

External Evaluation Report of the Doctoral Studies in Political Science Domain of the Doctoral School of Philosophy, Sociology and Political Science of the West University of Timisiora

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I. Introduction¹

This report was elaborated in result of a process of evaluation that developed in a hybrid manner, online and in presence. For the external evaluators, the process was exclusively online. It was conducted from 11th to 15th October, and the team was composed of the evaluation director, the coordinator of the IOSUD committee, the international expert for IOSUD evaluation, the PhD student expert, the secretariat, the committee for IOSUD expert of fundamental domains of science, and 22 committees for specific domains of science, where political science was included.

The institution being evaluated, the West University of Timisoara, was established in 1944, operating in the western region of Romania. According to the current law, it's an Organization Institution for Doctoral University Studies. Following sequential reorganisations caused by national law, the last one regarding the organisation and development of doctoral studies and applying the framework of the Bologna Convention, the IOSUD was organised by 19 fields of doctoral studies, of which Political Sciences is one. In turn, these 19 doctoral fields are organised in 12 doctoral schools, one of them being the Doctoral School of Philosophy, Sociology, and Political Sciences. This doctoral school was built around the scientific area of philosophy, and political science joined in 2016.

II. Methods used

The external evaluation report for the Doctoral Study Domain of Political Science, in the West University of Timisoara, was prepared according to information collected from the evaluation process bases on three main types of procedures. The internal evaluation report provided by the institution and additional annexes, that were made available by the Aracis. The information was collected during the online visits to the institution. These were based on several meetings with the Aracis experts, IOSUD stakeholders, like academics of the institution and of the doctoral domain, in particular, Ph.D. students, doctoral study domain graduates, employers, that could provide different insights related to the domain in the institution. Another source of information was the website of the university, and its subpages, although some information is only in Romanian, which caused some difficulty.

¹ Each time when applicable the information shall be presented gender-wise.



III. Analysis of ARACIS's performance indicators

Domain A. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

The doctoral studies on Political Sciences are one of the newest fields of doctoral research and education at the IOSUD. The first doctoral students were enrolled in 2013. The institution reveals to have developed capacity at the level of infrastructure, services, human resources, and procedures to accomplish its mission.

Criterion A.1. The administrative, managerial institutional structures and the financial resources

Standard A.1.1. The institution organizing doctoral studies (IOSUD) has implemented the effective functioning mechanisms provided for in the specific legislation on the organization of doctoral studies.

The IOSUD shows evidence of applying and complying with the national legal requirements and has developed its own regulations and hired human resources to underpin the functioning of the respective doctoral school.

Although it mentions it has a person to assist in administrative work relating to the doctoral programs, one person seems to be too little to undertake administrative responsibility for several doctoral studies.

Performance Indicator A.1.1.1. *The existence of specific regulations and their application at the level of the Doctoral School of the respective university doctoral study domain:*

Internal regulations regarding the general mission and scope of action of the IOSUD exist and are adequate for regulating the doctoral programme in political sciences. The regulations set the components and criteria for the functioning of the doctoral studies domain and the completion of a Ph.D. The methodology for electing the Council of the Doctoral School is shown to be appropriate, safeguarding well balanced and privacy standards. Methodologies for admitting candidates are properly set by different criteria and information for candidates is publically available. Criteria are aligned with what is normally required in doctoral degrees. The composition and functioning of the Doctoral School Council (DSC) comply with criteria set and meets at least twice a year. This was observed in the documents provided and during the online visits. Although competencies of the DSC were mentioned in the online meeting to be sufficient for the current mission of the doctoral studies programme, it was also considered that in terms of the internationalization objectives, it would be an advantage of the DSC could acquire some financial prerogatives for management. This would help to implement some strategies more quickly and efficiently.

Recommendations:

One person appears to be too little for all doctoral programmes. The IOSUD mentions that a person will be nominated for the Political Sciences doctoral programme. It's strongly recommended that the new administrative person be nominated to assist the administrative service of the doctoral school.

Consider the financial decentralisation of the institution, providing the DSC with some financial autonomy.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator A.1.1.2. *The doctoral school' Regulation includes mandatory criteria, procedures and standards binding on the aspects specified in Article 17, paragraph (5) of the Government Decision No. 681/2011 on the approval of the Code of Doctoral Studies with subsequent amendments and additions.*

The doctoral school Regulation complies with governmental law, establishing the structural basis of the doctoral programme, the adequate criteria for admission of new members, and the competencies that students are to acquire. The number of regulations includes procedures to deal with academic fraud. This was observed through consultation of documents and during the online visit.



