The Research, Development, and Creative Activities Strategy of the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary for 2024-2028

The Research, Development, and Creative Activities Strategy of the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary (hereinafter referred to as the Seminary) is based on the vision presented in the BMTS development plan:

> to be an educational and competence centre that offers students a life-changing learning experience through an engaging educational process, meeting the needs of both the church and society. In addition to providing contemporary theological higher education, it aims to create opportunities for continuing education, being recognized both nationally and internationally.

The BMTS Research, Development, and Creative Activities Strategy (hereinafter referred to as RDC) outlines the goals, necessary actions to achieve them, and key metrics for the seminary's RDC from 2024 to 2028.

Based on the mission of BMTS, the central goal of this RDC is the cultivation, development, and popularization of practical theology through creative activities based on scientific research and its expressions.

Practical Theology at BMTS

The core of research and creative work at BMTS is practical theology, which encompasses a wide range of activities. A significant part of this involves traditional academic research—both in the form of theological and applied theological research articles, as well as historical studies concerning the EMK and Methodism more broadly, which are introduced to the general public through various media channels.

Both faculty and students at the seminary are engaged in publishing popular science articles (both in the EMK magazine “Koduteel” and elsewhere). The seminary is also involved in the publication and distribution of theological translations.

The seminary’s curricula place a strong emphasis on preparing new pastors, where homiletics, or the art of preaching, plays an essential role. Preparing sermons requires both theological and other types of research, combined with literary and rhetorical dimensions. Therefore, sermons can be considered an independent creative work within the context of practical theology. In addition to students, homiletics is also practiced by the seminary’s faculty and alumni, and BMTS is involved in the publication and promotion of sermon collections.

The seminary organizes continuing education courses, open lectures, and discussion evenings to popularize practical theology, aimed at members of various churches as well as a broader audience. International conferences are also organized.

BMTS has long been involved in mission work directed at Finno-Ugric minority groups, engaging faculty, students, and alumni. Ethnological material collected during these trips is used in teaching and thematic exhibitions. As a result of the established contacts, the first Komi and

Udmurt individuals received Protestant theological higher education. If opportunities arise, BMTS is interested in resuming activities directed at Finno-Ugric minority groups.

While the implementation of activities related to research, development, and creative work has been project-based so far, the goal of this strategy is to create a structural framework.

RDC Goals, Priorities, and Activities

1. **BMTS systematically increases competence in academic research and general scientific work.**
    - Priority Research Areas:
        - Church history (personalities, work areas, different periods)
        - Internal dynamics and resilience of congregations (involvement, growth, work areas, etc.)
        - Church and society (relationships with the community, mental health, social work)
    - Research Organization:
        - Participation in research projects (writing research proposals and applying for funding)
        - Full-time faculty publish at least one research article every three years.
        - The seminary offers opportunities for publication through the preparation of thematic professional collections.
        - At least half of the theses are defended in prioritized research areas.
2. **BMTS systematically contributes to the creation of new teaching and church work materials.**
    - Creation of higher education teaching materials
    - Creation of materials for pastors
    - Development of guidance materials and methodologies for youth and children's work
    - Development of guidance materials for other areas
3. **BMTS serves as a competence center for church workers and the congregation.**
    - Availability of relevant research and student work on various platforms
    - Conducting relevant studies
    - Organizing open continuing education courses
    - Enhancing the qualifications of church workers and the congregation through appropriate training and materials
4. **BMTS RDC is of high quality and internationally recognized.**
    - Project-based collaboration with Estonian and foreign universities
    - Organizing international conferences and training courses
    - High-quality multilingual learning environment
    - Regular participation of seminary faculty in international research mobility
    - Increasing the proportion of academic staff with doctoral degrees
5. **Preparations for the opening of master's level education.**
    - Development and accreditation of the master's level curriculum
    - Opening of master's level education in the 2026/2027 academic year

Strategy Implementation

The implementation of the strategy is organized by the seminary’s Director of Research and Development. The implementation of the RDC strategy is monitored by the Rector's Council and heads of structural units, and necessary management decisions are made as needed.

At least once a year, a discussion on the implementation of the strategy is held with the Rector's Council and heads of structural units.

Key Metrics

Appendix 1. List of key indicators.

Goals / Indicators by Year	31.12 2024	31.12 2025	31.12 2026	31.12 2027	31.12 2028
1. BMTS systematically engages in academic research and general scholarly work, expanding competencies					
Number of scientific publications per year	2	3	4	4	5
Publication of thematic collections	1			1	
Share of defended final theses in priority research areas	>15%	>20%	>25%	>30%	>33%
Number of active research projects	0	1	1	2	2
2. BMTS systematically contributes to the creation of new teaching and church work field guidance materials					
Number of published teaching materials for different church fields	1	2	2	3	3
Published teaching and guidance materials for various church work fields	1	1	2	2	3
3. BMTS operates as a competence center for church workers and the broader community					
Number of relevant studies per year	1	2	2	3	3
Church-related scientific and student works available on various platforms	Qualitative indicator				
Number of continuing education courses offered per year	2	3	4	4	5
4. BMTS TAL is high-level and internationally recognized					
Number of organized international conferences and seminars per year	1	1	2	2	2
International mobility of academic staff (number of mobile workers per year)	1	2	3	4	5
Employee satisfaction with TAL support services	Qualitative indicator				
Share of doctoral academic staff, FTE	28%	30%	30%	33%	35%
5. Opening of master's level programs					
Formulation of the master's program curriculum	Qualitative indicator				
Accreditation of the master's program	Qualitative indicator				
Opening of master's program in 2026/2027 academic year	Qualitative indicator				