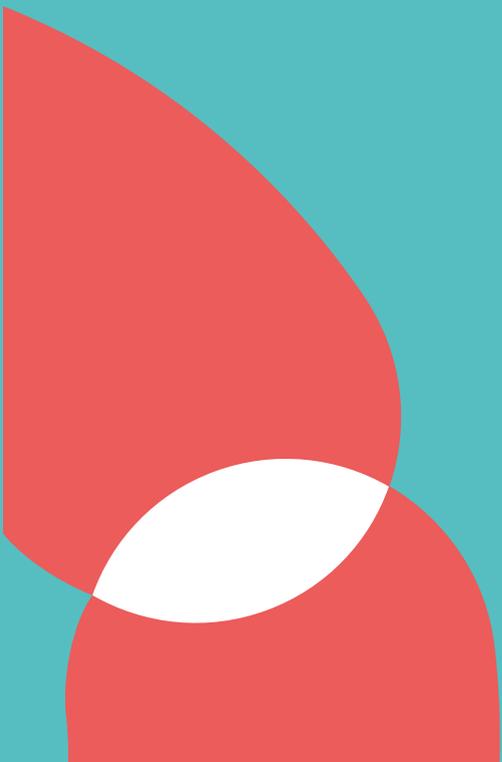


BACHELOR IN PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

CONTINENTAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

INITIAL ACCREDITATION ASSESSMENT REPORT

October 16th, 2024



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1 Executive summary

Following the comprehensive investigation into the quality of the Bachelor in Pentecostal Theology and Biblical Studies, the panel advises the NVAO to take a negative initial accreditation decision.

This bachelor's programme aims to address the distinct need within the Pentecostal tradition to academically train both men and women for Evangelical-Pentecostal and Charismatic ecclesiastical service. The historic experiential commitment of Pentecostalism, which can sometimes render it less committed to traditional academic scholarship, highlights the necessity of formal theological education for local church leaders.

The panel met committed people, who embody the Seminary's vision and mission and are highly engaged with the institution and with the students' education and welfare. The panel is convinced that CTS provides a supportive teaching and learning environment, where students feel safe and well-guided. It valued the academic approach of the new programme, established that the learning outcomes align with Level 6 of the Flemish Qualifications Framework (FQF) and assessed that a secure assessment policy for the courses is in place.

However, the panel urges CTS to address the following two conditions:

CTS needs to make sure that the learning objectives, the curriculum, and the assessment processes are fully aligned. If some of the programme-specific learning outcomes contain that students learn to "explain and *practice* Pentecostal ecclesiological vocation" or "demonstrate theoretical and *practical* competencies", CTS should make sure that all activities which are essential for achieving these programme's learning outcomes are part of the curriculum and are formally assessed.

The panel found that the professional field and external independent peers had not been sufficiently consulted in the curriculum design and in quality assurance processes. The panel insists that CTS structurally gathers input from and seeks active engagement with the relevant internal and external stakeholders and external independent peers during the profiling process, the curriculum design phase and subsequent evaluations of the programme.

Finally, the panel encourages CTS to take the following recommendations into consideration:

To fully realise the objective of the benchmarking exercise, CTS should incorporate learning outcomes and the content of the course subjects into the benchmarking exercise and validate this comparison with the other institutions.

CTS could strengthen its procedures to monitor the academic quality of theses and written exam papers by streamlining them with the stated learning outcomes (e.g. regarding the use of primary sources).

While valuable initiatives are in place to support the academic quality of the programme and the staff's academic excellence, these efforts are highly reliant on individual initiative. In order to make these initiatives less dependent on personal relationships and individual engagement the panel recommends that CTS institutionalises them, by making them quantifiable and documenting them in policy documents shared with all involved. This could also include the formalising of promotion procedures for staff.

The Hague, October 16th, 2024

On behalf of the expert panel convened to assess the Bachelor in Pentecostal Theology and Biblical Studies:

Annemarie Mayer
(chair)

Inge Verbeeck
(secretary)

2 Examination of the panel

2.1 Procedure

The Continental Theological Seminary (CTS) is an international Pentecostal Centre for Higher Education, situated in Sint-Pieters-Leeuw. The Seminary offers, besides some additional study options, undergraduate studies in Pentecostal Theology and Biblical Studies (with biblical language, music or missiological specialisations) and an accredited Master of Theology in Evangelical and Pentecostal Studies. The present assessment report is the record of the panel's investigation into the potential quality of CTS's new programme, the academic Bachelor in Pentecostal Theology and Biblical Studies, for which CTS applies for initial accreditation. The new bachelor programme builds on the experience of the existing undergraduate studies.

The NVAO convened an international panel of experts consisting of:

- Prof. dr. Annemarie Mayer (chair)
- Prof. dr. Andrew Davies (expert)
- Ms. Ds. Joline van Poppel (expert)
- Ms. Linde Van den Eede (student expert)

The composition of the panel reflects the expertise deemed necessary by NVAO for this assessment. Short CVs of the panel members are provided in Annex 3. On behalf of NVAO, Ms. Veerle Martens was responsible for the coordination of the assessment process. The external secretary, Ms. Inge Verbeeck, drafted this report in close cooperation with all panel members and in agreement with the chair. All panel members and the secretary signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.

