



**Report
of the Expert Panel
on the REACCREDITATION
of the University Postgraduate (Doctoral) Study Programme
“Education Research in Natural and Technical Sciences”
University of Split
Faculty of Science**

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INTRODUCTION

The Expert Panel appointed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) created this Report on the Re-accreditation of the University Postgraduate (Doctoral) Programme Education Research in Natural and Technical Sciences on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the University of Split, Faculty of Science.

The Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE), a public body listed in EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education) and a full member of ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), re-accredits higher education institutions (hereinafter: HEIs) and their study programmes in line with the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (Official Gazette 45/09) and the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (OG 24/10). In this procedure parts of activities of higher education institutions and university postgraduate study programmes are re-accredited.

Expert Panel is appointed by the Agency's Accreditation Council, an independent expert body, to carry out independent evaluation of post-graduate university study programmes.

The Report contains the following elements:

- Short description of the study programme
- The recommendation of the Expert Panel to the Agency's Accreditation Council
- Recommendations for institutional improvement and measures to be implemented in the following period (and checked within a follow-up procedure)
- A brief analysis of the institutional advantages and disadvantages
- A list of good practices found at the institution
- Conclusions on compliance with the prescribed conditions of delivery of a study programme
- Conclusions on compliance with the criteria for quality assessment.

Members of the Expert Panel:

1. Professor Lianghuo Fan, Head of Mathematics, Science and Health Education Research Centre, University of Southampton, UK
2. Professor Carlinda Leite, Centre for Research and Intervention in Education, University of Porto, Portugal
3. Professor Neven Ricijaš, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb, Croatia
4. Professor Nihad Bunar, Department of Child and Youth Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden
5. Professor Reinhold Stipsits, Universität Wien, Austria
6. Professor Maria Assumpta Aneas Alvarez, Faculty of Education, University of Barcelona, Spain
7. Professor Matthew John Schuelka, School of Education, University of Birmingham, UK
8. Professor Rachel Katherine Shanks, School of Education, University of Aberdeen, UK
9. Professor Lasse Lipponen, University of Helsinki, Finland.

The higher education institution was visited by the following Expert Panel members:

1. Professor Lianghuo Fan, Head of Mathematics, Science and Health Education Research Centre, University of Southampton, UK
2. Professor Maria Assumpta Aneas Alvarez, Faculty of Education, University of Barcelona, Spain
3. Professor Lasse Lipponen, University of Helsinki, Finland.

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

- Emita Blagdan, ASHE, coordinator
- Ivana Rončević, ASHE, interpreter at the site visit
- Lida Lamza, ASHE, translator of the Report.

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

- Management
- Study programme coordinators
- Doctoral candidates
- Teachers and supervisors
- Alumni.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme contained in the licence:

Postgraduate university study programme in “Education Research in Natural and Technical Sciences”

Institution delivering the programme: **University of Split, Faculty of Science**

Institution providing the programme: University of Split, Faculty of Science

Place of delivery: Split

Scientific area and field: Interdisciplinary area of natural and technical sciences, and educational sciences

Number of doctoral candidates: 25

In the academic year 2015/16, eight (8) candidates enrolled in the study programme;

In the academic year 2016/17, there were no enrolled candidates in the first year of study, because the admission procedure was conducted every two years.

Number of funded doctoral candidates: 25

Number of self-funded: 19

Number of employer-funded doctoral candidates: 6

Number of teachers: 15 employed by the HEI and 9 external associates

Number of supervisors: 23 officially appointed (currently 18 supervisors manage 24 doctoral candidates)

Learning outcomes of the study programme:

Expand cognitive boundaries:

1. Conduct didactic transformation of knowledge in the field of natural and technical sciences.
2. Devise contemporary learning contents and educational programmes.
3. Develop teaching and learning methods and techniques.
4. Develop and evaluate curricula, conduct knowledge assessments.
5. Conduct research in the teaching process.
6. Create theories envisaging new approaches in the field of education.
7. Collect, analyse and organise appropriate scientific and professional data and plan and efficiently conduct a teaching with the use of modern information and communication technology.
8. Apply scientific methodological findings into the teaching process.

