



**Report
of the Expert Panel
on the Re-accreditation
of the University Postgraduate (Doctoral) Programme
Licentiate and Doctoral Study in Theology
Catholic Faculty of Theology, University of Zagreb**

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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 *Licentiate and Doctoral Study of Theology* on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the Catholic Faculty of Theology, University of Zagreb.

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 for Philosophy and Theology cluster:

- Professor Harm Goris, Tilburg University, Netherlands, chair
- Professor Andrius Narbekovas, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania
- Professor Irmtraud Fischer, Catholic Theology, University of Graz, Austria
- Professor Rupert Klieber, University of Vienna, Austria
- Dr. Dries Bosschaert, postdoc, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven, Belgium
- Professor Marina Gržinić Mauhler, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia
- Professor Panos Dimas, University of Oslo, Norway
- Daniel Dragicevic, PhD student, University of Hamburg, Germany

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

- Professor Harm Goris, Tilburg University, Netherlands
- Professor Andrius Narbekovas, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania
- Professor Irmtraud Fischer, Catholic Theology, University of Graz, Austria
- Professor Rupert Klieber, University of Vienna, Austria
- Dr. Dries Bosschaert, postdoc, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven, Belgium.

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

- Irena Petrušić, coordinator, ASHE
- Petra Košutar, assistant coordinator, ASHE
- Lida Lamza, interpreter at the site visit and Report translator, ASHE.

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

- Study programme coordinator and Management of the institution
- Doctoral candidates
- Teachers and supervisors
- Alumni
- Library team.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: Postgraduate doctoral study programme of Licentiate and Doctoral Study in Theology

Institution providing the programme: University of Zagreb

Institution delivering the programme: Catholic Faculty of Theology

Place of delivery: Zagreb

Scientific area and field: Humanities, Theology

Learning outcomes of the study programme:

LO 1: successful and responsible scientific work in accordance with the highest standards in the area of humanistic sciences and in the field of theological research

LO 2: independent scientific and teaching work at one of the scientific-teaching or scientific institutions

LO 3: independent direction of scientific projects

LO 4: independent publishing of scientific works

LO 5: continuous improvement at the post-graduate level

LO 6: communication and evaluation of achieved results of research in the field of theology

LO 7: application of acquired generic skills

Number of doctoral candidates (all): 122

Number of HEI funded doctoral candidates: 0

Number self-funded doctoral candidates and employer-funded doctoral candidates: 122

Number of inactive doctoral candidates: 55

Number of teachers: 63 (43 employed at the Faculty and 19 external)

Number of supervisors: 8

Number of doctoral candidates with officially appointed supervisors: 9

Structure of the programme:

First year:

- during enrolment the doctoral student is being assigned a study advisor who will direct him until a supervisor has been appointed for him/her
- all doctoral students in the first year are required to enrol into and follow common courses Science and Research in the University Context and Lectio Theologica
- the doctoral student will enrol into five lectures in the research area in which he/she wants to write a doctoral thesis (three lectures in the module in which the doctoral student is enrolled)
- the doctoral student will enrol into one seminar (seminars can be chosen from any module)
- in the second semester the doctoral student has the obligation to participate in and present in the doctoral workshop and to present results of research on the topic of his/her licentiate/doctoral thesis

- in agreement with his/her supervisor, the doctoral student participates in scientific-teaching activities

Second year:

- the doctoral student enrolls into a lecture in agreement with his/her supervisor
- the doctoral student enrolls into a seminar in agreement with his/her supervisor
- within the frame of a doctoral workshop, the doctoral student will present results of research on the topic of his/her licentiate/doctoral thesis
 - in agreement with his/her supervisor, the doctoral student will participate in scientific-teaching activities
- at the latest until the end of the 3rd semester, the doctoral student will submit the topic of his research licentiate thesis
- the doctoral student enrolls into a lecture in agreement with his/her supervisor
- the doctoral student enrolls into a seminar in agreement with his/her supervisor
- within the frame of a doctoral workshop, the doctoral student will present results of research on the topic of his/her licentiate/doctoral thesis - in agreement with his/her supervisor, the doctoral student will participate in scientific- teaching activities

Third year:

