publication activity in three areas with their subdisciplines: Biblical studies and Antiquity; ST with Church history; Sociology of religion. The Institute clarifies the needs of EELC and responds to them by research.

Involvement of students by academic staff in RDC activities (Bible studies, ST, Sociology of religion).

The total number of all kind of open access publications of the academic staff, on paper and/or in web, is 540 during the period of 2018–2022.

Areas of improvement	Planned activities
More centrally provided funds by the Institute for academic research and publishing activity are needed.	Consultations with the EELC leadership and international partners. Consultation and development of cooperation with Ministry of Social Affairs.

3.12. Service to society



3.12.1. Contributions to the society and other public activities

As is the case in private higher education institutions, service to society is conducted through private means and additional resources are involved through project funding. Despite our limited means, we try to be open to broader society through different activities and services. Our employees are acting out of a strong sense of mission and desire to develop their field. The Institute's website has a [separate section](#) to present employees' social activities and their articles in public media. A partial overview of our activities that reach beyond the Institute and make a contribution to the balanced development of society is presented in this chapter below and in [Appx. 28](#) *Employees' Participation in the Activities of Social and Professional Associations in 2022*, [Appx. 31](#) *Popularization of the Institute's Activities and Public Services and Endeavours*.

Table 16. Short overview of the Institute's Contribution to the Estonian society.

Field of action	Action
Training of the clergy	The Institute does not train clergy only strictly for church work, but when preparing the study programmes, also takes into account the fact that people who desire to become clergy could acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to become promoters of social life in the local community.
Pastoral Care and Counselling	Growing support for hospitals and other social care facilities has grown through teaching and preparing of PCC specialists from the EELC and the Institute. The demand for PCC workers in society is continuously growing and SARS-CoV-2 pandemic strongly highlighted a need for PCC specialists (read more in this chapter below about new developments that have taken place in this field). The Institute has played an active part in the development of occupational qualification standards and organising the spread of specialised information. In spring 2018, the Institute established the Pastoral Care and Counselling support fund that is aimed at supporting activities that help to make pastoral care services better available and to develop pastoral care areas in Estonia more comprehensively. In spring 2021, the PCC Centre was launched in the TAT IT facility, which is open to the public (read more in this chapter below).
Chaplaincies	Education in the Institute gives sufficient preparation for working as a chaplain in the Estonian Defence Forces, Police and Border Guard, prison, Defence League and hospitals.
Ecumenicalism	Based on the agreement with OCE, there is a Chair of Orthodoxy in the Institute since autumn 2014. All fields of study have students from different denominations and therefore the Institute plays an ecumenical role.
MA Studies in Christian Culture	On the MA level, the Institute broadens competency and occupational possibilities for educated specialists from different fields through the Studies in Christian Culture <i>curriculum</i> .
Lifelong learning	The Department of Lifelong Learning of the Institute offers different trainings in PCC and other unique areas.
Pastoral Seminary	The Pastoral Seminary plays an important part in training of priests and deacons in the Lutheran church, giving them important practical know-how to manage in real-life situations. As the church serves society through the clergy, then the Pastoral Seminary is also involved in this service.
Church Music	The Church Music Department keeps alive and develops the church music tradition, which is not only part of the liturgical life of the church, but also inseparable from Estonian high culture.

The TAT IT building in Tartu, which was completed at the end of 2019, has been developed into a diverse centre whose activities are aimed at serving society and spreading Christian values. In this way, students also get the opportunity to apply what they have learned in practice. The following is an overview of the activities of the TAT IT Tartu centre:

- Since 2021, the PCC Centre has been operating, where alumni of the Institute and TAT work, and it is also possible to practice as a pastoral caregiver. In addition to providing daily PCC, the PCC Centre organizes various trainings and supervisions for PCC workers and manages a pan-Estonian network of PCC workers.
- PCC Centre is an official partner of the Tartu City Government and offers PCC for the people of Tartu free of charge. The city government finances this work.