The panel members studied the information file and submitted their first impressions on the materials prior to the preparatory panel meetings, which were held on September 9th, 2024 (online), and on September 17th, 2024. The panel noticed the report came across as too generic, often lacking specific information, such as student numbers per academic year, more detailed statistics about staff, and results of course evaluations. The panel requested these prior to the site visit (for an overview: see Appendix 5).

After having read the institution's information file and the additionally requested information, the panel intended to place the following themes, about which it sought to gain a clearer understanding, on the agenda of the discussions with the Continental Theological Seminary:

- Profiling of the programme and correspondence between the learning outcomes and the intended programme;
- Teaching and learning environment;
- Assessment of students;
- Staff;
- Continuous quality enhancement and involvement of internal and external stakeholders and of external peers and experts

The site visit by the full panel took place on September 18th, 2024. The panel talked to the institutional management, as well as to the staff responsible for the new programme, students in related programmes, the (intended) teaching and support staff, and representatives of the

professional field. The schedule of the visit is presented in Annex 4. Annex 5 lists the materials made available by the Seminary both before and during the site visit.

Immediately after the discussions, the panel formulated its considerations and preliminary conclusions. These were built on the assessment of the documents and based on the findings of the site visit. The external secretary then drafted the advisory report and circulated it to all panel members for review and feedback. The comments of the panel were incorporated in a second version, which was validated by the chair.

2.2 Findings

2.2.1 Profiling of the programme, learning outcomes and the alignment with the intended programme

In its documentation CTS outlines the distinct need within the Pentecostal tradition to academically train both men and women for Pentecostal-Charismatic and Evangelical ecclesiastical service. The historic experiential commitment of Pentecostalism, which can sometimes render it less committed to traditional academic scholarship, highlights the necessity of formal theological education for local church leaders. The panel appreciated the clear focus on the distinctive needs of the Pentecostal tradition and the insight into the cultural and social transitions the movement is engaging in globally – not least the prioritisation of training and theological education.

CTS translated this profiling and intentions into a set of learning outcomes for this new BA programme. Since currently there are no other accredited bachelor programmes in Pentecostal theology and biblical studies in Flanders, it was important to check the learning outcomes with other related programmes and with (international) requirements regarding level, content, and orientation. By August 2023, CTS concluded a benchmarking exercise comparing the structure and ECTS of its proposed BA programme with similar programmes in Belgium and abroad.¹ According to CTS, this exercise demonstrated that the new programme was comparable to the outlines of the accredited programmes, while simultaneously filling a niche in the educational landscape by adopting a specific Pentecostal approach to theology. Unfortunately, CTS only compared the ECTS credits of the programmes and did not consider the learning outcomes and the subjects of the courses. Additionally, the interviews revealed that there had not been direct contact with the institutions to validate this comparison. However, the panel concluded that the learning outcomes align with Level 6 of the FQF.

During the panel's preparatory meeting, the schematic overview of the entire curriculum (Appendix 5 of the initial accreditation file) was reviewed. The total number of credits (198 ECTS) outlined in that appendix exceeded the maximum number of credits permitted (180 ECTS), and no electives were indicated. In the programme outline found in Section 5 of the Academic Handbook (Appendix 28), 58 ECTS were allocated to the first year and 60 ECTS to the second year. However, as the section did not clarify how students choose electives, the total number of credits for the third year remained unclear. Consequently, the panel sought further

¹ Included in the benchmarking were Belgian accredited programmes in theology (Evangelical Theological Faculty (ETF) Leuven, Katholieke Universiteit (KU) Leuven, Faculté de Théologie Protestante et Religion (FTPR) Brussels and Université Catholique (UCL) de Louvain) and programmes abroad (Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam and Regents College in London).

clarification from CTS. On September 16th, CTS submitted an updated version of Appendix 5, which outlines a programme consisting solely of compulsory courses totalling 180 ECTS. The panel regrets that the final version of the intended curriculum was only then consistently communicated by CTS.

The panel observed that the learning outcomes of the new programme were generally consistent with the curriculum design (and with the assessment methods, see section 'Assessment' below). However, learning outcomes 6 and 7, which emphasise practical competencies, were identified as exceptions. The panel acknowledges the importance of these practical vocational elements within a Pentecostal programme and does not object to their inclusion in the curriculum. Nonetheless, if the programme's goal is to equip students to "practice Pentecostal ecclesiological vocation in the areas of Pentecostal music, liturgy, and missiology" (as stated in learning outcome 6) and to prepare students for "practical competencies in the complex area of pastoral Pentecostal theology, psychology, counselling, and preaching" (as noted in learning outcome 7), it is essential that: a) the programme incorporates sufficient courses and dedicated ECTS to enable students to acquire these skills, and b) these practical components are formally assessed and accredited.

