



agency for science and higher education



Improvement of quality assurance
and enhancement systems in higher education

**Report
of the Expert Panel
on the Re-accreditation
of the University Postgraduate (Doctoral) Programme**

***Geography:
Space, Region, Environment, Landscape***

**Faculty of Science
University of Zagreb**

**Date of the visit:
November 12th 2019**

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME.....	5
RECOMMENDATION BY THE EXPERT PANEL TO THE ASHE'S ACCREDITATION COUNCIL	7
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME.....	7
ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME.....	8
DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME.....	8
EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE	8
COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRESCRIBED CONDITIONS FOR THE DELIVERY OF A STUDY PROGRAMME	9
QUALITY ASSESSMENT.....	11

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 *Geography: Space, Region, Environment, Landscape*, on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the Department of Geography, Faculty of Science, 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:

- Professor Frank Witlox, Ghent University, Belgium
- Professor Thomas Nedomysl, Lund University, Sweden
- Doctoral student Rowan Jaines, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom
- Professor Jorge Colomer Feliu, University of Girona, Spain
- Professor John Doran, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland
- Doctoral student Kateryna Lemishko, Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain.

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

- Professor Frank Witlox, Ghent University, Belgium
- Professor Thomas Nedomysl, Lund University, Sweden
- Doctoral student Rowan Jaines, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom.

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

- Mia Đikić, coordinator, ASHE
- Ivana Šimić, assistant coordinator, ASHE
- Anna Maria Perović, interpreter at the site visit, ASHE
- Lida Lamza, 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 also had a tour of the library.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: Geography: Space, Region, Environment, Landscape (hereinafter: Doctoral study of Geography: SREL)

Institution providing the programme: University of Zagreb

Institution delivering the programme: Faculty of Science

Place of delivery: Zagreb

Scientific area and field: 8. Interdisciplinary scientific area; 8.2 Geography

Number of doctoral candidates (all): 60 (of which 39 doctoral candidates are enrolled in the Doctoral study of Geography: SREL which has been offered since the academic year 2014/15, and 21 doctoral candidates are enrolled in the previous post-graduate study of Geographic Basics of Spatial Planning, which was offered until the academic year 2014/2015, though all those enrolled have the possibility to complete that programme).

Number of HEI-funded doctoral candidates: (as junior researchers of that or another higher education institution or institute): 3

Number self-funded doctoral candidates and employer-funded doctoral candidates: 57

Number of inactive doctoral candidates: (did not regularly enrol in the next year, but still have the right to study): Total number of inactive doctoral candidates, taking into account the doctoral study of Geography: SREL and the previous post-graduate study of Geographic Basics of Spatial Planning is 23. Number of inactive doctoral candidates of the doctoral study of Geography: SREL is 8. The number of inactive doctoral candidates of the post-graduate study of Geographic Basics of Spatial Planning that was offered until the academic year 2014/15 is 15.

Number of teachers: (internal and external): 24 internal lecturers in the academic year 2018/19. The doctoral study programme has no external lecturers, though it has external co-supervisors.

Number of supervisors: 16 supervisors (3 internal and 3 external), and 14 study advisors, for a total of 27.

Number of doctoral candidates with officially appointed supervisors: 17

Learning outcomes of the study programme:

1. KNOWLEDGE

LO 1: to critically evaluate the theoretical approach to geography, and to create new knowledge in geographic disciplines, by applying relevant (and novel) approaches to scientific research

2. KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

LO 2: to identify the relevant spatial issues, to create original (innovative) approaches to conducting research, and setting hypotheses in the context of specific research

LO 3: to use specialised research methodology and an interdisciplinary approach to resolving spatial issues

3. PSYCHO-MOTOR SKILLS

LO 4: to design and conduct research, using the available tools and IT technology

4. SOCIAL SKILLS

LO 5: to communicate research results in written and oral form to the scientific and general public (scientific papers, conferences, public) using ICT, thematic maps, etc.