Encourage independence:

9. Analyse and evaluate new specialised knowledge, methods, tools and instruments in the field of scientific research and independently apply them in research and development of the profession and highly specialised work.
10. Create an interdisciplinary scientific research proposal.
11. Compose a research paper.
12. Report and analyse research findings at a scientific conference and critically evaluate scientific research.
13. Supervise gifted students and develop their independence, creativity and excellence and integrate them into the field of scientific production and scientific research.

Contribute to social skills:

14. Organise and participate in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary individual and team research.
15. Use statistical methods, computer software for statistical analysis and computer databases to locate and identify sources for scientific research.
16. Popularise science and publish popular scientific papers in public journals.
17. Apply the methods for defining and protecting intellectual property.

Encourage responsibility:

18. Apply scientific, professional and ethical principles relevant for the educational and scientific system.
19. Tackle new societal challenges by applying the findings of scientific research and thus contribute to the societal and educational development.

RECOMMENDATION BY THE EXPERT PANEL TO THE ASHE'S ACCREDITATION COUNCIL

Upon the completion of the re-accreditation procedure and the examination of the materials submitted (Self-Evaluation Report etc.), the visit to the higher education institution and interviews with HEI members in accordance with the visit protocol, the Expert Panel renders its opinion in which it recommends to the Accreditation Council of the Agency the following:

Issue a confirmation on compliance for performing parts of activities (Renew the licence and label it as 'high quality')

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Provide students with more access to recent research literature, especially the latest international scientific publications.
2. Slightly reduce the number of mandatory courses required, the lecture hours for students to take and the points for them to collect so students can have more time to focus on research.
3. Encourage and help create a learning community with more sharing, communication, and collaboration among students.
4. Increase the funding by the university, the employers of the students and other agencies and create more funded positions in the programme.
5. Have more focus and more integration: Integrate more effectively the research topics, and key areas of scientific interest and expertise.
6. Enhance students' international exposures and experiences by encouraging and helping (financially or otherwise) them to attend international conferences, participate in exchange programmes (e.g., through ERASMUS) and engage in international collaborations.
7. Include SSCI and/or Scopus in addition to CC, SCI or SCIE in relation to the requirement that before students submit their theses for assessment, they need to have at least one internationally reviewed paper published or accepted for publication indexed on CC, SCI or SCIE list.

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. The programme is overall well-established, with alumni being highly satisfied.
2. The programme is unique, has an ambitious version and serves the education in the whole country, with students from all parts of Croatia.
3. The programme has a strong connection with schools and classroom practices.
4. Low ratio of drop off (20%), given that most students are studying part time.
5. Supervisors are well qualified.
6. Staff are very committed and highly motivated.
7. The management team as represented by the programme head has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and provides a clear vision of the direction for improvement and development.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Limited founding and funded positions in the programme.
2. Limited assistance for students to attend international congress outside Croatia, mobility, etc.
3. Limited access to recent and actual scientific research literature and publications.
4. Virtually no support (e.g., training or money) for English improvement.
5. There is not any kind of platform such as Moodle for students to communicate and share their work, evaluation and contents of the programme.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Plenty of dedication and availability for counselling, attention and mentoring of the PhD candidates.

2. Freedom to choose the supervisor, the theme of the research and facilities to change the supervision if it is necessary.
3. The Faculty has agreement with schools and other institutions in order to facilitate the research.
4. The supervisors write two annual reports and also there is a committee that supervise the supervisors.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRESCRIBED CONDITIONS FOR THE DELIVERY OF A STUDY PROGRAMME

