

## Report \* of the Expert Panel on the REACCREDITATION

# of the University Postgraduate (Doctoral) Programme Management of sustainable development Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, University of Rijeka

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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 Management of Sustainable Development on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, University of Rijeka.

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.

The 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:

- President of the Expert Panel Professor Peter Mason, London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom;
- Prof. Aleksandra Mrčela Kanjuo, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia;
- Prof. Rainer Niemann, Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, Austria;
- Prof. Anand Murugesan, Central European University, Hungary;
- Prof. Peter-Wim Zuidhof, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands;
- Prof. Wendy Sigle, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom;
- Doc. dr. Maja Turnšek-Hančić, University of Maribor, Slovenia;
- Prof. Julius Horvath, Central European University Business School, Hungary;
- Prof. Adele Ladkin, Bournemouth University, United Kingdom;
- Ieva Krumina, doctoral candidate, Latvian University of Agriculture, Latvia;

- Hrvoje Stojić, doctoral candidate, University Pompeu Fabra, Spain;
- Jeremiás Máté Balogh, doctoral candidate, Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary;
- Kanad Bagchi, doctoral candidate, Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Germany.

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

- Prof. Peter Mason, London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom;
- Prof. Adele Ladkin, Bournemouth University, United Kingdom;
- Doc. dr. Maja Turnšek-Hančić, University of Maribor, Slovenia;
- Ieva Krumina, doctoral candidate, Latvian University of Agriculture, Latvia;

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

- Frano Pavić, coordinator, ASHE,
- Marina Matešić, assistant coordinator,
- Lida Lamza, interpreter at the site visit and translator of the Report, ASHE.

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,
- External stakeholders,
- Alumni,

The Expert Panel (henceforth 'the Panel') also had a tour of the library, IT rooms, student register desk and the classrooms.

#### SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study program: Management of Sustainable Development (hereinafter: MSD)

Issuing institution(s): Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management of the University of

Rijeka (hereinafter: FTHM) **Education provider**(s): FTHM

Scientific area and field: social sciences, field of economics

Place of delivery: FTHM

**Number of (all) doctoral candidates**: **64** (out of which 44 are active)

Number of doctoral candidates with funding (assistants from that Faculty or other HEI or

Institute): 10

Number of doctoral candidates who finance their study by themselves and candidates financed by their employers: 52

#### Number of teachers at doctoral study:

- 28 teachers employed at FTHM
- 12 from other HEI-s in the Republic of Croatia
- 4 foreign teachers

**Number of supervisors**: **30** appointed supervisors and co-supervisors.

Number of doctoral candidates with officially appointed supervisors: a total of 36 candidates have an officially appointed supervisor.

#### Learning outcomes of the study programme (as stated in the SER):

- 1. Apply advanced concepts in scientific research in the area of social sciences, field of economics with special emphasis on business economics.
- 2. Create and evaluate new facts, procedures and theories, that based on the research results, shift boundaries of knowledge in the field of scientific research;
- 3. As author or co-author write and successfully publish an original scientific paper in a peer-reviewed journal;
- 4. Prepare and present a public statement on the results and scientific concept at the international conference;
- 5. Give reasons for certain viewpoints and defend the position in the discussion with other scientists in the field of research;
- 6. Create and conduct scientific research in the field of economics (drafting scientific research, organization of conducting research, timely detect potential problems, identify the necessary funds, lead the research team);
- 7. Critically assess published original research results of other authors in the field of doctoral student's research;
- 8. Analyse and evaluate new and specialized knowledge, methods, tools and instruments in the field of scientific research;
- 9. Collect and analyse various pieces of information (search literature and databases);

- 10. Present and explain the results of scientific research to other scientists and general public;
- 11. Accept ethical and social responsibility for the success of research and possible effects on the wider community;
- 12. Writing and reporting skills (speaking and listening skills, the ability to present data and research results);
- 13. Express and justify personal, professional and ethical attitude;
- 14. Implement the results of scientific research in the business and social environment (knowledge transfer).
- 15. Face the new challenges of society and the economy and the application of scientific research to contribute to social and economic development.

Taught / research content in ECTS: 90/90

Taught part: 90 ECTS Research part: 90 ECTS

#### 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 letter of expectation for the period *up to two (2) years* in which period the higher education institution should make the necessary improvements.