- in agreement with his/her supervisor, the doctoral student will participate in scientific-teaching activities
- within the frame of a doctoral workshop, the doctoral student will present results of research on the topic of his/her licentiate/doctoral thesis
- during the 5th semester, the doctoral student will submit to the students' office his/her graded research licentiate thesis and takes the licentiate exams. Positively graded licentiate exam is a condition for being eligible for grading and defending a doctoral thesis
- at the latest until the end of the 5th semester, the doctoral student will start the procedure for acceptance of his/her doctoral thesis and a supervisor will be appointed for him/her
 - in agreement with his/her supervisor, the doctoral student will participate in scientific-teaching activities
- within the frame of a doctoral workshop, the doctoral student will present results of research on the topic of his/her doctoral thesis.

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)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Open the possibility for students to have a PhD without the licentiate.
2. The next strategic programme should be more focused and better structured, reflecting the whole field of theology (esp. Biblical studies) and better linked to new international developments.
3. Improve the transfer of information on funding, internationalization, publishing, upcoming conferences and call for papers by the institution to the students and also actively support students in applying for these.
4. Take into account the challenges doctoral students face in funding and time-management, for example by creating pre-doc posts for excellent students.
5. Promote awareness on research integrity, connect to university level efforts against plagiarism, and integrate anti-plagiarism software in all levels of the programme (papers, thesis).
6. The total workload of faculty members has to take into account the teaching and supervising of doctoral students.

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. The new doctoral programme seems more research centred, especially by demanding less mandatory courses and by offering highly esteemed doctoral workshops instead.
2. Official procedures and template for quality insurance are mostly in place, accessible, and transparent.
3. The library is well supported by the Faculty, operating on an international level, and offering many possibilities and active support to doctoral student (including acquisition management, support with databases, service to students, and making information accessible).
4. Most supervisors seem to actively support their students.
5. The integration of the licentiate in the doctoral programme has as its advantage that it offers an attractive programme, raises the number of potential students, and promotes the time-efficiency of a whole study career.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. The current structure seems to cause a high dropout of certain categories of students after obtaining the licentiate.
2. Low level of transdisciplinary strategies.

3. Low international mobility on the level of students and, it seems, also for some teachers and supervisors.
4. No visible strategies in place to support students in the ambition of publishing at least one article in a high-ranked journal during their doctoral trajectory.
5. Large number of inactive students.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Ongoing reflection and continuous efforts to improve the doctoral programme; the HEI is a self-learning organization.
2. Implementation of well-designed standard forms (e.g. for the research proposal, the supervisor's annual report on the progress of the candidate, the assessment of the thesis, and the minutes of the defence).
3. General resources at library and support by its staff, especially for the needs of the students.
4. The organization of the doctoral workshops wherein students present and discuss their doctoral work in a collegial manner.

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, see also 1.4.
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;	YES, except for e and f. Training workshops are

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 candidate (or submission of the proposal); 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; e) trained for the role before assuming it (through workshops, co-supervisions etc.); f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory work.	optional. There is no formal procedure in place by which the HEI evaluates previous supervisory work.
6. All teachers meet the following conditions: a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position; b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the course (table 1, Teachers).	YES
7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment committees.	NO (cannot chair the Committee)
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.	YES
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.	N. A.

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.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The HEI has a long tradition and a good reputation in almost all fields of theology, both in teaching and in research. It is the oldest and largest faculty for Catholic theology in the country, Many faculty members received doctoral degrees from renowned universities abroad. Faculty members publish in high-ranking national and international journals and they publish many monographs and collections of papers. They participate in international conferences and – to a certain degree – in international research projects. Many of them are member of important international ecclesial and academic associations. The HEI organizes many national symposia every year and also some international symposia. The HEI hosts six academic journals, some of which are graded as A1 and A2. The HEI plays an important role with regard to social, ecclesial and cultural matters in Croatian society.</p>
1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The number and workload of teachers and supervisors is adequate. At least 50% is delivered by faculty members. However, the workload of supervising doctoral students should be objectively quantified and formally included in the total workload of the teacher.</p>
1.3. The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The teachers involved in the doctoral programme are all active researchers in their own fields. They are engaged with the topics they teach and have a high number of relevant scientific publications.</p>
1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>Supervisors have up to three doctoral students. If a supervisor has four of five students, a co-supervisor is appointed. Supervisors are active researchers with a number of high quality publications relevant for the programme area and field. They participate in</p>

