

REPORT OF THE EXPERT PANEL ON THE REACCREDITATION OF THE UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE (DOCTORAL) PROGRAMME POLITICAL SCIENCE

FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB



Date of the visit: 26 April 2017

April, 2017



The project was co-financed by the European Union within the European Social Fund.

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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 *Political Science* on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the Faculty of Political 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:

- Prof. Tamás Hoffmann, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary, president of the Expert Panel:
- Dr. Gerhard van der Schyff, Tilburg Law School, Department for Public Law, Jurisprudence and Legal History, Tilburg University, Netherlands;
- Dr. Dagmar Simon, The WZB Berlin Social Science Center, Germany;
- Prof. Dibyesh Anand, University of Westminster, United Kingdom;
- Dr. Igor Štiks, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom;
- Prof. Mare Leino, Tallinn University, Estonia;
- Max Lüggert, doctoral candidate, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Germany;
- Marko Radenović, doctoral candidate, Princeton University/McKinsey & Company, Croatia;

• Katja Simončič, doctoral candidate, Inštitut za kriminologijo pri Pravni fakulteti v Ljubljani, Slovenia.

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

- Dr. Igor Štiks, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom, moderator;
- Prof. Mare Leino, Tallinn University, Estonia;
- Dr. Dagmar Simon, The WZB Berlin Social Science Center, Germany;
- Prof. Dibyesh Anand, University of Westminster, United Kingdom;
- Max Lüggert, doctoral candidate, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Germany.

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

- Ivana Borošić, coordinator, ASHE,
- Mr. sc. Sandra Bezjak, assistant coordinator, ASHE,
- Lida Lamza, interpreter at the site visit and Report translator, ASHE,
- Ivana Rončević, translator of the Report, ASHE.

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

- Management,
- Meeting with the heads of PhD programmes,
- Doctoral candidates.
- Supervisors,
- Alumni.

The Expert Panel also had a tour of the library.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME (Self-Evaluation Report-pages 3-5)

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: Postgraduate university doctoral study program *Political Science*

Institution delivering the programme: Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb Institution providing the programme: Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb

Place of delivery: Zagreb

Scientific area and field: Social Sciences, Political Science

Number of doctoral candidates: 76 enrolled / 57 active students.

Number of teachers: 33-35 (depending on year)

Number of supervisors: 26

Learning outcomes of the study programme: Not defined.

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: <u>to</u> <u>issue a letter of expectation for the period up to three (3) years</u> in which period the higher education institution should make the necessary improvements (as stated in this report and the recommendations).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. Due to the current, unproductive and untenable situation with the two co-existing doctoral programmes (Political Science and Comparative Politics), Expert Panel recommends an urgent and comprehensive internal review and the development of a single doctoral programme covering all sub-disciplines of political science.
- 2. Tackle the problem of the low completion rates by accepting a lower number of committed and prepared students and by making efforts to secure funding for as many accepted students as possible.
- 3. Address the problem of the high workload of supervisors and professors. The workload must be more evenly distributed, bearing in mind teachers' workload in the undergraduate programme as well.
- 4. Make a clear distinction between mentor and supervisor: every PhD researcher should have a mentor from the very beginning based on the preliminary ideas for research submitted during the admission process (research proposal). By the start of second year at the latest, a supervisor should be appointed. This supervisor may be a mentor or may be a different person depending on the evolution of the proposal.
- 5. More clarity about the use of funds. They are mostly reserved for additional honoraria for the teachers. This should change and more funds should be allocated for students (especially the self-funded ones): conferences, training workshops or short study visits.

- 6. Although many doctoral candidates lack a general knowledge about the discipline in general, the programme must assure that gaps in students' knowledge are tackled by focused courses that should also be related to their research interests and specialisation. More methodology courses must be offered that would enable students to effectively use existing research methods in approaching their topics.
- 7. The programme should develop and define learning outcomes.