5. INDEPENDENCE

LO 6: to independently plan and execute the research

LO 7: to independently use technology and tools in implementing research and presenting results

LO 8: to initiate new research directions, aimed at reaching new scientific findings and methodological novelties

6. RESPONSIBILITY

LO 9: to critically analyse the course of the research, aimed at ensuring its successful execution (and where necessary to revise the planned research)

LO 10: to take responsibility for knowledge transfer to new generations (to responsibly transfer knowledge to new generations) and to ensure the social usefulness of research results

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)

NOTE. This assessment is based on the consideration of 18 “High level of quality”, 13 “Improvements are necessary”, and 3 “No evaluation”. The Panel rated most of the indicators of the “Internal quality assurance of the programme” and “Support to doctoral candidates and their progress” as of high quality. Improvements are mostly needed at the level of the “Resources” and the “Programme and outcome”. Some indicators were not ‘measurable’ due to a lack of information and/or a too small sample.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Make sure that the doctoral training programme is kept up to date, by which we mean the ways in which geography as discipline is evolving, e.g. new technologies, interdisciplinarity and literature. Pay attention especially to the domain of transferrable skills i.e. academic English, grant proposal writing, the funding landscape, presentation and communication at conferences, transferable methods, proposal and CV building. Critically evaluate the flexibility of the compulsory courses and unify the different approaches to the doctoral training programme (ensuring that distinction is made between those with a background in Geography and those who do not).
2. Progressing towards more international visibility – encourage PhD thesis to be written in English with extended Croatian summary in order to keep the connection with both cultural heritage and the international scientific community.
3. To make it standard practice to have two supervisors – or in cases where there is not a second supervisor, to have an appointed doctoral guidance committee (early career academics to receive support and guidance from more senior colleagues in absence of Faculty-level training for supervisors – which we do recommend in addition to the above).
4. To expand on good practice in the Department, when academics in the Department are identified as having skills in publishing in international journals, obtaining grants, interdisciplinary work to celebrate them and ask them to present their expertise to interested members of the Department (train the trainers).
5. To expand good practice in terms of theoretical and methodological innovation and use this to expand Croatian geography (and Croatian issues) in the international scientific community.
6. To increase the level of teaching opportunities for doctoral students (in line with student’s research interests) in order to reduce workloads on junior staff and make teaching experience part of the doctoral training programme.
7. The best literature review papers from the doctoral programme should be considered and encouraged to be submitted to a journal.

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Interdisciplinarity – in particular the conference in which students share their work.
2. Good supervisor student relationships.
3. The relative flexibility of the programmes.
4. The low tuition fees.
5. Research-orientated nature of the programme.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Work on top of existing work for the teaching staff that could result in overload.
2. Lack of clear reward structure and celebration of best practice (dissemination through doctoral student community).
3. Lack of diversity.
4. Learning outcomes are not specific enough for the doctoral programme in geography. The LOs are quite general, but do signal some progression from the graduate level. The LOs should to be further developed, both in terms of detail, but perhaps more important, so that they really signal "learning outcomes at the most advanced level".

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. The Geo-Doc conference.
2. The programme is committed to the requirement that students achieve an A1 publication before the completion of their PhD.
3. The Department is committed to the slow and gradual progress of the doctoral programme. Rash changes are not being made – rather sustainable long term plans are given time to ripen.

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

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

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

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

	Quality assessment (“high level of quality” or “improvements are necessary”) and the explanation of the Expert Panel
1. RESOURCES: TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, RESEARCH CAPACITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
1.1. HEI is distinguished by its scientific/artistic achievements in the discipline in which the doctoral study programme is delivered.	Improvements are necessary Whilst there are excellent examples of international quality academic research occurring in the Department (as exemplified by the recent publications in Science and Nature as well Geoforum, The Journal of Rural Studies and Applied Geography), the Department as a whole needs to be aiming for more Q1/Q2 journals in the Web of Science as well as international collaborations and networks.
1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.	Improvements are necessary When the workload table is viewed, most staff members are above 360 standard for norm hours. There are plans underway to improve this in a manner beneficial to the doctoral training plan through student teaching (this will provide the students with a broader skill portfolio during their training, and will partly relieve the current staff).
1.3. The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.	Improvements are necessary Staff are very committed and students feel supported and well guided by their supervisors. Please see box 1.1 for further details on research staff.
1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.	Improvements are necessary A sufficient number of quality supervisors are available, but the number of high quality publications is not distributed equally amongst the staff. There is a lack of evaluation on supervisor performance quality.
1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.	Improvements are necessary See above.
1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.	High level of quality The Faculty has a future in state-of-the-art methods such as GIS and needs ongoing access to the newest technology in order to develop in the manner advised in the wider report.