	international and national scientific research projects.
1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>As far as the Panel could establish, all teachers and supervisors in fact have the necessary skills and qualifications. Teachers are assessed with regard to their research competencies, by standard methods in accordance with the HEI's official regulations. This assessment regards in particular the number and quality of the teachers' publications. An improvement would be the actual implementation of student evaluations of teachers in the doctoral programme. The 2015 Proposal of the Programme mentions yearly and final evaluations by students through questionnaires (A.4.3) sent to the Committee of Quality Assurance, but the Panel has not seen evidence of such questionnaires.</p> <p>The qualifications and competencies of supervisors <i>qua</i> supervisors are not assessed through standard methods. Supervisors receive support from colleagues and learn from their own experience. The annual reports the supervisors write on the work of the candidate can give the Council of the Licentiate and Doctoral Study some information on the performances of the supervisor, but this is only accidental. Supervisors are encouraged to participate in workshops offered by the University for training supervisors, but participation and/or successful conclusion of such trainings is not required. Also, there are no formal procedures at the level of the HEI for student evaluation of supervisors. The Panel recommends to introduce standard methods for assessing the qualifications of supervisors.</p>
1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>Candidates have access to a very good library. It provides candidates with excellent resources for research, including relevant databases. Library staff is very supportive towards candidates. Candidates can ask for books, journals and databases necessary for their research, which the library then either purchases or gives access to through (inter-)national library loan.</p>
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	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The HEI described the internal quality procedures in the 2015 Proposal of the Programme of Licentiate and Doctoral Study in Theology, supplemented by a new</p>

<p>identification of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs.</p>	<p>Ordinance of the Licentiate and Doctoral Study in 2019. The procedures are well-formulated and effective. The HEI shows itself to be a self-learning organization. The levels of competence, responsibility and accountability between the different faculty bodies are clearly organized and described (2015 Proposal of the Programme, A.2.8). The 2015 Proposal also convincingly points out the academic, artistic, cultural and social needs the Programme intends to meet.</p> <p>As all other European ecclesiastical faculties of theology, which are recognized by the Holy See and have the right to issue canonical degrees, the HEI faces the problem of how to combine the specific structure of the Vatican version of theology studies (Bachelor, Licentiate, Doctorate) with the Bologna structure of studies (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate), that is also recognized by the State. At present, the HEI has fully integrated the ecclesial structure within the Bologna structure. This mixed structure has consequences (e.g. a greater number of lectures; two theses; students leaving the programme after completing the licentiate thesis) which implicates advantages and disadvantages at the same time (see part: advantages). Evidently, there has been much discussion about this within the HEI. The discussions resulted in the conviction that with the present incorporation of the ecclesial structure within the Bologna structure, the HEI responds best to the ecclesiastical needs of the country and of the professional prospects of the greatest number of their students. In our opinion, though, this discussion should be continued and open to the perspective to offer also a PhD-study without the interval step of a canonical licentiate.</p>
<p>2.2. The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The HEI developed a Strategic Programme of Scientific-Research Work regarding the period of 2015 to 2020 and consisting of nine Strategic Areas, each of which is subdivided in a number of topics. For the Panel, the most noticeable aspects of this Strategic Programme were the dominance of topics with connection to Croatia, especially in historical items, and furthermore an astonishing absence of any topics regarding Biblical studies. Moreover, the nine areas frequently overlap or show very little internal coherence. The Strategic Programme gives the impression of being more a descriptive, unordered collection of research topics of individual faculty members, than a prescriptive, focused strategy for developing the</p>