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 8. The only doctoral programme in political science in Croatia.
- 9. A significant number of outstanding and ambitious faculty members committed to high quality international research and teaching standards.
- 10. High standards maintained for developing and defending the theses.
- 11. Availability of some PhD studies funding through research projects.
- 12. Possibility for doctoral students to publish in top Croatian academic journals.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. Due to the existence of two doctoral programmes, the programme in Political Science does not cover the field of Comparative Politics (see above).
- 2. A few supervisors have a disproportionately high number of students and hence a very high workload. The candidate / supervisor ratio is also high.
- 3. Completion rates are not satisfactory, which puts in danger the quality of the programme.
- 4. The programme, sub-disciplines and modules are often personality driven (and thus heavily dependent on individual staff members for their implementation and sustainability).
- 5. Personal funding of the doctoral training already works as a *de facto* selection criterion.
- 6. Due to the structural reasons related to Croatian educational and research system, the programme in its current form cannot be effectively compared with international institutions.
- 7. Expert Panel noticed an overlap between undergraduate and postgraduate courses as well as many general courses. There is also an insufficient focus on methodology.
- 8. A lack of training opportunities and a limited number of possibilities for students, especially self-funded ones, to present their work in front of diverse academic or non-academic audience.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

- 1. External or international members participate in the work of the commission for evaluation and defences.
- 2. Doctoral students must publish or have an accepted scientific paper in an internationally peer-reviewed scientific publication, linked to the doctoral research topic.
- 3. The heads of programme branches serve as initial mentors and points of contacts (how to develop further, see above).
- 4. Some courses are also offered in English.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRESCRIBED CONDITIONS FOR THE DELIVERY OF A STUDY PROGRAMME (Self-Evaluation Report-pages 10-11)

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 (including the teaching assistants)
6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public.	YES There is a public (though not digital) access to the doctoral thesis.
7. HEI launches the procedure of revoking the academic title if it is	YES
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.	
Additional/ recommended conditions of the ASHE Accreditation	YES/NO
Council for passing a positive opinion	notes
1. HEI (or HEIs in joint programmes) has at least five teachers appointed to scientific-teaching titles in the field, or fields relevant for the programme involved in its delivery.	YES
2. In the most recent reaccreditation, HEI had the standard Scientific and Professional Activity marked as at least "partly implemented" (3).	YES

3. The doctoral programme is aligned with the HEI's research strategy.	YES
4. The candidate: supervisor ratio at the HEI is not above 3:1.	YES, it is above for
	the entire
	programme but
	NOT for the
	approved thesis
	proposals (SER)
5. All supervisors meet the following conditions:	NO, not all
a) PhD, elected into a scientific title, holds a scientific or a scientific-	supervisors meet
teaching position and/or has at least two years of postdoctoral research	all conditions (e.g.
experience;	some supervisors
b) active researcher in the scientific area of the programme, as evidenced	are not active
by publications, participation in scientific conferences and/or projects in	researchers)
the past five years (table 2, Supervisors and candidates);	a) YES
c) confirms feasibility of the draft research plan upon admission of the	b) NO
candidate (or submission of the proposal);	c) NO (there is
d) ensures the conditions (and funding) necessary to implement the	no clear
candidate's research (in line with the draft research plan) as a research	research plan
project leader, co-leader, participant, collaborator or in other ways;	upon
e) trained for the role before assuming it (through workshops, co-	admission;
supervisions etc.);	feasibility only
f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory work.	assessed after
	the formal
	submission of
	the PhD
	proposal much
	later)
	d) YES for
	researchers
	employed in
	research
	projects; NO
	for self-funded
	students
	e) YES (in
	principle,
	supervisors
	should acquire
	some
	experience
	before being
	promoted as
	supervisors or
	through
	training
	programmes,

	if available.
	Mostly it is
	through
	personal
	academic
	development,
	which could
	include
	experience at
	foreign
	universities)
	f) YES
	(SER and our
	evaluation)
6. All teachers meet the following conditions:	NO, not all
a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position;	teachers meet all
b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the course (table	conditions (e.g.
1, Teachers).	some do not work
	in academic
	institutions; some
	have no research
	activity; many
	teachers are
	retired) (SER)
7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment	YES
committees.	
8. The programme ensures that all candidates spend at least three years	NO
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.	
9. For joint programmes and doctoral schools (at the university level):	NA
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.	
L	l .

