

The External Evaluation Report of a Doctoral Study Domain

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I. Introduction¹

This report was made as a part of the external periodic evaluation of IOSUD Constanta, **in the period 22.11.2021-26.11.2021**. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the Romanian legislation on the organisation of higher education (third cycle/doctoral studies), as stipulated in the National Education Law no. 1/2011 (art. 158, 159, 160, 170), in GD 681 / 2011 (Code of Doctoral Studies) and in subsequent legislation.

The evaluation aimed at establishing the quality level achieved by the doctoral study field *Theology*, organized within IOSUD-UOC, as provided for in the basic legislation establishing minimum quality standards in higher education in Romania, in particular the Romanian Government Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2005 on quality assurance in education, approved with amendments and additions by Law no. 87/2006, with subsequent amendments and completions, Order of the Minister of Education and Research no. 3,200 of 7 February 2020 and OM 3,651 of 12 April 2021 on the approval of the Methodology for the evaluation of doctoral studies and the systems of criteria, standards and performance indicators used in the evaluation.

In order to ensure a unified evaluation, ARACIS has provided an expert evaluator for the fundamental field of *Humanities and Arts*, and for the particularization of each field of doctoral studies, teams of 3 evaluators with recognized activity and expertise in the fields evaluated: 1 teaching staff, PhD supervisor team coordinator, expert from Romania; 1 teaching staff PhD coordinator, international expert and 1 PhD student from Romania).

The members of the evaluation committee for the field of theology, appointed by the ARACIS Executive Board, were:

- Pr. prof. univ. dr. habil. Dumitru Adrian VANCA (University "1 Decembrie 1918", Alba Iulia, Romania), coordinator;

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



- Conf. univ. dr. habil. Mariyan STOYADINOV (University of Veliko Tarnovo „St Cyril and Metodiy”, Veliko Tarnovo, BG), international expert;
- Drd. Marius Bogdan NEGREA (University „Babeş-Bolyai”, Cluj-Napoca, RO), PhD student.

The institution organising doctoral studies is part of the structure of the University „Ovidius” of Constanța, an accredited public university, part of the national higher education system, and uses the material, financial and human resources of this University. Among the fields of doctoral studies that are organised at UOC, is the field of "theology", which constitutes the subject of evaluation of this report.

The Doctoral School of Theology (SDT) was established by Senate Decision №. 1291/2012 (Annex IOSUD 06).

SDT is part of the administrative structure of the UOC's Faculty of Orthodox Theology and is constituent part of IOSUD-Ovidius, consisting of 10 affiliated teachers, of which 2 full-time UOC holders and 8 associates (external or retired UOC). In the Currently, the number of PhD students is 101, of which 9 are female.

https://univ-ovidius.ro/images/2021-2022/doctorat/Lista_drd_SDT-2021-22_web.pdf

Technical support is provided only by the IOSUD secretariat, which employs 3 staff auxiliary teachers.

II. Methods used

The quality assessment methodology was established by the Order of the Minister of Education no. 3.651/2021 and took into account the criteria, standards and performance indicators specified by GEO 75/2005 on quality assurance in education, Law 87/2006, in accordance with the methodologies and guidelines on quality assessment processes in higher education applied by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Romania (= hereinafter ARACIS).

In particular, the expert committees analysed the IOSUD Internal Evaluation Report (= hereafter IER) and its annexes, summarised the information provided during the online meetings and the on-site visit. For the documentation and assessment, the experts also made use of other information on the institution's website(s) or other official public documents identified, information received during meetings with tenured and associated teaching staff, students, graduates, employers or other stakeholders.

Taking into consideration the current epidemiological situation, but in order to assess as accurately as possible the research-learning capacities and the facilities offered to doctoral students, teaching staff and researchers, the evaluation teams sent a representative on site to visit the lecture and seminar rooms, the institution's dormitories and canteens, libraries and laboratories and the IOSUD secretariat.

In this report we have used the following abbreviations:

CD / CCD = doctoral coordinator(s)/teaching staff

CSDT = Council of the Doctoral School of Theology

CSUD = Council of doctoral studies

FTO = Faculty of Orthodox Theology

IOSUD-UOC = The organizing institution of the Doctoral studies at the University



"Ovidius" of Constanța

PC = research program

PPS = training program based on advanced university studies

REI = Internal evaluation report

RPS = scientific progress report

SD / SSD = doctoral student(s)

SDT = Doctoral School

UOC = University „Ovidius” of Constanța

For the multi-criteria evaluation and for knowing the opinion of the stakeholders in the teaching process, several online meetings were held, scheduled by the ARACIS team and recorded and stored by the UOC (with SDT management, PhD coordinators, doctoral students, employers, representatives of research laboratories).

For the verification of the material base, for the verification (by survey) of some admission and habilitation files, as well as for the clarification of some aspects related to the administrative and secretarial process, the coordinator of expert teams made a personal visit on November 25.11.2021. On this occasion, meetings were held with the director of SDT, the dean of the Faculty of Theology. Also, the learning spaces, the library, the dormitories, the canteen, the technical secretariat and the service / personal office of the institution were visited.

The report was prepared by the Romanian evaluator, coordinator of the expert team (D. VANCA) and the doctoral student (M.B.NEGREA), members of the body of experts of ARACIS for theology, in which were inserted the assessments and recommendations extracted from the report of the foreign expert M. STOYADINOV, but only those that are complementary or differ substantially from those of Romanian experts.

After final drafting, the report was forwarded to the institution assessed to formulate any observations and rectify any material errors reported.

III. Analysis of ARACIS's performance indicators

Domain A. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

The field of doctoral studies "theology" has the necessary tools (regulations and methodologies), which through a few interventions and corrections, can ensure the proper functioning of administrative structures and academic processes.

Due to the retirement of a significant number of teachers and the small number of full-time holders at the UOC, the teaching staff is vulnerable.

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 UOC has functional administrative mechanisms, regulations, methodologies and necessary procedures. Continuous interventions are needed in the revision of the regulations in order to bring them into line with the legislation in force.