	<p>HEI's research in the future.</p> <p>The term of the Strategic Programme has now almost passed. Although the assessment of the Strategic Programme officially does not fall within the mandate of the Panel, we strongly recommend a fundamental revision of the strategic research programme for the period 2020-2025. Such a revision should aim at indicating those research areas and topics on which the HEI wants to focus, in a conceptually coherent way.</p> <p>It is also remarkable that, in contrast of wide confessions to interdisciplinarity by means of cooperation with other faculties, the Panel could find almost no traces of it in the strategic programme of research nor in our talks to the supervisors or the management – not even with the newly established Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Sciences that is run, remarkably enough, by Jesuits.</p>
2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the success of the programmes through periodic reviews, and implements improvements.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The 2019 Ordinance of the Licentiate and Doctoral Study has been aligned with the University regulations only a few months ago. The HEI has, however, already an established culture of self-evaluation, which the Panel highly appreciates. With the process of reaccreditation, the HEI sets another important further step in that direction. The Panel is convinced that the HEI will continue this permanently necessary discussion about potential improvements and progresses.</p>
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.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>With its definitions of the responsibilities of supervisors and their regularly monitoring reports about the progress of the doctoral candidates, the most important mechanisms of control and guidance seem to be implemented. A systematic feedback by the students, however, is not in place, even though it was prescribed in the 2015 Proposal of the Programme (cf. 1.5). On the contrary, the formulations in the SER are very vague in this regard ("the students have the right to freely express their opinion"). Therefore, the possibility and options for students to comment the quality of their studies seem to be dependent to a great measure on the benevolence of their personal supervisors that were declared – in a pointed way – to be "almighty" by one of the students. The Panel strongly recommends to implement standard student evaluations with regard to the performances of supervisors and also to establishing an ombudsperson for students.</p>

<p>2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>From all the interviews with different groups at the HEI, the Panel got the impression that the HEI undoubtedly has the best intentions to fulfil all measures of integrity and freedom on a necessary level of academic ethics.</p> <p>The HEI has an Ethical Committee that ensures privacy in case of working with interviews etc., deals with ethical questions of special themes and is working in good cooperation with the corresponding administration at University.</p> <p>The Panel strongly recommend that the HEI should use the anti-plagiarism software available through the University; having just all documents of the procedure online, it would be rather easy to do so.</p> <p>Concerning freedom of research, the Panel is worried, if the attention given to ecclesial documents in research according to the approaches described in the Self-evaluation report and in the Strategic Programme 2015-2020 allows for enough freedom for critical reflection, especially in the field of academic women- and gender-studies.</p>
<p>2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation.</p>	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The HEI has developed very good procedures of producing and defending the doctoral thesis proposal (as described in the Ordinance and other documents), has a scientific committee, with external members for almost all dissertations as is standard. It publishes a detailed proposal defence protocol (the Expert Panel has seen several examples). The doctoral programme has published proposal templates and clear presentation guidelines as well as published templates for proposal assessment. The whole procedure is transparent. Plagiarism control through anti-plagiarism-software of the University should, however, be integrated into this procedure.</p>
<p>2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.</p>	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The HEI has clear procedures for developing and defending the doctoral thesis and encourages participation of external or international examiners in the thesis defence committee (the Panel was able to have a look at some dissertations and also spoke with the alumni, who had just passed through the entire process).</p> <p>The renewed programme requires that candidates have at least one publication with an internationally competitive peer-review in the field of thesis, prior to completion of doctoral education, although the meeting with the PhD</p>

	<p>students has shown problems with the access to those journals. The programme could offer more support for the candidates in preparing their article, e.g. through the doctoral workshops. The HEI should open its own journals for very high quality articles of PhD students adopting a blind review process.</p> <p>The HEI has created and published thesis guidelines (the Panel was able to see them) as well as thesis assessment guidelines. The Expert Panel was able to have a look at the detailed thesis defence protocols and minutes from thesis defences.</p> <p>A minor improvement could be that the members of the assessment committee write individual reports independently from one another.</p>
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.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>All relevant information on PhD and Licentiate is published on the webpage of the HEI.</p>
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).	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The HEI has established a very transparent system of distribution of the incoming fees, as evidenced in the 2019 Ordinance (and the 2015 Proposal of the Programme of Licentiate and Doctoral Study in Theology).</p> <p>At this moment, all funds in the programme come from tuition fees. Recently, in 2019, the HEI has been making great efforts to collect extra funds by applying for projects with the Croatian Science Foundation. Extra funding would support students and help them not to drop out of the doctoral programme after the licentiate because of the necessity of earning money for everyday life and would decrease the really high number of inactive students of the programme.</p> <p>As an incentive, the Faculty should also prevail money for those students, who were able to publish their articles in high-ranked journals or prestigious proceedings.</p>
2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The HEI accounts for the determination of tuition fees in an excellent manner, as evidenced in the 2019 Ordinance.</p>
3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION	

