



REPORT
of the Expert Panel
on the
RE-ACCREDITATION OF
Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
Faculty of Law

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INTRODUCTION

This report on the re-accreditation of the Faculty of Law Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek was written by the Expert Panel appointed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education, on the basis of the self-evaluation of the institution and supporting documentation and a visit to the institution.

Re-accreditation procedure performed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE), a public body listed in EQAR (*European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education*) and ENQA (*European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education*) full member, is obligatory once in five years for all higher education institutions working in the Republic of Croatia, in line with the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

The Expert Panel is appointed by the ASHE Accreditation Council, an independent expert body, to perform an independent peer-review-based evaluation of the institution and their study programs.

The report contains:

- a brief analysis of the institutional advantages and disadvantages,
- a list of good practices found at the institution,
- recommendations for institutional improvement and measures to be implemented in the following period (and checked within a follow-up procedure), and
- detailed analysis of the compliance to the Standards and Criteria for Re-Accreditation.

The members of the Expert Panel were:

1. **Professor Ciarán Burke**, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Rechtswissenschaftliche Fakultät, Federal Republic of Germany (chair)
2. **Professor Maria Alessandra Livi**, Sapienza University of Rome, Italian Republic
3. **Professor Tamàs Hoffmann**, Institute for Legal Studies, Department for the Study of the Domestic Implementation of International and European Law, Hungary
4. **Professor Marko Petrak**, Faculty of Law University of Zagreb, Republic of Croatia
5. **Nina Išić**, student, Faculty of Law University of Rijeka, Republic of Croatia

In the analysis of the documentation, site visit and writing of the report the Panel was supported by the ASHE staff:

- Frano Pavić coordinator
- Vlatka Šušnjak Kuljiš coordinator
- Đurđica Dragojević interpreter

During the visit to the Institution the Expert Panel held meetings with the representatives of the following groups:

- The Management (Dean and Vice-Deans),
- Heads of Study Programmes,
- Committee for Quality Assurance and Improvement in Higher Education,
- The students, i.e., a self-selected set of students present at the interview (full-time, part-time),
- Research project leaders,
- Teaching staff,
- Teaching assistants.

The Expert Panel also had a tour of the library, IT rooms, student register desk, and the classrooms at the Faculty of Law Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, where they held a brief question and answer session with the students who were present.

Upon completion of re-accreditation procedure, the Accreditation Council renders its opinion on the basis of the Re-accreditation Report, an Assessment of Quality of the higher education institution and the Report of Fulfilment of Quantitative Criteria which is acquired by the Agency's information system.

Once the Accreditation Council renders its opinion, the Agency issues an Accreditation Recommendation by which the Agency recommends to the Minister of Science, Education and Sports to:

1. **issue a confirmation** to the higher education institution, which confirms that the higher education institution meets the requirements for performing the higher education activities or parts of activities, in case the Accreditation Recommendation is positive,
2. **deny a license** for performing the higher education activities or parts of activities to the higher education institution, in case the Accreditation Recommendation is negative, or
3. **issue a letter of recommendation** for the period up to three (3) years in which period the higher education institution should remove its deficiencies. For the higher education institution the letter of recommendation may include the suspension of student enrolment for the defined period.

The Accreditation Recommendation also includes an Assessment of Quality of the higher education institution as well as recommendations for quality development

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATED INSTITUTION

NAME OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: Faculty of Law University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek

ADDRESS: Stjepana Radića 13, 31000 Osijek

NAME OF THE HEAD OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: Prof Boris Bakota, Ph.D.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE:

There are 20 chairs at the Faculty. Chairs are teaching organisational units at the Faculty. A chair gathers lecturers and assistants who take part in teaching the courses within the chair. The duties of the chair are: organising teaching, research and professional activities for all chair courses; preparing drafts of course curricula; improving teaching at the Faculty; providing textbooks, handbooks, and other teaching materials and aids; taking account of lecturers, assistants, and researchers and their professional and scientific training; taking account of student achievement. The chairs are organised in a way that they include related courses. Other organisational units are the Library, Secretariat, Law and Economics Clinic and the Lifelong Learning and Foreign Languages Section.

LIST OF STUDY PROGRAMMES:

Undergraduate level (1):

1. Public administration (professional bachelor level)

Graduate level (2):

2. Law (integrated study programme)
3. Public Administration (professional master level)

Postgraduate specialist study (3):

1. Human Rights
2. Criminal Law
3. Management of Local and Regional Self-Government Development

Postgraduate Doctoral study (1):

1. Law

NUMBER OF STUDENTS:

Full-time: 893

Part-time: 1505

Final year students: 165

NUMBER OF TEACHERS:

Full-time teachers in scientific-teaching grade: 30

Full-time teachers in teaching grade: 4

External associates: 16

NUMBER OF SCIENTISTS:

Doctors of science, elected to grades, full-time: 24

TOTAL BUDGET (in kunas): 26.530.948,72 HRK

MSES FUNDING: (15.948.877,48 HRK) 60%

OWN FUNDING: (492.376,73 HRK) 1,8%

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION:

The very inception of law studies in Osijek dates back to 1961, when the University of Zagreb's Faculty of Law organised its short-lived study of law here. This was followed by the introduction of continuous education of lawyers as part of the Study of Law at the Faculty of Economics in Osijek in 1973. Two years later, lack of qualified lawyers in the regions of Slavonia and Baranja and efforts to raise and improve the educational profile of the local populace were the core reasons that the Study of Law was expanded into a fully-fledged Faculty of Law.