During the site visit, the panel learned that CTS consciously aims to combine a rigorous academic programme with practical training, enabling students to pursue academic careers at CTS or elsewhere, or serve as ministers in local churches, or seek employment outside of religious contexts after graduation. The importance of comprehensive academic study as a prerequisite for pastoral success is consistently emphasised in the documentation and during the dialogues, explaining why CTS opts for academic depth of its curriculum, for example, by in-depth study of Biblical languages. To preserve room for academic rigor, CTS does not include an obligatory internship within its programme. However, CTS strongly encourages students to engage in a broad range of extracurricular activities, such as involvement in local parishes and participation in mission trips and reports to provide informal opportunities to develop practical skills in safe environments.

Both the representatives of the professional field and the students acknowledged the significance of the practical training acquired through ministry work. Students expressed great appreciation for these experiences and did not object to the lack of ECTS credits for them, reasoning that their other courses are adequately credited. Consequently, they did not advocate for the inclusion of a formal internship in the curriculum. However, the professional field favoured the idea of an internship, seeing it as a means of both strengthening the connection between students and churches and enhancing the professionalisation of churches in their role as educators.

The panel was struck by the observation that, compared to the staff and students, the professional field appeared to place less value on a robust academic education. When the panel chair presented the curriculum outline (which the representatives had not previously seen), the representatives' spontaneous reaction was that the programme "seemed too heavy theoretically". They emphasised the importance of equipping students with practical tools for engaging with people. It is worth noting in this respect that students commended their professors' ability to bridge theoretical knowledge and practical application, using discussions, reflections, and practical assignments as teaching methods. Students reported feeling well-

prepared for practical ministry work. The alumna interviewed by the panel also expressed confidence in her ministry engagements, attributing this to the practical training she received.

In conclusion, the panel commends the academic approach of the new programme and understands the need for a practical approach within the Pentecostal tradition. However, the panel also acknowledges a tension between the expectations of the professional field and the objectives of CTS's new programme. The former places paramount importance on practical ministry work, while the latter aims to establish an academically rigorous programme comparable to university-level theological degrees, providing both a strong foundation for future Pentecostal pastors and the opportunity to pursue academic careers.

The panel suggests that CTS, in close consultation with its internal and external stakeholders, should make more distinct choices in its profile. Furthermore, learning outcomes and course subjects ought to be incorporated into the benchmarking exercise, and this comparison should be validated with the other institutions. The refined profile can then be consistently translated into a set of learning outcomes that are fully aligned with the entire curriculum and assessment framework. The panel urges CTS to ensure complete alignment between learning objectives, the curriculum, and assessment processes, ensuring that extracurricular activities, which are not formally assessed, are not essential for achieving the programme's learning outcomes.

2.2.2 Teaching and learning environment

CTS prioritises a student-centred teaching and learning environment, where students are actively engaged in their own personal and academic development. This is achieved through the establishment of an attractive and well-equipped campus, the implementation of an interactive teaching methodology and the fostering of close relationships between students and staff.

The CTS **campus** is located on a spacious and green estate, where a new accommodation building is currently under construction and extensive renovation works of the old building are planned for completion in the coming years. The main building includes a chapel, meeting rooms, spacious, well-equipped classrooms, some of which are fitted with screens to facilitate distant learning. Additionally, a research library is available, with new books being purchased based on staff requests and the required and supplementary reading materials specified in the Academic Manual. While interlibrary loans are not possible, CTS does organise trips to KU Leuven for students wishing to access resources not available at CTS. Furthermore, the Seminary subscribes to Perlego, which is intensively used by students and, according to staff, has improved the students' research quality considerably. In addition to Perlego, CTS is subscribed to the EBSCO/ATLA database to support students in their research. CTS's Learning Management System (LMS) is NEO, and a demonstration during the site visit effectively demonstrated how its use enhances the students' learning process.

As the written documentation did not provide sufficient detail regarding the intended **teaching methodology**, the panel invited the staff to elaborate on this aspect. During the conversations, the panel learned that students frequently do preparatory work, such as reading assignments and exercises, which foster more and better interaction during class sessions. Encouraging personal involvement, even in more theoretical courses such as Biblical languages, and promoting critical thinking during class discussions are key strategies that allow teachers to bring theoretical concepts into practical application. The application of Biblical texts to personal

life from a Pentecostal perspective is a significant component of the courses. With small class sizes and a highly diverse student body (72 nationalities were represented last year), the exchanges among students and staff are experienced as meaningful and enriching by all parties.