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.	High Level of Quality The HEI is distinguished by high quality research of some of its staff.
1.2.	The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.	A few supervisors have a disproportionately high number of students and hence a very high workload. Many teachers and supervisors have workload above 360 NH. Suggestions: • Avoid over-burdening some professors regardless of their 'popularity' or a lack of available supervisors; • Encourage team supervision where a junior academic is involved so that their capacity is built; • Diffuse the workload among all employed teachers.
1.3.	The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.	High Level of Quality There is a high number of high quality scientific publications relevant for the programme area and field.
1.4.	The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.	 Improvements are necessary Suggestions: The candidate / supervisor ratio is unacceptably high. The direction of the doctoral programme must address the issue. In addition, as noted above, some supervisors have a high workload and there is no evidence that supervisors' performance is assessed on the basis of the candidates' performance (e.g. their publications coming out of doctoral research) and their completion rates. Address the issue and develop clear assessing mechanisms of supervisors as well. Completion rates are not satisfactory, which puts in

effective procedures for proposing,	11
2.1. The HEI has established and accepted	Improvements are Necessary The formal process of initiation of the doctoral programme in
2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME	
1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.	 Improvements are Necessary Suggestions: More funds required for the improvement of high quality resources for research; More international partnerships should be explored in order to tap into relevant and possible funding.
1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.	 Improvements are Necessary The research and teaching profile of the staff should, in principle, guarantee the quality of teaching and doctoral supervision. However, there should be formal mechanisms in place to assure the continuous quality of supervision. Suggestions: Make a clear distinction between mentor and supervisor: every PhD researcher should have a mentor from the very beginning based on the preliminary ideas for research. By the start of second year at the latest, a supervisor should be finalised. This supervisor may be the mentor or may be a different person depending on the evolution of the proposal (see also below). For the inexperienced member of staff, joint supervision should be practiced. While such a staff can be a mentor at the start, to be a supervisor, they should be in a team with another experienced member of staff. Capacity building of inexperienced mentors so that they can be supervisors of the future can be done through a) training workshops as well as b) pairing with experienced staff.
	 danger the quality of the programme. Develop a strategy to tackle the problem (even though some structural elements are beyond the HEI's control). There are very few research projects involving funded PhD students. Although again, this is also related to general structural problems, invest more available funds for the development of self-funded students (see more below).

approving and delivering doctoral education. The procedures include identification of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs.

political science **was not entirely clear** because of the uncertainty related to the previously approved programme in Comparative Politics at the same HEI.

Suggestions:

- Due to the current situation with the two co-existing doctoral programmes (Political Science and Comparative Politics), Expert Panel recommends an urgent and comprehensive internal review and the development of one single doctoral programme, covering all sub-disciplines of political science.
- The programme, sub-disciplines and modules should not be personality driven (and thus heavily dependent on individual staff members for their implementation and sustainability), but shaped according to the need of the discipline and students.

Improvements are Necessary

2.2. The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.

Suggestions:

- The HEI needs to develop an integrated research strategy based on all areas of the discipline. The programme in Political Science currently does not, due to internal functioning, cover comparative politics (see above).
- 2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the success of the programmes through periodic reviews, and implements improvements.

Improvements are Necessary

Suggestions:

- No evidence of systematic periodic reviews of the programme or implemented improvements. They need to be developed, implemented and monitored by HEI.
- 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.

monitors | High Level of Quality

The procedures are in place. However, their efficiency should be continuously monitored and shared as good practice amongst all supervisors.

High Level of Quality

2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.

Plagiarism software is used to detect unethical behaviour. But the procedure if plagiarism is found (even if it is only one sentence) should be clear too.