In its first years of activity, the teaching staff was mostly comprised of teachers from the Faculty of Economics in Osijek and renowned visiting professors of the University of Zagreb's Faculty of Law. In the mid-1980s, thanks to selfless efforts of the staff and the first Dean, Professor Dragutin Rilke, the Faculty managed to appoint its own teachers for all courses. The Faculty of Law in Osijek is organised into 20 Chairs, each comprising mutually related subjects, with the other organisational units being the Library, Secretariat, Law and Economics Clinic and the Lifelong Learning and Foreign Languages Section.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE EXPERT PANEL

ADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION

1. Relatively small size of the Faculty allows for a more personal atmosphere
2. Strong and successful efforts by management to overcome past difficulties with ethical problems amongst the staff.
3. Good access to online databases.
4. Support for students who are unsatisfied with grades and a general attitude of transparency.
5. A general attitude of co-operation prevails throughout the faculty.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION

1. Low number of publications in internationally acclaimed law journals.
2. Data collection systems – especially the *Quali-Meter* system – amount to vanity projects and are entirely unfit for purpose.
3. Enrolment quotas are too high, and entry standards for all programmes are too low, representing a lack of quality control.
4. Low number of international research projects and a general lack of meaningful international co-operation.
5. Severely unbalanced teaching load of staff members.
6. Grossly bureaucratised profile of the Faculty as a whole, with too many ancillary and administrative staff.

FEATURES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Strong evidence of a general improvement in the Faculty's practices and attitude, albeit only over very recent months.
2. Excellent management of library resources, albeit on a very limited budget.
3. Willingness to fund staff mobility through participation at international conferences.
4. New strategic plan places ethics at the centre of everything it does.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Management of the Higher Education Institution and Quality Assurance

- The *Quali-meter* system should be entirely discarded.
- Specialised Faculty-level ethics procedures should be put into place.
- Formalized mechanisms for recognizing and improving research excellence should be introduced, especially regarding participation in international projects with prestigious scientific organizations, as well as publishing in prestigious international scientific journals and by prestigious publishers.

2. Study Programmes

- Practical application of theoretical knowledge should be introduced already at the undergraduate level of Professional Study Programme of Public Administration.
- Possibility of choosing some elective courses should be made possible before the final year.
- English language legal subjects for Croatian students should be introduced.
- Teaching excellence should be incentivized through financial means (bonuses, premiums etc.) and the establishment of teaching awards.
- Assigned readings at courses should be reviewed periodically to determine whether they provide state-of-the-art knowledge.

3. Students

- Written exams should consist of more practical cases.
- Professors should encourage students to write more scientific articles in cooperation with them.
- The relationship between students and members of the Students office should be improved.
- Relationships with former students should continue to be maintained.

4. Teachers

- The number of full-time teachers should be increased, as should the number of Full and Associate Professors compared to that of Assistant Professors and Research Assistants.
- The current inward-looking appointment system should be amended in order to attract the best possible candidates in the future.
- The size of student groups in tutorials and seminars should be reduced.
- The long-term mobility of teachers should be promoted.

5. Scientific and Professional Activity

- The number of publish articles and book chapters by internationally recognised publishers should be substantially increased
- The establishment of formalized mechanisms for recognizing and improving research excellence and the reward system based on scientific productivity
- The improvement of the international scientific visibility of OFL's publications should be made, e.g. by including them in the most important databases
- Administrative help should be secured for project applications.

6. Mobility and International Co-operation

- Arrangements made for international students should be improved, particularly on the administrative level.
- Awareness amongst students of opportunities to study abroad should be raised, and such studies should be facilitated, e.g. by allowing for them at a more opportune time during a student's studies.
- Recognition of Erasmus-courses taken abroad should be formalized.
- A renewed focus on successfully obtaining sizeable amounts of research funding should be encouraged.
- The Faculty should seek opportunities to engage with other partners throughout Europe and further afield to increase both outgoing and incoming student mobility.

7. Resources, Administration, Space, Equipment and Finance

- The faculty buildings should be made accessible to persons with disabilities.
- The faculty should try to secure more space for the library.

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE TO THE STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR RE-ACCREDITATION

1. Higher education institution management and quality insurance

1.1. The Osijek Faculty of Law (OFL, or the Faculty) has compiled a detailed and comprehensive strategic plan, charting goals and objectives for the next five years. However, it should be noted that this plan is very new, and as such there is little evidence as to whether the stated goals will in fact be pursued.

The strategy is divided into eight parts, taking account the Faculty's positioning in its social surroundings and the need to establish a link with the local labour market. In addition, a strategic plan of scientific research activities was adopted in June of 2015.

Annual operational plans and monitoring of the implementation thereof would be helpful in fulfilling the tenets of the strategic plan.

1.2. The Faculty would seem to have a solid corpus of institutional rules and regulations. However, until recently, there has been a strong reliance on informal procedures, which derogated the letter of the law. For example, while the regulations prescribed that witnesses should be present during certain examinations, but in reality, such decisions were typically taken on an ad hoc basis. While elsewhere, a reliance on informal procedures may lead to increased efficiency, there is no evidence that this is the case at the OFL.