## Joint recommendations for all of the evaluated study programmes in the cluster of social sciences and the field of economics:

- 1. Research proposal should accompany applications of candidates and should be part of the assessment process when choosing the best candidates for enrolment.
- 2. Supervisor should be appointed at the start of programme.
- 3. Transparency of doctoral students' funding should be improved.
- 4. Justification of fee level should be improved.
- 5. There should be an equal treatment of part time and full time (fully funded) students.
- 6. All doctoral students should have at least 3 years of independent research in full capacity. With current teaching content taking large portion of the programmes, programmes should be prolonged to last possibly 4 or 5 year, with first (classroom) part as a Masters (Research) level.
- 7. Systematic internationalisation of curriculum, faculty and students (incl. student experience) should be a priority.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. Efforts should be made to ensure that the programme provides three years of independent research activities.
- 2. Publications of the supervisors should extend beyond regional journals.
- 3. More international cooperation is advised, both in terms of the use of international teachers and supervisors and also of including international students.
- 4. Funds need to be used to provide a more modern, up-to-date infrastructure and appropriate resources for students operating at this level, especially databases and library resources.
- 5. The HEI should regularly check the rationale for, and aims of, this programme, alongside that of the PETU programme (also offered by the Faculty) to ensure that the two programmes are clearly distinctive.
- 6. Efforts have already been made to publish online recent PhD theses, however, this should be done also for past dissertations.

#### ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. High level of students' satisfaction with communication with the HEI and supervisors.
- 2. The courses delivered offer choice and can be adapted to individual academic needs and research plans.
- 3. Courses are delivered using methods appropriate for small groups, with an emphasis on developing individual research skills.
- 4. The programme has adequate and appropriate procedures for defending the thesis proposal and this includes a presentation.
- 5. The programme justification is well presented in the SER, and includes an analysis of social and economic needs of the community.

#### DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. There is a significant taught component to the programme and subsequently a lower level of independent research.
- 2. Currently, all applicants meeting minimum criteria are being accepted for studies.
- 3. The programme is lacking in resources, in particular: infrastructure, library and databases, working space for students.
- 4. There is relatively low level of internationalisation, in relation the following: international mobility, international faculty, international cooperation, international students.
- 5. There are different opportunities for full-time (employed at the HEI) compared with parttime students, in terms of: funding of international conferences, time of selection of supervisor.

#### **EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

- 1. The Faculty edited Scopus journal.
- 2. Communication between students, supervisors and HEI management.
- 3. The Faculty location and attempts at innovative teaching spaces ('classroom at the sea').

## 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 According to MOZVAG 75%
5. Student: teacher ratio at the HEI is below 30:1.	YES According to MOZVAG 24.5:1
4. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public.	NO The Panel acknowledges the efforts made to publish publicly online recent theses, however, this should be also done for past dissertations.
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	YES/NO

Council for passing a positive opinion	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*	
*Comment: This is YES in the moment and if only the programme is taken into account. But if total number of Ph.D. students in both programmes (PETU and MSD) is taken into account (118) the ratio with current enrolment quotas will become unsatisfactory in very near future.		
6. All supervisors meet the following conditions:	NO a) NO (Some do not actively work	
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;	as academics anymore, as they have retired.) b) NO (Some have	
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);	no research activity.) c) YES	
c) confirms feasibility of the draft research plan upon admission of the candidate (or submission of the proposal);	d) NO (Not for all doctoral students and not all supervisors as	
d) ensures the conditions (and funding) necessary to implement the candidate's research (in line with the draft research plan) <b>as a research project leader, co-leader, participant, collaborator</b> or in other ways;	many had/have no projects (neither do they participate).	
e) trained for the role before assuming it (through workshops, cosupervisions etc.);	e) NO (Some participated in training	
f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory work.	programmes, but only on a voluntary basis.) f) YES	
6. All teachers meet the following conditions:	YES	
<ul><li>a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position;</li><li>b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the course (table</li></ul>		
<ol> <li>Teachers).</li> <li>The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment</li> </ol>	NO	
The supervisor normany does not participate in the assessment		

committees.	
8. The programme ensures that all candidates spend at least three years	NO
doing independent research (while studying, individually, within or	(Half of a three
outside courses), which includes writing the thesis, publishing,	year study
participating in international conferences, field work, attending courses	programme is
relevant for research etc.	spent on courses,
	although it is
	claimed in the SER
	that they are
	performing
	research within
	courses. Yet the
	students decide
	on their topic
	relatively late and
	typically start
	their research
	only after courses
	have finished.)
9. For joint programmes and doctoral schools (at the university level):	n/a
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.	