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:

(a) the internal regulations of the Doctoral School;

Regulations adopted by HS №. 29 / 31.01.2019; available here:

https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/2019/doctorat/scoli_doctorale/ROF_SD_TEOLOGIE.pdf

(b) the Methodology for conducting elections for the position of director of the Council of doctoral school (CSD), as well as elections by the students of their representative in CSD and the evidence of their conduct;

The methodology is available for consultation on the IOSUD-UOC website: <http://www.univ-ovidius.ro/uoc/documente-oficiale/carta-si-regulamentele-universitatii/523> (Anexa A.1.1.b - Alegeri)

c) the Methodologies for organizing and conducting doctoral studies (for the admission of doctoral students, for the completion of doctoral studies);

The Regulation on admission to the Council adopted by HS no. 143/2018, available here:

<http://www.univ-ovidius.ro/uoc/documente-oficiale/carta-si-regulamentele-universitatii/512>

The Regulations on finalization of doctoral studies and form of this process is available for consultation on the IOSUD-UOC website: <https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/uoc/documente-oficiale/carta-si-regulamentele-universitatii/1429>

d) the existence of mechanisms for recognizing the status of a Doctoral advisor and the equivalence of the doctoral degree obtained abroad;

The Procedure adopted by HS № 31/31.01.2019 is available here: <https://univ-ovidius.ro/images/2019/doctorat/reglementari/PO%2014.pdf>

e) functional management structures (Council of the doctoral school), giving as well proof of the regularity of meetings;

CSDT, legally elected in 2017, consists of 5 members, of which 2 are students (Annex A.1.1.1b).

Currently, after the retirement of the SDT director, the position is held on an interim basis.

f) the contract for doctoral studies;

The study contract complies with the legal provisions and includes rights and obligations for doctoral students and doctoral supervisors.

(https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/2021/doctorat/documente/Contract_2019_Teologie.pdf)

g) internal procedures for the analysis and approval of proposals regarding the training for doctoral study programs based on advanced academic studies.

The training plan based on advanced studies follows the Operational Procedure UOC-PO-02 on the elaboration, revision and approval of curricula for undergraduate, master's and doctoral study programs: https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/2019/doctorat/reglementari/PO_02_PLAN-INV_rev1_HS%20%20907_26.11.2018_ex2.pdf



Recommendations:

- The processes of reviewing and applying the academic and management regulations and procedures have to be continued.

Remarks: *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 Regulation includes information on PPS (ROF-SDT, art. 29), Research Program (art. 30), change of CD (art. 16), Procedure for affiliation and revocation of this (Art. 22.c), prevention of intellectual fraud (Art. 35).

https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/2019/doctorat/scoli_doctorale/ROF_SD_TEOLOGIE.pdf

Recommendations:

- Criteria for granting the interruption of studies to be introduced;
- Paragraphs regarding the obligations and the way of attending the doctoral students to be introduced.

The indicator is fulfilled

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

The logistical support provided by the administrative and economic structures of the UOC, the technical secretariat of IOSUD and SDT, contributes to the successful fulfillment of SDT's mission. Grants and sources of extra-budgetary funding provided by the UOC's management may contribute to the fulfillment of the mission undertaken, provided that they are also spent on SDD training. Unfortunately, the small sums spent in this direction reveal either a lack of information for PhD students or a lack of appetite for them to attend external conferences or to publish results in journals other than those of the UOC.

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 UOC uses the Integrated University Management System (UMS) provided by Red Point Software Solutions. (https://rpss.ro/ro_RO/clients/educatie/#)

The module for doctoral students includes information about the doctoral student's doctoral thesis, his / her dissertations and the activities he / she carries out. The general functionalities of the module include: concluding the situation of doctoral students for the years in which they do not have subjects with qualifications, managing the situation that they obtain over the years, as well as the information on the progress reports (Annex A.1.2.1.)



Recommendations:

- The activity of improving the computer system for managing the professional activity of students to be continued.

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 UOC uses the Plagiarism-detector platform www.plagiarism-detector.com to verify doctoral theses.

Several exemplary similarity reports have been submitted to the file to demonstrate the operation of the verification software.

Recommendations:

- The improvement of the system for verifying doctoral theses for the prevention of academic fraud, as well as other scientific products made by doctoral students to be continued.

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.*

The UOC has the financial resources and the necessary mechanisms (regulations and procedures) to support the day-to-day work, research and training of SDD in their professional activity.

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.*

During the evaluated period there are no research grants obtained through competition. In the list submitted in the file (Annex A.1.3.1. - several research projects are nominated but there is no consistent information, descriptors and / or links to the pages of the research-development projects).

The institution's response to the existence of ongoing grants confirms that no research grants have been awarded or carried out during the period under review. (R1: Grant indicated in REI is no longer relevant)

The Archdiocese of Tomis consistently supports many of the scientific activities carried out in the Faculty of Theology, but no clarifications have been submitted regarding the distinct funding of the doctoral students' research activity.



After requesting additional information, SDT sent UOC U Ovidius the document: Clarifications Clarifications Domain Theology - Files - ownCloud.pdf, stating that: "R1 - The grant mentioned in the report is no longer relevant."

There are 3 research centers in the FTO

- *Research Center on the Dialogue between Science & Theology (RCDST);* (https://www.dialogo-conf.com/cat_36/)
- *Center for the History and Philosophy of Religions* (<https://conferencerks.wixsite.com/academic>)
<https://conferencetheolog.wixsite.com/churchstatesociety/blank>
- *Center for Religious and Canonical Studies and Research of the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam).*

Recommendations:

- Active participation in competitions for research grants or conducting grants funded through UOC structures is required.