1.3. The procedures of the Faculty, the goals pursued therein, and the objectives pursued, are generally aligned with those of the university as a whole.

1.4. It would seem that the study programmes are broadly consistent with the Faculty's mission.

1.5. The OFL does collect some data from students and staff with regard to improving the quality of its service provision. See below, criteria 1.6 and 1.7. However, with regard to consultation of alumni, stakeholders, civil society and private organisations, the picture is less well developed. Alumni were consulted for the first time last year under the aegis of the *Quali-meter* project. However, this project is deeply flawed (see below), and the consultation of alumni was piecemeal. There is no systematic means of collecting feedback from employers, and no meetings with stakeholders are scheduled. However, the recently implemented *Iurisprudencia* project does include some round tables with employers, and it is hoped to implement a new procedure thereafter. Initial feedback has been negative concerning the number of study programmes and the curricula on offer. A number of fact-finding trips to Germany and France to garner evidence of best practices will take place in the near future.

1.6. The Faculty has a two-track procedure for the monitoring of teaching quality. The first track consists of two tenets, both of which are overseen by the Quality Assurance Committee.

The first of these is a survey document, based upon a university-wide template, which is filled in by students in September every year. The second is a faculty survey, which is distributed to staff at the end of every semester, amounting to effective self-evaluation. The data obtained from the two sources is compared and analysed. Thereafter, there are discussions with the academic staff members based upon the results. However, a bad report has no formal consequences, and the system is very new, with no real evidence that it is working effectively.

The second track has been in existence longer, and is based upon the *Quali-meter* tool. This is a proprietary, patented, assessment model designed by the chair of the Quality Assurance Committee, which has been used for some time within the Faculty to assess the quality of teaching – though not research – based upon a number of input variables derived from bespoke surveys, distributed to students at various points during the academic year. According to the *Quali-meter* results, the Faculty has received excellent grades. However, serious concerns may be voiced about the methodology employed in the *Quali-meter* tool. In particular, expectations of performance are used as one of the variables for the purposes of assessing performance. This entails that if expectations are low, even a mediocre performance may receive a good grade, since expectations have been exceeded. Such a system rewards mediocrity and does not amount to an objective assessment tool. This is borne out by the fact that the results of the internal University survey conducted for the purposes of this assessment bore little or no resemblance to the outcomes observed by the *Quali-meter* survey. As such, it is strongly recommended that the *Quali-meter* system be entirely discarded.

Finally, with regard to the Quality Assurance Committee itself, a few remarks are warranted concerning its composition. The Committee possesses no formal powers to compel the Faculty or even to review its own procedures, and may only present recommendations to the Faculty Council. There are no professors on the Committee, only junior faculty and students, and the most senior member is not a lawyer by training. This diminishes the Committee's gravitas, and limits its efficacy in convincing the Council of its concerns.

Another indirect method of monitoring teaching quality is through the complaints procedure available to students, whereby they may approach either the Vice-Dean or the Student Ombudsman, in either case, anonymously, or may make contact with the Quality Assurance Committee via a Facebook page. However, there is little evidence to show that students are aware of, or make use of, such opportunities. The comments received by students within the framework of the re-accreditation procedure are indicative of a good deal of dissatisfaction with various aspects of teaching. Further, no feedback is given concerning the teaching evaluations to students, which was cited as a source of frustration. Teachers are overburdened in terms of hours, and the load is very unevenly distributed between staff members. This suggests that there is much to do to improve teaching and that present procedures are inadequate.

In addition to the above, there is no procedure for the review or updating of reading lists, even for junior staff, which would constitute a basic measure of quality control.

1.7. With regard to the monitoring of research quality, academic staff members must submit annual reports of their activities, amounting to a self-evaluation system. However, there are no discernible immediate consequences depending on whether such reports show performance to be good or bad. In addition, the dangers inherent in effective self-evaluation are self-evident. There is no formal mechanism to ensure research excellence.

Linked to the above is the fact that recruitment is typically undertaken from within the Faculty. This includes promotion. As such, staff members do not have to fear that a mediocre academic output will lead to their usurpation from without. This limits motivation to engage in quality research. Further, promotions of junior staff are undertaken, inter alia, on the basis of number of, rather than quality of, publications, with no additional premium attributed to a good publication over a mediocre one. Monographs are not accorded sufficient acclaim, and only one junior staff member had published one. On the other hand, junior staff may be disciplined if they do not publish at all for two consecutive years. As such, in order to improve their career prospects, staff are effectively encouraged to prioritise quantity – many articles, of any length, in any journal – over quality. This is not ideal, effectively discouraging excellence.

1.8. It is germane to note that the recently adopted strategic plan places ethical concerns at the centre of everything it does. However, as stated in relation to criterion 1.1, it should be noted that this plan is very new, and as such there is little evidence as to whether the stated goals will in fact be pursued. There is also a draft of a new disciplinary code at university level, though this has yet to be adopted.