<p>3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The HEI holds an admission policy that takes into account the capacity of the available supervisors and their teaching workload.</p> <p>The SER refers to a total number of 122 students in the doctoral programme of which 67 are active students. At the same time it refers to 60 potential supervisors. In the conversations it became clear to the Panel that in reality 20 of these supervisors de facto supervise doctoral students. This is still within the 3:1 ratio of candidates per supervisor on the programme as a whole.</p> <p>The Panel is, however, concerned with the total workload of the supervisors given that their teaching in the doctoral programme and their duties as supervisor are not officially taken into account in their total workload. Taking this into account could function as a reward to encourage supervisors to invest more in their duties as supervisor (cf. 1.2).</p> <p>The rights and obligations of students, supervisors, and co-supervisors are clearly indicated in the renewed 2019 Ordinance on the Licentiate and Doctoral Study. All these different groups seem to be aware and well-informed on these aspects.</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</p> <p>The HEI takes into account the ecclesial and social needs in their admission policy (cf. 1.1).</p> <p>Most – if not all – of the students are already employed or ensured of future employment at the start of their doctoral studies. In many cases, the employer is providing the means to pursue the doctoral dissertation.</p> <p>The Panel would like to raise two issues of attention in this regard: (i) a significant number of students seem to meet the criteria to be employable with the canonical licentiate alone. This does not require them to successfully accomplish the entire doctoral programme with obtaining the doctoral degree at the end; (ii) Most of the students are employed in an ecclesial context and pursuing a further career in academic research either at their own faculty or on an international level is not fully promoted.</p> <p>The Panel encourages the HEI to pursue the systematic monitoring of the subsequent careers of their students as they indicated in their Self-evaluation report.</p>
<p>3.3. The HEI establishes the admission quotas taking into account the funding</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>All students in the doctoral programme are self-supporting</p>

<p>available to the candidates, that is, on the basis of the absorption potentials of research projects or other sources of funding.</p>	<p>students or funded by their employers. At the moment, there are no students that are working in the context of a funded project or individual doctoral fellowships.</p> <p>The Panel encourages the HEI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the level of the doctoral students, to inform and encourage them to apply for individual fellowships, and to support them actively in the application procedure. • On the level of the supervisors, to apply for projects to be able to fund or co-fund doctoral students on this basis. • On the level of the faculty, to actively inform and coach supervisors and (potential) doctoral candidates in writing research proposals in the context of funding applications. • On the level of the faculty, to establish a small number of funded pre-doctoral positions for a fixed time period. <p>The Panel notices with satisfaction that recently efforts have already been made to apply for external funding in the form of four projects that have been submitted in various competitions of the Croatian Science Foundation and, at the same time, the Panel recognizes the challenges posed by the local socio-political context.</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>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The 2015 Proposal of the Programme and the 2019 Ordinance on the Licentiate and Doctoral Study have procedures in place to submit a qualitative research proposal at the start of the students' doctoral trajectory. However, there is some confusion with regard to the research plan. The 2015 Proposal to the Programme says that "a project proposal on the area/topic of research" is required before entering the programme (A.2.6), but also that "the topic has to be submitted at the end of the 2nd semester" (A.3.7) and that "the topic can still be submitted until the end of the second year" (A.3.7), i.e. the 4th semester.</p> <p>Again, the SER mentions that "the topic of his/her research licentiate thesis" (presumably this includes the doctoral thesis) must be submitted "at the latest until the end of the 3rd semester".</p> <p>In addition, there are a number of milestones (including presentations of the project and doctoral workshops) to promote students to make progress in their doctoral studies and complete them successfully. The Panel appreciates in this regard especially the standardized</p>