The indicator is not 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%.*

No supporting documents were submitted in the file for the granting of 4 scholarships by the UOC, of 3 months each in 2018. (Annex A.1.3.2.a). In 2021, a regulation was approved regarding the awarding of scholarships for doctoral students, based on which, outside the evaluated period, a number of 9 scholarships were awarded (Annex A.1.3.2.b) https://univ-ovidius.ro/images/2021/doctorat/scoli_doctorale/Regulament_ISD_burse_fin_rev%20DJ_HC_A%20502.pdf

In the file was also submitted a table with social scholarships (not assumed institutionally) in which are invoked a number 13 SDD that benefited from the reduction of the tuition fee by a percentage of 50%. (Annex A.1.3.2.c). The document is unsigned and unsubmitted and does not bear the Senate / CSUD compliance visa.

Recommendations:

- To look for extra-budgetary sources to support doctoral students

The indicator is partially 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*

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 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.).

No supporting documents have been submitted in the file, although there are internal decisions to support the scientific mobility of doctoral students or the publication of scientific materials, but these have not been allocated. (Annex A.1.3.3 - CSD Decision of September 10, 2018). PhD students have scientific activities ("Logos" Summer School) but no evidence has been submitted regarding the funding of their activities.

<https://logosscoaladevara.wixsite.com/academic/editii>

Recommendations:

- For the operation of these types of budget allocations, SDD has to be informed about the amounts they have available each year and to be stimulated to spend these amounts for research, training and mobility of PhD students.

The indicator is not fulfilled.

Criterion A.2. Research infrastructure

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

With few exceptions, research funding is based on government sources (doctoral grants, grants, fees).

The Archdiocese of Tomis is involved in funding the scientific activities of SDT and in supporting doctoral students.

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 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.*

Rev. Prof. Vanca carried out the visit on-site. He sent photos of the premises and referred them to the rest of the committee. From all this, it is clear that the academic infrastructure is on the expected level.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Criterion A.3. Quality of Human Resources

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.



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

With 9 PhD supervisors, 7 of whom are either associate or retired SDT has to develop the fulfillment of the teaching body with young professors and to care more about the scientific visibility of the teaching staff. The ballance between UOC holders and associates is required also.

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.

For the period of evaluation, 10 coordinators led doctorates in the field of theology. At the time of the evaluation, 9 teachers were still active, of which only 7 submitted documents attesting to the fulfillment of the minimum necessary and obligatory standards for conferring didactic degrees in higher education, professional research and development degrees, the quality of doctoral supervisor and of the habilitation certificate, established by OMECS no. 6129 of December 20, 2016 (Annex A.3.1.1).

After the check of the available information not all of them meet the standards of CNATDCU.

Recommendations:

- we recommend focusing scientific activity on intensive, not extensive, publication; studies and articles in magazines and publishing houses recognized in the field, with wide visibility, not many articles in any kind of publishing houses and magazines;
- we recommend a more rigorous selection in the process of teacher affiliation and a more rigorous verification of the fulfillment of the qualification criteria;
- for the safety and certainty of fulfilling the habilitation criteria, we recommend that the following habilitation files be supported in experienced and senior university centers (e.g. Bucharest, Iași, Sibiu, Cluj).

The indicator is partially 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.

According to the documents submitted in the file and the SDT website, 10 doctoral coordinators were working during the evaluated period. 5 of them were owners and 5 associates.

Currently, only 2 of the 9 CDs are UOC holders, ie 20.2%

Also, 1 CD is waiting for the authorization order and the fulfillment of the affiliation procedures).

As stated in the SDT Evaluation Report of 16.11.2021 prepared by the UOC commission (appointed by decision of the rector 83 / 7.06 / 2021) the activity of some associated R&D, especially pensioners, was deficient, reason for which the Report proposes the co-supervision for retirees.

Restoring the balance between incumbents and associates by disaffiliating some of them will be a difficult process, as SDT has allowed them to receive many PhD students in the last two years.



Recommendations:

- restoring the balance between UOC holders and associated teachers.

The indicator is partially 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.*

All CDs who take courses in the subjects in the curriculum are qualified or in the process of being qualified (Annex A.3.1.3.a.) and have expertise in the field of the subjects they teach, as well as a rich experience in publishing materials on subjects within the disciplines (Cf. and Annexes A.3.1.3.b - k: Discipline sheets) according to the PPS schedule

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1t52gWjizVJHDOxr3Y2oWHEL-T7Y6UvO5/view>

Recommendations:

- The number of disciplines in the training program has to be reduced, so that their attendance does not affect the research program of doctoral students.

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%.*

7 of the 9 doctoral supervisors, ie 77%, have more than 8 doctoral students in coordination (REI p. 20), but no teacher exceeds 12 doctoral students in coordination.

It is noted that the UOC has allowed some CDs to compete for many places in the 2021/2022 admission (IS - 7th year I year; GA - 7th year I year), so that this is an assurance that IOSUD does not will proceed to disaffiliate the associates.

Recommendations:

- The number of PhD students assigned to each supervisor has to be reduced according the legal parameters in the coming years (cf. LEN 1/2011);
- For proper scientific coordination, it is recommended that a smaller number of vacancies be filled.

The indicator is partially 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.



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

Although all teachers have scientific publications and achievements in their languages, they are not visible in the scientific community.

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.*

According to the CNATDCU standards only 3 teachers meet the C4 indicator (the one targeting the international scientific activity: ISI, ERIH, BDI) (Additional Annex 2). The rest of the researchers are not visible in the research platforms BrainMap, ORCID, WebOfScience, Scopus.

Recommendations:

- publishing scientific performance achievements in scientific publishing houses and journals with international visibility.

The indicator is partially 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.*

According to the verification sheets regarding the scientific activity, it is found that more than 50% of the teachers continue to be scientifically active, achieving in the last 5 years 25% of the CNATDCU score. However, it can be seen that the score is more focused on internal publications. (Additional Annex 1).

Recommendations:

- Diversification of publications and focus on publications with greater impact in the scientific world.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Domain B. EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS



SDT puts out too many places in the competition every year, so many of them the doctoral coordinators have more than 8 PhD students in activity. SDT does not check with acrimony the scientific activity of doctoral students who sometimes publish texts that are not structured according to the format of a study, article or scientific communication.

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

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.