The Faculty seems deeply dependent upon a university-level code of ethics, rather than developing its own procedures. This has been shown to be inadequate due to the fact that two teaching staff who are currently being investigated by the State Prosecutor remain on active duty, inter alia, supervising examinations. Since the offences of which these individuals are accused pertain to corruption of examination procedures, this is particularly lamentable. In addition, there is no formal plan in place for the discarding of examination results, or indeed, any plan regarding how to cope if they are found guilty. This seems an unacceptable oversight. However, the Faculty does warrant some commendation for its expulsion of the former Dean, who was similarly indicted, and ultimately convicted. These recent problems seem to have raised awareness of ethical issues, though it is clear that the present improvements are highly dependent upon the good faith of the staff, while in order to ensure future performance, specialised Faculty-level ethics procedures should perhaps be put into place.

With respect to plagiarism, student essays are automatically filtered via a system resembling *Turnitin*. However, academic output by the staff is not subject to the same controls. There is no formal mechanism for dealing with a lack of ethical practices with regard to research, whether plagiarism, recycling, or taking credit for the work of students, assistants, and junior staff. There

is a university-level Ethical Committee, but its resolutions are merely declaratory, and not mandatory.

2. Study programmes

2.1. With regard to the presence – or lack thereof – of effective procedures for monitoring and improving the quality of study programmes, it is germane to note that there seems to be no institutionalized mechanism to monitor and improve study programmes beyond the formal review prescribed by Croatian law. Regular review of the curriculum is certainly necessary, having special regard to the assigned literature for individual courses. The establishment of incentives for teachers, such as recognition of teaching excellence by awarding bonuses and creating awards for the best teachers is recommended.

There is scant evidence of any stakeholder involvement from the public and private sectors.

2.2. With regard to whether enrolment quotas are justified, one should begin by stating that the enrolment quotas – with the exception of the enrolment quota for PhD students (which, in any case, is a new programme) – are regularly fulfilled, so there is a clear demand for the courses from the public. However, in light of the insufficient number of teachers (the teacher-student ratio is 1:59, exceeding the recommended maximum ratio of 1:30 by a factor of two) and the low entry level grade average of students, most of whom arrive from vocational schools rather than grammar schools, it is recommended that the Faculty should reduce the number of students admitted, especially the number of part-time students.

2.3. As a result of the above, it is clear that enrolment quotas are far from aligned with the institutional resources for quality teaching and pass rate analysis.

In light of the high number of students and the resulting high workload of teachers, quality teaching becomes difficult, even in the presence of committed teaching staff, of which there are certainly a good number at the OFL.

2.4. Generally, law students seem to be satisfied with the skills obtained during their education. Teachers seem to try to incorporate practical aspects such as case law analysis into their courses. However, public administration bachelor students expressed grave concerns about the lack of practical education during their study programme. Given that most of these students presumably intend to work in the public sector after their graduation, the absence of such skills can be detrimental to their future employment opportunities.

With regard specifically to the presence – or lack thereof – of defined learning outcomes describing the skills and knowledge that students can expect to acquire during their studies, it is worth noting that these are more loosely defined than would be ideal in the circumstances.

2.5. The learning by students of all subjects is assessed through a combination of written and oral exams, usually without continuous assessment of student learning throughout the course. Certain complaints have been raised concerning the lack of objectivity in a number of cases when past performance is taken into account determining the students' final grades and that the review of the written exam is sometimes provided only following the oral exam.

2.6. With regard to whether ECTS credits awarded for courses reflect a realistic estimate of student workload, it should be observed that ECTS credits at the University of Osijek are calculated based on average student workload invested in the subject, and not simply the number of lecturing hours. There have been no complaints on the part of the students concerning the allocation of ECTS credits. As a result, it would certainly seem that current parameters reflect the realistic estimate of student workload.

2.7. Study programmes have clear objectives and learning outcomes are specified for the students. However, there is generally no overview of the content of individual subjects which results in complaints from students concerning having to study from outdated scientific literature. In general, the study programmes do not seem to take into account international standards and aim to meet only Croatian requirements.

2.8. The teachers employ a variety of teaching methods and make use of information technology facilities. Practical aspects are also introduced into the teaching process. Nevertheless, there have been complaints about the lack of adequate focus on the practical aspects of legal education, and major concerns expressed by public administration undergraduate students in this regard. It is recommended therefore that this situation be rectified forthwith.

2.9. The Faculty has taken an exceptional degree of care to ensure that adequate resources are provided to the students, researchers and lecturers. There is a subscription to major international legal databases, such as Heinonline, Westlaw and Lexis-Nexis (which, it is acknowledged, requires substantial investment of funds, and which is to be warmly commended), and the library has an adequate collection of national and international legal titles, though it should be noted that some of these are rather out-dated.

2.10. Students are afforded opportunities to apply their knowledge in the context of practical application.

The Faculty conducts several legal clinics, which provide an opportunity for students to participate in practical legal work, as well as compulsory practical training in the fifth year as prescribed by Croatian law. Moreover, students can participate in moot court competitions, where they can simulate legal trials. However, it seems that there are few efforts on behalf of the Faculty to build any further links with businesses or the local community in order to ensure that students are able utilize their knowledge in different contexts.

3. Students

3.1. OFL does not evaluate applicants before they enrol into the study programmes due to the State Matura system. Compulsory subjects must be taken at the 'B' level, while politics and economics are effectively obligatory, as taking these subjects is necessary in order to receive extra points. Extra points are also awarded if the applicant in question finished grammar school, or economic and administrative school, if the student in question is professional athlete, or has a language certificate. For most students, OFL was their first choice. There is a tendency toward increasing the number of students who have finished grammar school, and the Faculty plans to make efforts to attract students who have finished grammar school with a good grade average.