The indicator is fulfilled.

Standard A.1.2. The IOSUD has the logistical resources necessary to carry out the doctoral studies' mission.

Observations lead to conclusion that the IOSUD possesses sufficient resources for the doctoral studies mission.

Performance Indicator A.1.2.1. The existence and effectiveness of an appropriate IT system to keep track of doctoral students and their academic background.

The institution uses three platforms: a general one, the University Management System, allowing the register of personal data and the student's status in the doctoral programme; the Single Matriculation Register, which gathers the previous information in a uniformed national system; and the Integrated Education Register containing the historical track of the student after the public defense of the thesis.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator A.1.2.2. The existence and use of an appropriate software program and evidence of its use to verify the percentage of similarity in all doctoral theses.

The IOSUD uses the iThenticate software to verify the degree of similarity in all doctoral theses before they are defended in the steering committee, and the resulting reports are nationally verified, through submission to REI platform and validation by CNATDCU.

Recommendations:

It's recommended that students have regular access to this programme in order they can make this checking and be more aware of ethical concerns, as a learning process and useful tool during the period they are researching and writing their thesis.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Standard A.1.3. The IOSUD makes sure that financial resources are used optimally, and the revenues obtained from doctoral studies are supplemented through additional funding besides governmental funding.

Performance Indicator A.1.3.1. Existence of at least one research or institutional / human resources development grant under implementation at the time of submission of the internal evaluation file, per doctoral study domain under evaluation, or existence of at least 2 research or institutional development / human resources grant for the doctoral study domain, obtained by doctoral thesis advisors operating in the evaluated domain within the past 5 years. The grants address relevant themes for the respective domain and, as a rule, are engaging doctoral students.

There is a minimum of two research or institutional/human resources grants in the last five years in the doctoral study domain.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.1.3.2. The percentage of doctoral students active at the time of the evaluation, who for at least six months receive additional funding sources besides government funding, through



scholarships awarded by individual persons or by legal entities, or who are financially supported through research or institutional / human resources development grants is not less than 20%.

In the current year, there are 36 enrolled students in the doctoral programme, of which 13 have received additional funding.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.1.3.3.² *At least 10% of the total amount of doctoral grants obtained by the university through institutional contracts and of tuition fees collected from the doctoral students enrolled in the paid tuition system is used to reimburse professional training expenses of doctoral students (attending conferences, summer schools, training, programs abroad, publication of specialty papers or other specific forms of dissemination etc.).*

The IOSUD mentions to have developed a methodology to provide institutional support for the development of the professional activity of doctoral students, namely for costs related with internships for research, participation in conferences or workshops, in training, seasonal schools, publishing or consumables like software or equipment; it's specified that doctoral students in exclusivity have access to financial support for carrying out training activities in the amount of 10% of the value of the annual grant; this amount raises to 20% in case of doctoral students developing a thesis in international co-supervision or doing a European doctorate. Nevertheless, it's not provided information about how many students benefited from this stated opportunity, nor such data is available on the IOSUD website. Furthermore, students' feedback points out the need for more information and clarification of procedures for applying for such grants. If the existence of a methodology for the availability and use of grants is a starting point, it's also important to apply it and show evidence of the applications that have been made and the students that have benefited from it.

Recommendations:

To publish annually the amount of money available for grants for students;

To provide regular and prompt information for students about the availability of such grants and the procedures and deadlines for application;

To publish the list of students that applied for it and the ones that received it;

To publish the results of the use of the grants by each student.

The indicator is not fulfilled.

Criterion A.2. Research infrastructure

The IOSUD proves to have either good physical and online recourses, suitable for the carrying on of the activities in presence and for the self-study of students.

Standard A.2.1. *The IOSUD has a modern research infrastructure to support the conduct of doctoral studies' specific activities.*

Performance Indicator A.2.1.1. *The venues and the material equipment available to the doctoral school enable the research activities in the evaluated domain to be carried out, in line with the assumed mission and objectives (computers, specific software, equipment, laboratory equipment, library, access to international databases etc.). The research infrastructure and the provision of research services are*

² The indicators marked with an asterisk (*) hold a special status, referring exclusively to the evaluation of doctoral studies domains, as per Article 12 from the annex No.1 of the Order of the minister of education No. 3651/12.04.2021 approving the Methodology for evaluating university doctoral studies and the system of criteria, standards and performance indicators used in the evaluation. In case they are not met, the Agency extends a period of maximum 3 years to IOSUD to correct the respective deficiencies.



presented to the public through a specific platform. The research infrastructure described above, which was purchased and developed within the past 5 years will be presented distinctly.