#### QUALITY ASSESSMENT

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.	It is a positive factor that the HEI publishes its own Scopus based journal, and scientific achievements in the discipline are evident from the quantity of publications of teachers in the past 5 years. However, the range is limited mostly to publications within their own journal or other journals published by HEIs based on the pool of knowledge from the region.  Furthermore, although the HEI has been involved in university, national and international research, some supervisors (full professors) have had no project activity in the last 5 years. More opportunities should thus be found that will allow for inclusion of students, including the part-time students, in research projects.  The Panel recommends that more effort should be put into publishing in more international journals, especially those with higher impact factors.  Additionally it is recommended that more effort should be put into starting national and international research projects.
1.2	. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.	Improvements are necessary  While most of the supervisors do not seem to be overloaded with workload, there seems to a serious issue in the case of some of the supervisors, who are overloaded. Specifically, almost half (4 out of 10) professors amongst those who hold obligatory courses have above 400 hours workload. The problem of overloading needs to be addressed and excessive workloads (above 450 hours) should be addressed immediately.
1.3	The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.	Improvements are necessary Scientific achievements in the discipline are evident from the quantity of publications of teachers in the past 5 years. However, the range of publications is limited mostly to publications within their own journal or other journals published by HEI based in the regional pool of

	knowledge. The Panel recommends that more emphasis should be put on stricter expectations for publishing of supervisors in international journals, especially in journals outside the region.
1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.	Improvements are necessary  The number of candidates (those that have selected their theme) per supervisor does not exceed suggested ratio. Mostly the supervisors work with 1 or 2 candidates, but there are a few supervisors that work with 4 candidates. The number of students enrolled at the moment is 64 and amongst them 44 are active.  The number of supervisors listed in the table is 49 (although on the website published for students the figure is 57).  The panel has taken into account the total number of doctoral students on both doctoral programmes (118) since the supervisors are to a large extent the same. The panel is concerned that with present enrolment quotas and fully employed staf at he Faculty this ratio will soon be unsatisfactory. We recommend to the Faculty that the total number of students is taken into account when calculating the ratio of supervisors to students and setting enrolment quotas in the future (taking into account that each student should have appointed supervisor from day one).
1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.	Improvements are necessary Supervisors work is assessed on the basis of yearly reports of both the supervisor and the students. The reports themselves, however, seem to serve mostly as the communication between the student and the supervisor in order to create a yearly plan. There were no reports of possibilities of follow-up checks on the reports themselves from the management.  The current students and the 3 alumni reported during interviews that they were highly satisfied with the communication with supervisors and with the way the management has listened to their comments in the past. Additionally, the students assess the supervisors and the programme yearly via an online questionnaire. It is not clear, however, how exactly these questionnaires are later taken into account.

		The Panel did not learn precisely how the research, publishing and teaching activities of supervisors and teaching staff are monitored. Hence it is recommended that there should be greater monitoring of these activities, in addition, as indicated above, to the clearer monitoring of the supervisory workload of teaching staff.
1.6.	The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.	Improvements are necessary  The HEI has an important advantage in terms of its coastal location and heritage building which were mentioned by students as an important reason for selecting the HEI.  However, there are also specific infrastructure limitations that need to be addressed, in particular: the library, the databases and literature and working areas for students.  Hence, the library should be improved with quality up-to date literature in the field of the management of sustainable development.  As students at interview complained about the lack of international databases and some literature, the HEI should take important steps to improve this situation.  The Panel also recommends that students would benefit through the provision of dedicated working and study areas.
2.	INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME	
2.1.	effective procedures for proposing, approving and delivering doctoral	High level of quality Evidence from both the SER and discussions with staff suggest that there is a clear rationale for this programme. The programme justification is well presented in the SER, and includes an analysis of social and economic needs of the community. It appears that the programme is intended to be an alternative to the PhD programme, Business Economics in Tourism and Hospitality (PETU) which is also offered by the Faculty. The three students who have graduated from the programme were present at the interview with alumni and indicated that their background and interests led them to select this PhD programme rather than PETU.
2.2.	The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.	High level of quality As far as can be ascertained from the SER and interviews with senior managers, the programme is closely aligned to the Faculty's strategy. There are relatively few doctoral