According to the staff responsible for the programme, the small student numbers (between 28 and 35 over the past years) and the fact that most students live on campus, constitute the uniqueness of the Seminary and contribute to stronger **relationships between students and staff**. Students described their academic experience as highly personalised, with staff providing considerable guidance and support, both in academic and spiritual matters. In response to the panel's inquiry about the availability of an ombudsperson, students indicated that external assistance is rarely required. The panel itself observed the staff's strong commitment to supporting students throughout their academic and personal journeys. The fact that several staff members have been teaching at CTS longer than initially planned (the staff the panel spoke to, has been teaching at CTS between nine and 25 years), have moved their families to Belgium and have involved them in the CTS community, testifies to that.

The panel is convinced that CTS provides a supportive teaching and learning environment, where students feel safe and well-guided. It values the staff's personal guidance of the students but invites the former to consider how it might better structurally embed a gradual increase in the independence of the students' learning throughout the programme.

2.2.3 Assessment of students

In the initial accreditation file, CTS refers to the rubrics outlined in the Academic Handbook, which detail the marking criteria for each level of the programme and for essays. CTS also highlights the regular involvement of second markers for essays and written exams. Section 11 of the Academic Handbook contains ECTS course sheets, which specify the assessment methods for each course. While the panel found CTS's descriptions of its assessment methods to be succinct, it sought further clarification during the site visit to gain deeper insight into the assessment practices, particularly the role of second markers, the evaluation of the thesis, and the institution's fraud policy.

The intended staff clarified that a variety of **assessment methods** are employed, including written and oral exams, midterm and final written assignments, weekly literature reviews, presentations, or a combination of these, to evaluate both theoretical knowledge and practical application. The panel also inquired how CTS ensures that more practical subjects – such as liturgy, missiology, pastoral care, and preaching (as mentioned in the learning outcomes) – are practiced and assessed within the curriculum. The staff explained that these topics are addressed by integrating students' experiences from their local churches and by engaging in discussions on challenging topics, allowing for students to share different cultural perspectives. While the panel recognises the value of these activities and appreciates the inclusion of practical components in the assessments, it concluded that these efforts are insufficient to fully meet the scope of learning outcomes 6 and 7 (as discussed previously). With an internship as assessment method, CTS would be able to assess these learning outcomes. It would in that case have to ensure the quality of the internships and of the mentors in the work field. Nevertheless, the panel was satisfied with the breadth of assessment methods in use.

In its accreditation file (Appendix 33), CTS explains that it involves external examiners in its assessment process, reviewing the examination papers, assignments, and other evaluation

materials. Their primary objective is to verify the consistency and appropriateness of the grading standards applied internally. The panel questioned why **second markers** are not involved in oral examinations, given their occasional involvement in essays and written exams - second markers verify the grading of the first marker in their feedback forms - and their consistent involvement in thesis assessments. A staff member explained that CTS does not engage them in oral exams, but occasionally records these and uses transcripts as a basis for grading and for discussions with students. The panel considered this practice to be sufficient to ensure the objective grading of oral exams.

In the third year of the programme, the modules 'Thesis I & II' (worth 10 ECTS credits) introduce students to the process and methodologies required for writing a **research thesis**. The ECTS sheets outline the timeline, teaching and assessment methods. In 'Thesis 1', students select a thesis topic and familiarise themselves with research methodologies, while in 'Thesis 2' the professor responsible for the course works individually with students as they develop their theses. During this module students choose a professor to supervise their writing process. Faculty members reported that students work on a wide range of thesis topics, and distribution of supervision among staff is well-managed. Section 9 of the Academic Handbook stipulates the formal requirements for submitting the thesis. Based on its review of several undergraduate theses and written exam papers, the panel had doubts about the final academic level achieved in them, since in samples taken from both biblical and historical subjects, it appeared that the students were rather working from and relying on secondary literature than original sources. Additionally, if they used primary sources, they did not use critical editions or the Migne's Patrologia, for example. The panel therefore recommends CTS to better adapt the quality of theses and exam papers to learning outcomes 3 and 11.

CTS uses **Turnitin** and Google Originality Reports to detect plagiarism. Students are required to submit each written assignment via the Turnitin Similarity Report, which their professor then reviews. The goal is to protect students from both intentional and non-intentional plagiarism and to teach them proper research techniques in cases where the software flags potential academic dishonesty. During the conversations, the panel learned that CTS's policy on the use of **Chat GPT** permits students to use the software for text correction but prohibits its use for generating content.

Overall, the panel is confident that CTS has established a well-balanced and secure assessment policy for the courses, but it also established that the practical components of the programme are not assessed to a sufficient degree to fully meet the requirements of learning outcomes 6 and 7 (see discussion above).

2.2.4 Staff

The teaching staff at CTS primarily come from Protestant-Evangelical-Pentecostal ecclesiastical backgrounds and have at least a Master's degree in theological education, obtained from theological faculties or universities with Evangelical-Pentecostal distinctiveness, as well as from secular institutions or institutions of different religious affiliations. In addition to academic excellence, CTS prioritises teaching competence during the recruitment process, emphasising the ability to communicate effectively, foster critical thinking, and create an inclusive learning environment. CTS distinguishes between full-time teaching staff, who teach four or more courses per academic year, and part-time teaching staff, which includes adjunct teaching staff

(those teaching at least one module per academic year in an ongoing relationship with CTS) and visiting teaching staff (those invited to teach a specific module or for a limited period).