2.6.	defending the thesis proposal is	High Level of Quality All necessary procedures are in place. Expert Panel also examined the defended theses. They comply with high standards.
2.7.	Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.	 High Level of Quality Expert Panel appreciates the following qualities: External or international members participated in the work of the commission for evaluation and defences; A doctoral student must publish or have an accepted scientific paper in an internationally peer-reviewed scientific publication, linked to the doctoral research topic.
2.8.	The HEI publishes all necessary information on the study programme, admissions, delivery and conditions for progression and completion, in accessible outlets and media.	High Level of Quality The information is published on the website of the Faculty.
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).	 Improvements are Necessary There is no clarity about the use of the collected funds. They are mostly reserved for additional honoraria for the teachers. Some efforts have been recently made to provide support for students for conference presentations. Suggestions: More funds should be allocated for students: conferences, training workshops or short study visits; The criteria for their distribution should be transparent to all; Some funds should also be made available for cosupervisors or external examiners coming from regional and international universities; Established researchers should be expected to engage in research projects that involve funding of doctoral students as research assistants.
2.10	Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).	NA Expert Panel does not have relevant information to accurately assess how tuition and fees are determined.

3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION	
3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.	Improvements are Necessary Expert Panel recommends accepting a lower number of students. There is already a high number of candidates per supervisor (especially some supervisors) and high teaching workload. Furthermore, the site visit revealed that teaching engagements within the PhD programme are not being covered by the regular working hours of faculty, thus any work in relation to the PhD programme has to be added on top of the regular workload, which adds an additional burden for the teaching staff.
3.2. The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.	Improvements are Necessary The real needs have to be more accurately assessed. For example, one of the criteria to be used are limited employment opportunities for PhD holders in public sector and educational / research institutions. According to the site visit, there is hardly any competition for inclusion within the PhD programme, with roughly 2 candidates applying for each spot in the programme. This leads to a situation where funding opportunities or personal resources act as a <i>de facto</i> selection criterion, meaning that the individual financial situation of the applicant basically determines the admission of candidates.
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.	Personal funding of the doctoral training already works as a <i>de facto</i> selection criterion. Although this is the structural problem, it has to be addressed at the level of HEI as well. HEI should take into account that the low completion rate is directly related to the lack of student funding, which in turn necessitates higher working hours of the candidates. Additionally, according to the SER, only a very small number of candidates is included in any kind of project activity and according to the site visit, in practice only those candidates who are employed at the Faculty take part in research projects.
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	Improvements are Necessary There are some steps in the right direction taken by the programme by establishing the heads of programme

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.

branches as initial mentors and points of contacts. However, the distinction between mentor and supervisor is not clear.

Suggestions:

- Every PhD researcher should have a mentor from the very beginning, based on the preliminary ideas for research (as part of the admission process).
- By the start of second year at the latest, a supervisor should be finalised. This supervisor may be the mentor or may be a different person depending on the evolution of the proposal.
- The review from the mentor (year one) and supervisor (from year two) should be made an annual exercise. This should be regardless of whether the student is enrolled full time or part time.
- Develop a formal process to assess progression. This should involve both the student and mentor (and later PhD thesis supervisor). This may be a brief form where both record the brief details of the progress made. The report should then be verified by the head of the programme and any necessary action should be taken immediately (especially at earlier stages).
- Ensure that there are fixed standards for mentorship (rather than informal control) to improve accountability.

3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.

Improvements are Necessary

Expert Panel can detect some efforts to attract international students by offering courses in English. However, the enrolment rate of foreign students is low and mostly applies to the regional students (for instance, from Bosnia-Herzegovina or Montenegro) who can follow the courses offered in Croatian. An encouraging development from the site visit was that a rising number of candidates is writing their dissertations in English.

High Level of Quality

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

The formal criteria are in place and are followed. However, many applicants lack research skills and potential PhD theses supervisors are not clearly identified based on students' interests. The site visit also revealed that the selection thresholds are deemed to be too generous, which effectively means that a supplemental selection takes place through drop-outs.

For improvements see 3.4.

	High Level of Quality
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.	All transparency criteria appear to be met and the site visit confirmed that a change of supervisors due to complaints is possible, even though this can become an issue in highly specialised fields of study, where there are few knowledgeable supervisors available.
	High Level of Quality
3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.	The prior learning of candidates and applicants gets recognized. If there are applicants with a background in a different discipline, additional exams can be taken in order to complete the PhD programme. Likewise, credit points acquired at an earlier stage can be transferred into the PhD programme, however this does not include the enrolment of a candidate into a higher semester.
	Improvements are Necessary
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.	Although procedures are in place and (according to the site visit) all candidates sign a study contract, Expert Panel can detect problems with finding and changing supervisors. There is a small pool of available supervisors (see 3.7) and students depend heavily on supervisors in relation to their success. In such a small academic community, this might involve personal difficulties for students, which the formal rules cannot take into account.
	Improvements are Necessary
3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.	There are some mechanisms in place, such as a possibility to publish in Croatian academic journals (some of them are of highest quality) and a limited funding for conference presentations. However, there is again a sharp difference between a small number of funded students (project-related) and a much larger number of self-funded students. The latter face much more difficulties in their progression. Suggestions: • This gap between two groups of students has to be addressed by allocating more funds towards the academic development of self-funded students. • A tangible suggestion for improvement in this regard could be the introduction of scholarships to cover tuition force.

