

Memorandum of Understanding

between the

The Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

and

Deputies Theological Training of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa

This memorandum of understanding pertains to the support of theological education for students of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) who plan to come to the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) for their training for the ministry.

A. Background

1. CRTS understands that the FRCSA have some unique needs concerning theological education which include, but are not limited to, the following: a) their students come from diverse backgrounds, levels of education, and language groups; b) their theological training is pulled together from various “service providers”; c) tertiary education in South Africa does not always have consistent standards. As encouraged by the CanRC synods, Burlington 2010, Carman 2013 and Dunnville 2016, CRTS agrees to give heartfelt assistance to the FRCSA deputies in ways that address their specific needs.
2. The FRCSA deputies understand that CRTS is a seminary that is accredited by ATS, an agency that also has specific regulations concerning extension and distance education programs. The FRCSA deputies agree that when they make requests for assistance they will bear this fact in mind, realizing that as CRTS extends assistance it also has to uphold the integrity of the on-campus educational programs at CRTS and these ATS regulations.
3. CRTS takes note of the FRCSA Synod decisions that students have to follow first a three-year BA degree at a South African university close to their home church, which will be followed by a Master of Divinity degree at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton, Canada. However, Synod Belhar 2021 also decided: “In special circumstances, to consider adaptations of this trajectory to fit the particular needs of a student.” As grounds for this decision are mentioned:
 - a. It should not be viewed as a ‘one size fits all’ solution to theological training that has to serve the FRCSA in its multicultural and complex socio-economic contexts.
 - b. The context of the FRCSA churches requires a solution to the contextual challenges of both churches and students.
 - c. Deputies for Theological Training should make sure that the outcome standard of the different programmes should be as equal as possible. Adaptations should therefore aim at enabling students to attain the highest levels.
4. Although CRTS has developed online and hybrid models of training, the FRCSA are in agreement with CRTS’s principle in this regard: in-person training at CRTS as much as possible and online training as much as is necessary.

B. Financial Support of Students

The guiding principle of this agreement is that financial support for students for the ministry from the FRCSA will be a shared responsibility between the FRCSA, as represented by the Deputies, and the Foreign Student Bursary Fund (FSBF) which is administered by a committee appointed by the Board of CRTS. Each party will share in the responsibility according to the circumstances in which the Lord has placed them and the financial blessings he has given to them.

1. Division of expenses

- a. As a rule, the FRCSA will pay for tuition fees, all travel to and from South Africa, medical insurance, and books.
- b. The FSBF will cover the other cost of living expenses such as housing, utilities, groceries, transportation (excluding the purchase of a vehicle), and other regular expenses listed in the CRTS Cost of Living table on its website. How this is best paid out will be determined by the FSBF committee.
- c. If the FRCSA is able to raise funds for a particular student beyond the commitment outlined above, the first option to consider is whether these funds could be used to reduce the amount of assistance required from the FSBF.
- d. In the event that an FRCSA student owns a home in South Africa, the Deputies are responsible for determining whether (and if so, how) this should factor into the support the student receives. Funds from the FSBF may not be used for any expenses related to housing in South Africa.

2. Application of support

- a. Students from the FRCSA must meet all admission requirements and follow the usual application process as outlined on the CRTS website for admission to CRTS.
- b. Students from the FRCSA seeking support from the FSBF must complete the support application process as laid out by the FSBF committee. This includes a letter of request and a completed budget form.

3. Conditions of support

- a. According to its guidelines (Appendix 1), the FSBF works with the premise that when they complete their studies, foreign students will: a) return to their country of origin and b) begin to serve in the ministry or related service. In such cases *no* repayment to the FSBF is expected. However, in exceptional cases, when the student does not return to his home country or does not enter the ministry, the FSBF reserves the right to seek repayment of the funds given within a five-year period (see item 2.4 in Appendix 1). At the same time, the FSBF understands that it may not always be possible for a student to return to South Africa immediately after his graduation. The vacancies within the FRCSA at that point in time may be such that it is advisable for the student to enter the ministry in a sister church, while at the same time keeping open the option of returning to the FRCSA in the future. If such a situation should arise, this can be discussed between the Deputies and the FSBF committee under provision 2.5 in the mandate (Appendix 1).
- b. In the case that a South African student does not enter the ministry and cannot repay the (full) amount to the FSBF, the Deputies and FSBF committee will discuss how the financial burden of that situation will be shared, in accordance with the guiding principle outlined above.

