

# Report of the Expert Panel on the Reaccreditation of the University Postgraduate (Doctoral) Programmes History of Theology and Christian Institutions

Christianity and Contemporary Culture
University of Split Catholic Faculty of Theology



Date of the visit: December 4th, 2017

March, 2018



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

The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the Agency for Science and Higher Education.

#### **CONTENTS**

INTRODUCTION	3
SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME	
RECOMMENDATION BY THE EXPERT PANEL TO THE ASHE'S ACCREDITATION COUNCIL	6
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME	6
ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME	7
DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME	7
EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE	7
COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRESCRIBED CONDITIONS FOR THE DELIVERY OF A STUDY	
PROGRAMME	8
QUALITY ASSESSMENT	10

#### **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 *History of Theology and Christian Institutions* and *Christianity and Contemporary Culture* on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the Catholic Faculty of Theology, University of Split.

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:

- Dr. Igor Štiks, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom, president of the Expert Panel,
- Dr. Ljiljana Reinkowski, Universität Basel, Switzerland,
- Prof. Dr. Rozita Dimova, Ghent University, Belgium,
- Dr. Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom,
- Dr. H. J. M. J. (Harm) Goris, Tilburg University, Netherlands,
- Prof. David Maxwell, Emmanuel College Cambridge, United Kingdom,
- Prof. Elżbieta Osewska, The Pontifical University of John Paul II, Krakow, Poland and State Higher Vocational School, Tarnow, Poland
- Prof. Mikhail Dmitriev, Central European University, Hungary,
- Prof. Andrej Blatnik, Univerza v Ljubljani, Slovenia,
- Prof. Ljiljana Šarić, University of Oslo, Norway,
- Prof. Dr. Katrin Boeckh, University of Regensburg, Germany,
- Prof. Vincent Gaffney, University of Bradford, United Kingdom,
- Prof. Mika Vahakangas, Lund University, Sweden,

- Dr. sc. Nicole Butterfiled, Marie Curie Fellow, Seged University, Hungary,
- Anna Meens, Leiden University, Netherlands,
- Kevin Kenjar, University of California, Berkeley, United States of America,
- Dr. Elżbieta Gajek, University of Warsaw, Poland,
- Dr. Kyle Jerro, University of Essex, United Kingdom,
- Dr Nadia Mifka-Profozic, University of York, United Kingdom,
- Dr. Moreno Mitrović, University of Cyprus, Cyprus,
- Dr. Catherine MacRobert, Oxford University, United Kingdom,
- Prof. Emeritus Svein Mønnesland, University of Oslo, Norway,
- Dajana Vasiljevicová, Charles University, Prag, Czech Republic,
- Prof. dr. Christian Neuhäuser, Universitaet Dortmund, Germany,
- Dr. Dries Bosschaert, KU Leuven, Belgium,
- Dr. Oliver George Downing, University of Liverpool, United Kingdom,
- Prof. Hanoch Ben-Yami, Central European University, Hungary,
- Sonja Kačar, University Toulouse II Jean Jaurès, France,
- Garrett R. Mindt, Central European University, Hungary,
- Prof. Vieri Samek Lodovici, University College London, United Kingdom,
- Mišo Petrović, Central European University, Hungary.

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

- Dr. H.J.M.J. (Harm) Goris, School of Catholic Theology, Tilburg University, Netherlands,
- Prof. David Maxwell, Emmanuel College Cambridge, United Kingdom,
- Prof. Elżbieta Osewska, The Pontifical University of John Paul II, Krakow, Poland and State Higher Vocational School, Tarnow, Poland
- Prof. Mika Vahakangas, Lund University, Sweden,
- Dr. Dries Bosschaert (post-doc), KU Leuven, Belgium.

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

- Alma Agović, coordinator, ASHE,
- Ivana Šimić, assistant coordinator, ASHE,
- Irena Škarica, interpreter at the site visit,

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

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

The Expert Panel also had a tour of the library.

#### SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Institution delivering the programme: Catholic Faculty of Theology, University of Split Institution providing the programme: Catholic Faculty of Theology, University of Split

Place of delivery: **Split** 

Scientific area and field: Humanities, Theology

study Institutions	and Contemporary Culture
programme	
Number of 7 18	
doctoral	
candidates:	
Number of 5	
supervisors	
Number of 18 23	
teachers:	
Ratio of 5:7 (1:1.4) 8:18 (1:2.25)	
officially	
appointed	
supervisors	
and their	
doctoral	
candidates:	
•	umber of ECTS's for the
1	180. Information on how they
	vided varied. According to the
	ite 16x4 (64) ECTS's are
	attending lectures and
	ompulsory courses, 6x3 (18)
	lective courses, and other
	ties. That leaves 98 ECTS's for
	earch work, including the
doctoral thesis. doctoral thesis	
	es and classroom) / research ogrammes): 82 / 98
	ng outcomes are listed. They
	ad and attempt to engage
partition and the state of the	issues of pressing social
G. T. J. J. T. J. T. J. J. J. J. J. T. J.	ves the impression of being a
	learning outcomes of the
	urses. They do not reflect
	a PhD-programme. Internal
	cking. Generic skills are not
	ethodological issues are not
mentioned. taken into cons	sideration.

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

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

**Issue a letter of expectation** for the period of **one (1) year** in which period the higher education institution should make the necessary improvements. During this period, **the enrolment of new students should be suspended**. In view of poor student recruitment for many years and the insufficient number of faculty based teachers, the Panel has very serious questions about the viability of this programme and doubts if it should be continued. The faculty could make better use of its resources by establishing a new PhD programme that focuses on classical theology, which incorporates church history.

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

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

**Issue a letter of expectation** for the period of **two (2) years** in which period the higher education institution should make the necessary improvements. Although this programme has a number of problems in common with the study programme 'History of Theology and Christian Institutions', the Expert Panel thinks that the programme 'Christianity and Contemporary Culture' is much more viable.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE PROGRAMMES 'HISTORY OF THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS' AND 'CHRISTIANITY AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURE'

- 1. Overall learning outcomes have to be reformulated on the basis of a clear programme statement.
- 2. Supervisor and co-supervisor should have requisite expertise in the two disciplines that are combined in a particular PhD.
- 3. Composition of the assessment panel for PhD thesis: there should be at least three members besides supervisor(s).
- 4. Course work should form a coherent whole, generate generic skills, and be research oriented. Ratio of course work and independent research during the first two years should be changed in favour of the latter.
- 5. More robust procedures with regard to ethical issues, in particular plagiarism, should be implemented.

- 6. There should be one committee with oversight of the whole programme and student progress.
- 7. A system should be put in place to highlight good practices so that they can be implemented in the whole programme. Students should not depend exclusively on the individual relationship with supervisor.
- 8. Better use of the experiences and skills gained by students in their professional life.

#### ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. Commitment of faculty.
- 2. Desire to engage relevant contemporary issues and a pioneering programme which addresses these issues.
- 3. Efforts to establish a dialogue between theology and other disciplines.
- 4. Highly motivated students.
- 5. Good practices of individual supervisors like engaging students in research and teaching of supervisors.
- 6. Flexibility that allows students to combine academic study with work and take more time (up to ten years) to finish degree.

#### **DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME**

- 1. Overall learning outcomes are incoherent, generic skills and focus on methodological issues are lacking.
- 2. The amount of course work is too high and insufficiently research-oriented.
- 3. Assessment panel is not sufficiently independent.
- 4. Proper, published criteria for PhD thesis are absent.
- 5. There is not enough national and international cooperation on the level of the whole programme.
- 6. Not enough support from faculty in finding additional funding for research activities of students.
- 7. Formal work load of supervisors exceeds prescribed level.

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

- 1. Engaging students in supervisors' research and teaching.
- 2. Supervisors helping students in finding sources for their research.
- 3. Good personal relationships between professors and students.
- 4. Strong academic formation in undergraduate and licentiate-programme.