The UVT possesses either adequate physical accommodations for students and physical spaces for studying and researching and scientific activities as conferences. It also provides access to a considerable fund of books, through the Central University Library, which has been increasing its books and journals fund, making also available rooms and computer facilities. It has also good online resources, with access to main scientific databases with top bibliography available. This information was in the internal report and coincides with students' perceptions collected during the online visit.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Criterion A.3. Quality of Human Resources

The analysis made concluded that human resources are qualified in compatibility with the legal requirements of a doctoral programme.

Standard A.3.1. At the level of each domain there are sufficient qualified staff to ensure the conduct of doctoral study program.

Within the doctoral field of Political Sciences, the existing full professors meet the minimum standards according to the Order of the Minister of Education and Research no. 6129/2016.

Performance Indicator A.3.1.1. *Minimum three doctoral thesis advisors within that doctoral domain, and at least 50% of them (but no less than three) meet the minimum standards of the National Council for Attestation of University Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates (CNATDCU) in force at the time when the evaluation is carried out, which standards are required and mandatory for obtaining the enabling certification.*

Within the field of doctoral studies of Political Sciences, at least 50% but not less than three thesis advisors meet the minimum CNATDCU standards.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.3.1.2. *At least 50% of all doctoral advisors have a full-time employment contract for an indefinite period with the IOSUD.*

At least two of the four PhD supervisors are full professors of the IOSUD.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator A.3.1.3. *The study subjects in the education program based on advanced higher education studies pertaining to the doctoral domain are taught by teaching staff or researchers who are doctoral thesis advisors / certified doctoral thesis advisors, professors / CS I or lecturer / CS II, with proved expertise in the field of the study subjects they teach, or other specialists in the field who meet the standards established by the institution in relation with the aforementioned teaching and research functions, as provided by the law.*

Teaching staff responsible for the curricular units of the doctoral programme or researchers who are doctoral thesis advisors have an adequate profile for the functions held.

The indicator is fulfilled.



Performance Indicator *A.3.1.4. *The percentage of doctoral thesis advisors who concomitantly coordinate more than 8 doctoral students, but no more than 12, who are themselves studying in doctoral programs³ does not exceed 20%.*

The percentage of doctoral thesis supervisors is in the limit set. Special consideration is paid to the exceptional situation of the lost of a professor.

Recommendations:

Pay attention to a more balanced coordinators in the future.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Standard A.3.2. *The Doctoral advisors within the domain are carrying out a scientific activity visible at international level.*

The general analysis shows that doctoral advisors carry out scientific activity at the international level.

Performance Indicator A.3.2.1. *At least 50% of the doctoral thesis advisors in the evaluated domain have at least 5 Web of Science- or ERIH-indexed publications in magazines of impact, or other achievements of relevant significance for that domain, including international-level contributions that indicate progress in scientific research - development - innovation for the evaluated domain. The aforementioned doctoral thesis advisors enjoy international awareness within the past five years, consisting of: membership on scientific boards of international publications and conferences; membership on boards of international professional associations; guests in conferences or expert groups working abroad, or membership on doctoral defense commissions at universities abroad or co-leading with universities abroad. For Arts and Sports and Physical Education Sciences, doctoral thesis advisors shall prove their international visibility within the past five years by their membership on the boards of professional associations, membership in organizing committees of arts events and international competitions, membership on juries or umpire teams in artistic events or international competitions.*

The criteria is met, with two professors out of four showing to have at least five indexed publications.

Recommendations:

Although criteria are met, it's recommended that other professors increase the number of indexed publications, as this contributes to the internationalization of the doctoral programme and the scientific level of it.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.3.2.2. *At least 50% of the doctoral thesis advisors in a specific doctoral study domain continue to be active in their scientific field, and acquire at least 25% of the score requested by the minimal CNATDCU standards in force at the time of the evaluation, which are required and mandatory for acquiring their enabling certificate, based on their scientific results within the past five years.*

It's shown that the four thesis advisors overpassed the minimum of 25% score requested by the CNATDCU.