programmes in Croatia focusing on tourism, but the Faculty appears to have the capacity in terms of research expertise and supervisory capacity to align the programme with its strategy. Nevertheless, the Panel recommends that the Faculty regularly check the rationale for and aims of this programme, alongside that of PETU, to ensure that the two programmes are clearly distinctive. Improvements are necessary The Programme is relatively new having only been established in 2012, so as far as the Panel were aware, this is the first major review, since its inception. However, 2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the although information was gained at interview from success of the programmes through supervisors and students suggesting that some feedback periodic reviews, and implements has already been used to make minor adjustments and improvements. modifications to the programme, it was not clear what formal monitoring has occurred. Hence the Panel recommends that continual, formal monitoring of the programme is conducted, particularly in relation to the PETU programme. High level of quality The HEI monitors supervisors' performance on an annual basis and uses this information appropriately. There was 2.4. HEI continuously monitors an indication in the SER, that it is possible to change supervisors' performance and has supervisors and evidence was presented during mechanisms for evaluating interviews with students that it is possible. In the example supervisors, and. if necessary, discussed by a student at interview with the Panel, this changing them and mediating between occurred with the willingness of the supervisor involved the supervisors and the candidates. and also involved her assistance in finding a replacement supervisor. Nevertheless, the Panel recommends that the Faculty continually monitors supervisors' performance in relation to student progression and completion. High level of quality The HEI has procedures for detecting plagiarism. During interviews with supervisors it was indicated that no plagiarism cases have as yet been detected. The Faculty 2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and provides input early in the first year of study on freedom. plagiarism and students appear to have a good understanding of the meaning of plagiarism. However, the Panel recommends that the Faculty should ensure continual, rigorous checking to detect any

plagiarism cases.

2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective. and includes a public presentation.

#### High level of quality

The programme has adequate appropriate and procedures for defending the thesis proposal and this includes a presentation. The Faculty has produced and published a defence protocol and clear presentation guidelines.

2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.

#### Improvements are necessary

As far as can be discerned from the SER, the Faculty has scientifically sound procedures of assessment for the thesis. The Faculty has produced and published guidelines for thesis defence and assessment. Candidates have also produced publications in relation to their thesis. There have only been three graduates of the programme to date, so it is not clear how international examiners will be used in future. To date, there appears to have been little use of external international defence committee members and the Panel recommends that the Faculty makes much greater use of foreign staff in the PhD examination process.

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

The SER indicates that the Faculty publishes relevant information on the study programme, admissions, delivery and conditions for progression and completion.

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 the allocation of funding. successfully).

#### Improvements are necessary

Although the Faculty appears to have secured funding, for the doctoral programme, it was not clear from either the SER or the interviews with staff and students how the funds are distributed. The Panel recommends that there should be a much more transparent system for allocating funds to students, and that students are informed about

2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).

#### Improvements are necessary

It was not possible for the Panel to assess whether tuition fees are determined based on the real costs of studying, as there is no way available of determining the real costs of studying. However, the SER indicated the amount of tuition fees, although it is not entirely clear on what basis these fees have been determined. Senior managers at interview agreed with the Panel that fees are relatively high in comparison with similar programmes elsewhere.

3.	SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR	The Panel were informed during interviews that students gain 'other benefits' on the programme and this was linked in discussion to the relatively high fees. However, it was not completely clear what these 'benefits' are and whether they are value for money. The Panel recommends that a greater proportion of tuition fees should be used to provide a dedicated work space for PhD students. Additionally, funds need to be used to provide a more modern up-to-date infrastructure and appropriate resources for students operating at this level.
	PROGRESSION	
3.1.	The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.	High level of quality The programme sets admission quotas taking into account administrative resources of the HEI including supervisors' workload. Obligations of supervisors and co-supervisors, candidates and research terms are clearly defined and within existing legal thresholds.
	The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.	High level of quality  Admission quotas take into consideration the current economic situation in Croatia. There is a relatively low number of highly educated people currently employed in tourism and yet there is great emphasis on the importance of tourism, which highlights the possible contribution to society made by those with PhDs, to bring about more sustainable development. However, the general lack of financial support of studies results in relatively little competition in admission and lower number of students than the HEI could serve.
3.3.	quotas taking into account the funding available to the candidates, that is, on the basis of the absorption potentials of	Improvements are necessary  The HEI establishes admission quotas independently from funding opportunities and relying on student's willingness to cover the fee from his/her pocket or agreement with employer. However, there is an insufficient amount of state funded positions, stipends from employers and third parties, all of which the Panel recommends should be improved.
		High level of quality  There is a sufficient number of supervisors for the candidate to choose from. Great efforts are invested to

doctoral research successfully.

potential supervisor). From the point of create nurturing environment for the candidate, provide admission to the end of doctoral him/her with all the support needed for creating and education, efforts are invested so that executing his/her research plan. There are clear each candidate has a sustainable procedures for all those processes, corporate environment research plan and is able to complete fostering communication and a feedback system insuring improving processes. The ability to complete PhD study appears to be endangered more by the need to combine work, family life and demanding studies than lack of supervisory support.