- The PCC Centre organises summer days for PCC workers every year in August, and starting from 2023, work conferences will be held in winter, which are intended to address currently important topics in the field of PCC, to support PCC workers and to strengthen the network between them.
- The Christian radio channel Pereraadio (run by a separate NGO) rents studio and office rooms.
- Various Christian events for the youth are organised.
- Since September 2020, a Bible school has been held on Monday evenings during each school year, which can be attended both in person and online. The bible school is part of lifelong learning, and prior knowledge of the Bible is not required. Over the course of three years, there have been a total of about 200 participants from all over Estonia and even from Finland and Sweden.

With the outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in the spring of 2020, there was a great need for mental health professionals. Since the PCC Centre had already worked on creating a network of PCC workers by that time, the Chaplaincy of the Ministry of Social Affairs approached the PCC Centre. In the crisis situation, the PCC workers were immediately employed as volunteer helpers all over Estonia. Since long-term isolation caused many problems in society, the Ministry of Social Affairs initiated the creation of a 24-hour helpline. To launch this, the ministry turned to NGO TAT and Siimon Haamer. The Ministry of Social Affairs provided funding and S. Haamer made all the necessary preparations for the creation of a helpline, and on 17.06.2020 the PCC Helpline started operating. 15 TAT and Institute alumni started working on the Helpline as PCC workers. Siimon Haamer coordinated the activities of the PCC Helpline until 31.03.2022. From 01.04.2022, the Social Insurance Board took over the coordination and hired several of the PCC Helpline employees. From that moment on, the helpline has been called the Emotional Support and Pastoral Care Telephone, which operates every day from 14:00 until 00:00.

Starting from June 2020, the jobs created in nursing homes funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs (in 2022, PCC workers were working in 40 nursing homes) are mostly staffed by alumni and students of the Institute.

As the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic continued, there was a need to support people in home care to help alleviate their social isolation. The Ministry of Social Affairs turned to NGO TAT to conduct a pilot project of the PCC service offered to people in home care. All funding came from the Ministry of Social Affairs. The project lasted from 01.05. to 31.12.2021, and within its framework, 16 PCC workers from all over Estonia were involved, who worked in cooperation with local government.

Immediately after the outbreak of war in Ukraine, numerous war refugees who needed accommodation began to arrive to Estonia. Since March, nine families from Ukraine have found accommodation in the Institute's hostel and TAT guest apartment in Tartu. The use of the accommodation has been free for them. In March, NGO TAT launched a fund-raising campaign to support war refugees, involving its contact network in the United States. As a result, it has been possible to support the livelihood of refugees who arrived to Estonia from Ukraine to the amount of around 60,000 euros. Also, alumni and students of the Institute have volunteered in refugee centres, focusing mainly on PCC.

The library of the Institute and EELC is open to everybody interested, also to people from outside the Institute and the church community (see also Ch. [3.2.3](#)).

3.12.2. Lifelong learning



In the EELC development plan strategy for 2019–2028, one of the sub-goals is the implementation of a unified church training platform that meets the needs of the church. The Institute has set the same goal in *Development Plan 2022–2026* (see [Appx. 10](#)). As a result, we are developing the Institute into a training centre for the EELC, which offers a single platform for coordinated and systematic training activities that meet the needs of the church.

The organisation of lifelong learning is based on the statutes of the Department of Lifelong Learning and the rules of lifelong learning, which the Council of the Institute adopted on 08.02.2021.

The main target-group in the church includes ministers (local pastors and chaplains – almost 200 people). The training of lay-staff and volunteers is also important. This group includes people from different specific areas – diakonia, PCC, children's and youth ministry, members of the church's boards and councils. Other targeted people are teachers of religion, humanitarian and social subjects in public schools and other specialists involved in religious topics. In addition to that, more and more specialists in the social and healthcare fields are becoming interested in various PCC trainings.