The indicator is fulfilled.

³ 3 years for the doctoral university studies with the duration stipulated at Article 159, paragraph (3), respectively 4 years for the doctoral university studies with the duration stipulated at Article 174, paragraph (3) of the Law of national education No.1/2011 with subsequent amendments and additions, with additional extension periods approved as per Article 39, paragraph (3) of the Code of doctoral studies approved by the GD No. 681/2011 with subsequent amendments and additions.



Domain B. EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The UVT reveals to attract a considerable ratio of candidates, with diverse proveniences.

Criterion B.1. The number, quality and diversity of candidates enrolled for the admission contest

Doctoral programme attracts diverse and quality students.

Standard B.1.1. The institution organizing doctoral studies has the capacity to attract candidates from outside the higher education institution or a number of candidates exceeding the number of seats available.

The doctoral programme attracts candidates with quality, having a master's degree or long-term studies equivalent to master's studies. Most of the candidates come internally from the IOSUD, with 13% who are foreigners. They also show to be of diverse scientific proveniences. The IOSUD proves to have more candidates than the vacancies publically financed.

Performance Indicator *B.1.1.1. *The ratio between the number of graduates of masters' programs of other higher education institutions, national or foreign, who have enrolled for the doctoral admission contest within the past five years and the number of seats funded by the state budget, put out through contest within the doctoral domain is at least 0.2 or the ratio between the number of candidates within the past five years and the number of seats funded by the state budget put out through contest within the doctoral studies domain is at least 1,2.*

The ratio between the number of students and the budgeted places is 2.26, and the ratio between candidates and the budgeted places ranged between 2.22 and 1.86 from 2018 until 2020.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Standard B.1.2 Candidates admitted to doctoral studies demonstrate academic, research and professional performance.

In general, candidates demonstrate academic, scientific, and professional performance that is suitable as a background for a Ph.D. programme.

Performance Indicator *B.1.2.1. *Admission to doctoral study programs is based on selection criteria including: previous academic, research and professional performance, their interest for scientific or arts/sports research, publications in the domain and a proposal for a research subject. Interviewing the candidate is compulsory, as part of the admission procedure.*

Proper criteria are specified in the governing procedures of the IOSUD, and this was also observed during the meeting with PhD students.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.1.2.2. *The expelling rate, including renouncement / dropping out of doctoral students 3, respectively 4, years after admission⁴ does not exceed 30%.*

⁴ 3 years for the doctoral university studies with the duration stipulated at Article 159, paragraph (3), respectively 4 years for the doctoral university studies with the duration stipulated at Article 174, paragraph (3) of the Law of national education No. 1/2011 with subsequent amendments and additions.



The rate of students abandoning the doctoral programme does not reach the limit of 30%.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Criterion B.2. The content of doctoral programs

The content of doctoral programme is adequate to the respective scientific domain.

Standard B.2.1. The training program based on advanced university studies is appropriate to improve doctoral students' research skills and to strengthen ethical behavior in science.

The training programme is adequate to improve doctoral students' research skills, with the first year of assignments that allow for the deep knowledge of the scientific field and methodological skills. It still counts with the scientific supervision for elaborating a research project for the following thesis.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.1. *The training program based on advanced academic studies includes at least 3 disciplines relevant to the scientific research training of doctoral students; at least one of these disciplines is intended to study in-depth the research methodology and/or the statistical data processing.*

The programme includes four disciplines, of which two deal with methodology and applied statistics. They are complemented with two additional disciplines concerning ethics in the academy and a thematic general one in the scientific domain of the programme. In the 2020-2021 academic year, the programme suffered a slight change, suppressing the discipline of statistics and adding a thematic discipline within the political science field. Students have shown a preference for this last year's programme.

Recommendations:

The 2020-2021 programme is more balanced, with two thematic disciplines in the scientific field of doctoral studies, and two disciplines related to methodology and ethics. It's suggested to maintain two disciplines of the scientific domain of the doctoral programme, and two related to methodology and ethics.