As the information CTS provided in its initial accreditation file regarding the competencies of its staff was not entirely transparent, the panel sought further clarification during the site visit regarding the **academic credentials** of staff without a PhD. The panel also noted from the CVs (Appendix 23) that several staff members teach an impressive range of diverse courses, and it aimed to ensure that such a wide variety of teaching responsibilities does not compromise the academic quality of the programme or place an excessive workload on the teaching staff.

CTS management explained that it consciously recruits people with diverse backgrounds to reflect the diversity it advocates. This diversity relates to diverse academic qualifications and diverse and professional (not necessarily Pentecostal) experience in different church settings. The staff responsible for the programme emphasised that CTS has dedicated significant effort to strengthening the programme: the preparation for the initial accreditation of the BA programme has influenced CTS's appointment policy in recent years, as the seminary has actively sought to hire new staff with PhDs while encouraging those holding only MA degrees to pursue doctoral studies. Although staff members have specific research interests, they describe themselves principally as generalists. Their research often overlaps with multiple courses. For example, one staff member who researches the usage of the Old Testament in Romans teaches both Hebrew and Romans. The staff thus affirmed that they teach a variety of courses while incorporating their own areas of expertise into their teaching.

When asked about balancing PhD studies with teaching responsibilities, the teaching staff noted that their research and teaching are closely related in terms of content, making the **workload** manageable. They also indicated that the number of courses they teach, as well as those they take as part of their PhD programmes, can be adjusted to ensure feasibility. The Dean confirmed that the distribution of modules is discussed annually with all teaching staff. However, progression of the PhDs of these staff members does not seem assured or incentivised.

Regarding the staff's **professional development**, the initial accreditation file states that student evaluations are a source of information indicating whether further professional or academic development is needed. Additionally, CTS offers monthly training on pedagogical topics, such as innovative teaching methods and the use of new technologies, as well as an annual retreat to discuss policies and set goals for the upcoming academic year. CTS management also encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research, providing dedicated budgets for staff development, including attendance at academic conferences and seminars. However, the initial accreditation file does not mention a formal **promotion policy**.

Given the panel's concerns that the current professional development initiatives might not be sufficient to ensure the academic excellence that CTS aspires to, and noting the apparent absence of a promotion policy, these topics were raised during discussions on the day of the site visit. The teaching staff explained that they have sufficient time to attend (online) seminars and conferences, and they noted that CTS hosted a prominent European conference a few years ago. The Dean of Graduate Studies organises an annual colloquium on Pentecostal studies, where external experts are invited to give lectures. CTS is a member of the European Pentecostal Theological Association (EPTA) which facilitates a Pentecostal theological forum for

scholarly discussion and collaboration. Additionally, CTS reported that there is regular collaboration with the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit (Leuven) and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam for predoctoral work. CTS management further noted that it encourages academic staff to publish their work and allows time for such activities. This was confirmed by a staff member, who mentioned that he and his colleagues are continuously seeking opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills. For example, one faculty member recently joined the editorial board of the peer reviewed Journal of Pentecostal & Charismatic Christianity as a co-editor. However, there are no financial incentives or formal promotion policies to support these initiatives or ensure that people advance in their PhDs, even though such progress is clearly advantageous to the institution (for example, the more members of teaching staff hold PhDs, the more members of CTS staff would be eligible for membership of relevant editorial boards).

In conclusion, the panel found that CTS staff are highly engaged with the institution and are deeply committed to personal growth, both as educators and researchers. While valuable initiatives are in place to support the academic quality of the programme and the staff's academic excellence, these efforts are highly reliant on individual initiative. The panel recommends that CTS institutionalises these initiatives to ensure their sustainability and continuity.

2.2.5 Continuous quality enhancement and involvement of internal and external stakeholders and of external peers and experts

Appendix 13 describes the Internal Quality Assurance Policy at CTS, which CTS has implemented to ensure the quality of its programme. Appendix 11 details that CTS's **curriculum review policy** is overseen and managed by the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) under the direction of the Provost. The review aims to assess the achievement of learning outcomes and final attainment levels. This process enables CTS to evaluate the content of individual courses, teaching methodologies, assigned coursework, and assessment methods. According to the documentation, these curriculum reviews occur at least every five years, with additional interim reviews if necessary. The review process involves identifying improvement areas, collecting and analysing relevant data, consulting stakeholders, developing and approving proposed changes, implementing them, and subsequently monitoring and evaluating their impact. The documents state that feedback is gathered from internal and external stakeholders such as teaching staff, students, alumni, professional fields, ecclesiastical organisations, employers, and external experts. Any modifications to the programme are agreed upon by the teaching staff and must be approved by the Leadership Team and the Board of Trustees.