In 2022, a paper titled "Possibilities of lifelong learning of the Institute of Theology from the perspective of alumni, EELC clergy and congregations" was written as a part of a master's examination in Christian Cultural History. The aim of the work was to ascertain the expectations of these target groups regarding lifelong learning conducted at the Institute (see Figure 24 and 25). The survey, in which 110 people participated, shows that the Institute of Theology was considered very important as a provider of life-long learning by all respondents, because it is reliable, with professional teaching staff and one of the few providers of further education in this field. Long-term teaching experience and a good learning environment that supports the learner are valued. The most

Would you like to learn something more at the Institute, improve yourself?

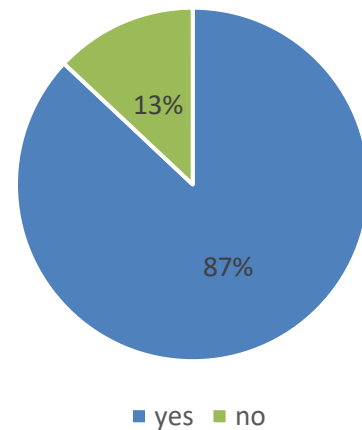


Figure 24. The Institute's lifelong learning opportunities from the perspective of alumni, EELC clergy and congregations (1).

What topics would you like to improve yourself on in the Institute?

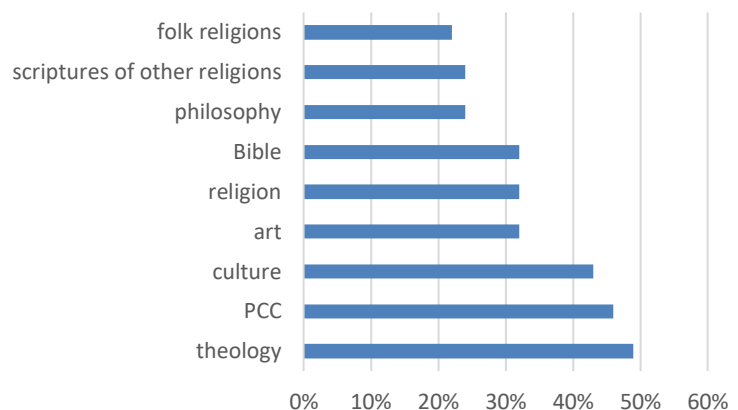


Figure 25. The Institute's lifelong learning opportunities from the perspective of alumni, EELC clergy and congregations (2).



wanted was life-long learning in the field of theology and pastoral care, as well as topics related to cultural history more broadly (see Figure 25).

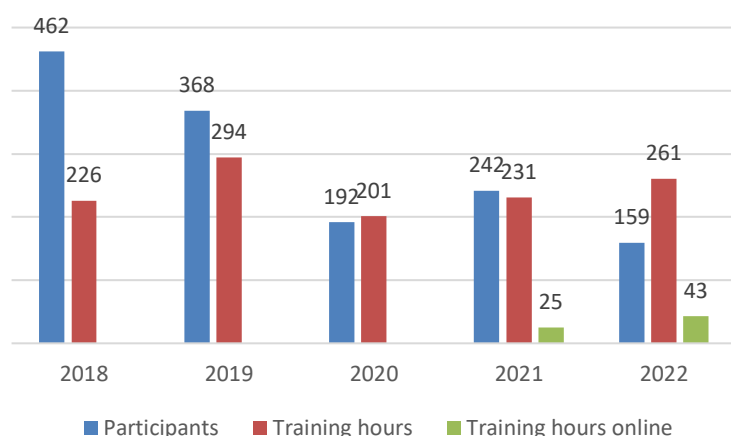


Figure 26. Training volumes of the Department of Lifelong Learning, 2018-2022.

In 2021, we started a series of e-courses in the format of a Public University aimed at the general public, where people interested in theology, church history and the relationship between the church and society can improve their knowledge and exchange of ideas. An overview of the Institute's lifelong learning courses during the period of 2018–2022 is presented in [Appx. 36](#).

