



## ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE at CHÂTEAU DE BOSSEY

Chemin Chenevière 2, 1279 Bogis-Bossey, Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 960 7300 Fax: +41 22 960 73 67  
Email: Bossey\_Admissions@wcc-coe.org www.bossey.ch

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON ACADEMIC PROGRAMME

**Q=Question, A=Answer**

Following is a collection of the most frequently asked questions and are aimed to help the candidates. If after reading them all carefully, you still have another question, please, contact Bossey\_Admissions@wcc-coe.org.

#### **Q: What is the Ecumenical Institute?**

**A:** The Ecumenical Institute is the international centre for formation, encounter and dialogue of the World Council of Churches. Founded in 1946, the Institute brings together people from different church traditions, cultures and backgrounds for ecumenical learning, academic study and personal exchange. The Institute is attached to the University of Geneva through the Autonomous Faculty of Protestant Theology.

#### **Q: What study programmes does the Ecumenical Institute offer?**

**A:** The current annual academic programme consists of:

- Complementary Certificate (CC) in Ecumenical Studies/*le Certificat complémentaire d'études œcuméniques* [autumn semester (September-January) of any given academic year/30 ECTS credits]
- Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in Ecumenical Studies/*le Certificat de formation continue en études œcuméniques* [autumn semester (September-January) of any given academic year/25 ECTS credits]

Note: The Complementary Certificate in Ecumenical Studies and Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in Ecumenical Studies replace the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies held during 1952-2010.

- Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) in Ecumenical Studies/*la Maîtrise universitaire d'études avancées en études œcuméniques* [one academic year (September-June) 60 ECTS credits]

The tuition language at the Ecumenical Institute is English, those needing improvement in this language and who have applied to the study programmes listed above, may also apply to:

- English as a Tool for Ecumenical Formation: Intensive English Summer Course [three months from mid-June]
- Doctorate in Theology (Mention Ecumenical Studies/*Doctorat en théologie (Mention sciences œcuméniques)*)

Note: The Doctorate in Theology is a non-residential programme. A pre-requisite prior to the application for enrolment is a successful completion of the Master of Advanced Studies in Ecumenical Studies –degree.

- Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in Interreligious Studies/*le Certificat de formation continue en études interreligieuses* [spring semester (June-July) of any given academic year/10 ECTS credits, blended learning composed of a three-week distance learning component and a three-week intensive residential period of study, research and community life]

**Q: What is the difference between CAS and CC study programmes?**

**A:** CC has more ECTS credits compared to CAS and is part of what may be defined as classical graduate courses within the University of Geneva. CAS belongs to the continuing education offer of the University of Geneva. Please, see the next question in relation to the admission criteria and accreditation of the previous studies.

**Q: Among the admission criteria “accreditation by the University of Geneva of the applicant’s upper secondary and post-secondary studies” is mentioned. What does this mean in practice?**

**A:** The Ecumenical Institute is attached to the University of Geneva and hence follows its accreditation policy. Currently the primary reference guides, used to assess the accreditation of the post-secondary studies in universities and university-level institutions (i.e. offer at least a post-graduate degree), are the World Higher Education Database (WHED) or International Handbook of Universities, both managed by the International Association of Universities (IAU)/UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Information Centre on Higher Education. These offer updated authoritative information, deriving from the official sources i.e. competent national authority or academic body in each country or territory listed (the designations as used in the United Nations system) on higher education system and details of quality assurance and recognition systems.

To gain admission to the CC/MAS/DTh. courses, which are graduate courses within the University of Geneva matriculation qualifications as regular students apply. In practice the university or the university-level institution from where you have earned your Bachelor or Master level degree, is to offer doctoral/research level studies and be listed in the primary reference guides in the section of public institutions.

Completion of a minimum Bachelor level course in theology, or a portfolio considered equivalent, provides admission to the CAS course, which belongs to the continuing education offer of the University of Geneva and for which matriculation as a regular student is not necessary.

**Q: Do I need to send the application form and the appendices at the same time?**

**A:** It is preferable that you send all documents at the same time. However, what is finally most important that all of them are RECEIVED at the Ecumenical Institute by the delay i.e. 30 November proceeding the academic year to which you wish to apply for. In case you send documents separately, ensure that there is a cover letter indicating clearly your name.

**Q: Why application materials should be unstapled and without scotch tape, but the photo is to be glued to the application form?**

**A:** Application materials should remain as immaculate as possible. Staples, scotch tape, etc. leave holes and stains. In addition administrative time increases significantly when documents need to be unstapled and scotch tape, etc. removed. Loose photos simply get easily lost.