## 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	YES
Scientific Organisations in the scientific area of the programme,	
and has a positive reaccreditation decision on performing higher	
education activities and scientific activity.	
2. HEI delivers programmes in the two cycles leading to the	YES
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).	
3. HEI employs a sufficient number of researchers, as defined by	YES
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).	
4. At least 50% of teaching as expressed in norm-hours is	<b>YES</b> for the Christianity
delivered by teachers employed at the HEI (full-time, elected into	and Contemporary
scientific-teaching titles).	Culture programme,
	<b>NO</b> for the History of
	Theology and Christian
	Institutions programme,
	which has only 45%.
5. Student: teacher ratio at the HEI is below 30:1.	YES
6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public.	NO
	There is a university
	repository but theses
	cannot be accessed at the
	moment, apparently
	because of technical
	problems.
7. HEI launches the procedure of revoking the academic title if it	YES
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.	
Additional/ recommended conditions of the ASHE	YES/NO
Accreditation Council for passing a positive opinion	notes
1. HEI (or HEIs in joint programmes) has at least five teachers	YES
appointed to scientific-teaching titles in the field, or fields	

relevant for the programme involved in its delivery.	
2. In the most recent reaccreditation, HEI had the standard	YES
Scientific and Professional Activity marked as at least "partly	
implemented" (3).	
3. The doctoral programme is aligned with the HEI's research	NO
strategy.	
4. The candidate : supervisor ratio at the HEI is not above 3:1.	YES
5. All supervisors meet the following conditions:	.) VDC
a) PhD, elected into a scientific title, holds a scientific or a	a) <b>YES</b>
scientific-teaching position and/or has at least two years of postdoctoral research experience;	
postdoctoral research experience,	
b) active researcher in the scientific area of the programme, as	b) YES
evidenced by publications, participation in scientific conferences	0) 120
and/or projects in the past five years (table 2, Supervisors and	
candidates);	
c) confirms feasibility of the draft research plan upon admission	c) YES
of the candidate (or submission of the proposal);	
	15.770
d) ensures the conditions (and funding) necessary to implement	d) <b>NO</b>
the candidate's research (in line with the draft research plan) as a	
research project leader, co-leader, participant, collaborator or in other ways;	
other ways,	
e) trained for the role before assuming it (through workshops,	e) <b>NO</b>
co-supervisions etc.);	
f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory	f) <b>NO</b>
work.	
6. All teachers meet the following conditions:	
a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position;	a) YES
b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the	b) YES
course (table 1, Teachers).	NO.
7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the	NO
assessment committees.	<b>NO</b> . The number of ECTS's
8. The programme ensures that all candidates spend at least three years doing independent research (while studying,	allocated for individual
individually, within or outside courses), which includes writing	research during two first
the thesis, publishing, participating in international conferences,	years is below
field work, attending courses relevant for research etc.	international standards
9. For joint programmes and doctoral schools ().	N/A
, r . 0	'

#### QUALITY ASSESSMENT

1. RESOURCES: TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, RESEARCH CAPACITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
1.1. HEI is distinguished by its scientific/artistic achievements in the discipline in which the doctoral study programme is delivered.	Improvements are necessary  Most publications are in regional and national journals and written in Croatian. This can be partly explained by the fact that research focuses on regional issues. International publications are mostly in German or Italian, to a lesser degree in English, but the number of English publications is rising.  No state funded research projects were part of the doctoral study programmes in recent times. One project proposal was almost accepted. Four new project proposals are being prepared. The doctoral study programme was not involved in four projects of the Faculty that were accepted. The Panel recommends to include positions for PhD students in future project proposals. The Panel also recommends to look for other means of research funding (Church, NGO's, EU).  International cooperation is improving. The Faculty has a growing number of formal agreements with institutions abroad. The Faculty organized an international conference in 2017 on Religion and Sports. It also organizes an international conference every year in October in which good PhD students can present their research. Individual supervisors take students to conferences abroad. The Panel recommends to make participation by PhD students in international research activities more a systematic part of the whole programme.
1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.	Improvements are necessary  The History Programme does not meet the standard that at least 50% of the teachers are members of the own faculty, although the difference is only slight (45%).  The number of teachers is more than sufficient. However, according to the information received, twelve teachers exceed the workload limit of 360 hours, sometimes to a very extreme degree. The Panel recommends to count the workload in a realistic way and to ensure that it does not exceed the official limit.
1.3. The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with	Improvements are necessary Of most teachers the Panel could verify that they publish

the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.

according to academic standards in the field they teach. For some teachers the Panel could not find the relevant, up-to-date data. The Panel recommends that the Faculty monitors the number and quality of publications of teachers in a systematic way and ensures that it is well documented.