Minimal legal conditions:	YES/NO notes
1. Higher education institution (HEI) is listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations in the scientific area of the programme, and has a positive reaccreditation decision on performing higher education activities and scientific activity.	YES
2. HEI delivers programmes in the two cycles leading to the doctoral programme, i.e., first two cycles in the same area and field/fields (for interdisciplinary programmes), and employs a sufficient number of teachers as defined by Article 6 of the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (OG 24/10).	YES
3. HEI employs a sufficient number of researchers, as defined by Article 7 of the Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing Licence for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organisations and Content of Licence (OG 83/2010).	YES
4. At least 50% of teaching as expressed in norm-hours is delivered by teachers employed at the HEI (full-time, elected into scientific-teaching titles).	YES
5. Student: teacher ratio at the HEI is below 30:1.	YES
6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public.	YES
7. HEI launches the procedure of revoking the academic title if it is determined that it has been attained contrary to the conditions stipulated for its attainment, by severe violation of the studying rules or based on a doctoral thesis (dissertation) that has proved to be a plagiarism or a forgery according to provisions of the statute or other enactments.	YES
Additional/ recommended conditions of the ASHE Accreditation Council for passing a positive opinion	YES/NO notes
1. HEI (or HEIs in joint programmes) has at least five teachers appointed to scientific-teaching titles in the field, or fields relevant for the programme involved in its delivery.	YES
2. In the most recent reaccreditation, HEI had the standard Scientific and Professional Activity marked as at least "partly implemented" (3).	YES
3. The doctoral programme is aligned with the HEI's research strategy.	YES
4. The candidate : supervisor ratio at the HEI is not above 3:1.	YES
5. All supervisors meet the following conditions: a) PhD, elected into a scientific title, holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position and/or has at least two years of postdoctoral research experience; b) active researcher in the scientific area of the programme, as evidenced by publications, participation in scientific conferences and/or projects in the past five years (table 2, Supervisors and candidates); c) confirms feasibility of the draft research plan upon admission of the	YES

<p>candidate (or submission of the proposal);</p> <p>d) ensures the conditions (and funding) necessary to implement the candidate's research (in line with the draft research plan) as a research project leader, co-leader, participant, collaborator or in other ways;</p> <p>e) trained for the role before assuming it (through workshops, co-supervisions etc.);</p> <p>f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory work.</p>	
<p>6. All teachers meet the following conditions:</p> <p>a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position;</p> <p>b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the course (table 1, Teachers).</p>	YES
<p>7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment committees.</p>	The supervisor does not participate
<p>8. The programme ensures that all candidates spend at least three years doing independent research (while studying, individually, within or outside courses), which includes writing the thesis, publishing, participating in international conferences, field work, attending courses relevant for research etc.</p>	YES
<p>9. For joint programmes and doctoral schools (at the university level): cooperation between HEIs is based on adequate contracts; joint programmes are delivered in cooperation with accredited HEIs; the HEI delivers the programme within a doctoral school in line with the regulations and ensures good coordination aimed at supporting the candidates; at least 80% of courses are delivered by teachers employed at HEIs within the consortium.</p>	Not applicable

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

	Quality assessment (“high level of quality” or “improvements are necessary”) and the explanation of the Expert Panel
1. RESOURCES: TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, RESEARCH CAPACITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
1.1. HEI is distinguished by its scientific/ artistic achievements in the discipline in which the doctoral study programme is delivered.	Improvements are necessary Teachers, supervisors and doctoral students need to increase research projects, publications and impact at the international level.
1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.	High level of quality The teachers at the Faculty of Science are involved in the delivery of over 50 % of the programme. Most teachers do not have the workload of over 360 of norm hours.
1.3. The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.	High level of quality The teachers hold doctoral degrees and have a high number of scientific publications relevant for the topics they teach.
1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.	High level of quality The programme employs a sufficient number of quality supervisors (with candidate: supervisor ratio = 3:4, way below 3:1). In the past five years, the supervisors were leading researchers or associates in 26 international and national projects, and published 364 journal papers (together with teachers) and 27 research papers in co-authorship with their doctoral students.
1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.	High level of quality There are clearly established and developed formal mechanisms of assessing and monitoring the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors, chiefly based on education qualification (with doctoral degrees), scientific-teaching title (at least assistant professor) and research publication.
1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.	High level of quality The Faculty of Science moved into a new building equipped with the state-of-the-art information classrooms, amphitheatres, and classrooms for lectures and seminars with multimedia equipment. Experimental research is enabled by numerous research laboratories equipped with research equipment. The Faculty library is part of the