One of the main strengths of SDT is the attraction of non-UOC students and, especially, the attraction of doctoral graduates from other scientific fields, which can be explained by the involvement and permanent dialogue with the socio-cultural environment in the area.

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 is 1.75. And the ratio between the number of candidates in the last 5 years and the number of places financed from the state budget put up for competition in the field is 5.36. (Cf. REI p. 21)

Recommendations:

- continuing the process of attracting students from other universities

The indicator is fulfilled.

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

Despite the fact that the number of dropouts falls within reasonable limits, the rejection of a large number of theses in the first instance, according to the CNATDCU analysis, reveals shortcomings in methodology, research ethics and coordination of doctoral students (cf. UOC Report SDT). Also, the large number of candidates enrolled in a single instructor (sometimes even 6-8 per series, reveals the lack of real competition and the identification of the best candidates).

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.*



There are good conditions for the best graduates to be selected for the entrance exam, as SDT has an admissibility threshold for registration (weighted average 8.50, cf. https://univ-ovidius.ro/images/2021/doctorat/admitere/Precizari_adm_STD.PDF).

The selection of candidates is made on the basis of an examination composed of two tests: the doctrine and the specialized discipline. Grants are distributed to those admitted according to a single value scale.

Recommendations:

- the inclusion of the scientific activity before the registration for the entrance exam between the admission criteria or at least the selection of the candidates.

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%.*

The expulsion rate is in the optimal parameters: 13% (cf. REI, p. 22). However, it is found that a large number of PhD students periodically withdraw, or are expelled; thus, in the academic year 2018/2019, 38% of doctoral students were expelled.

Recommendations:

- developing strategies to prevent school dropout

The indicator is fulfilled.

Criterion B.2. The content of doctoral programs

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.

By form and structure, the program complies with Romanian legislation and regulations. The content of the taught subjects needs an adaptation / adequacy to the level of doctoral studies (activities of deepening and analysis of some documents, ecclesial processes, etc.).

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.*

PPS comprises 6 disciplines of 5 ETCS each, of which one is optional, which students choose from a package of 7 disciplines. PPS contains a discipline of Ethics and Academic Integrity of 14 hours of course per semester and one of Research Methodology (Modern Methods of Research in Theology). PPS is a public document: https://univ-ovidius.ro/images/2019/dr/scoli_doctorale/Plan_Teologie2019.pdf The subject sheet for some courses,

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.

through the specified contents, reveals rather the recipients of the bachelor's level, and not the doctorate (Annex B.2.1.1. - subject sheets).

All the subject sheets specify the professional and transversal competences in terms of the cognitive dimension and the functional-action dimension in accordance with the Matrix of the National Framework of Qualifications in Higher Education and with OM 5703/2011.

The assessment was made by reporting the current PPS, as no supporting documents were submitted in previous years.

Recommendations:

- it is recommended to include contents that exceed the informative level and their adequacy at the level of doctoral studies;
- it is recommended to update the bibliography for some disciplines

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.*

PPS contains the discipline of Ethics and Academic Integrity.

https://univ-ovidius.ro/images/2019/doctorat/scoli_doctorale/Plan_Teologie2019.pdf

Recommendations:

- It is desirable that the bibliography recommended for this course also include legislation in the field of ethics as well as practice at European and international level;
- It is recommended that at least 14 physical hours be allocated for the Ethics discipline (cf. OM 3.131 / 2018).

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 learning outcomes covered by the PPS are specified in the subject sheets and are recorded in the examination catalogs. Research skills are assessed in the guidance committees during the internship and are recorded in secretarial documents. During the visit, several minutes were verified to support the RPS in the SD files (510/2021; 431/2019; 711/2021; 496/2019; 777/2019; 506/2019; 502/2018)

There are no mechanisms for designing the targeted competencies by consulting stakeholders (meetings with the socio-cultural environment, BOR representatives, academia and science, etc.).

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.

The UOC is concerned with improving the content and processes for coordinating doctoral theses in the SDT, as the large number of theses rejected at the CNATDCU is damaging the image of the university (see Report of the SDT Analysis Committee of 16.11.2021). Thus, among the findings and recommendations of this report were reported serious problems regarding the proper functioning of doctoral programs in the field of theology.

We consider that the UOC's concern for such verifications is gratifying and hopeful for the recovery of the processes within the SDT.

Recommendations:

- it is recommended to improve the process of identification and development of skills and abilities specific to the field;
- it is recommended to improve the activity of the steering commissions;
- It is recommended to create mechanisms for the regular evaluation of the targeted competencies and abilities.

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.*

As highlighted in the discussion with the management of SDT / Teachers, students present the research project as the first report, at the end of the first year of studies and 3 other research reports in the second year of the internship (approx. January / Feb, June / July and sept.). Year III is reserved for writing and completing the thesis. Instead, a CSDT Decision was filed in the file approving the support of 2 RPS per year (Annex B.2.1.4b - decision no. 10).

We consider that the interpretation given by SDT regarding the obligation to present at least 3 RPS during the internship (cf. GD 681/2011, art. 64: "at least once every 12 months") is distorted, so that by presenting the three reports in a single year, corroborated with the lack of these presentations in year I and III, the coherence, continuity and consistency of the doctoral research is not ensured (Annex B.2.1.4b - hot.nr.10).

The steering committees are approved annually (B.2.1.4.a), and SD submits three progress reports to this committee, which provide written feedback to the doctoral student.

During the on-site visit, several doctoral students' files were checked: 510/2021; 431/2019; 711/2021; 496/2019; 777/2019; 506/2019; 502/2018. It is noted that at the presentation of the RPS, minutes are drawn up and advice is offered to doctoral students. In most RPSs, the information on the guidance provided is brief and general, which raises questions about the proper functioning of these committees. In fact, in the Report of the SDT Activity Analysis Commission of 16.11.2021, these deficiencies are found (p.15 point 3.2) and it is recommended to improve the documents elaborated to better reflect the process of doctoral students (p. 17, point 3.2).