2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME	
2.1. The HEI has established and accepted effective procedures for proposing, approving and delivering doctoral education. The procedures include identification of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The Department has established regulations on launching and approving doctoral programmes. The programme has been launched and approved in line with the regulations. The programme justification was documented, and included a thorough analysis of social, academic, economic or other needs of the community.</p>
2.2. The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>It is aligned with the quality research strategy, as well as the HEI development strategy.</p>
2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the success of the programmes through periodic reviews, and implements improvements.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>Some mechanisms are currently in place and working well, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - periodical international and/or national programme reviews; - continuous monitoring and analyses of research productivity of supervisors and candidates. <p>The Panel would recommend that students are consulted regarding the outcome of the report.</p> <p>Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is currently no exit talk with students who drop out of the programme. The Panel would advise the development of mechanisms for periodically reviewing and improving the quality of the doctoral programme (ordinances, guidelines, procedures, well established practices etc.).</p> <p>Such mechanisms include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - collecting and analysing feedback from candidates, alumni and drop-outs, especially concerning the supervision system and the support provided by the HEI, or reasons to drop out; - collecting and analysing feedback from other stakeholders (e.g. employers); - evidence on changes implemented on the basis of these procedures.
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>The Department should invest in mechanisms of monitoring and improving the quality of existing supervision.</p> <p>The Panel advises that all students have two supervisors or a doctoral guidance committee.</p>

	Consider recognition schemes (awards) for exceptional practice, could the Department look towards the Faculty for financial recognition for completed PhDs?
2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>HEI has procedures that assure academic integrity (prevent plagiarism and other forms of academic fraud) and freedom of research. The Panel has confidence in the Ethics Assessment Committee that they are managing this with quality and integrity.</p>
2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has developed the procedures of producing and defending the doctoral thesis proposal (as described in the ordinance, or some other document); - forms a committee, at least one member of which is external (from another institution); - has published a detailed proposal defence protocol; - has created and published proposal templates and clear presentation guidelines; - has created and published templates for proposal assessment. <p>Since the new programme was implemented in 2014, there has only been one thesis defended.</p>
2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has developed the procedures of developing and defending the doctoral thesis (as described in an ordinance, or some other document); - encourages participation of external or international examiners in the thesis defence committee (viva assessment committee) - encourages candidates to have at least one publication with an internationally competitive peer-review in the field of thesis, prior to completion of doctoral education; - accepts a variety of formats for the theses; - has created and published thesis guidelines; - has created and published thesis assessment guidelines; - has created and published a detailed thesis defence (viva) protocol; - has developed and published a template for recording the thesis defence (viva). <p>* Since the new programme was implemented in 2014 there has only been one thesis defended).</p>

<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>	<p>Improvements are necessary The quality is available, but the structure of the programme could be made more explicit in terms of the course content and organisation of compulsory modules.</p>
<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>	<p>High level of quality The SER explains what tuition fees are spent on, and the Panel checks if this complies with the regulations on using own and dedicated funds, i.e., to insure further development of the doctoral programme.</p> <p>The programme has established a system of funding the programme and the candidates within the institution. The HEI secures funding, applies to calls for co-funding doctoral programmes, establishes partnerships and finds other sources of (candidates') research funding useful for solving social, scientific or economic challenges. The HEI secures funding for the candidates' research and research results' dissemination costs.</p>
<p>2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).</p>	<p>High level of quality The level of tuition is determined by the Faculty Council, at the proposal of the Council for Postgraduate Studies. Pursuant to the commitments of the doctoral candidates laid down in the study agreement, the tuition is settled prior to the enrolment (advancement) for each study year. Fees for enrolment and passing difference courses are included in the price, and costs of drafting the doctoral dissertation, costs of printing the diploma, and other material expenditures are not calculated in the cost of the tuition. The Faculty covers the tuition fees for doctoral candidates employed with the Faculty as junior researchers, and for those participating in classes and teaching assistants, proportional to the classes held (120 standard hours is equivalent to 100% exemption). In confirming the proposal for tuition fees, the Council of doctoral studies considers the costs of the doctoral studies. The costs of the study per doctoral candidate can be roughly divided into: 1. Teaching costs (material and utility costs of courses, fees for external associates, administrative costs, travel costs for committee members from other domestic and foreign universities), that are covered by the leader of the doctoral study through the tuition fees, and 2. Scientific costs (preparing the doctoral dissertation, participation at scientific meetings, workshops, etc.), which are covered from project funds, if the doctoral candidate</p>