1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.

#### Improvements are necessary

The number of supervisors is sufficient. Their academic qualifications meet the normal standards. However, they do not receive a special training in supervising as standard practice – though some followed workshops at their own initiative – nor are supervision qualities taken into account when appointing a supervisor. The Panel advises that the Faculty formulates which specific skills are required of supervisors, assesses if candidates and appointed supervisors have these skills and provides regular training.

1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.

#### Improvements are necessary

The Faculty has not developed formal methods of assessment and monitoring teachers' and tutors' qualifications other than student questionnaires. The follow-up of student questionnaires by the management is adequate. The Panel recommends the implementation of other mechanisms for monitoring and assessing the work of teachers and supervisors and also to reward best practices in some way.

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 library specialized in theology. Students and researchers can make use of the University library, online resources and the Croatian and international ILL system. They can also make suggestions to the library for acquiring specific resources.

## 2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME

#### Improvements are necessary

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.

The Faculty has identified scientific/artistic, cultural and social needs which it attempts to address through its PhD programs. One of the ways of addressing these needs is to provide the only Croatian program of theology with an interdisciplinary approach. The course on Christianity and Contemporary culture is pioneering and innovative in its desire to stimulate theological responses to pressing social and cultural issues and establish new means of communicating Christian ideas. However, the committee

structure and academic procedures for administering these courses are underdeveloped and in need of greater coherence. Increased cooperation with academics from other institutions would extend the range of supervision available and add greater depth to the courses. Improvements are necessary The Faculty Strategic Vision of research contains many positive elements, as do the two doctoral courses. Both place emphasis on the heritage and contemporary condition of Croatia in the Mediterranean region viewed from a Christian perspective. However, the alignment between the Strategic Vision and courses is random and occasional, meaning that postgraduate research currently plays a minor role in the future plans for the Faculty and in shaping the research profile of the Faculty. There needs to 2.2. The programme is aligned with the be a more concerted attempt to bring them into line. HEI research mission and vision, i.e. Annual Faculty 'Away Days' provide a good opportunity to research strategy. discuss strategic vision and build collegiality. It is important to note that the Faculty must also adhere to directives from the Vatican, which for instance obliges it to maintain its Licentiate. However, the Panel advises the Faculty to investigate the possibilities – given the current statutory regulations of both the Church and the State - for offering a PhD programme without a canonical degree in Theology (STL and STD). The Panel also advises to investigate if certain requirements for the STL can be fulfilled in the MA-programme so that the amount of course work in the doctoral programmes can be reduced. Improvements are necessary So far no international or domestic programme review has been conducted. There is no means of monitoring the programmes at a systemic level. Instead the monitoring happens through the doctoral students' annual reports that are scrutinized by the Quality Assurance Committee for 2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the Postgraduate Studies and the Faculty Board. The Faculty success of the programmes through Council has a post-graduate student representative periodic reviews, and implements providing another important opportunity for voicing improvements. student concerns. Thus student feedback is used as a way of improving the programmes within the existing framework. What is needed is a more systematic quality enhancement programme development work. There opportunities for greater monitoring within the doctoral programme. There could be a 'probation' / 'change of interview Licentiate status' between the and

commencement of the doctoral degree and a voluntary pre-viva interview. The supervisor would not have to be present on these occasions or could take a backseat role.

The research productivity of supervisors is monitored through the publication lists that are available online. However, it is neither clear what exact level of academic production is expected of a faculty member nor what kind of incentives are given to those who are productive.