Student feedback plays a crucial role in the curriculum review process and in the internal quality assurance policy as well. Anonymous feedback on courses, content, requirements, reading materials, and assessment methods is submitted to the Dean through semesterly course evaluations.

The **Student Association Council (SAC)**, elected by the student body, represents students' interests. SAC provides feedback to CTS's leadership, the AAC, and the Board of Trustees. The student representative who joined the discussion shared with the panel that she found the meetings with the Leadership Team initially slightly intimidating, but that the staff was receptive to adjusting matters to student needs. The student representative also attends Academic Affairs meetings, where curriculum matters are discussed. This representative

explained that student requests are filtered with the assistance of an advisor, and meetings with the Leadership Team occur every three weeks.

CTS reports progress on key performance indicators (KPIs) related to financial health and continuous improvement of CTS to the **Board of Trustees** at its bi-annual meetings (Appendix 22). The panel felt the documentation lacked details on CTS's strategies for achieving these goals, e.g. regarding clarity about the resources, the intermediate goals and the monitoring how these goals would be achieved. If, for instance, one of these goals were to employ only staff holding PhDs, the panel would not know whether there was enough funding for putting this goal into practice.

The documentation provided by CTS also mentions that **peer experts** contribute to the work of CTS. According to CTS, experts include theological partners, researchers, alumni, professional practitioners, and peer-review experts (including guest lecturers from peer institutions and external examiners). Representatives from religious partners in Belgium, such as the Verbond van Vlaamse Pinkstergemeenten (VVP) and Les assemblées de Dieu Francophones de Belgique (ADFB), are also involved. Additionally, collaborations with other institutions and religious organisations with whom CTS has established Memorandums of Understanding, provide external input.

The panel wanted to gain a clearer insight in how these external parties had impacted the curriculum design of the new bachelor programme. The conversation with the **professional representatives** revealed that they had not yet seen the programme outline. While they noticed the programme's emphasis on Biblical languages and its academic rigour, they emphasised the need for the training of practical communication and coaching skills. The chairman of the French-speaking Belgian Assemblies of God and a member of the Board of Trustees recalled being consulted on the importance of an accredited English-language bachelor programme, but not on the actual contents of the programme. Although both interlocutors agreed that the frequency of conversations with CTS has increased in recent years, they reported these discussions have largely been personal. They expressed their willingness to participate in more structured exchanges on curriculum related topics.

Also, the programme comparisons CTS conducted (Appendix 15) could have included reports of conversations and interviews with those responsible of the related programmes and documentation on how this exercise impacted the curriculum design of the new programme (see discussion above).

During the additional discussion with the President, the Dean, the Provost and the Dean of Graduate Studies, the panel sought to understand the extent to which the **exchanges with external peers are institutionalised** rather than dependent on personal relationships and individual engagement. The leadership affirmed that participation in initiatives, e.g. in the conference of the Pentecostal European Fellowship, is institutional because staff is invited as CTS staff and not in a personal capacity. They shared examples of contacts and collaborations with other academic and theological institutions, such as a colloquium organised with KU Leuven's Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, which led to a Master's thesis collaboration, the involvement of external examiners, and guest lectures from the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven. The Memorandums of Understanding (Appendix 32) were also mentioned.

The panel concluded that while internal quality assurance mechanisms, including student representation, are reasonably well-organised, they still are somewhat informal. Given the institution's small size, this is understandable. However, CTS anticipates a student body growth of 60 students by autumn 2027, which may necessitate a more formal and institutionalised student representation process. The panel appreciates CTS's initiatives to gather alumni feedback and encourages the institution to further strengthen these.

While different useful initiatives concerning quality assurance are in place, the panel is concerned that they rely too heavily on the personal initiative of staff members and do not structurally feed into the quality of the programme. The panel recommends that CTS formalises its processes and best practices, making them quantifiable and documenting them in policy documents shared with all involved. CTS would also benefit from structural commitments such as organising an annual academic conference on a relevant topic and ensuring that at least one staff member serves on the editorial board of an influential academic journal. These steps would make CTS's external connections more sustainable, explicit and visible, especially to external stakeholders and potential academic staff.

Finally, the panel noted that the professional field and external peers have not been sufficiently consulted in the curriculum design and in quality assurance processes. It urges CTS to gather input from the relevant external stakeholders and peers during both the curriculum design phase and subsequent evaluations of the programme.

3 Judgement

Following the comprehensive investigation into the potential quality of the *Bachelor in Pentecostal Theology and Biblical Studies*, the panel concludes that the new programme does not meet the assessment ground as set out in the assessment framework for 'Initial Accreditation'. Consequently, the panel recommends that the NVAO takes a negative initial accreditation decision.

The panel valued the academic approach of the new programme and understands the need for a practical approach within the Pentecostal tradition. The learning outcomes align with Level 6 of the FQF. During the discussions the panel met committed people, who embody the Seminary's vision and mission and are highly engaged with the institution and with the students' education and welfare. The panel is convinced that CTS provides a supportive teaching and learning environment, where students feel safe and well-guided. CTS has established a well-balanced and secure assessment policy for the courses.