In order to achieve such goals, it is recommended putting extra measures in place in to ensure the excellence of students who enrol in the first year of studies. Furthermore, it is recommended to reduce the number of students admitted and to continue to reduce the enrolment quotas for part time students due to decreasing interest in that kind of study programme.

3.2. The Faculty greatly encourages and supports students in their extracurricular activities. Students have the opportunity to take English and German language courses established especially for lawyers. They also have the opportunity to take international seminars, summer schools et cetera. Many student teams actively take part in international and regional Moot court competitions, for example, the Regional Moot Court IHL Competition. OFL offers financial support for such activities, and provides all literature that is required. However, students seem to be dissatisfied with the amount of literature that is needed to prepare for Moot Court Competitions. Moreover, students are also encouraged to take part in sport competitions.

3.3. Mentorship takes place via mentoring seminars, as well as through the supervision of master's theses and final bachelor papers. Professors also write and publish scientific articles in cooperation with students, but it is also true that they are obliged to do this in order to be promoted. Furthermore, they are mentoring activities during preparation for moot court competitions (though it should be note that the overall amount of students who participate in moot courts is relatively small). Professors regularly answer students' e-mails.

OFL does not offer counselling or professional orientation services to ensure personal and professional development of the students. It is necessary to at least consider introducing such services in order to help students with their professional career development.

3.4. OFL has established and published knowledge assessment procedures. Most exams are in written form, while for some courses, there is a mix of written and oral exams. Written exams are objective, but certain questions must be raised concerning the objectivity – or lack thereof - of oral exams at the Faculty.

In order to ensure a modicum of objectivity, a recent improvement is evident due to the fact that, now, all oral exams are taken in the presence of two or more professors or other students, which

was not previously the practice. In writing exams, professors usually do not set any practical case to solve in which students should be able to apply their knowledge in a problem-based context. It is recommended that this practice change.

There is a procedure to deal with cases when students are not satisfied with the grades awarded, and students are familiar with the way in which the procedure operates. In cases when there is only one teaching professor for some courses, the Faculty maintains a list of all other professors that can examine students; this serves to ensure a greater degree of objectivity in examination situations.

3.5. The Alumni Club of Graduated Students of the Faculty of Law in Osijek was founded in November 2014. The Faculty has not kept any records of employment of the alumni during the period analysed. The OFL is in contact with Croatian Employment Service - Regional Office Osijek, and they have agreed to submit data on the number of unemployed classified by qualification (National Standard Classification of Education) and scientific/artistic areas to the Committee for Quality Assurance and Improvement. This helps to ensure an approximate picture of the unemployed lawyers in the region.

It is recommended that OFL continues to invest in improving contact with its former students and collect data on their employment, so that such information may be used for further improvement of the Faculty.

3.6. All relevant documents on study programmes, learning outcomes, qualifications and employment opportunities are published on the (recently renovated) web page of the OFL. Moreover, the Faculty has Brochure – ‘a Guide for Freshmen’.

In order to motivate and attract future students, the faculty is recommended to organize open days or to organise the presentation of the Faculty in secondary schools in the region.

3.7. Students of the OFL can express their opinions through Student Representatives and via a Student Ombudsman. At several locations on the campus, mailboxes are installed, in which students can anonymously express their opinions, complaints or problems. The student Ombudsman is charged with occasionally checking the mailboxes and presenting the complaints to the Vice-Dean, who then endeavours to solve the problem in question with professors and students.

However, in practice, the Panel notes that a less than ideal level of communication is evident in the relationship between students and members of the Students’ office. Improvement here is urgently needed.

3.8. Students receive feedback on the measures that have been taken on the basis of their opinions and suggestions via the Student Ombudsman, via e-mail, or directly from professors. However, the results of the evaluation process are not published. Students representatives are present in all Faculty committees.

4. Teachers

4.1. As indicated into the Self-Evaluation Report of October 2014 (hereinafter “SER”) of the Osijek Faculty of Law (“OFL”) (and the situation is not changed till now), the teaching staff of OFL includes: 30 teachers with academic titles (including 6 Full Professors, 8 Associate Professors and 16 Assistant Professors); 4 teachers in teaching positions (senior lecturers); 21 postdoctoral research assistants/senior assistants, assistants and junior researchers and 5 professional associates in teaching. There are also 16 external associates (9 Full Professors; 4 Assistant Professors and 2 Emeriti Professors), mostly engaged in postgraduate study programmes (only 2 in the Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate University Study Programme).

SER shows that during the last five years, there has been an increase of young employees with academic titles (8%) (but mostly in the position of Assistants) and a decrease in the number of staff with associate (by 9%) and teaching titles (by 1%).

Table 4.b.1 of SER makes it evident that there is a positive trend concerning the teacher/student ratio but that an adequate ratio has not yet been reached (it should also be noted that the figures into the Table are not completely clear).

SER indicates how the high workload for teaching staff is very unevenly distributed, exacerbating the situation of over-work for some teachers.

SER shows that the lectures for full-time and part-time students, in all study programmes, have been taken mostly by teachers of the higher education institution (and not by external associates).

As a result of the above, it seems that the scientific-teaching staff cover core disciplines, and do their best to pursue the strategic goals of the institution, but, because of the still low number of full-time teachers, the workload of some of the permanent staff is overly burdensome, and their mobility and activities as researchers can be severely adversely affected.