There is no system in place to follow up those who drop out from their courses, such as an exit interview or questionnaire.

Given that the programme is still in its infancy the number of doctorates awarded so far is small (total 3 PhDs). Data employability of doctoral regarding graduates' employment would have limited value at this stage and none is available.

#### Improvements are necessary

Supervisors' performance is not systematically monitored. For instance, there are no regular staff appraisals. However, the students interviewed expressed their satisfaction about the general level of willingness of the supervisors to guide and assist them. They also believed that there was a realistic possibility for them to further their possible grievances about the supervisors. In case of conflict between students and supervisors the Faculty performance and has Council decides on a solution. Sometimes the problem is solved by assigning a co-supervisor. The example of a failing lecturer whose contract was not renewed following student complaints, was cited several times. However, a clearer codification of the procedures around complaints and changes of supervisors would be necessary, especially in case the number of PhD candidates would expand.

> The supervisors have received a handbook of 6-7 pages, which is positive. There seemed to be no procedures for rewarding successful supervisors, such as making a good record of supervision a criterion for promotion or salary enhancement.

> The Panel also recommends the implementation of specific training in supervising skills.

#### Improvements are necessary

The SER states that the Faculty has established an Ethical Codex, regulating possible violations of academic integrity. There is no module included in the PhD programme that involves research ethical questions. They are supposed to be covered in studies at earlier levels. This is not sufficient

2.4. HEI continuously monitors supervisors' mechanisms for evaluating and. supervisors. if necessary. changing them and mediating between the supervisors and the candidates.

2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.

and research ethics should be a part of explicitly addressed for instance in a module on methodology.

It seems that the university is in the process of implementing the use of a plagiarism check programs, which is a very welcome development, though its regular use is not part of established Faculty practice. The Panel was informed that there had been no cases of plagiarism hitherto.

#### Improvements are necessary

As the program consists of two degrees (licentiate and PhD), the formulation of the PhD proposal is at present a three-stage process. First, the applicant to the program writes a research proposal for the licentiate, which needs to be accepted by the prospective supervisor and the Faculty. Then, during the first two years of the programme, the candidate writes her/his licentiate thesis, which serves as the launching pad for the PhD project. At the hinge point of the licentiate and PhD studies, a doctoral thesis proposal is presented to the supervisor and it needs to be approved by the faculty. This gradual process of developing a research plan was considered to be of great value by students, supervisors and Faculty-external supervisors

The Panel appreciates the close collaboration between supervisor and student in drawing up the research plan. However, the Panel recommends that a detailed research proposal is already written during the first year. There should be a template for the proposal. This template should address issues such as: the research problematic, originality, timelines, sources and methodology. It also should beforehand specify the branch of theology in which the thesis will be written. The proposal should be assessed by a Committee for Post-Graduate Studies.

of th

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

2.6. The

process

and

includes a public presentation.

defending the

transparent

developing

thesis proposal

objective,

and

and

#### Improvements are necessary

The doctoral thesis assessment committee cannot be regarded as independent enough because it only consists of three members, of whom the supervisor is one. In the relatively common case that there is a co-supervisor, (s)he is also included in the committee and in that case the total number of members is four. However, a supervisor cannot be the chairperson. The decisions are made with majority vote which further strengthens the supervisors' position. The supervisors need only one additional vote to get the desired result in the committee. The Panel is of the opinion that the composition of the assessment committee needs to be expanded to limit the influence of the supervisor(s). The

Panel advises to appoint at least three other members besides the supervisor(s). Internationally, there is no standard practice as to whether the supervisor(s) is/are member of the committee. For example in the United States, Poland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland the supervisor sits on the committee, but in Sweden and the UK he/she does not.

There appeared to be a desire to appoint external examiners from universities outside Croatia when the medium of the dissertation was not Croatian but there was no information on the criteria for appointment or how it was managed.

The SER states: "The Programme envisages neither dissertations in foreign languages, nor a possibility of replacing the dissertation by works published in prestigious international publications, since this is not allowed by ecclesiastical regulations concerning postgraduate studies." However, there appeared to be some flexibility within the Faculty.