Since autumn 2020, TAT IT has organised a Bible school course in Tartu, during which an overview of the entire Bible is given over the course of one year. No prior knowledge is required from the participant. It is possible to participate in

the study both in person and in the form of distance learning. All lectures are recorded and it is possible to view the lectures later on. Students and alumni of the Institute have also used this opportunity to improve their Bible knowledge. In three years, there have been nearly 200 participants.

Usually, trainings take place in cycles which last 1-2 days at a time. Different basic trainings in certain fields can take longer, up to 2-4 days per cycle. For example, the basic training for PCC lasts for 5x4 days. Conducting lifelong learning courses is not set out as an obligation for the Institute's ordinary lecturers according to their contracts, therefore lecturers are additionally reimbursed for conducting lifelong learning courses. The lecturers of lifelong learning courses are mostly not members of the Institute's ordinary academic staff. The volume of courses is quite good compared to the size of our Institution (see Figure 26 above).

Pastoral Seminary

Pastoral Seminary is a department of lifelong learning for those who already have a theological education, to offer them the opportunity to continue learning with the goal of becoming a priest in EELC. The main emphasis of the Pastoral Seminary study year is on spiritual growth (*praxis pietatis*), regular communal prayer and the worship life of the Seminary, Bible study, counselling and pastoral care. Corporate and personal spiritual growth are of crucial significance for the candidates' formation process and future ministry. The goal is to guarantee an individual approach in their studies. The Pastoral Seminary gives in depth knowledge in practical theology subjects: homiletics, liturgics, religious education, diaconal ministry, ecumenism, cybernetics and professional ethics for ordained ministry. Studies in the Pastoral Seminary are conducted mostly in the form of seminar and are organised as follows: individual learning, introductory lectures, internship and reflections. The ordination candidates also study Lutheran Confessional Writings, e.g., the Lutheran Augsburg Confession and its relevance for today; liturgical singing, rhetorics; church legislation; economics; bookkeeping; record management. Besides this, they also receive training in heritage conservation and in several other necessary areas.

Internship supervisors and congregations where the internship is carried out (see Ch. [3.10.1](#)) play an important role for the student both during the studies in the Pastoral Seminary and in his or her later ministry.

At the end of the study year the students will need to pass the *pro ministerio concionandi* examination, the prerequisite for applying for the ordination to the priesthood in the EELC. The examination will be conducted by the archbishop of the EELC.

Church Music Department

The Church Music Department of the Institute offers vocational studies to church musicians and keeps alive and also develops the church music tradition in Estonia. The programme is composed of two two-year courses in order to apply for D and C category in church music (see Figure 27).

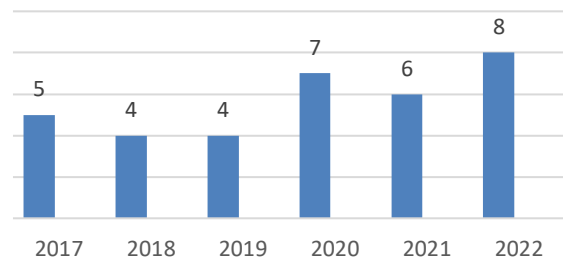


Figure 27. Students taking D and C category courses in the Church Music Department, 2017–2022.

Strengths

The Institute has played an active part in the development of occupational qualification standards for chaplains and pastoral care givers and counsellors and is organising the dissemination of specialised information.

In spring 2018, the Institute established the PCC Support Fund that is aimed at supporting activities that help to make the pastoral care service more readily available and to develop the pastoral care areas in Estonia more comprehensively.

The Department of Lifelong Learning of the Institute offers different trainings in PCC and other unique areas. With the outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in the spring of 2020, there was a great need for mental health professionals. In the crisis situation, the PCC workers, among them the Institute's alumni and students, were immediately employed as volunteer helpers all over Estonia.

Since March, nine families from Ukraine have found accommodation in the Institute's hostel and TAT guest apartment in Tartu. The use of the accommodation has been free for them. Alumni and students of the Institute have volunteered in refugee centres, focusing mainly on PCC.