Recommendations:



- We recommend reviewing SDT regulations and decisions and distributing scientific progress reports throughout the doctoral internship;
- We recommend that the minutes be prepared with more information, suggestions and recommendations, so that the feedback provided to the students is more consistent and applied.

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.*

For the evaluated period, according to the documents submitted in the file, the guidance was provided only by the doctoral supervisors from SDT, which made the ratio be 7.5: 1 (136 drdz. / 18 CD). However, lately SDT has sought to improve this indicator by introducing new teachers in the guidance committees so that, even if in the academic year 2020/2021 the ratio was 7.25, in 2021/2022 it enters expected rules: 2.97.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to diversify the steering committees by recruiting PhD experts even from outside the institution;
- It is recommended the annual approval of the doctoral commissions and, if the evolution of the research requires it, the annual modification of some commissions.

The indicator is partially 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.

SDT offers publishing possibilities for SD both in its own magazines and collective volumes as well as through the publishing house and publications of the Archdiocese of Tomis. Also, most of the PhD students participate in other scientific events in the country.

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.*

The five texts I had access are quite different from each other. While I.V.'s publication is a large study, the rest are too short. I would like to highlight the text of the M.C.G, for the good structure and work with the bibliography.

1. **Antone Stefan Emanuel (co-author Bobei Florin)**, RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR DIMENSION OF MUSIC IN THE HORIZON OF THE OLD TESTAMENTS BIBLICAL LIFE, in 9th

European Symposium on Religious Art. Restoration and Conservation, Edited by Iulian Rusii, Kermes Book. Torino, 2017, (ISSN 2532-4381 ISBN 978-88-94206-44-9, indexat ISI)

2. **Irimia Viorel**, „Chenoza Sfintei Treimi în creație, întrupare și istoria mântuirii”, în *Studii și cercetări teologice și istorice*, vol. II, Edit. Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului, Constanța, 2017, p. 42-114 (ISBN 978-606-8870-07-6; 978-606-8870-11-3).

3. **Munteanu Ciprian George**, *Incursiune în ideologia secularizării și a fenomenului secularist – Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in a Pluralistic World. Philosophical and Theological Perspectives*. – lucrare relevantă. Publicat în „1st International Conference «Religion, Knowledge, Society (ISBN 978-606-733-241-4).

4. **Trestianu Gabriel**, „Mănăstirea Poiana Mărului, provocatoare a spiritualității românești”, în *Studii și cercetări teologice și istorice*, vo. V, Edit. Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului, Constanța, 2019, pp. 48-56.

5. **C.G.C.**, Importanța dialogului inter-religios pentru misiunea Bisericii, în „Buletinul Centrului pentru dialog între științe și teologie”, nr. 2/2018, Editura Universitaria, Craiova, ISSN 1584-4196.

Recommendations:

Verification of scientific publications by doctoral coordinators before their publication is recommended.

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 document provided as support in REI (Annex B.3.1.2) represents a centralization of the scientific papers / scientific publications of the graduates. Most PhD students comply with this requirement, however, from the findings during the visit, some SDs do not have at least one publication.

Given that not all student publications are published articles / studies (example - published research reports for years II - III), we consider it necessary to review the support / material of this indicator. Either by completing the annex in question or by restructuring it.

SDT did not provide further explanations on the fulfillment of this report.

Recommendations:

- We recommend the observance of the legislation in the field and the non-acceptance to the public defense of the doctoral theses that do not comply with the provisions of OM 5.110 / 2018.

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.*



For some disciplines/coordinators, SDT appeals to a small number of specialists in the field, which raises some questions in this regard.

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.*

According to the documents submitted as an annex to REI, in SDT there were 26 cases in the evaluated period, some teachers being referred 4-5 times to theses coordinated by the same supervisor. (Annex B.3.2.1. - Thesis support committees)

The effects of the practice of inviting the same teachers in the academic processes of guidance and evaluation were also reported in the Report of the SDT Activity Analysis Commission of 16.11.2021 (p. 17, point 3.3)

Recommendations:

- Keeping this indicator in optimal parameters by co-opting as many specialists as possible.

The indicator is partially 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.*

During the evaluated period, 89 doctoral theses were defended (Annex B.3.2.1). In the commissions for the defense of doctoral theses, some teachers were present 16 to 21 times, which raises questions about this indicator, even if it, due to the large number of theses defended in SDT, falls within the expected parameters.

Recommendations:

- it is recommended to include in the internal regulations some thresholds of attention on this indicator and to diversify the list of invited specialists as specialized references.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Domain C. QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Especially in the last year, the UOC has been paying close attention to identifying vulnerabilities in the teaching of theology.

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.

SDT periodically conducts evaluations of mentors' activity, student satisfaction, etc. but they lack objectivity.

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.*

In 2019, the Operational Procedure for centralization and follow-up of the capitalization of the research results carried out within ISD-UOC was approved (HS no. 33 / 31.01.2019:
<http://univ-ovidius.ro/images/2019/doctorat/reglementari/PO%2016.pdf>

Also, the Operational Procedure regarding the periodic evaluation of doctoral supervisors was approved in the light of the results obtained in the didactic and scientific research activity (HS no. 35 / 31.01.2019:
<http://univ-ovidius.ro/images/2019/doctorat/reglementari/PO%2018.pdf>.

Following the application of the procedure, the Director of SDT draws up an evaluation and monitoring report of the Doctoral School of Theology which contains internal recommendations for improving the parameters related to performance indicators (Annex C.1.1.1).

There is a major discrepancy between the SDT Internal Evaluation Report (Annex C.1.1.1.) And the SDT Evaluation Report of 16.11.2021 prepared by the UOC commission (Rector's decision 83 / 7.06 / 2021, cf. Supplementary Annex), the latter highlighting a long list of shortcomings identified on this occasion. However, the UOC's efforts to understand the shortcomings and remedy the situation at SDT are commendable.

Recommendations:

- conducting evaluations with more honesty and responsibility for early identification of deficiencies and malfunctions, and remedying them so that they do not make SDT vulnerable.

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.