#### 3.5. The HEI ensures that talented and highly candidates are internationally.

#### Improvements are necessary

The HEI distributes its call for the program admission interested, within alumni, local companies and municipalities, as well motivated as in local newspaper and HEI's webpage. The faculty recruited ensures that most motivated and prospective graduate students are informed about postgraduate studies. However, not enough effort is put into attracting international students and this situation needs to be improved.

#### 3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.

#### Improvements are necessary

Admission to the program is carried out through public call, usually once a year and the decisions of Faculty commission. Candidates must demonstrate their research interest, in the case of lower grades provide recommendations and attend an interview. However currently all applicants meeting minimum criteria are being accepted for studies. The HEI must attempt to attract higher quality students.

### 3.7. The HEI ensures that the selection **High level of quality** with published criteria, and that there is a transparent complaints procedure.

procedure is transparent and in line The Faculty has established clear procedures and criteria for selection of candidates these are publicly available for scrutiny. The selection is clear and applicants have a right to complain.

#### 3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.

#### High level of quality

The HEI has established a procedure for recognizing prior learning and achievements relevant for the doctoral programme, e.g. recognition of ECTS from a Master's or another doctoral programme. The procedure is set in motion upon an applicant's request, and is based on clear criteria and results in lower fee for the student.

#### 3.9. Candidates' rights and obligations are defined in relevant HEI regulations and

#### High level of quality

The program provides defined regulations for a high level

institutional support to the candidates.

a contract on studying that provides for of supervisory and institutional support to the candidates. a high level of supervisory and Candidates' rights and obligations are described and they are informed on all of their rights and obligations upon admission in a timely manner. The HEI has a contract for studying, which is signed by each candidate. There is a clear set of procedures on the provision of feedback and public knowledge both between candidates supervisors, as well as how to act in case any problems arise. All parties indicate that they have seen improvements based on the feedback they have provided. At least once a year each candidate and their supervisor provides a review of candidate's work.

3.10. There institutional are progression.

#### Improvements are necessary

The Faculty covers tuition fees of a doctoral study program for all employees holding a position of Assistant employed at the expense of the Ministry of Science and support Education, and to students with an employment contract mechanisms for candidates' successful with the Faculty. There is support for attending conferences and publishing papers, but this is insufficient as not covering all students and international conferences outside Croatia. The Panel recommends that greater financial support is provided by the Faculty for students to attend international conferences and should specifically make competitive research grants for students available.

#### 4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES

#### Improvements are necessary

4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme aligned are with internationally recognized standards.

The programme of postgraduate doctoral study is in accordance with international standards in terms of minimum duration and relevance to scientific research and creation. There is a considerable taught component to the programme, which whilst in-line with some in the region is not common to all international programmes.

Overall the programme is research-oriented and works towards the students' independent research. However, by international standards, there is concern that the thesis component does not begin until year 2 of the programme of study. Therefore three years of independent research is not entirely evident.

There are opportunities for teaching for some students, opportunities to acquire generic skills and also to gain international experience. The nature of the programmes enables interdisciplinary research across the Faculty. The thesis is allowed to be presented in English and Croatian, with all of the thesis written in the latter.

The Panel recommends that the Faculty consider starting independent study earlier. This could be by alter the length of the programme, or to require that the students have a thesis topic at the beginning of the programme. This may need a reflection on the admissions criteria, whereby a research proposal could be part of the selection process.

The Faculty could also consider reducing either the credit weighting of ECTS taught element as a total of the percentage, or keeping the ECTS the same but offering fewer classes. Classes offered could then be in greater depth appropriate for level 8.2 and embed the research training further.

#### Improvements are necessary

The SER aligns the programme learning outcomes with level 8.2 of the CroQF. These are described fully. Ethics is covered within the research methods training. The learning outcomes of the subjects are also aligned to level 8.2 of the CroQF and have been tailored to research. The documentation in relation to these aspects was clear and fully developed.

Documentation was provided that demonstrated skills and competences in terms of research for example (e.g. methods, planning, bidding, writing and ethics.) The Faculty also provides funds for scientific research that students can apply for, therefore developing bidding and research leadership skills.