Being applied statistics also important, it's suggested that it's added as a module in the Research Methods in Political Science.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.2. *At least one discipline is dedicated to Ethics and Intellectual Property in scientific research or there are well-defined topics on these subjects within a discipline taught in the doctoral program.*

The doctoral programme provided a discipline in 2018-2020 which is Ethics and Academic Integrity, and another one in 2020.2021, which is Ph.D. academic writing and integrity, and respective contents provide adequate training on the field.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.3. *The IOSUD has mechanisms to ensure that the academic training program based on advanced university studies addresses „the learning outcomes”, specifying the knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy that doctoral students should acquire after completing each discipline or through the research activities⁵.*

The doctoral programme specifies for each discipline the general and specific learning goals, professional skills, and transversal competencies that the student should acquire.

⁵ Or by what the graduate should know, understand and to be able to do, according to the provisions of the Methodology of 17 March 2017 regarding inscription and registration of higher education qualifications in the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education (RNCIS) approved by the Order No.3475/2017 with subsequent amendments and additions.



Recommendations:

It's recommended that more specific information is added to each discipline sheet, like pedagogical strategies and evaluation criteria, argumentation about how the pedagogical strategies meet the learning outcomes, and the number of working hours needed.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.4. *All along the duration of the doctoral training, doctoral students in the domain receive counselling/guidance from functional guidance commissions, which is reflected in written guidance and feedback or regular meeting.*

The student's research is accompanied by the Ph.D. supervisor, who is assisted by a steering committee of three members of the scientific domain. Internal regulations set adequate formal and scientific criteria for a thesis to be accomplished. Approval of the doctoral thesis is subject to peer evaluation and public defense, and it's said reports on the defended doctoral thesis are made publicly available. Nevertheless, it lacks specific information on the steps the students have to follow after the first curricular year of the programme, namely the definition of criteria and/or existence of evidence that the student is progressing in the research for the accomplishment of the thesis. Although it was mentioned by the doctoral supervisors that the transition of the first year to the research for the thesis is subject to prior approval of a project, it's not clear if there's a formal procedure to approve a research project. Moreover, it seems that the supervision process is too informal. It's recognized that the progress of research activities can be unstable, subject to time and other constraints, that cause difficulty in having a formal supervision process, with certain steps to be fulfilled, however, the accomplishment of the thesis is totally left under informality. Even if students have provided good feedback in the online meeting about the coordination with their supervisors, the guarantee of progress should not be totally left under self willing, and some kind of formal procedure is advisable.

Recommendations:

To create a formal procedure to publically approve a research project, subject to public defense, recognizing the student is in conditions to undertake thesis research.

To create a formal procedure for accompanying students after the first year, to ensure progress is being made in research. It can be an annual report, subject to approval and equivalent to some credits.

The indicator is partially fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.5. *For a doctoral study domain, the ratio between the number of doctoral students and the number of teaching staff/researchers providing doctoral guidance must not exceed 3:1.*

The criteria is met with 26 teachers for 23 doctoral students.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Criterion B.3. The results of doctoral studies and procedures for their evaluation.

Standard B.3.1. Doctoral students capitalize on the research through presentations at scientific conferences, scientific publications, technological transfer, patents, products and service orders.

The report of activities of doctoral students shows they participate in research activity, are involved in organizing events, and are encouraged to publish and present oral communications.

Performance Indicator B.3.1.1. *For the evaluated domain, the evaluation commission will be provided with at least one paper or some other relevant contribution per doctoral student who has obtained a*



doctor's title within the past 5 years. From this list, the members of the evaluation commission shall randomly select 5 such papers / relevant contributions per doctoral study domain for review. At least 3 selected papers must contain significant original contributions in the respective domain.

There's evidence that there are three papers providing a good insight into the scientific domain and a significant contribution to it.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *B.3.1.2. *The ratio between the number of presentations of doctoral students who completed their doctoral studies within the evaluated period (past 5 years), including posters, exhibitions made at prestigious international events (organized in the country or abroad) and the number of doctoral students who have completed their doctoral studies within the evaluated period (past 5 years) is at least 1.*

The ratio is 3.5.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Standard B.3.2. *The Doctoral School engages a significant number of external scientific specialists in the commissions for public defense of doctoral theses in the analyzed domain.*

A significant number of external scientific experts composes the committees for public defence of theses.