To justify this indicator, REI attaches 5 reports, related to the period 2016-2020 made by the Center for Career Counseling and Guidance of the University. (Annex C.1.1.2). They describe the level of satisfaction of doctoral students. The analysis is made on the graduates of the Doctoral School, not on the students in internship.

Recommendations:

- Inclusion in the evaluation questionnaires of the interns / extensions aimed at observing their satisfaction. The results thus obtained can be made public and discussed in a possible meeting with doctoral students and teachers.

The indicator is fulfilled.

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

SDT through the UOC is developing increasingly consistent public information.

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

IOSUD ensures that all information of public interest is posted in a timely manner on the institution's website and is easily accessible.

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.*

SDT publishes the necessary information on the institution's website. Most regulations and methodologies are institutional and customized in each area where necessary:

(a) the doctoral school regulations:

http://univ-ovidius.ro/images/2019/doctorat/scoli_doctorale/ROF_SD_TEOLOGIE.pdf

(b) the rules of admission:

<http://univ-ovidius.ro/images/2018/doctorat/Regulament%20admitere%20doctorat.pdf> .



Annex 4 identifies the specific criteria for each doctoral field.

(c) the doctoral contract form:

<https://univ-ovidius.ro/formulare-doctorat>

(d) the regulations for the completion of studies, including the procedure for the public defense of the doctoral thesis:

<https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/-docs/regulamente/v9/Regulament%20privind%20organizarea%20examenului%20de%20finalizare%20a%20studiilor%20universitare%20de%20doctorat.pdf>

(e) content of study programs:

<http://univ-ovidius.ro/images/2018/doctorat/Plan-fin-SDT.pdf>

(f) the scientific profile and research interests / topics of the doctoral supervisors in the school, as well as their institutional contact details:

<http://www.univ-ovidius.ro/conducatori-de-doctorat> ;

(g) list of doctoral students with basic information (year of registration; leader)

<http://univ-ovidius.ro/scoala-doctorala-de-teologie> ;

(h) information on the standards for the elaboration of the doctoral thesis:

<http://www.univ-ovidius.ro/formalitati-pentru-sustinerea-publica-a-tezelor> ;

(i) summaries of publicly defended doctoral theses, as well as the date, time, place where they will be defended, at least 20 days before the defense

<https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/sustinerea-publica-a-tezelor-of-doctorate> .

Recommendations:

- A more consistent description of the research niche of each coordinator is recommended, accompanied by an indicative list of the main works carried out by him in the research niche;
- Customization of the research guide, writing and defense of the doctoral thesis in the field of theology is necessary

The indicator is fulfilled.

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

The PhD students have access to information and documentation resources in the field of humanities. As has been pointed out on other occasions, there is a need to increase the number of subscriptions and the purchase of books in the field of theology.

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.*



According to REI, SD have free access to important databases in the field, both through the ANELIS + platform and through purchased institutional platforms, such as Springerlink, Web-of-Science, Scopus, etc.: <http://biblioteca.univ-ovidius.ro/> .

It's a pity that the Library of UOC does not have subscriptions to scientific journals in the field of Theology (<http://biblioteca.univ-ovidius.ro/documente/REVISTE%20ONLINE.pdf>)

Recommendations:

- continuing the activity of endowing the library with databases necessary for doctoral students;
- purchase of subscriptions to magazines, especially for theology.

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.*

In the dialogue with the doctoral students at the online meetings (see the recording) it was highlighted that the works of the doctoral students are verified by similarity software. Doctoral students have access to the application, with the consent of the doctoral supervisor, to the system for verifying the degree of similarity for the progress reports, the doctoral thesis project and the research project. In the description of the fulfillment of the indicator is attached a reference to the request to start this procedure: <http://univ-ovidius.ro/formulare-doctorat>

During the visit and in the dialogue with the SDT contact person, it was found that the use of software is a constant practice.

Recommendations:

- use of software for verifying similarities and for other scientific achievements of PhD students (e.g. articles, studies, communications, etc.)

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.*

The field of theology does not presuppose the existence of sophisticated laboratories. At the UOC, PhD students and teachers have a space for meetings, courses, public presentations, etc., which was visited on the date of the visit.

Recommendations:

- The activity of maintenance and endowment of the current material base has to be continued.

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 UOC has developed an internationalization strategy that also reflects the doctoral programs, unfortunately, in the field of theology, the internationalization activity is quite low. (https://univ-ovidius.ro/images/2021/carta_si_regulamentele/1j/Strategia%20de%20internationalizare%20a%20UOC.pdf).

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.*

For the Theology Field, level III, the UOC has concluded agreements with 7 universities. (Annex C.3.1.1.a - List of ERASMUS agreements; Annex C.3.1.1.b - Bilateral ERASMUS + agreements by domains).

There were no Erasmus or other types of mobility during the assessed period; the only student declared in an internship achieved an internship mobility (2 months) in the academic year 2018/2019. (Annex C.3.1.1.c - List of PhD students with mobility). For the period of 5 years and about 100 PhD students to have only 1 (one) Erasmus mobility is far less than the requirement of 35%.

Recommendations:

- Students have to be informed concerning the possibilities given by academic mobility programs as Erasmus or others. For this reason, a regular public presentation of the actual contracts, foreign universities, and programs in general, made by the mobility coordinators, could be helpful.
- PhD coordinators themselves have to be more active in using Erasmus or other types of academic mobility and promote the best options to their PhD students. They have to stimulate their students to apply and achieve Erasmus or other types of academic mobility.

The indicator is not 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.*

Two doctorates have been organized in international co-supervision:

T. D. Andrei (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

B. C. Ionuț C. (Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland)

(Annex C.3.1.2 - International Partnership Agreements)

Recommendations:

- it is recommended to develop bilateral relations and to organize several doctorates in co-supervision;



- it is recommended to invite specialists from educational institutions abroad to give lectures / courses in the field of theology.

The indicator is 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.).*

There was only Prof. Dr. Ketevan Pavliashvili from the University of „St. King Tamar of Georgia” (Appendix C.3.1.3) who was co-opted in the commissions for guiding or defending doctoral theses.