	<p>annual progress reports on the doctoral students by their study advisors/supervisors.</p> <p>The students are assigned a study advisor at the start of the doctoral education. In most cases, the study advisor will later act as supervisor. The number of doctoral students per study advisor/supervisor is below the maximum.</p> <p>The Panel does encourage the HEI to also install procedures through which doctoral candidates can also report on their own progress, evaluate the quality of the supervision (cf. 1.5 and 2.4), and identify possible issues related to the relation with the supervisor. The SER mentions procedures to replace supervisors, but procedures to remediate could also prove to be helpful. In the conversations with the students, self-evaluation reports on the university level were mentioned. Performance reviews could be a possibility.</p> <p>In addition, the Panel recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity on when the project proposal (“topic”) must be submitted • Introduction of a go-no-go decision after one year.
3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The HEI indicated in its SER that it has a public competition with a public call for applications. This also came to light in the conversations with the Panel concerning the availability of information through the Faculty website. In the call, requirements to be eligible are included.</p> <p>A minor improvement that the Panel recommends is to publish the call more internationally, by including it for example in international mailing lists or asking international societies to spread the call among its members.</p>
3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The HEI has a transparent procedure for the selection of candidates, as indicated in the Self-evaluation report. The Panel appreciates the standardized form to submit the proposal.</p> <p>A minor improvement could be possible in the procedure. The Panel thinks that if instead of working with an ad hoc committee to hold the consultation talks with the candidates, it would be better to work with a fixed committee. This would ensure that there is a greater continuation between the different separate evaluations and that all applications are assessed by the same standards.</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.	High level of quality There is a transparent selection procedure and there is a clear procedure to issue a complaint in case of non-selection. These procedures are publically available.
3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.	High level of quality The applicants and candidates' prior learning is taken into account when entering the doctoral programme. These requirements are also further detailed by certain conditions including proofs of knowing Latin and (Biblical) Greek languages for example. Students entering the doctoral programme after already having completed the licentiate study at a different HEI are admitted to the programme, taking into account their previous acquired number of ECTS-points.
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 The HEI has a detailed renewed (2019) Ordinance on the Licentiate and Doctoral Study stipulating in detail the rights and obligations of the students. The students seem well aware of their rights and obligations. Given the recent nature of this Ordinance, the Panel looks forward to the further implementation of it and expects that it will lead to a further increase of the level of the support doctoral candidates receive from the institution.
3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.	Improvements are necessary The Panel highly appreciates the efforts made in the context of the renewal of the licentiate and the doctoral study programme to adopt a student-centred approach and to ensure the successful progression of doctoral students. An example is the limitation of the number of mandatory courses. The HEI supports the candidates particularly in their research and career development with an annual progress report and the doctoral workshops. The Panel has noticed that these doctoral workshops are highly valued by students and supervisors. The doctoral progress seems to be followed up mainly on the level of the individual relation between student and supervisor. The Panel recommends the HEI to also strengthen the student-centred approach at an institutional level. This could be done by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coaching students in gaining the skills and the means to accomplish the requirement to publish one article in a high-ranked journal; • promoting students to attend international conferences, either or not with financial support by the

	<p>institution (e.g. through an internal competition) or by informing them on other possibilities to finance conference attendance;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informing and encouraging students to apply for individual fellowships and actively supporting them in the application procedure; • Informing and encouraging students to apply for Erasmus programmes that would increase their international mobility.
4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES	
4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The Panel was impressed by the great improvements the HEI has made on the doctoral programme in 2015. The renewed doctoral programme, which started in 2016/2017, is research-oriented and focuses on the candidate's independent work. It provides for at least three years of independent research experience. Doctoral workshops give candidates the opportunity to present their research work in progress and discuss it with their peers. The admission procedure has improved substantially in the renewed programme by introducing an excellent standard form for the research plan. Programme duration, volume of teaching, the ratio between teaching and research, the number of compulsory and elective courses, and supervision procedures meet international standards. The same goes for the thesis format and the assessment committee. Interdisciplinarity seems to become more common in the programme.</p> <p>Improvements should be made in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquisition of transferable skills - International experience.
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.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The learning outcomes as mentioned in the Self-evaluation Report are not formulated in an adequate way. We give a few examples: Learning outcome 1 mentions “successful ... scientific work”, but “successful” is not a criterion; it indicates that a criterion has been met. Learning outcome 5 (“continuous improvement at the postgraduate level”) cannot be taken as a learning outcome; it describes a process. Learning outcome 7 (“application of acquired generic skills”) presupposes that the skills were already acquired before entering the programme and this does not seem to be the case; the generic skills need be taught in the programme. The Panel has the distinct impression that</p>