Performance Indicator *B.3.2.1. *The number of doctoral theses allocated to one specialist coming from a higher education institution, other than the evaluated IOSUD should not exceed two (2) in a year for the theses coordinated by the same doctoral thesis advisor.*

The number doesn't exceed 2.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *B.3.2.2. *The ratio between the doctoral theses allocated to one scientific specialist coming from a higher education institution, other than the institution where the defense on the doctoral thesis is organized, and the number of doctoral theses presented in the same doctoral study domain in the doctoral school should not exceed 0.3, considering the past five years. Only those doctoral study domains in which minimum ten doctoral theses have been presented within the past five years should be analyzed.*

The ration is 0.21, this indicator being met.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Domain C. QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The doctoral programme is aligned with institutional norms and processes for quality management. UVT possesses internal organic structures to pursue quality and obeys external legal organisms and rules, setting several objectives.

Criterion C.1. Existence and periodic implementation of the internal quality assurance system



Standard C.1.1. There are an institutional framework and procedures in place and relevant internal quality assurance policies, applied for monitoring the internal quality assurance.

UVT has internal auditing practices to monitor the quality goals, and publish an annual audit report.

It has internal regulations and procedures of enforcement and punishment for violation of the principles of ethics, namely in the integrity of the theses. It also has a process of assessment of professors, doctoral supervisors, in which students are involved.

Performance Indicator C.1.1.1. *The Doctoral school in the respective university study domain shall demonstrate the continuous development of the evaluation process and its internal quality assurance following a procedure developed and applied at the level of the IOSUD, the following assessed criteria being mandatory:*

- (a) the scientific work of Doctoral advisors;*
- (b) the infrastructure and logistics necessary to carry out the research activity;*
- (c) the procedures and subsequent rules based on which doctoral studies are organized;*
- d) the scientific activity of doctoral students;*
- e) the training program based on advanced academic studies of doctoral students;*
- f) social and academic services (including for participation at different events, publishing papers*

etc.) and counselling made available to doctoral students.

The IOSUD has several means for guaranteeing the permanence of the evaluation process at various levels of the doctoral programme. It monitors every two years the quality of the scientific work of doctoral supervisors. The doctoral programme possesses regulations and set places available for admission of doctoral students, proposing customized methodologies. Procedures for undertaking doctoral studies are also regulated by internal norms, in compliance with national procedures. IOSUD provides accommodation and psychological support services. Besides the laboratories and infrastructure for conducting research activities for Ph.D. students, UVT mentions that it grants funds and advisory practices for them to participate in scientific events and publish articles, nevertheless, the criteria of the scientific activity of the students depends not only on counseling but also on material support, very much dependent on funds.

Recommendations:

It's recommended the definition of a clear process of funds to support scientific activities of students (see performance indicator A.1.3.3.).

The indicator is fulfilled

Performance Indicator *C.1.1.2. *Mechanisms are implemented during the stage of the doctoral study program to enable feedback from doctoral students allowing to identify their needs, as well as their overall level of satisfaction with the doctoral study program in order to ensure continuous improvement of the academic and administrative processes. Following the analysis of the results, there is evidence that an action plan was drafted and implemented.*

The doctoral studies programme has the practice of regular informal discussions between supervisors and doctoral students in order to assess the functioning of the doctoral programme, to report and address unnormal situations and unsatisfactions by students. The dialogue is encouraged in order to avoid the accumulation of dissatisfaction, board members offer guidance and solutions. Nevertheless, the procedure relies mainly on informality.

Recommendations:

There should be a formal mechanism to listen and consider students feedback



Example: the creation of a commission of students of the doctoral studies domain, which is representative of the several curricular years of the doctoral programme; setting a minimum of annual meetings with doctoral school programme management; drafting an action plan following the conclusion of those meetings.

The indicator is partially fulfilled.

Criterion C.2. Transparency of information and accessibility of learning resources

**general description of the criterion analysis.*

Standard C.2.1. Information of interest to doctoral students, future candidates and public interest information is available for electronic format consultation.

Information is available through the IOSUD-UVT website, displaying several aspects of the doctoral programme.