	network of scientific and scientific-teaching institutions in Croatia, as well as the National University Library.
2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME	
2.1. The HEI has established and accepted effective procedures for proposing, approving and delivering doctoral education. The procedures include identification of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs.	High level of quality The programme was launched and approved in line with the scientific, societal and economic needs at the regional and national level. The justifications for establishing the programme are documented in the Study Programme Proposal.
2.2. The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.	High level of quality The research strategy of the doctoral programme is an integral part of the Faculty's Research Strategy, which is aligned with and based on the Research Strategy of the University of Split 2017-2021. The programme content, choice of candidates and supervisors are aligned with the strategy, focus and potentials of the University and the Faculty.
2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the success of the programmes through periodic reviews, and implements improvements.	High level of quality The programme committee meet regularly every semester, reviewing the activities from the past semester, proposing changes with the aim to improve the programme, and/or monitoring and solving current issues. The supervisors submit annual reports on students' progress. The students submit their own progress report and work plan for the following period, and assess the quality of collaboration with the supervisor and the quality of the programme.
2.4. HEI continuously monitors supervisors' performance and has mechanisms for evaluating supervisors, and, if necessary, changing them and mediating between the supervisors and the candidates.	High level of quality There exists mechanisms of monitoring and improving the quality of supervision. In their progress reports, the students can officially assess the quality of the programme and the supervisors, and they are allowed to change their supervisors if irreconcilable differences occur between the supervisors and students.
2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.	High level of quality The Statute of the Faculty of Science complies with the statutory enactment as reflected in the Act on Scientific Activities and Higher Education (OG 123/2003), which ensures the freedom of academic research. There is university regulation that ensures academic integrity.
2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and	High level of quality There is a well-established and transparent procedure for the application and approval of a thesis proposal and a

includes a public presentation.	public discussion. A committee of at least three members, chaired by a member whose is not the supervisor, is appointed for this purpose. A student is entitled to change the topic of the thesis once, with the written request and the report of the supervisor.
2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.	High level of quality There is a well-established procedure for thesis assessment. Before submitting the thesis for assessment, the student needs to have at least one internationally reviewed paper published or accepted for publication indexed on CC, SCI or SCIE list (Note: the Panel also recommend the inclusion of SSCI or Scopus for this purpose). A committee of at least three members, none of whom is the supervisor, is appointed for thesis assessment, with at least one member from outside of the Faculty. The participation of external and international members in the committee is encouraged. So far, four theses have been successfully defended.
2.8. The HEI publishes all necessary information on the study programme, admissions, delivery and conditions for progression and completion, in accessible outlets and media.	High level of quality All the necessary information related to the study programme (including notifications, syllabus, ordinance and other enactments, instructions and forms, list of mandatory and elective subjects, seminar dates, thesis defences etc.) can be found on the official website of the study programme.
2.9. Funds collected for the needs of doctoral education are distributed transparently and in a way that ensures sustainability and further development of doctoral education (ensures that candidates' research is carried out and supported, so that doctoral education can be completed successfully).	High level of quality There is clear explanation about the system of funding the programme and the candidates within the institution. Tuition funds, a total of 45000 HRK per candidate in 3 years, are spent according to the standards and the manner of use of personal and dedicated revenue to ensure the advancement of the doctoral study programme.
2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).	High level of quality There is a clear explanation about the tuition fee, as indicated in 2.9.
3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION	
3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.	High level of quality There are currently eighteen supervisors and twenty-four (24) doctoral candidates, which is far below the allowed

	<p>minimum ratio of supervisors and doctoral candidates (1 : 3 = 0.33). All teachers with assistant professor rank or higher in related areas may be appointed as co-supervisors or independent supervisors if they have published research papers in the related fields of education.</p>
<p>3.2. The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.</p>	<p>High level of quality The students are predominantly full-time in-service teachers in elementary and secondary schools and higher education institutions for teacher education, educational departments and institutes, agency for education, or textbook authors, who are interested in pursuing professional advancement and further education through doctoral study programme, which meet their needs.</p>
<p>3.3. The HEI establishes the admission quotas taking into account the funding available to the candidates, that is, on the basis of the absorption potentials of research projects or other sources of funding.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary Need to increase the funding available to students in different ways and to provide more funded positions in the programme.</p>
<p>3.4. The HEI should pay attention to the number of candidates admitted as to provide each with an advisor (a potential supervisor). From the point of admission to the end of doctoral education, efforts are invested so that each candidate has a sustainable research plan and is able to complete doctoral research successfully.</p>	<p>High level of quality A supervisor or advisor is officially appointed or provisionally appointed at the beginning, after consultation with the student during the admission procedure. The supervisors guide the students during the study, monitor their work and progress and devise a work schedule with the student, till the end of their completion of the programme</p>
<p>3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary There have been no international students enrolled in the programme so far. There is a need to have a clear strategy to recruit international students.</p>
<p>3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.</p>	<p>High level of quality The selection procedure is made public and carried out by a Competition Committee appointed by the Study Programme Committee. The selection decision is based on the grade transcript, English language certificate, interview results etc. to ensure best applicants are admitted.</p>
<p>3.7. The HEI ensures that the selection procedure is transparent and in line with published criteria, and that there is a transparent complaints procedure.</p>	<p>High level of quality The decision on the selection and the list of selected applicants is public. The applicants not selected can file a complaint within 15 days from the issuance of the selection decision. The selection is documented and made available</p>