There is, however, course content that is subject rather than research based, and it is difficult to distinguish how this is higher than level 7, and also if the learning outcomes will be achievable in the timeframe of the programme.

It is recommended that the Faculty reviews the programme content to assess the need for the number of courses as a requirement of the course. Classes offered should be in greater depth and appropriate for level 8.2, focusing more on research.

4.3. Programme learning outcomes teaching contents, as well as

4.2. Programme learning outcomes, as well

the

describe

as the learning outcomes of modules

and subject units, are aligned with the

level 8.2 of the CroQF. They clearly

candidates will develop during the

ethical requirements of doing research.

doctoral programme, including

competencies

the

the

#### are **High level of quality**

logically and clearly connected with The programme learning outcomes are clearly mapped to the the courses. It is clear that the supervisors play an

contents included in supervision and important role in working with the students to tailor the research. programme to the student needs. High level of quality The course documentation and discussions with students and Faculty indicates that by the end of the course of study a thesis is produced that aligns with level 8.2 of the 4.4. The doctoral programme ensures the CroQF. achievement of learning outcomes and This is evidenced in the sample of the thesis seen by the competencies aligned with the level 8.2 Panel, publications and conference presentations. There is of the CroQF. some evidence of publishing in international journals (e.g. Current Issues in Tourism, International Journal of Business Administration, Tourism and Hospitality Management) and scientific conferences (Tourism & Hospitality Industry - THI Tourism in Southern and Eastern Europe, ToSEE). High level of quality if Courses are delivered using methods appropriate for 4.5. Teaching methods (and ECTS, applicable) are appropriate for level 8.2 small groups with an emphasis on developing individual of the CroQF and assure achievement of research skills. Many take place in small groups, with opportunities for group work, presentations and clearly defined learning outcomes. workshops. The approach adopted will assist the students in the achievement of the learning outcomes. Improvements are necessary The skills are acquired within individual courses, in particular those in the course 'research methods and techniques'. Conference attendance is also encouraged, with students able to present their work, or alternatively during doctoral student workshops, and attendance in other classes provided more broadly by the University (e.g. by the library and the StepRi). Students also have the opportunity to be involved in the writing of research 4.6. The programme enables acquisition of grants and teaching, therefore developing transferable general (transferable) skills. skills. The site visit revealed that students are aware of these opportunities and make use of them where appropriate. Evidence from the Alumni indicated that the programme enabled them to develop research and other skills that have been useful in their current employment. However, the students are disadvantaged in terms of international exposure due to language. It is also not clear

that the opportunities for transferable skill development are the same for all students, with those who are employed by the Faculty having an advantage over the self-financed students.

The Panel recommends that the team encourage the use of English language in thesis writing and ensure that the opportunities are the same for all students in terms of international exposure, and that efforts are made to improve the opportunities (including funding) for international activities for the self-financed students.

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

A strength of the programme is that the courses delivered offer choice and can be adapted to individual academic needs and research plans. This was evidenced through documentation and was articulated by students during the site visit. Timings of classes are also scheduled according to the cohort needs. The individual study plans are considered jointly between the student and the mentor, that take into account specific needs.

The Panel recommends that a specific research plan could be considered to insure the research focus and thesis development at an earlier point in time.

#### Improvements are necessary

The programme strives to provide international opportunities. These are embedded in the programme through research staff mobility and the use of international faculty (for teaching, workshops and comentoring). Opportunities for candidates to study abroad are provided formally through involvement in Erasmus and CEEPUS, and by the Faculty in terms of attendance at international conferences. International connections are clearly evident.

4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.

However, in reality, the international mobility is constrained by the self-funding situation of some of the students, many of who are engaged in full-time work and are not able to take advantage of these schemes other than for a short duration. The opportunities are not the same as for those employed by the Faculty.

In the last four years, Faculty members have engaged in outgoing and incoming mobility, some of these being from fellow assistant positions. This emphasises the point made above regarding unequal opportunities.

There is a clear willingness to provide international opportunities by the Faculty, but in reality few students who have attended international conferences, and the number of articles published in international journals was low compared to in-house journal publication. None of the thesis had been written in English.

The Panel recommends that clear criteria are given to all students that describes opportunities for and offers financial support for international mobility. In addition, there should be further use of international faculty in the programme, international research networks and collaborations should be developed, and the Panel also suggests that the thesis be written in English to give international exposure.

## \* 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.