Performance Indicator C.2.1.1. *The IOSUD publishes on the website of the organizing institution, in compliance with the general regulations on data protection, information such as:*

- (a) the Doctoral School regulation;*
 - (b) the admission regulation;*
 - (c) the doctoral studies contract;*
 - (d) the study completion regulation including the procedure for the public presentation of the thesis;*
 - (e) the content of training program based on advanced academic studies;*
 - (f) the academic and scientific profile, thematic areas/research themes of the Doctoral advisors within the domain, as well as their institutional contact data;*
 - (g) the list of doctoral students within the domain with necessary information (year of registration; advisor);*
 - (h) information on the standards for developing the doctoral thesis;*
 - (i) links to the doctoral theses' summaries to be publicly presented and the date, time, place where they will be presented; this information will be communicated at least twenty days before the presentation.*
 - description of the facts, the findings from the assessed institution's documents and the evaluation visit itself*
 - analysis of the facts, the findings from the assessed institution's documents and the evaluation visit itself*
- The IOSUD website displays information about regulations of the doctoral studies functioning and procedures, information of admission to doctoral studies, projects carried out, the content of the study programme, information of general interest like mobilities, projects, open scholarships, lists of doctoral students, but it lacks links to abstracts of doctoral theses to be defended. It's quite difficult to find all the information in English, which is important considering the will to attract foreign students.*

Recommendations:

Information about the abstracts of the theses to be defended is important to be publically available. More structured and complete information should be available in English.

The indicator is partially fulfilled.

Standard C.2.2. The IOSUD/The Doctoral School provides doctoral students with access to the resources needed for conducting doctoral studies.

IOSUD provides differentiated resources to support the research of doctoral students.



Performance Indicator C.2.2.1. All doctoral students have free access to one platform providing academic databases relevant to the doctoral studies domain of their thesis.

UVT subscribes to the main international scientific databases, providing students with adequate bibliographic funds. This was mentioned in the report and proved in online meetings with students.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator C.2.2.2. Each doctoral student shall have access, upon request, to an electronic system for verifying the degree of similarity with other existing scientific or artistic works.

Doctoral students, under request, have access to the software that UVT uses to check similarity of texts.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator C.2.2.3. All doctoral students have access to scientific research laboratories or other facilities depending on the specific domain/domains within the Doctoral School, according to internal order procedures.

Students can use UVT facilities, like offices and computers. Fulfilling internal regulations of the faculty, doctoral students have access to all faculty facilities. There are five laboratories in the faculty, equipped with a considerable amount of computers, and other electronic assets available, and six research centers/institutes, that students can also take for research activities.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Criterion C.3. Internationalization

Standard C.3.1. There is a strategy in place and it is applied to enhance the internationalization of doctoral studies.

The UVT shows to be making efforts for internationalization.

Performance Indicator *C.3.1.1. IOSUD, for every evaluated domain, has concluded mobility agreements with universities abroad, with research institutes, with companies working in the field of study, aimed at the mobility of doctoral students and academic staff (e.g., ERASMUS agreements for the doctoral studies). At least 35% of the doctoral students have completed a training course abroad or other mobility forms such as attending international scientific conferences. IOSUD drafts and applies policies and measures aiming at increasing the number of doctoral students participating at mobility periods abroad, up to at least 20%, which is the target at the level of the European Higher Education Area.

There's a considerable amount of students making mobility Erasmus abroad or attending international conferences or training courses, which meet the minimum standards required.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator C.3.1.2. In the evaluated doctoral study domain, support is granted, including financial support, to the organization of doctoral studies in international co-tutelage or invitation of leading experts to deliver courses/lectures for doctoral students.

International co-tutelage is a minor practice, with only one thesis in co-tutelage. It's mentioned that the doctoral studies programme has benefitted from lectures from invited professors from two foreign universities, however,



either the number of co-tutelage theses is too low as the institutional provenience of international professors should be diversified.

Recommendations:

Create mechanisms to increase the international co-tutelage.

Diversify the lectures delivered by international professors beyond the two universities with special agreements with the IOSUD.

The indicator is partially fulfilled.

Performance Indicator C.3.1.3. The internationalization of activities carried out during the doctoral studies is supported by IOSUD through concrete measures (e.g., by participating in educational fairs to attract international doctoral students; by including international experts in guidance committees or doctoral committees etc.).

International professors have been participating in examination committees and guiding commissions, and internal staff has been participating in international fairs to promote de doctoral programme with a considerable number of activities.

The indicator is fulfilled.