	upon request to all applicants.
3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.	Improvements are necessary There is a need to clearly describe how applicants' and candidates' prior learning, as documented in the certificate of the master's degree, academic awards, public research papers and other research-related activities, is recognized in the admission and in the study programme after admission, and based on what criteria/procedures.
3.9. Candidates' rights and obligations are defined in relevant HEI regulations and a contract on studying that provides for a high level of supervisory and institutional support to the candidates.	High level of quality All candidate's rights and obligations are defined in the applicable Ordinance to ensure a high level of institutional as well as supervisory support to the candidates. There is a contract on studying that defines the financial obligations of candidates upon admission.
3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.	High level of quality There is clear evidence that comprehensive institutional support has been provided to the doctoral students throughout their study programme. The high quality of research work of the doctoral candidates has been commended by renowned scholars/examiners with international experiences.
4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES	
4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.	High level of quality The admission criteria, programme duration, content and quality requirements of the programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards as compared to many other countries such as Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, UK, USA, Netherlands, etc. as documented in the SER. The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and implement interdisciplinary research through mandatory and elective courses, and through collaborative and interactive work with the relevant partners in the country and abroad.
4.2. Programme learning outcomes, as well as the learning outcomes of modules and subject units, are aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF. They clearly describe the competencies the candidates will develop during the doctoral programme, including the ethical requirements of doing research.	High level of quality The students are expected to acquire competencies of the highest level (8.2) according to CroQF, which results in the expansion of knowledge boundaries. There are clear descriptions about the objectives, expected learning outcomes, content and teaching methods of courses in the programme. The students acquire specific scientific skills such as the collection of information and literature, critical

	reading, preparation of research paper, and the writing and presenting of paper through research seminars, conferences and interactions with the supervisor. They are also expected to demonstrate preparedness to assume ethical and social responsibility for conducting research.
4.3. Programme learning outcomes are logically and clearly connected with teaching contents, as well as the contents included in supervision and research.	High level of quality There is clear and logical connection between the programme learning outcomes and the learning outcomes of individual courses, supervisory and research work, as illustrated in the SER (Table 1.1) and evidenced during the interview.
4.4. The doctoral programme ensures the achievement of learning outcomes and competencies aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF.	High level of quality There is evidence showing that the students acquire learning outcomes and competencies of the highest level (8.2) according to the CroQF. So far, four doctoral candidates have defended their theses, and all the examiners commended the high level of research quality, and its significance and contribution to the advancement of the education system in the Republic of Croatia.
4.5. Teaching methods (and ECTS, if applicable) are appropriate for level 8.2 of the CroQF and assure achievement of clearly defined learning outcomes.	High level of quality The programme lasts a minimum of 3 years in full-time equivalent with 69 ECTS allocated for teaching activities, and 16 ECTS for research seminar I and II. Teaching methods used include lectures, small group work, experimental or laboratory work, research projects, seminars and workshops, student writing and presentation, etc. which are appropriate for level 8.2 of the CroQF and assure achievement of clearly defined learning outcomes.
4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.	High level of quality The programme enables the students to acquire generic skills through Research Seminar I and II, and through conferences and workshops they attend, and through the interaction with their supervisors. They learn to collect scientific information, critically read relevant papers, and the principles of writing and presenting research papers using a variety of ways during the programme.
4.7. Teaching content is adapted to the needs of current and future research and candidates' training (individual course plans, generic skills etc.).	High level of quality Courses delivered are flexible and adapted to individual academic needs and research plans (though the number of mandatory courses required should be slightly reduced). The syllabus of the study programme can be adjusted to meet the needs of individual students. The students can choose elective courses after reaching agreement with the