	<p>prepares the dissertation within the frame of such projects, or are covered by the candidate, or the institution covering the costs of the tuition fees. Since the funds of doctoral studies are secured exclusively from tuition fees, and that the Faculty does not receive any funds for the implementation of doctoral studies, in determining the level of tuition fees, the Council for Postgraduate Study takes into the account the need for sustainability of the study programme, and the need to achieve teaching and student standards.</p> <p>With the above, at the start of each academic year, the Council of the Faculty of Science issues the decision on exemption from payment of a part of the tuition fees.</p>
3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION	
3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The programme provides for a high quality admission policy, systematically taking into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the number of available supervisors and their teaching workload; - quality of supervisors - if their competencies suit the candidates' research proposals; - the number of candidates a teacher already supervises, with no more than 3 candidates per supervisor on the programme as a whole; - teaching workload of supervisors, which should not exceed the existing legal thresholds (the Department has plans for improving this). <p>The HEI also needs to prove that it clearly defines the obligations of supervisors and co-supervisors, candidates and research teams.</p>
3.2. The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>Evidence from students, alumni and stakeholders aligns with the SER which states: quotas for the doctoral study are also determined on the basis of demand from the scientific, economic and social sectors. A unique feature of the doctoral study was that, during the period 2014 – 2019, the highest number of doctoral candidates came from the economic and social sectors, e.g. from state bodies, regional and local governments (especially the Ministry of Construction and Physical Planning, city/municipal offices</p>

	<p>for strategic and physical planning, from public institutes for nature protection, from tourism companies (hotels, tour operators, tourist agencies), from authorised companies for drafting tourism development plans, from statistics bureaus (state, county, city levels), from development agencies and companies specialising in drafting project documentation for the EU, from cartographic and geoinformation institutions, from the Croatian Armed Forces, and primary and secondary schools. Furthermore, the doctoral candidates also come from the science system, e.g. Department of Geography, Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb; Department of Geography, University of Zadar; Department of Geography, Faculty of Science, University of Sarajevo. Though there is no database on the status of completed candidates, from the information available to supervisors, the number of unemployed doctors of science is minimum, and primarily relates to short periods of unemployment while looking for work that better suits the newly attained qualifications.</p>
<p>3.3. The HEI establishes the admission quotas taking into account the funding available to the candidates that is, on the basis of the absorption potentials of research projects or other sources of funding.</p>	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The funds for candidates' research are clearly reported, some of them funded or co-funded by research projects, and some others (a large part) from other sources. SREL takes on a high share of doctoral candidates coming from outside the science system (57 to be exact, compared to only 3 who are financed by the HEI). The 'external' candidates are self-financed and their tuition fees are covered by their employers. A part or full tuition fee exemption is possible based on a certain return (taking on teaching). The HEI sets out the rules. The supervisors are involved with national and international projects that can largely benefit doctoral students. No specific problems were mentioned.</p>
<p>3.4. The HEI should pay attention to the number of candidates admitted as to provide each with an advisor (a potential supervisor). From the point of admission to the end of doctoral education, efforts are invested so that each candidate has a sustainable research plan and is able to complete doctoral research successfully.</p>	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>Supervisors in the Department confirmed that, at the time of applying to the competition, each candidate for enrolment to the doctoral study of Geography: SREL submits an Agreement signed by the future study advisor (potential supervisor). This agreement confirms, even prior to the formal enrolment, that the candidate is personally acquainted with the programme, structure, requirements and expectations of the doctoral study programme, and on the other hand, that the future study advisor is acquainted with the area of scientific interest and potential topic of the doctoral dissertation of the student. The study advisor is selected from among the lecturers at the doctoral study of</p>

	<p>Geography: SREL, i.e. as a person in the scientific-education title who participates in the implementation of doctoral studies. One of the fundamental tasks of the study advisor is to shape the individualised work plan, which is systematically and continuously monitored to ensure the study obligations are carried out. The Report on execution of the work plan is submitted on a special form (available on the doctoral studies website). The form of the work plan is filled out by the doctoral candidate and the study advisor, after holding consultations, at least six times during the academic year. There are currently 19 candidates in the study programme who do not yet have an appointed supervisor, to whom 14 study advisors have been assigned.</p>
<p>3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>More advertisement in an international context, with emphasis that large parts of the doctoral training programme are taught in English; also, make use of Erasmus schemes. Issues of diversity and positionality should be considered within this – who would feel comfortable and at home in the Department and who might not?</p>
<p>3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.</p>	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>Ensuring the enrolment of the highest quality candidates to the doctoral study of Geography: SREL is clearly defined in the competition for enrolment, which is published in the daily press, on the Faculty website and website of the doctoral study. The enrolment criteria are: 1. Grade point average in undergraduate and graduate study of at least 3.5 (overall and individual; for an average lower than 3.5 enrolment is only possible with explicit explanation of the lecturer of the doctoral study of Geography: SREL, however, this is only for exceptional cases); 2. Written outline of the scientific research topic (proposal of the research); 3. Prior scientific and research work that is evaluated using specific criteria, different weighting systems (points), where at least one criteria must be met (including: published peer-review scientific paper, Rector's award, published peer-reviewed professional paper, active participation in a scientific meeting, active participation in a professional meeting, participation in a scientific project, participation in professional projects); 4. Interview with the applicant. The interview is held before a three-member Committee who discusses with the candidate on the proposal of the research they submitted with the application. In the past five-year period, in three academic years, enrolment quotas</p>