**Q: Can I send application dossier electronically?**

**A:** Yes. If you do so, please,

**Q: How do I know if my handwriting is legible?**

**A:** Give your filled in form to be read aloud by someone else and the illegible parts, if any, usually reveal themselves.

**Q: Should I send original certificates?**

**A:** No, you should not send original certificates with your application. However, be aware that should you become admitted, certified copies (i.e. a photocopy of a primary document that has on it an endorsement or certificate that it is a true copy of the primary document) will be requested at the time of enrolment to the University of Geneva and the originals must be presented to confirm the enrolment at the beginning of the studies.

**Q: When do I know if I am admitted?**

**A:** The admission decisions are normally made during February preceding the beginning of the academic year in September. All candidates are informed in writing whether or not they are admitted to study at the Ecumenical Institute.

**Q: I was admitted to one of the academic programmes, but could not begin my studies. How can I defer my studies?**

**A:** The present policy of the Ecumenical Institute is not to defer any admission from one academic year to another. You need to re-apply within the regular application process for the academic year you wish to be re-considered. Since the applications pool is unique every year, it is not possible give any kind of promise that you would be re-admitted. However, the trend during the previous years has been that those who were already once admitted and could not begin their studies for valid reasons, have been usually re-admitted provided they are still within the scope of the academic excellence of the particular application pool they re-apply.

**Q: How much do I need to pledge to contribute financially in order to get a scholarship?**

**A:** Each applicant is requested to make a minimum pledge (ie promise to pay) of CHF 100.00 as a financial contribution towards the study course costs. This is a strict minimum amount and in addition to this amount, each applicant is expected to pledge honestly the maximum according to his or her ability. In case the applicant is admitted the total pledged amount is to be paid as a confirmation of the acceptance of the study place. While the amount of the pledge does not greatly influence the scholarship grant, it may be taken into consideration when very restricted amenities, such as single rooms must be allocated.

**Q: What does a partial scholarship award cover?**

**A:** The partial scholarship award is towards the total course costs: Swiss student residence and UNIGE fees, tuition, health insurance, study visits and board & lodging.

**Q: What costs are the responsibility of the admitted student?**

**A:** Return international and local travel expenses to and from the Ecumenical Institute (located in Bogis-Bossey, Switzerland), all personal travel related expenses (such as passport, visas(s), vaccination(s), any Covid-19 pandemic related tests/medical certificates/other required processes in order to travel, travel insurance, etc.) are always the responsibility of the admitted student.

**Q: Where does the board and lodging take place?**

**A:** The board includes breakfast, lunch and dinner, which all take place in the self-service restaurant *Orangerie* of the main building *Château de Bossey* in the same space where the guests of the conference centre also have their meals. The lodging is in Petit-Bossey, the legendary building, where the students have resided during the past decades. It is located on the campus, app. 350 meters from the main Château building. It is a charming countryside house built on the 18th century with all the unique features of the time. The building was renovated in 2005 and all 31 rooms and common facilities located on each floor in the corridors (wash/bathrooms) modernized.

**Q: Are there any scholarships for travel related expenses?**

**A:** No, there are no scholarships through the Ecumenical Institute at all for any travel related expenses.

**Q: Where can I look for funds for my pledge and travel expenses?**

**A:** Each individual situation is different and depends on the context. Here are some ideas where one may search for financial support: your church, any foundations, your government may support studies, any organization you are involved, your parish, any private service provider known among your network, your school/university, your family, friends(s), etc.). Searching for financial support requires efforts, at times well documented applications. However, without asking, you will get nothing.

**Q: What happens if I do not indicate a pledge in the scholarship application form?**

**A:** Your dossier is treated as an incomplete one, which naturally has an adverse effect on admission possibility.

**Q: If I am admitted to study at the Ecumenical Institute, I want to bring my spouse and/or children with me to Switzerland. Is this possible?**

**A:** The temporary residence permit as student in Canton of Vaud, which the students of the Ecumenical Institute apply for, does not allow to bring any family members as residents. Furthermore the student accommodation (single/double rooms with wash basins, common bathrooms in the corridor, no cooking facilities) is not meant for family life.

The family members may visit Switzerland and stay up to the maximum time allowed in their visitor visa, if applicable, or up to 90 days if EU citizen. Any visiting family member(s) must be booked their own room through the reception of the Ecumenical Institute. Please, visit the website to consult the available accommodation types and costs, which are naturally fully to be covered by the visitors.