	<p>the renewed programme in fact enables candidates to reach a very adequate level of academic knowledge, competencies and skills at the end of their studies, but recommends to reformulate explicitly the learning outcomes of the programme in a precise way. The Panel is convinced that this could be done without much effort.</p> <p>The 99 (!) courses candidates can take – in principle – are extensively described in the 2015 Proposal of the Programme. However, the learning outcomes of each course are not explicitly formulated, nor how these outcomes relate to the programme learning outcomes. The Panel recommends to explicate the learning outcomes of the courses and their connection to the learning outcomes of the whole programme. Again, the Panel thinks that this will not require much effort. The Panel also advises to reduce the number of courses the student can choose from.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In addition to research competencies, the programme also provides for competencies in research ethics.
4.3. Programme learning outcomes are logically and clearly connected with teaching contents, as well as the contents included in supervision and research.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>As mentioned above in 4.2, the learning outcomes of both the individual courses are not explicitly formulated and the learning outcomes of the programme are ill-formulated. As a consequence, they are not connected explicitly with the contents of supervision and research. However, the Panel thinks that this can be done easily.</p>
4.4. The doctoral programme ensures the achievement of learning outcomes and competencies aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The Panel is convinced of the quality of the submitted doctoral theses. Because none of the Panel members reads Croatian and all available theses and student papers were in Croatian, we had to rely on the English summaries and the English reports of assessment committees. These documents give clear indications that the actual learning outcomes and competencies meet level 8.2 of the CroQF.</p>
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.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The teaching methods as described in the 2015 Proposal of the Programme are appropriate for developing individual research skills that meet level 8.2 of the CroQF.</p> <p>The Panel received some signals that occasionally supervisors might improve the actual implementation of the appropriate teaching methods, in particular by treating candidates as academics who are on their way to become independent researchers.</p>
4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>As mentioned above in 4.2, the learning outcome with</p>

	<p>regard to generic (transferable) skills is ill-formulated in the SER and in the 2015 Proposal of the Programme. Also, acquisition of such skills are not explicitly mentioned as learning outcomes in individual courses.</p> <p>The 2015 Proposal of the Programme shows that the HEI is aware of the importance of such skills (A.3.4), but both the Proposal and the way the doctoral programme is actually carried out do not specify how transferable skills are taught. It could be the case that for many candidates the acquisition of transferable skills does not have priority, as they are already employed (as parish priest, member of a religious order, or teacher) and will continue the same professional activities after obtaining the doctorate.</p> <p>However, the Panel recommends that in the doctoral programme more explicit attention is given to the acquisition of transferable skills. The HEI can make use of workshops organized by the university. Another possibility could be active support to candidates when they apply for extra funding or grants. With regard to the last mentioned possibility, the Panel was informed that the Senate agreed to appoint a person who is professionally qualified to give such support.</p>
4.7. Teaching content is adapted to the needs of current and future research and candidates' training (individual course plans, generic skills etc.).	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>Candidates can choose from a large number those courses which are relevant for their own research. The relationship between a candidate and his/her own personal supervisor is very good. There is much time available for individual research. The annual reports by the supervisor on the progress of the candidate help to signal problems in time and to adapt the research plan if necessary.</p>
4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>As far as the Panel could establish, all teachers and supervisors in the programme have international connections, although the extent differs. Some supervisors help their candidates to attend international conferences. The Panel did not hear about candidates who fulfilled part of their programme abroad. The Panel appreciates the efforts of a number of supervisors to improve international mobility of candidates, but thinks that at the level of the institution, the information and support (financially and administratively) with regard to international mobility for candidates should be improved.</p> <p>Foreign scholars can be involved in the research project of a candidate, but this seems to happen only very rarely. Occasionally, foreign scholars sit as external member on</p>

	the assessment committee for a doctoral thesis.
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*** 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.