	<p>were set (10 candidates), all criteria were considered and points assigned, and the final number of points placed candidates into the appropriate position in the rankings, and accordingly their right to enrolment. The rankings of the selected candidates, their qualifications, number of total achieved points, are published on the notice boards and websites of the study programmes. In academic years without admissions quotas, the requirements and criteria of the competition remained the same, only there were no points or rankings assigned, and all candidates meeting the requirements were admitted. Candidate who did not submit written outlines of the research topic or have the interview with the Committee are not entitled to enrol into the doctoral study of Geography.</p>
<p>3.7. The HEI ensures that the selection procedure is transparent and in line with published criteria, and that there is a transparent complaints procedure.</p>	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The enrolment procedure at the doctoral study of Geography: SREL is clearly described in the previous point. Candidates are ensured clarity of choice and the right to complaint in the competition and admissions procedure to the doctoral study of Geography: SREL. To date, there have been no complaints regarding the enrolment procedure to the doctoral study of Geography: SREL. The competition documentation is archived, and the list of selected candidates is public, with the protection of personal data pursuant to the regulations. The Council of the Department of Geography confirms the list of candidates enrolled in the doctoral study of Geography: SREL.</p>
<p>3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.</p>	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>Pursuant to the Ordinance on doctoral studies and study programmes, candidates meeting the requirements may have previous accomplishments relevant to the doctoral study of Geography: SREL recognised. In accordance with the Salzburg II recommendations, as the fundamental document on the improvement and restructuring of doctoral education in Europe, the doctoral study of Geography: SREL does not apply the ECTS points system, as the programme is research-based. Therefore, the recognition of previous accomplishments primarily pertains to persons having attained the title of Master of Science, who may submit a formal request to be exempted from the obligation of passing the course Scientific Paper. The Council of the doctoral study of Geography: SREL decides on this, and all other requests.</p> <p>Candidates who have completed another university study other than geography may, according to the decision of the</p>

	<p>Council of Doctoral Studies, be assigned difference courses and exams to be passed before they may submit the proposal of the topic of the doctoral dissertation, which is the requirement for advancement to the second year of study.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The rights and responsibilities of doctoral candidates are defined by the Ordinance on doctoral studies of the University, and further by the Ordinance on doctoral studies at the Faculty of Science. The Ordinance defines the rights and responsibilities of doctoral candidates. This is attached to the SER.</p> <p>The Ordinance describes candidates' rights and obligations in detail (the SER describes the relevant chapters in detail, including the ways in which support is provided). Candidates are informed on all of their rights and obligations upon admission. At the time of enrolment, the doctoral candidate signs the agreement which confirms the student status, tuition fees and other fees and payment schedule, and the rights and responsibility of the contracting parties, and the Statement by which the candidate states whether they will study on a full-time or part-time basis.</p>
<p>3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.</p>	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The current students reported to the Panel that they were satisfied with the level of support from the Department and from their supervisors. Institutional support mechanisms (like set deadlines, awards, fixed evaluation meetings) are not systematically in place, but a lot is (organically) regulated by the Proposal of the program of the Doctoral study of Geography: SREL and based on the Implementation plan that is adopted for each academic year. Through their three-year study period, students are faced with a series of compulsory activities that serve as evidence for independent scientific research. No specific problems were mentioned.</p>
<p>4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES</p>	
<p>4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The Panel only has evidence of one completed thesis in the current programme and this is in Croatian. So we have to base our evaluation on an extended summary in English, and the evidence from the SER and interviews with supervisors.</p>