Moreover, the number of Full and Associate Professors is low, compared with the number of Assistant Professors and Research Assistants. Also the number of administrative, technical and supporting staff (29 at the moment) is too high compared with the number of teachers with academic titles.

4.2. The institution is partly successful in implementing the policy of growth and development of human resources. The system of selection of new human resources is based upon potential retirements and the sustainability of study programmes and research activities. OFL promotes the development of human resources: doctoral programmes appear to be well organized, as referred to by doctoral students. OFL provides mentors guiding the new human resources; stimulating them to participate in important conferences and mobility programmes; and

requiring them to show evidence of scientific productivity and teaching experiences. OFL provides also special teaching training in this regard.

It seems, however, that a large portion of new appointments come from within OFL. This rather inward looking appointments system should be amended in order to attract the best possible candidates in the future.

OFL has not established a procedure to assess rewards for research excellence.

4.3. The institution does not have an optimal student/teacher ratio.

As indicated above, Table 4.b.1 (p. 74) of SER makes it evident that there is a positive trend concerning the teacher/student ratio during the last five years, but the current situation is still far from acceptable. The maximum ration is 1:30, and this has not been reached. Moreover, the figures provided are rather confusing. It is not clear if the ratio is 1:33 or 1:50 at present. In fact, in 2013/ 2014 - the ratio between the total number of full-time teachers and the total number of enrolled students was 1:46, and the ratio between the total number of teachers employed (that figure also includes external teachers) and the total number of enrolled students was 1:33. However, the calculation of the ratio should be conducted while taking into account the total number of full-time teachers and not all teachers employed. Thus, the higher figure is more likely to be accurate.

Moreover, the opinion of the students as well as of the teachers met during our visit was that tutorials and seminars are held with large study groups, and that this means that it is difficult to effectively engage in practical cases. The SER itself indicates that it is necessary to pay attention to the size of student groups in the future and always bear in mind the staff and spatial capacities of the Faculty (see p. 77).

4.4. OFL encourages teachers and teaching associates to engage in training through visiting lectures, participation in various activities, financial support in project implementation, organising conferences, travel and participation at international conferences or cooperation with other institutions. In this respect, OFL provides financial support for the teaching staff by payment of the conference registration fees and presenting papers at conferences and covers the travel and accommodation costs, as stated by teachers during the Panel's visit. The mobility of teaching staff seems to be promoted, but only for short-term periods.

We also verified that OFL fully covers postgraduate doctoral studies costs for its employees, and takes part in the settlement of other costs related to the acquisition of necessary professional skills by attending pedagogical-psychological and didactic-methodological training, which is mandatory.

In the framework of lifelong learning, the OFL has a programme of professional training for lawyer-linguists and some workshops in the field of information technology and computer science.

Moreover, the Committee for Quality Assurance organised two workshops on defining learning outcomes (on 28 and 30 May 2014), in which almost all teachers and associates of the Faculty participated.

However, it must be said that the long-term mobility of teachers is not permitted because of the low number of full-time teachers and their workload.

In addition, students told the Panel that the lectures are far too theoretical.

Finally, OFL takes into account the scientific productivity of teachers: teachers are obliged to submit a report on their productivity. Every five years, a report by teachers is also required in order to maintain the position of employee of the Faculty, and to advance with one's career, as was indicated by lecturers during our visit, but no award is granted in case of excellence.

4.5. Policies governing an equitable and fair assignment of teachers' workload have not been implemented. Teachers met during the Panel's visit did not complain about their own workload (which includes teaching, research, mentoring and student consultations), although SER shows a hugely varying and rather burdensome workload (with an enormous amount of teaching hours for some staff members). Teachers told the Panel that a different workload means a different salary, and that they accept this. However, overworked staff members are never acceptable, even if remunerated. This practice should certainly be changed.

4.6. Part-time work of teachers, associates and other employees outside the Faculty is neither regulated by the Statute of the University of Osijek, nor by the OFL. The Faculty Management has not collected any systematic data on monitoring the external employment of teachers outside the Faculty. In any case, according to the law, teachers who are offered employment at a higher education institution shall notify the Faculty Management, after which the analysis is carried out on the teaching and scientific work of the teacher in question. If the external employment of the teacher does not affect his/her work at the Faculty, the Dean consents to such activities. Only a few teachers have an additional workload at other institutions (see SER). Such commitments do not seem to have a negative impact on the quality and efficiency of their work at the parent institution, as referred to by students met during our visit.

5. Scientific and Professional Activity

5.1. The OFL has recently adopted its own strategic research agenda for the next five years (2015-2020), which is in accordance with the university research agenda (2011-2020). It is the first document of this kind adopted by the Faculty, and it remains to be seen whether it will be effectively implemented. The monitoring, evaluation and review through defined performance indicators is scheduled and the implementation is in its starting phase.

5.2. In planning its research agenda, the institution envisions cooperation with other scientific organisations, both in Croatia and abroad. The cooperation with foreign scientific organisations is until now mostly limited to nearby faculties in foreign countries (such as Pecs in Hungary). Starting from that point, it is recommended that the scope and geographical reach of such cooperation should be broadened in the future beyond nearby faculties, and that the OFL should seek to establish some kind of bilateral or multilateral scientific cooperation with “top 100” law faculties in Europe and on a global level.