IV. SWOT Analysis

<p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High quality PhD programme - High quality academic staff - Significant scientific activity of PhD students, with publications and participations in scientific activities - Adequate institutional framework - Good physical and online resources to support research PhD activity 	<p><u>Weaknesses:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of a clear and formal procedure about students' grants - Lack of a formal mechanism for collecting students' feedback in the doctoral studies - Lack of a formal process for supervision of the doctoral student during research for PhD thesis - Low level of information available about the doctoral students' theses - Low level of thesis in co-tutelage and of lectures internationalization - Low level of indexed publications by doctoral supervisors
<p><u>Opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doctoral domain with scientific potential for addressing current contemporary political issues - Good institutional framework to strenghen interdisciplinarity - Propicious European environment and opportunities to strenghen internationalization 	<p><u>Threats:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finantial constraints on the side of the students - Economic institutional constraints - Constraints related with Pandemic

V. Overview of judgments awarded and of the recommendations

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
1.	A	1.3.3.	Not fulfilled	<p>To publish annually the amount of money available for grants for students;</p> <p>To provide regular and prompt information for students about the availability of such grants and the procedures and deadlines for application;</p> <p>To publish the list of students that applied for it and the ones that received it;</p> <p>To publish the results of the use of the grants by each student</p>
2.	B	2.1.4.	Partially fulfilled	<p>To create a formal procedure to publically approve a research project, subject to public defense, recognizing the student is in conditions to undertake thesis research.</p> <p>To create a formal procedure for accompanying students after the first year, to ensure progress is being made in research. It can be an annual report, subject to approval and equivalent to some credits.</p>
3.	C	1.1.2.	Partially fulfilled	<p>The creation of a commission of students of the doctoral studies domain, which is representative of the several curricular years.</p> <p>Setting a minimum of annual meetings with doctoral school programme management.</p> <p>Drafting an action plan following the conclusion of those meetings.</p>
4.	C.2.1.1	2.1.1	Partially fulfilled	<p>Information about the abstracts of the theses to be defended is important to be publically available.</p> <p>More structured and complete information available in English</p>
5.	C	3.1.2.	Partially fulfilled	<p>Create mechanisms to increase the international co-tutelage.</p> <p>Diversify the lectures delivered by international professors beyond the two universities with special agreements with the IOSUD.</p>
6.	A, B, C	A.1.1.1. A1.2.2	Fulfilled	<p>To hire a person for administrative work.</p>

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
		<p>A.3.2.1</p> <p>B.2.1.1</p> <p>B.2.1.3</p> <p>C.1.1.1</p>		<p>Providing the DSC with some financial autonomy.</p> <p>Regular access of students to programme to check text similarity.</p> <p>Increase of a number of indexed publications by professors.</p> <p>More balanced curricular doctoral programme, between scientific and methodologic disciplines.</p> <p>More complete information in each course discipline sheet.</p> <p>Create a formal procedure to publicly approve the project of a research thesis.</p> <p>Create a formal procedure for accompanying students after the first curricular year of doctoral studies.</p>

VI. Conclusions and general recommendations

The evaluation process allowed us to conclude that the doctoral studies in Political Sciences are well framed in the IOSUD, benefitting from an interdisciplinary environment with the potential to grow, and complying with the main academic and scientific requisites in terms of the curricular programme of the Ph.D., the academic staff and the students.

There is one main requirement that the doctoral school needs to overcome, which is defining a formal procedure for students to apply for annual grants and to publish results of this.

Other recommendations made in this report are also considered important for the doctoral school to achieve plain performance in a competitive international 3rd cycle studies environment. These are made by strengthening three different levels of action: i) in the internationalization of theses completion, creating incentives to co-tutelage and diversifying the international invited professors; ii) in pedagogical issues, increasing public transparency, by publishing theses' summaries and creating procedures to approve a thesis' project and for the supervision of the thesis research; iii) and in internal functional procedures, by creating formal mechanisms to collect students' feedback.

VII. Annexes

The following types of documents shall be attached:

- *The detailed schedule of the evaluation visit – MANDATORY.*
- *The survey questionnaire applied to doctoral students or academic staff in the doctoral study domain under review, the results - optional (e.g., in graphic form) and their interpretation - if applicable.*



- *Scanned documents – any document requested from the IOSUD during the evaluation visit and received, which is not found in the internal evaluation file received before the visit and referred to in the report.*
- *Pictures – if relevant issues are raised regarding the condition of the student residences, cafeterias, premises for teaching and learning activities, library etc.*
- *Screenshots/Print screens of the Doctoral School/IOSUD website proving specific claims in the report, accompanied by the date when they were accessed and saved.*
- *Any other documents relevant to the evaluation process referred to in the report.*