However, the panel urges CTS to address the following two conditions:

CTS needs to make sure that the learning objectives, the curriculum, and the assessment processes are fully aligned. If some of the programme-specific learning outcomes contain that students learn to "explain and *practice* Pentecostal ecclesiological vocation" or "demonstrate theoretical and *practical* competencies", CTS should make sure that all activities which are essential for achieving these programme's learning outcomes are part of the curriculum and are formally assessed.

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Finally, the panel encourages CTS to take the following recommendations into consideration:

To fully realise the objective of the benchmarking exercise, CTS should incorporate learning outcomes and the content of the course subjects into the benchmarking exercise and validate this comparison with the other institutions.

CTS could strengthen its procedures to monitor the academic quality of theses and written exam papers by streamlining them with the stated learning outcomes (e.g. regarding the use of primary sources).

While valuable initiatives are in place to support the academic quality of the programme and the staff's academic excellence, these efforts are highly reliant on individual initiative. In order to make these initiatives less dependent on personal relationships and individual engagement the panel recommends that CTS institutionalises them, by making them quantifiable and documenting them in policy documents shared with all involved. This could also include the formalising of promotion procedures for staff.

4 Review process

The assessment was carried out in line with the 'Assessment framework initial accreditation – June 2020'.

The panel prepared itself for the assessment based on the information file submitted by the institution when applying for accreditation. Prior to the preparatory meeting of the panel, each panel member formulated initial impressions and questions were listed. During a preparatory online meeting on September 9th, 2024, the panel discussed all information received in the application file and prepared the dialogue with the programme. Impressions and questions were updated before the dialogue with the institution.

The dialogue took place on September 18th.

During the dialogue the panel investigated the context of the programme and the institution and collected all required information to make a judgement on the quality of the programme.

During a closed meeting of the panel on September 18th the panel discussed all information obtained and translated it into a holistic judgement. The panel took this conclusion in full independence.

All information obtained led to a draft assessment report that has been sent to all panel members. The feedback from the panel members has been processed. The assessment report adopted by the chair was submitted to NVAO on October 16th.

Annex 1: Administrative data regarding the institution and the programme

Institution	Continental Theological Seminary
Address, institution website	Kasteelstraat 48 – 1600 Sint-Pieters-Leeuw https://www.ctsem.edu/
Status institution	Registered institution
Programme	Bachelor in Pentecostal Theology and Biblical Studies
Level and orientation	Academic Bachelor
(Additional) title	
(Parts of) field of study(s)	ISCED 0221 Religion and Pentecostal Theology
Specialisations	
Programme routes	Full-time, part-time and evening seminars and classes for working students
Location where the programme is offered	Kasteelstraat 48, 1600 Sint-Pieters-Leeuw
Teaching language	English
Study load (in credits)	180
New training in Flanders	yes
Programme-specific learning outcomes	<i>See next page</i>
Connecting options and potential further education	Master's Studies related to the field of Biblical Studies and Pentecostal Theology or Religious Studies.

Annex 2: Programme-specific learning outcomes

1. Apply knowledge of biblical Hebrew and NT Greek for Research and Pentecostal Exegesis;
2. Demonstrate knowledge of Pentecostal epistemology, logical thinking and argumentation;
3. Critically discuss biblical texts applying exegetical methodologies as an expression of a biblical Pentecostal hermeneutical framework to texts from OT and NT books;
4. Accomplish research, analysis and synthesis issues of systematic Pentecostal Theology, particularly from a Pentecostal perspective seen within the wider context of other potential perspectives;
5. Understand and critically interpret essential issues of the history of Pentecostal Theology and the church from the beginning to the present time;
6. Explain and practice Pentecostal ecclesiological vocation in the areas of Pentecostal music, liturgy, and missiology;
7. Demonstrate theoretical and practical competencies in the complex area of pastoral Pentecostal Theology, psychology, counselling and preaching;
8. Make judgments in the context of Christian Ethics, particularly in a Pentecostal context.
9. Gather and interpret relevant data in cross-cultural communication in an international Pentecostal context.
10. Critically evaluate and combine knowledge and insights in teaching religion, Biblical Studies, and Pentecostal Theology in both ecclesial and non-ecclesial contexts.
11. Utilise academic norms in form, content, and methodology for independent research and essay writing based on primary and secondary sources to identify complex theoretical problems in the area of Biblical Studies and Pentecostal Theology, and suggest compelling solutions by utilising critical, analytical, logical, well-informed, and creative thinking in the context of writing a BA thesis.

Annex 3: Composition of the panel

The assessment was made by a panel of experts convened and appointed by the NVAO. The panel is composed as follows:

Prof. dr. Annemarie Mayer (*chair*), professor of Dogmatics and the History of Dogma at the Faculty of Theology, Trier, Germany

Prof. dr. Andrew Davies (*panel member*), Director, Edward Cadbury Centre and Professor of Public Religion at School of Philosophy, Theology & Religion, University of Birmingham

Ms. Ds. Joline van Poppel (*panel member*), Gemeentepredikant bij de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland.