There is a protocol of the public defence of the thesis and the awarding of the final grade. In addition examiners write a lengthy report on the strengths and weaknesses of the doctoral dissertation. However, the expert panel was not provided any formal guidelines for the assessment of doctoral theses or a detailed viva template. These need to be developed.

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.

#### Improvements are necessary

The information on the study programme is widely available but mostly on a national level. Foreign students can enrol even if the medium of education strongly limits possibilities of internationalization.

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

The majority of the students' fees is used to pay supervisors' and teachers' salaries and there is little left over to finance student bursaries for conferences and research. Other means need to be found to support post-graduate research. Reducing the amount of course work and, hence, the amount of money needed for paying teachers, can provide extra financial means for supporting the students' research work (e.g. travel grants).

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

#### High level of quality

Tuition fees are dealt with in a transparent manner. They are set at a level, which covers the costs of the degree such as teaching, library services and equipment. The projected

	figure is communicated to students along with a justification prior to their enrolment.
3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION	
3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.	High level of quality  Of the doctoral students applying to enter the program an average of 60% is admitted. It seems that this selection criterion does not systematically take into account the number of available supervisors and their teaching workload, nor their workload as supervisors. However, given the small number of enrolled doctoral students and the declining number of applications every year it does not seem that the admission policy will cause problems concerning teaching workload in the future. The students expressed appreciation concerning the guidance they receive of their supervisors.  The teaching workload of the supervisors is mixed. The amount of teaching hours indicated in the SER are varied, ranging from 250-1500. The teachers did not immediately complain about this high number of teaching hours and classes in the program. Given the small number of students they indicated the possibility to work in seminars on aspects of the doctoral thesis. The Panel observed a great ethic of service among the faculty staff.
	Improvements are necessary  The SER of the program states that "the enrolment quota, as determined by the HEI, is mostly based upon the interest expressed by the candidates, but also based on estimation concerning the needs for doctors of theology, primarily for diverse Church ministries, the needs of the HEI, as well as regarding cultural and social engagement."  During the meetings with members of the Faculty interest of the students seemed indeed the main criteria for admission to the program. The graduated doctors of the doctoral programmes are employed (only three): e.g. one in the institution, another continued his church ministry. The students mostly expressed concern over the possibility to combine their doctoral studies with their work, even when taking ten years to complete their studies. The possibilities to find a job in academia after these studies seemed to be strongly bound up with the relation with the individual supervisor.  The doctoral students interviewed seemed most concerned

	whether their doctoral qualification would enhance employability and mobility within their current careers.
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.	Improvements are necessary  The SER states that "the PhD students finance their own study. For the time being, there has been no doctoral research financed or co-financed from the scientific projects, economy, or other public sources."  Although some supervisors occasionally support a student in finding (some) funding, PhD students indeed finance their own study. Three points of concern can be raised. First, most students seem unaware of the possibility to apply for additional funding. Even during their doctoral studies there is no central mechanism that informs and stimulates them to apply for funding from other sources. Information and support in finding funding should not be dependent on the personal relationship with the supervisor but should be given equally to all students. Second, the Faculty only has a very limited number of scientific projects by which students can be financed, and this does not seem to be part of the Faculty's research culture. Moreover, the absence of a centrally administered system for keeping oversight over research projects does not advance this as a source to fund students. Third, tuition fees are mainly used to cover the salary of the staff. Reducing the amount of class work and hence the salaries of teachers, can create additional funding for students' research activities.
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.	Improvements are necessary At present, the students are appointed to a supervisor from the beginning of their doctoral studies. The link between the competences of the supervisors and the research proposals is a point of concern. In the present situation, the student is free to take a supervisor of his choice, independent of the expertise of the supervisor, although research proposals and the choice of supervisors have to be approved by a three-member committee and confirmed by the Faculty Council. The Panel recommends the implementation of a more robust procedure for appointing the supervisor and for approving the research plan by one committee with oversight of the whole programme (cf. also 2.6).
3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated	Improvements are necessary  The SER indicates the local advertisement of the call for applications. There is no plan for an international