5.3. There are sufficient staff members with PhD degrees for the implementation of strategic research agenda. Some of the staff members, especially of the younger generations (i. e. under 45) are doing research of good quality and publish articles and book chapters by internationally recognised publishers.

5.4. However, the great majority of scientific publications are still purely national publications, and thus without global impact. This impact can be reached only by starting to publish in prestigious international scientific journals and with prestigious publishers.

5.5. The institution has no formalized mechanisms for recognizing and improving research excellence, and a reward system based on scientific productivity has not been introduced. It is highly recommended to introduce such a system, especially regarding participation in international projects with prestigious scientific organizations, as well as publishing in prestigious international scientific journals and by prestigious publishers. The practise of the institution covering the costs for active participation in the international congresses and the pro-active politics of the Faculty regarding the acquisition of new books, journals and databases is laudable and is to be continued, formalized and coordinated with the future rewards system based on scientific productivity.

5.6. The OFL has a sufficient number of peer-reviewed scientific publications (a peer reviewed quarterly periodical called *Pravni Vjesnik* and a biennial international publication called *Contemporary Legal and Economic Issues*), but it is to be recommended that international scientific visibility is improved, e.g. by including such journals in databases like Scopus or WoS.

5.7. The OFL has a certain number of domestic projects and participated in some EU funded projects (e.g. IPA, Jean Monnet). This represents a good starting point and the enlargement of the number, scientific, international and financial impact of this activity is strongly

recommended in the future, especially through bilateral or multilateral scientific cooperation beyond the region, oriented, if possible, towards the “top 100” law faculties in Europe and at a global level. Administrative help should be secured for project applications.

5.8. Cooperation with the public sector (local judiciary, the bar association and the public administration) is adequate, partially based on some EU funded projects (e.g. Jean Monnet, IPA) and in the form of life-long learning. There is no special cooperation with local industry, which should in the future be planned and established.

5.9. The potential for gaining private funding, apart from life-long learning, could be explored via consultancy and/or mediation. At present, no significant funding exists in this respect.

5.10. The OFL has just begun the first generation of its doctoral study programme. It is perhaps too early to make conclusions about its implementation, but the enrolment criteria need to be defined more strictly (especially regarding the average mark that the candidates achieved in their graduate studies) in order to secure quality of PhD students and their research activity.

6. Mobility and international co-operation

The Faculty engages in a number of activities involving international co-operation. It is clear that improvements have been made in this regard in recent years, and that many individual initiatives are worthy of praise. However, there is still clearly quite some work to be done in this area. This section aims to offer a brief appraisal of the performance of OFL in this field.

6.1. The efforts of the Faculty to attract students and encourage mobility from other higher education institutions are inadequate. While there are a small number of students from Bosnia, and two Erasmus students at the Faculty, this represents the entire cohort of non-Croats. In addition, the arrangements that are made for new students are quite meagre. There is an international affairs officer, but this person is also a member of the teaching staff, and has no bespoke administrative support, which seems odd, given the highly bureaucratized profile of the staff, with as many administrators as teachers. While the website of the OFL should be commended, and while it is available in English and German as well as Croatian, further activities to promote international engagement are certainly necessary. The OFL has also failed to take steps to ensure the transferability of credits for courses to and from other Croatian law faculties. Of the OFL's postgraduate students, only two had studied abroad at any point.

See also criterion 6.7, *infra*.

6.2. In tandem with the above, the efforts of the Faculty to allow, or even to encourage, students from Osijek to complete a part of their studies abroad have been wholly inadequate. While studying abroad is theoretically possible, normally such studies may only be undertaken in the

fifth year, which is not optimal, as students have other priorities at this time. In addition, unlike in other Croatian law faculties, there is no procedure for students who participate in the Erasmus programme to receive credit within the OFL for courses completed abroad (though a few teaching staff apply credit individually, this is entirely at their discretion and would seem to be a rarity in practice). This strongly discourages international ambitions for students, as is evident from the meagre uptake of the option to study abroad amongst the student body. The re-accreditation panel learned that there had been an 'international day' at university level in the 2014-2015 academic year, with an Erasmus component, to spread awareness of opportunities. However, this was cited as a one-off event, with no guarantees of repetition in future years. Students showed little awareness of their options in relation to international study opportunities, which renders the signing of some 21 co-operation agreements (and seven bilateral agreements) totally ineffective for the purposes of fostering student exchanges.

See also criterion 6.5.

Further, the fact that most internationally-focussed courses are available only as electives in the final year of study is indicative of a problem of outlook. Students must effectively choose between the international courses and an exchange experience. Allowing them to take such elective courses earlier might spark their interest in travel, encouraging them to travel later during their studies. At a more limited level, the OFL does offer a law and language programme, with approximately 25 students presently inscribed.

The Faculty partakes in the Erasmus internship programme, with at least two students involved in the process at present.

6.3. The OFL encourages short-term mobility of its researchers and staff, through the funding of attendance at international conferences, paying travel expenses, conference fees, and accommodation expenses. However, there is little evidence of evaluation of the efficacy of such procedures.