	<p>The programme is research-oriented and focused on the candidate's independent work (it provides for at least three years of independent research experience). Teaching is included as required by the needs of candidate's research (with flexibility) and enables the candidate to acquire generic (transferable) skills and international experience.</p> <p>Efforts are being made to encourage the use of academic English in theses and we support and encourage the progression of this (see recommendations).</p> <p>The programme provides for interdisciplinarity, i.e. provides opportunities to develop and implement interdisciplinary research. An interdisciplinary research proposal is attached to the SER with the list of co-supervisors and teachers from other scientific fields and disciplines etc.</p>
<p>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>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The Panel only has evidence of one completed thesis in the current programme and this is in Croatian. So we have to base our evaluation on an extended summary in English, and the evidence from the SER and interviews with supervisors.</p> <p>The published learning outcomes seem to be of doctoral level, although issues were reported by current students. Those who had studied geography at a lower level felt that material was being repeated and not necessarily at a more advanced level. Please see our recommendations for more information about critically evaluating the compulsory modules.</p> <p>Because the students all need to have an A1 publication, there is a degree of quality assessment with regard the doctoral level of education attained by the end of the course.</p> <p>The learning outcomes should be aligned more explicitly (and using the vocabulary as well as substantiating with examples and evidence) with level 8.2 of the CroQF.</p> <p>Given that the majority of the theses are written in Croatian and that only a summary is provided in English (and only one has been examined from the new programme), it is very</p>

	<p>difficult for the Panel to assess them objectively. Further to this, most people will not realise this level of achievement in <i>all</i> areas – especially given that the nature of PhD study is about honing in on a deep and rich understanding and competency in a narrow subject area.</p> <p>The Panel trusts the assertions from the SER that: The structure of the study programme and the learning outcomes at the level of the study programme are designed so that candidates are directed towards independent work from the first year of study, with the appropriate monitoring and support from the study advisor and later from the supervisor. The outcomes of the doctoral programme are formulated to ensure that the candidate gains specific knowledge, questions existing knowledge and theories, develops the skills needed to create new knowledge, implement innovative procedures in implementing research, applying a multi(inter)disciplinary approach, and use of contemporary tools and technologies.</p> <p>Through research seminars and published papers, the candidate is systematically monitored and stimulated to acquire and develop research skills within the selected module and methodology, to organise and implement the research, and to interpret the research results at internal conferences. The final group of learning outcomes includes ethical principles, the rights and responsibilities that govern relationships between scientific, educational, student and other members of the academic community, and the ethical principles of international and national acts and legislation on protection of subjects, and regulations on the protection of personal data.</p>
4.3. Programme learning outcomes are logically and clearly connected with teaching contents, as well as the contents included in supervision and research.	<p>No evaluation The Panel only has evidence of one completed thesis in the current programme and this is in Croatian. So we have to base our evaluation on an extended summary in English, and the evidence from the SER and interviews with supervisors.</p> <p>The learning outcomes need to be made more specific to the level of doctoral study. Prior to these changes, this is very difficult to assess as “high quality” because currently the learning outcomes are loosely worded.</p>
4.4. The doctoral programme ensures the achievement of learning outcomes and	<p>No evaluation The Panel only has evidence of one completed thesis in the</p>

competencies aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF.	current programme and this is in Croatian. So we have to base our evaluation on an extended summary in English, and the evidence from the SER and interviews with supervisors.
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 students reported high levels of satisfaction in their programme, and the Panel was pleased to have it confirmed that the doctoral study programme is research-based, meaning that about 80% of the total student activities are dedicated to their research and other forms of acquiring knowledge and generic skills for the application of the interdisciplinary approach. The doctoral study is predominantly focused on forms, methods and techniques aimed at developing research skills: methodological workshops, research seminars, discussion groups, internal and standard conferences, writing and presenting research results (presentations, posters and published papers), individualised work with the advisor/supervisor, and projects. The projects include independent planning the implementation of research, monitoring the course of the research and communicating the results of the research.</p> <p>The Panel commends the changes that have been made in the new programme and anticipates more progression as time goes on. Stakeholders, staff members and students were keen to see a development in the programme (please see our recommendations).</p>
4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>When looking at the doctoral programme, there is too much focus on taught material and more emphasis needs to be placed on transferable skills. Please see the Panel's recommendations. We would advise that the Department seek advice on whether this might be appropriate to be arranged at a Faculty level.</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>The programme has responded to stakeholder and student requests that the programme be offered in a more flexible manner. To continue this good work, we would suggest that the Department keep consulting their students, staff and stakeholders (as well as the international research community) regarding the way to stay responsive.</p>
4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The quality of the programme could be improved by making use of existing international connections and networks</p>

	<p>where academics from abroad are invited to participate in the programme. The level of mobility of candidates needs to be extended to attend specialist training and to present to a wider range of academic colleagues and begin to develop students own international research networks.</p>
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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.