4. Communication

- a. In order for the relationship between CRTS and the Deputies to succeed, open lines of communication must be maintained, particularly with financial arrangements. Correspondence between parties will be addressed and responded to within a reasonable amount of time.
- b. Annually, the Deputies will communicate to the FSBF committee regarding future students from the FRCSA. They will try, if possible, to give two (2) years advance notice of any theological students from the FRCSA who plan to come to CRTS, including whether he is single or married with children. In this way, if the FSBF needs to top up its balance to support another student, it has adequate time to solicit donations.

C. Faculty Visits to South Africa

1. In order to strengthen the relationship between the FRCSA and CRTS, every three years a professor from CRTS will visit the FRCSA for at least one week and give lectures to the FRCSA and their theological students.
2. The timing for this visit will usually fall between May and August when CRTS is not in session. The exact dates for the visit will be arranged between the deputies and the faculty member whose turn it is to visit.
3. The FRCSA agrees to carry the costs for the faculty member to visit. If the faculty member chooses to bring additional family members, those costs will be borne by the faculty member personally.
4. The FRCSA is not expected to pay any honorariums for the lectures given or worship services led by the faculty member during the visit.

Since this is an agreement between brothers in the Lord, if any circumstances arise that are not covered by this memorandum, we commit to discussing the matter together and working toward a responsible and God-honouring solution.

This memorandum is agreed to on **XXX** and is valid for three (3) years until **XXX**.

On behalf of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
John Louwerse – Chairman of the Board

On behalf of the Deputies Theological Training of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa

Appendix 1 – Excerpt from CH 4.3.4.2 – The Foreign Student Bursary Fund

1. Mandate and Purpose

The Foreign Student Bursary Fund Committee is a sub-committee of the Board of Governors, appointed to administer the Foreign Student Bursary Fund. The purpose of this fund is to provide the necessary financial assistance to qualified foreign students who seek a Reformed theological education who come from federations that are unable to provide sufficient support.

2. Guidelines

2.1 Foreign students who have a desire and are prepared to commit to enrol in one of the programs listed in the Seminary Calendar and meet all the admission requirements for the program selected, but who are prevented from enrolling in study at the Theological Seminary for financial reasons, may be eligible for a bursary.

2.2 The amount of the bursary is determined by the level of financial need.

- a. In determining need, the following factors are examples of what is normally considered: the amount of personal resources available, the degree to which support from family can be expected, the degree to which support from churches/federations of which the applicant is a member can be expected.
- b. In determining need, the following are examples of what are not normally considered as allowable expenses: support of relatives other than spouse or children, schooling for family members, including spouse, travel expenses to and from the country of origin.

2.3 The financial need of applicants for the Foreign Student Bursary shall be determined by a Foreign Student Bursary Committee composed of two members of the Senate (Principal and Vice-Principal) along with one member of the Finance and Property Committee.

2.4 This Bursary is intended to be a forgivable loan to students who return to their country of origin after their degree is completed and enter into active ministry or related service. Upon completion and return to country of origin, the loan is forgiven at a rate of one year of support per one year of ministry/service in the country of origin. If the recipient decides to leave the ministry or related service or decides to move away from the country of origin then the portion of the loan not forgiven needs to be paid back to the FSBF within 5 years.

2.5 In rare cases the loan can be forgiven, in whole or in part, either without the return to the country of origin or in the event of a move away from the country of origin before the loan has been completely forgiven. In such a case, the recipient must prove to the satisfaction of the Foreign Student Bursary Committee that the loan should be forgiven. If convinced, the Foreign Student Bursary Committee will make a recommendation to the Finance and Property Committee, which shall make a decision in the matter. If the whole loan is not forgiven then the portion of the loan not forgiven needs to be paid back to the FSBF within 5 years.