**Q: I have never studied theology. Can I apply for your academic programmes?**

**A:** One of the admission criteria to all academic programmes is a university bachelor's degree certificate in Christian theology, or in a closely related discipline. If you do not have this certificate, you are not eligible to apply.

**Q: I don't have university bachelor's degree or upper secondary school study certificate. Can I apply for your academic programmes?**

**A:** No, you can't. The Ecumenical Institute is attached to the University of Geneva and offers academic courses on a graduate level ie after university bachelor degree level. Every applicant must have completed both the upper secondary and under-graduate studies up to the first university level degree, normally a bachelor's degree, prior to making an application.

**Q: I don't have university master's degree. Can I apply for Master of Advanced Studies in Ecumenical Studies degree programme?**

**A:** No, you can't. The requisite for the Master of Advanced Studies in Ecumenical Studies degree course is a copy of a Master's degree certificate, transcript of records and a copy of the Master thesis. MAS course can be applied for after university Master degree level is secured. If you do not have these documents, you are not eligible to apply.

**Q: What does upper secondary school mean?**

**A:** Upper secondary school is the second stage of secondary education for students typically aged 16–18 preparing for tertiary/adult education or providing skills relevant to employment. An upper secondary school may be called, according to the context, in English for example secondary school, high school/senior high school and in French for example college, lycée, gymnasium.

**Q: I want to apply, but I don't have a passport. Can I let you have the passport details later?**

**A:** Yes, as long as it reaches the Ecumenical Institute by the deadline i.e. 30 November, preceding the academic year to which you wish to apply for.

**Q: Your school seems to be a boarding school. Can I, however, do my studies as a non-resident student?**

**A:** Due to the importance the community life plays within the overall study experience, there has been very few exceptional cases when a non-resident student has been admitted. Furthermore the experience is that it takes much more commitment to follow the studies as a non-resident student due to the irregular schedule lasting from early morning until the late evening and one needs to be very well organized to cope with the various logistical challenges.

**Q: How many students are admitted?**

**A:** The Ecumenical Institute can welcome annually up to 65 resident students. Usually 10 students follow the MAS degree programme, while others follow either the CC, CAS-ES or CAS-IS courses.

Maximum 15 students can attend the summer English course, prior to either MAS/CC/CAS-ES course.

**Q: Does the Ecumenical Institute have quotas for a particular region or denominations?**

**A:** No. Each academically qualified applicant is equal within the pool of all applicants of any given academic year. However, as the aim is to create a balanced student body, especially in terms of geographic context, church tradition and gender, this may or may not increase or decrease the admission possibility of any particular candidate.

**Q: What are ECTS credits?**

**A:** The ECTS system (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) allows for an overview of educational course based on the associated credits. These credits express the workload expected from the student in view of all the courses offered throughout the semester. A semester is equal to 30 ECTS credits; 1 ECTS credit corresponds to approximately 25-30 hours of student workload. Credits are awarded once a student has successfully completed the course.

**Q: Is there an age limit for applying?**

**A:** In principle, there is no age limit for applying to a course. However, they are meant for emerging ecumenical leaders. Also, obtaining a residence permit as a student may prove to be challenging for those above 30 years of age, unless the reasons for studies are well grounded and documented.

**Q: Must I have my official documents translated (diplomas, transcripts, etc.)?**

**A:** Any documents that are not written in English, French, German, Italian or Spanish must be accompanied by a certified translation.

**Q: How are applicants selected and who takes the decision?**

**A:** The decision to admit a student is taken by a Scientific Committee/Programme Steering Committee composed of representatives of the Ecumenical Institute and the Autonomous Faculty of Protestant Theology of the University of Geneva. The admissions process is selective and rigorous. In general, the Committee decides on the basis of the academic results, the letters of recommendation, the personal statement and the overall quality of the application file. This includes work-experience, extracurricular involvement and language skills.

**Q: Can I appeal against the decision to reject my application?**

**A:** No, you can't.

**Q: What is the Ecumenical Institute's language policy?**

**A:** The tuition language of the Ecumenical Institute is English. If the candidate is not English native speaker or has not studied in an English-taught undergraduate programme, s/he needs to prove the English language proficiency by providing appropriate documentation. In order to study at the graduate level the minimum required language level in the tuition language is B2 (Independent user) according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). When applying for the temporary residence permit as student, the appropriate language proficiency documentation may constitute a crucial element in the decision making by the competent authorities.

**Q: How does Covid-19 pandemic influence the studies at the Ecumenical Institute?**

**A:** The Ecumenical Institute follows all measures, which are in place to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff in compliance with the directives from the Swiss authorities in relation to Covid-19 pandemic at any given time.

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