to cover tuition fees.

4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES	
4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.	Due to the structural reasons related to Croatian educational and research system, the programme cannot be effectively compared with international institutions. The Panel detects a problem with teaching philosophy and the use of available doctoral studies models: the US model of graduate school clashes with the Bologna / UK model when it comes to coursework. Suggestions: • Heavy coursework, unlike in UK PhD programmes, is in clash with students' specialised topics and should, due to the limits of the 3-year doctoral programme and a lack of funding, accommodate students' specialised interest. • Expert Panel recognises concerns expressed by teachers that many doctoral candidates lack general knowledge about the discipline. However, the programme must assure that gaps in students' knowledge are tackled by focused courses that should also be related to their research interests and specialisation. • There is an insufficient focus on methodology that was repeatedly raised by both students and teachers. More methodology courses should be offered that would enable students to effectively use existing research methods in approaching their research topics. • The Faculty should not make students responsible for finding supervisors and the availability and research profile of potential supervisors should be made known to students from the beginning (to avoid reported situations in which students cannot identify adequate supervisor or cannot work with supervisors because she / he retires during the studies). On the mentor / supervisor problem, see item 3. 4.
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	Improvements are Necessary The programme (according to SER) has not developed and defined learning outcomes. SER is insufficient and too general. Thus, the Panel cannot properly assess this point.

	candidates will develop during the doctoral programme, including the	
	ethical requirements of doing research.	
4.3.	Programme learning outcomes are logically and clearly connected with teaching contents, as well as the contents included in supervision and	Improvements are Necessary SER is too general. This point cannot be properly assessed. Expert Panel noticed an overlap between undergraduate and
	research.	postgraduate courses. Students often see some general courses as not relevant to their research. The courses have to be more research-oriented.
4.4.	The doctoral programme ensures the	Improvements are Necessary
	achievement of learning outcomes and competencies aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF.	Not addressed in SER.
		The Panel checked the available theses. They comply with the quality standards.
		Improvements are Necessary
applica	Teaching methods (and ECTS, if applicable) are appropriate for level 8.2 of the CroQF and assure achievement of	Not addressed in SER.
	clearly defined learning outcomes.	The Panel's insight is that teaching methods are indeed diverse solely based on individual efforts and diverse teaching styles of teachers themselves.
		Improvements are Necessary
		Not addressed in SER.
4.6.	The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.	There is a lack of training opportunities and a limited number of possibilities for students, especially self-funded ones, to present their work in front of diverse academic or non-academic audience. The transfer of methodological skills is not sufficiently developed.
		Improvements are Necessary
]	Teaching content is adapted to the needs of current and future research and candidates' training (individual course plans, generic skills etc.).	Not addressed in SER.
		The Panel observes a relative lack of methodology training and overemphasis on general subject matters. Although the Panel acknowledges the need for many students to acquire knowledge of general subject matters relevant for the discipline, this seems to take too much time (for a 3-year programme) and distracts students from their own research.

	Furthermore, there are no systematically developed methodological-oriented courses. The problem has to be addressed more efficiently.
	Improvements are Necessary
	Not addressed in SER.
4.8. The programme ensures quality	The Panel regrets that the information on international
through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.	mobility of teachers and students was not provided in SER. The Panel's impression is that some Faculty members have a
teacher and candidate mobility.	high quality international research profile (including those
	who returned to Croatia from internationally renowned
	universities). However, the problems are again related to
	students' international mobility and the lack of funds for self-
	funded students in particular.

* 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.