Recommendations:

- It will be beneficial for all if more foreign experts are invited in the teaching and research process. There are plenty of possibilities that could be in use in our academic agenda and it is a pity not to put them into practice.
- Erasmus+ is a possible platform if the colleagues from CSDT or FTO decide to contact foreign professors for lectures or practice.

The indicator is not fulfilled.

IV. SWOT Analysis

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The great interest for doctoral studies in the field of theology of some graduates of doctoral studies from other fields; ● SDT has a very good collaboration with the main employer, in the sense of supporting many scientific activities; ● In the last year, several procedures and regulations have been adopted or revised (proving the interest of the institution in improving teaching processes); ● Given the problems that have arisen over time in SDT, the university has made its own assessment; ● A good collaboration of SDT with the administrative structures of the UOC. | <p><u>Weaknesses:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● large number of PhD students per supervisor; ● too many associates (7) compared to the holders (2); ● a significant number of CDs do not meet the current CNATDCU standards nor have they been active in the last 5 years according to these standards; ● the financing of doctoral students in their professional activity is very low; ● there are no grants during the evaluated period; ● a rather low internationalization activity (Mobility, guest teachers, etc.) |
| <p><u>Opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the revision of the regulations and the inclusion of quantifiable performance standards are the premises of a new beginning (e.g. the rejection of | <p><u>Threats:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● high age of most doctoral coordinators; ● the imbalance between owners and associates; |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 thesis at CNATDCU, respectively 2 leads to progressive sanctions, until the withdrawal of the respective CD affiliation);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the very good relationship of the Archdiocese of Tomis and of the teachers with the local and national socio-cultural environment attracts candidates for admission. | |
|---|--|

V. Overview of judgments awarded and of the recommendations

| No. | Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI) | Performance indicator | Judgment | Recommendations |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---|-----------|--|
| 1. | PI | <p>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:</p> <p>a) the internal regulations of the Doctoral School;</p> <p>b) the Methodology for conducting elections for the position of director of the Council of doctoral school (CSD), as well as elections by the students of their representative in CSD and the evidence of their conduct;</p> <p>c) the Methodologies for organizing and conducting doctoral studies (for the admission of doctoral students, for the completion of doctoral studies);</p> <p>d) the existence of mechanisms for recognizing the status of a Doctoral advisor and the equivalence of the doctoral degree obtained abroad;</p> <p>e) functional management structures (Council of the doctoral school), giving as well proof of the regularity of meetings;</p> <p>f) the contract for doctoral studies;</p> <p>g) internal procedures for the analysis and approval of proposals regarding the training for doctoral study programs based on advanced academic studies.</p> | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The processes of reviewing and applying the academic and management regulations and procedures have to be continued. |
| 2. | PI | <p>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.</p> | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria for granting the interruption of studies to be introduced; • Paragraphs regarding the obligations and the way of attending the doctoral students to be introduced. |
| 3. | PI | <p>A.1.2.1. The existence and effectiveness of an appropriate IT system to keep track of doctoral students and their academic background.</p> | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity of improving the computer system for managing the professional activity of students to be continued. |

| No. | Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI) | Performance indicator | Judgment | Recommendations |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------|---|
| 4. | PI | 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The improvement of the system for verifying doctoral theses for the prevention of academic fraud, as well as other scientific products made by doctoral students to be continued. |
| 5. | IP | 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. | not fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active participation in competitions for research grants or conducting grants funded through UOC structures is required. |
| 6. | PI * | 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%. | partially fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To look for extra-budgetary sources to support doctoral students |
| 7. | PI * | A.1.3.3. 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.). | not fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the operation of these types of budget allocations, SDD has to be informed about the amounts they have available each year and to be stimulated to spend these amounts for research, training and mobility of PhD students. |
| 8. | CPI | 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 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 | fulfilled | Prof. Vanca carried out the visit on-site, sent photos of the premises and referred to the rest of the committee. From all this, it is clear that the research infrastructure is adequate. |

| No. | Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI) | Performance indicator | Judgment | Recommendations |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------|--|
| 9. | CPI | 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. | partially fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● we recommend focusing scientific activity on intensive, not extensive, publication; studies and articles in magazines and publishing houses recognized in the field, with wide visibility, not many articles in any kind of publishing houses and magazines; ● we recommend a more rigorous selection in the process of teacher affiliation and a more rigorous verification of the fulfillment of the qualification criteria; ● for the safety and certainty of fulfilling the habilitation criteria, we recommend that the following habilitation files be supported in experienced and senior university centers (e.g. Bucharest, Iași, Sibiu, Cluj). |
| 10. | PI * | A.3.1.2. At least 50% of all doctoral advisors have a full-time employment contract for an indefinite period with the IOSUD. | not fulfilled | restoring the balance between UOC holders and associated teachers |
| 11. | PI | 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The number of disciplines in the training program has to be reduced, so that their attendance does not affect the research program of doctoral students. |
| 12. | PI * | 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 programs does not exceed 20%. | partially fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The number of PhD students assigned to each supervisor has to be reduced according the legal parameters in the coming years (cf. LEN 1/2011); ● <i>For proper scientific coordination, it is recommended that a smaller number of vacancies be filled.</i> |
| 13. | CPI | 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 | partially fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● publishing scientific performance achievements in scientific publishing houses and journals with international visibility |

| No. | Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI) | Performance indicator | Judgment | Recommendations |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---|-----------|--|
| | | 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. | | |
| 14. | PI * | 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 | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification of publications and focus on publications with greater impact in the scientific world. |
| 15. | PI * | 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuing the process of attracting students from other universities |
| 16. | PI * | 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the inclusion of the scientific activity before the registration for the entrance exam between the admission criteria or at least the selection of the candidates. |
| 17. | PI | B.1.2.2. The expelling rate, including renouncement / dropping out of doctoral students 3, respectively 4, years after admission does not exceed 30%. | fulfilled | developing strategies to prevent school dropout |