Of 30 teaching staff, three had undertaken some portion of their education abroad, while only one was engaged in regular teaching at other universities. Shorter breaks seemed to be more common, for periods of 1-2 weeks to teach elsewhere. However, such breaks seemed to occur despite the Faculty, rather than because of it. Staff cited times when they had 'managed to get away during the summer' et cetera. This is not indicative of a supportive environment. Assistants and junior staff cannot replace senior staff, even for a semester, as they may not teach more than 30% of a position. This severely impedes mobility as well as the potential for sabbaticals.

6.4. The Faculty has applied for a number of international research projects in recent years, with some success. However, the amount of money received is comparatively meagre, and should certainly be improved upon. In addition, it pursues co-operation pertaining to quality management. The *Iurisprudencia* project, in particular, undertaken in co-operation with the universities of Rijeka and Split, warrants mention in this regard. The *Tempus* project, focussing

on language improvement, is also noteworthy. However, a renewed focus on successfully obtaining sizeable amounts of research funding should be encouraged.

A limited amount of benchmarking of study programmes according to international standards takes place. For example, the Salzburg guidelines are applied to the doctoral research programme. However, this seems comparatively superficial and could be improved. In the case of the doctoral programme, it has led to a less than ideal outcome, whereby researchers are forced to inscribe in an overly burdensome number of courses instead of focussing on their dissertation from the beginning.

In addition to the above, few international specialisations are offered at the Faculty, impeding meaningful research exchanges.

6.5. The Faculty formally offers a total of 23 courses in the English language. There is also some evidence of engagement with Italian and German courses. This is to be commended. However, it would seem that in reality, while these courses exist on paper, few are taken up, due to the lack of incoming foreign students. In addition, Croatian students do not take these courses, and indeed are not permitted to do so for credit. This creation of a two-tier system, where local students are segregated from foreigners, is certainly less than ideal. Some joint courses are also offered in co-operation with the University of Pecs in Hungary.

6.6. The OFL provides inadequate possibilities for inward staff mobility. Appointments are typically made from the rank-and-file, meaning that staff are promoted from within, and announcements of vacancies are not published in international gazettes. The fact that all courses are taught in Croatian provides a further barrier. Approximately ten visiting international lecturers give classes each semester. However, their lectures do not form part of the core of any classes, and they usually only conduct a single lecture. They are unpaid, and there is no mechanism in place for attracting more frequent engagement with such individuals.

6.7. The Faculty enjoys a formal and close co-operation agreement with Pecs, though a formal framework for further interaction is lacking. In addition, there are a large number of international agreements for the Erasmus programme. However, it is certainly germane to note that these agreements have not led to much student mobility, with incoming numbers being around two per semester, and outgoing numbers not exceeding ten. Co-operation is in the main restricted to the region, especially the former Yugoslav states, which is indicative of a parochial outlook. This position requires revision, and the Faculty should seek opportunities to engage with other partners throughout Europe and further afield. Further, some local agreements give cause for concern, for example that with Banja Luka, an institution which at present is not fully accredited.

See also criterion 6.1.

The Faculty maintains a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence, with two separate chairs, ensuring some professional engagement with foreign universities and may invite international speakers.

However, the funding for these chairs is meagre, and travel expenses for visiting lecturers (approximately 10 per year) are not paid. Such lecturers do not stay for long (typically less than two weeks), and their engagement is often restricted to a single lecture. There has never been a long-term visiting staff member at the faculty, though in the future, some co-operation with the Universities of Nanjing and East China are planned.

The OFL participates in a number of international moot court competitions, which is certainly to be commended. However, at present, participants are given no credit for their participation, a position which should certainly be revised in the future.

7. Resources: Administration, space, equipment and finances

7.1. The OFL provides learning resources for all students enrolled at the faculty. However lecture halls and seminar rooms, as well as the library are rather limited.

Group study spaces are scarce, although modern IT facilities are provided, as well as subscriptions to electronic legal databases, which is to be commended. Problems with regard to space can be solved through the reduction of student intake via the lowering of enrolment quotas.

7.2. The ratio of teaching and non-teaching staff is far from adequate, and is unjustifiable when compared to other Croatian universities. The number of administrative staff seems to be excessive compared to the number of lecturers. Huge resources are spent on the administration, which is clearly unnecessary, since other Croatian law faculties do not require so many administrators.

7.3. The Faculty does not seem to have any policies to encourage the professional development of non-teaching staff, except some limited training courses for accountants.

7.4. The criterion concerning laboratory equipment and relevant usage protocols is not applicable in this case.

7.5. The level of modern equipment, technology and technical support supplied by the OFL is generally outstanding. However, there is no access for students (and researchers) with disabilities to much of the Faculty, which should be a priority area for action.

7.6. The library was found by the Panel to be very well-equipped, especially in terms of electronic resources, and books relating to Croatian legal subjects. Its collection on European Union law was also impressive. However, the physical space in which the library is housed is very small, and books on other subjects such as public international law and human rights were outdated.

7.7. The financial sustainability of the OFL seems, on the face of it, to be adequate at present. However, most sources supplied are financed almost exclusively by tuition fees. This in itself is counter-productive, as it compels the university to admit more students, increasing enrolment beyond what is sustainable. It is suggested to diversify income sources through alumni endowments, research funding, and co-operation with private industry.

7.8. Modern IT-facilities, databases, books, and the financing of participation at international conferences help to increase the quality of scientific output. However, there are no financial incentives for higher quality teaching and research, which should be re-assessed as a matter of priority.