Ms. Linde Van den Eede (*student panel member*), PhD Fellow Fundamental Research (FWO Vlaanderen). She graduated as a Research Master: Master of Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion (major History of Church and Theology) at KU Leuven in June 2024.

The panel was assisted by:

Veerle Martens, policy advisor Flanders NVAO, process coordinator.

Inge Verbeeck, secretary.

All panel members and the process coordinator/secretary have signed NVAO's code of ethics.

Annex 4: Schedule of the site visit

September 18th

Kasteelstraat 48, 1600 Sint-Pieters-Leeuw, Belgium
CTS Conference Room

08:30-09:00 AM	Reception, closed meeting of the committee	
09:00-09:30 AM	Meeting of the committee with the institutional management	President, Vice-President of Operations
9:30-9:45 AM	Coffee break	
09:45-11:00 AM	Meeting of the committee with the staff responsible for the programme	Provost, Dean of Graduate Studies, Administrative Assistant, Registrar, Academic Dean, Ombudsperson
11:00-11:30 AM	Coffee break and closed meeting of the committee	
11:30 AM – 12:30 PM	Meeting of the committee with the 'Intended Teachers' of the programme	five intended teachers
12:30-1:45 PM	Lunch and closed meeting of the committee	
1:45-2:15 PM	Introduction into NEO and brief campus tour	
2:15-3:15 PM	Meeting of the committee with students of CTS (including students from the programmes as they are running now)	Three third years students, two second year students, one alumna
3:15-4:00 PM	Meeting of the committee with representatives of the professional field	Chairman VVP, Chairman French-speaking Belgian Assemblies of God
4:00-4:15 PM	Additional meeting with management, responsible staff and teachers of the programme	Dean, President, Provost, Dean of Graduate Studies
4:15-5:30 PM	Closed meeting of the committee and preparing for closing reflections	
5:50-6:45 PM	Closing reflections, meeting between committee and representatives of the programme	

Annex 5: Overview of the material studied

Self-Assessment Report

Annexes to the Self-Assessment Report

- Appendix 1: administrative data regarding the institution
- Appendix 2: administrative data regarding the programme
- Appendix 3: domain-specific learning outcomes
- Appendix 4: corresponding programmes in Flemish higher education system
- Appendix 5: schematic overview of entire curriculum
- Appendix 6: curriculum components
- Appendix 7: teaching staff description
- Appendix 8: contacts with the professional field
- Appendix 9: information technology
- Appendix 10: administrative staff development opportunities
- Appendix 11: curriculum review policy
- Appendix 12: academic progress policy
- Appendix 13: internal quality assurance policy
- Appendix 14: program learning outcomes and Flemish qualification framework
- Appendix 15: programme comparison
- Appendix 16: teaching staff roles and responsibilities
- Appendix 17: Assemblies of God ecclesiastical requirements and competencies
- Appendix 18: admission requirements
- Appendix 19: large language model policy
- Appendix 20: cts gdpr privacy notice
- Appendix 21: student recognition policy
- Appendix 22: key performance indicators
- Appendix 23: teaching staff curriculum vitae
- Appendix 25: counsellors and advisors
- Appendix 26: board of trustees
- Appendix 28: academic handbook
- Appendix 29: European credit transfer accumulation system standards
- Appendix 30: plagiarism policy
- Appendix 31: accommodations policy and process
- Appendix 32: memorandums of understanding
- Appendix 33: external examiners
- Appendix 34: external examiner Aaldert Prins
- Appendix 35: Cees van der Laan
- Appendix 36: Rob Faesen
- Appendix 37: Thomas a Vollmer
- Investment Plan BA Program 26032024
- Academic Handbook

Documents made available during or leading up to the dialogue

- Supplemental Appendix to the Initial Accreditation File (on student enrollment, teaching and assessment methodology, bachelorate thesis final marks, faculty curriculum vitae summary, appendix 15: programme comparison data)
- Corrected exams and theses (links for online access)
- Updated version of appendix 5 (schematic overview of entire curriculum)
- Updated version of Section 5 of Academic Handbook (programme outline)
- Link to the Academic Affairs Minutes and link to Teaching Staff minutes of the last year (*arrived too late for being taken into account*)

Annex 6: List of abbreviations

AAC	Academic Affairs Committee
ECTS	European Credit according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EPTA	European Pentecostal Theological Association
FQF	Flemish Qualifications Framework
CTS	Continental Theological Seminary
LMS	Learning Management System
NVAO	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie)
SAC	Student Association Council

Colofon

BACHELOR IN PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

CONTINENTAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (VL01T-24)

Initial accreditation Assessment report

October 16th, 2024

Composition: NVAO Vlaanderen



Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie
Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders

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