| No. | Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI) | Performance indicator | Judgment | Recommendations |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------|--|
| 18. | PI | 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● it is recommended to include contents that exceed the informative level and their adequacy at the level of doctoral studies; ● it is recommended to update the bibliography for some disciplines |
| 19. | PI | 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is desirable that the bibliography recommended for this course also include legislation in the field of ethics as well as practice at European and international level; ● It is recommended that at least 14 physical hours be allocated for the Ethics discipline (cf. OM 3.131 / 2018). |
| 20. | PI | 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 activities. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● it is recommended to improve the process of identification and development of skills and abilities specific to the field; ● it is recommended to improve the activity of the steering commissions; ● It is recommended to create mechanisms for the regular evaluation of the targeted competencies and abilities. |
| 21. | PI | 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. | partially fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We recommend reviewing SDT regulations and decisions and distributing scientific progress reports throughout the doctoral internship; ● We recommend that the minutes be prepared with more information, suggestions and recommendations, so that the feedback provided to the students is more consistent and applied. |
| 22. | CPI | 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. | partially fulfilled | <p>It is recommended to diversify the steering committees by recruiting PhD experts even from outside the institution;</p> <p>It is recommended the annual approval of the doctoral commissions and, if the evolution of the research requires it, the annual modification of some commissions.</p> |
| 23. | CPI | 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 | fulfilled | Verification of scientific publications by doctoral coordinators before their publication is recommended |

| No. | Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI) | Performance indicator | Judgment | Recommendations |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------|---|
| | | 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 | | |
| 24. | PI * | 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. | fulfilled | We recommend the observance of the legislation in the field and the non-acceptance to the public defense of the doctoral theses that do not comply with the provisions of OM 5.110 / 2018. |
| 25. | PI * | 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. | partially fulfilled | Keeping this indicator in optimal parameters by co-opting as many specialists as possible. |
| 26. | PI * | 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> it is recommended to include in the internal regulations some thresholds of attention on this indicator and to diversify the list of invited specialists as specialized references. |
| 27. | PI | 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> conducting evaluations with more honesty and responsibility for early identification of deficiencies and malfunctions, and remedying them so that they do not make SDT vulnerable. |

| No. | Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI) | Performance indicator | Judgment | Recommendations |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---|-----------|--|
| 28. | PI * | 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inclusion in the evaluation questionnaires of the interns / extensions aimed at observing their satisfaction. The results thus obtained can be made public and discussed in a possible meeting with doctoral students and teachers. |
| 29. | CPI | 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A more consistent description of the research niche of each coordinator is recommended, accompanied by an indicative list of the main works carried out by him in the research niche; ● Customization of the research guide, writing and defense of the doctoral thesis in the field of theology is necessary |
| 30. | PI | 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● continuing the activity of endowing the library with databases necessary for doctoral students; ● purchase of subscriptions to magazines, especially for theology. |
| 31. | PI | 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>use of software for verifying similarities and for other scientific achievements of PhD students (e.g. articles, studies, communications, etc.)</i> |
| 32. | PI | 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The activity of maintenance and endowment of the current material base has to be continued.</i> |

| No. | Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI) | Performance indicator | Judgment | Recommendations |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---|---------------|--|
| 33. | PI * | 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. | not fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students have to be informed concerning the possibilities given by academic mobility programs as Erasmus or others. For this reason, a regular public presentation of the actual contracts, foreign universities, and programs in general, made by the mobility coordinators, could be helpful. ● PhD coordinators themselves have to be more active in using Erasmus or other types of academic mobility and promote the best options to their PhD students. They have to stimulate their students to apply and achieve Erasmus or other types of academic mobility. |
| 34. | PI | 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. | fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● it is recommended to develop bilateral relations and to organize several doctorates in co-supervision; ● it is recommended to invite specialists from educational institutions abroad to give lectures / courses in the field of theology. |
| 35. | PI | 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.). | not fulfilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It will be beneficial for all if more foreign experts are invited in the teaching and research process. There are plenty of possibilities that could be in use in our academic agenda and it is a pity not to put them into practice. ● Erasmus+ is a possible platform if the colleagues from CSDT or FTO decide to contact foreign professors for lectures or practice. |

The recommendations contained in the report shall be resumed in the indicators' analysis. Other general recommendations may be made that do not fit within a particular indicator.

VERY IMPORTANT!!! – Each identified weakness must be correlated with at least one recommendation to improve the situation!

VI. Conclusions and general recommendations

In the meeting with the PhD students and DC I received the impression that both sides are motivated to do the best for the development of their common engagement. Some details deserve to be better thought out and some things need to be changed in practice. For example, it was good to consider extending the duration of doctoral studies in view of the emergency situation in which we have had to work in recent years. This is undoubted to the detriment of the students, and they need to receive some compensation.

Secondly, the obligation to work online has its advantages and one of them is the opportunity to use more digital resources than we did before. In this sense, it's positive that they have free access to



important databases in the field. It will be positive as well if the Library will be good for the Library of UOC to subscribe to scientific journals in the field of Theology.

In the third place, it's important to pay more attention to internationalization (Criterion C.3.). Erasmus+ is still active, both for students and teachers, despite the pandemic situation and I have the impression that compared to other theological faculties in Romania, the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Constanta and the SDT, in particular, do not make sufficient use of the program's opportunities.

There are possibilities also to include more international scholars into the programs of SDT in order to give opportunities for the Ph.D. students to gain international experience within their doctoral school and without necessarily having to travel abroad, especially if some of them are prevented from doing so.

From the prior table it is clear where the standards were only *partially fulfilled* – mainly on Domain A. (A.1.3.2., A.3.1.1., A.3.1.4., A.3.2.1.), and Domain B. (B.2.1.4., B.2.1.5., B.3.2.1.).

Not fulfilled standards are mainly if the Domain A. (A.1.3.1., A.1.3.3., A.3.1.2) and Domain C. C.3.1.1. C.3.1.3.).

Assoc. Professor Mariyan Stoyadinov PhD
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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.*