	<p>supervisor. Any student is allowed to change the subject of the thesis for any reason, though only once during the programme. In the event of problems related to supervision, the candidate is allowed to request a new supervisor.</p>
<p>4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary Need to enhance students' international exposures and experiences by encouraging and helping (financially or otherwise) them to attend international conferences, participate in exchange programmes (e.g., through ERASMUS) and engage in international collaborations. Need to encourage and help teachers and students to publish more in international research journals and in English.</p>

*** NOTE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPERT PANEL TO THE ASHE'S ACCREDITATION COUNCIL AND QUALITY LABEL**

The role of the Expert Panel in the re-accreditation of doctoral study programmes is manifold. The Expert Panel or part of the Expert Panel visiting a higher education institution drafts a report on the basis of a self-evaluation report, the accompanying relevant documentation, and a site visit to HEI. The draft report is adopted by all members of the Cluster Expert Panel, while the president of the Cluster Expert Panel is responsible for coordinating the assessment levels.

The report contains an assessment on whether a doctoral study programme delivered at a higher education institution complies with the prescribed laws and by-laws, as well as any additional/recommended requirements defined by the Agency's Accreditation Council, and whether a higher education institution can obtain a positive, i.e. satisfactory quality assessment according to the criteria set out in this document. Moreover, the Expert Panel must make recommendations for quality improvement.

Based on the assessment of all these elements, the Expert Panel may propose to the Accreditation Council of the Agency to issue either a confirmation on compliance, a letter of expectation for the period up to three (3) years in which period the higher education institution should eliminate the identified deficiencies, or to deny the license.

If the Expert Panel has assessed that a doctoral study programme delivered by a higher education institution does not meet legal and other requirements or that the quality of a study programme is not ensured (i.e. that HEI does not meet additional requirements or recommendations made by the Accreditation Council, or has a very poor quality assessment), they should propose to the Accreditation Council to deny the license.

If the Expert Panel considers that the relevant laws and bylaws have been met by a higher education institution, but that certain elements mentioned above do not meet the quality requirements, while they consider that the identified shortcomings can be corrected within a time frame of three years, they should issue a letter of expectation.

If the Expert Panel considers that all legal and additional/recommended requirements have been met and the quality assessment is satisfactory, i.e. that a study programme fulfils the learning outcomes appropriately defined for that level and scientific area, they may propose the issuance of a certificate and have a HEI commit to quality improvement and reporting to the Agency during the follow-up period.

Finally, if the Expert Panel has, in accordance with the criteria mentioned above, proposed issuing the certificate of compliance and assessed that, in addition to meeting the minimum quality requirements – i.e. the qualification framework level - for a study programme, the programme should be identified as a doctoral programme of a 'high level of quality', the Expert Panel may propose to the Agency's Accreditation Council that such a doctoral study programme be awarded the 'high quality label'. Thus the Agency, with the consent of the Accreditation Council, grants a higher education institution the right to use the label for their academic and promotional purposes.

The 'high quality label' cannot be proposed or awarded to a programme or a higher education institution that does not comply with the requirements laid down by the laws and bylaws mentioned in this document, and any additional requirements recommended by the Accreditation Council. Moreover, the quality assessment awarded to a study programme should reflect a high level of quality inasmuch that at least half of the sub-criteria in each of the quality assessment criteria are assessed as

being of high quality. The Accreditation Council of the Agency issues a final opinion on the label awarded. The content and form of the quality labels shall be prescribed by the Agency in a relevant general act.

The Accreditation Council of the Agency discusses the final report with all recommendations and suggestions, and issues their opinion on the report. Based on a prior opinion of the Accreditation Council, the Agency issues an Accreditation Recommendation to the minister responsible for science and higher education, and upon receipt of the minister's final decision on the outcome of the procedure, awards the 'high quality label' to a higher education institution.