candidates are recruited internationally.	announcement of this call. Although it is open to non-Croatians, the thematic focus on Croatian culture and the linguistic dominance of Croatian forms an obstacle to international recruitment.
3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.	Improvements are necessary  The SER states that "the competition is held in due time and is published in the printed media (University of Split journal Universitas, the weekly Glas Koncila, official journal of the Split-Makarska Archdiocese Vjesnik), as well as the websites of the Franciscan Province of the Most Holy Redeemer and the Split-Makarska Archdiocese."  The advertisement for the program is thus very local and confessional. The enrolment procedure is reasonably robust. The applicants are evaluated upon their past performance, an interview, and their research interest. Publications are said to be greatly valued in the application process. There is mention of an entrance exam, but it is unclear what this exam actually consists of.
3.7. The HEI ensures that the selection procedure is transparent and in line with published criteria, and that there is a transparent complaints procedure.	High level of quality The SER states that "in admitting new candidates, the minimum requirements, as mentioned in the competition are always observed. Should, however, the number of candidates exceed certain enrolment quota, the candidates whose first applications has been rejected, are recommended to improve the research plans with a view to re-entering the competition."  During the meeting it was indicated that there are procedures in place and that the selection procedure is public. Applicants whose proposals were rejected, could reapply after one year but in practice this has never occurred in the past.
3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.	Improvements are necessary  The SER states that "the HEI has no established quality procedures of recognising the previous achievements relevant to the doctoral study. However, on the candidate's demand the PUDS Committee may consider and recognise such achievements. Nevertheless, the obtaining of the doctoral degree is not possible without attending classes and taking examinations."  There is no public procedure to recognize previous achievements or acquired ECTS's. The absence of a procedure to recognize ECTS's is of concern. It, first of all, contributes to the general lack of coherency within the program. Secondly, it contributes to the general culture,

where a doctoral project is defined by the relation between student and supervisor. On a faculty level a certain arbitrariness seems to exist. Third, the absence of a clear procedure concerning ECTS's recognition hinders the attraction of international students or students who have completed their research Masters or doctorates at other faculties.

The Panel would recommend the acceptance of certain ECTS's in cases where they were acquired for courses similar to the ones offered in the doctoral programme of this faculty.

#### Improvements are necessary

Students seem to have been informed of their rights and obligations. The students, however, indicate that they could not always grasp the true workload of the doctoral program, certainly not in combination with a full-time job. The existence of a Quality Monitoring Committee with monthly meetings and progress reports were mentioned during the meetings. Yet in practice, the position of the PhD students seems to be strongly defined by the relation student – supervisor.

Both students as supervisors expressed their appreciation for the collaboration. Students are given feedback, the supervisors are easily approachable, and there is a good one-on-one guidance. Many supervisors made efforts to integrate the students in their research and teaching work: giving them the opportunity to teach classes on their research topics, taking them for international conferences, and providing them with relevant literature. Some supervisors support their candidates with (finding) funding to participate in international conferences or acquiring relevant literature.

Despite the goodwill of many supervisors, institutional support is lacking. There is no procedure to apply for institutional funding. Many of these omissions could be corrected by a single student handbook, which outlines practices and procedures, rules and regulations, rights and obligations across the student's doctoral career. This handbook should also list resources and opportunities available to students.

The Panel was only able to meet and interview those students still in the course. It did not encounter those who had dropped out for whatever reason. There was no data on who had withdrawn or why. An exit interview or questionnaire for those who withdraw would gather data

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.

for improving retention.

#### Improvements are necessary

The SER states that "the Institution enables the doctoral students to publish scientific papers in the HEI journals, participate in domestic and international conferences... It is along these lines that the HEI has concluded agreements with other higher education institutions, the Faculty of Theology in Innsbruck, Theology in Luzern, and, within the framework of the ERASMUS Programme, the Faculty of Theology in Frankfurt. The HEI provides the doctoral students with an institutional assistance in research, particularly by its research resources."

At present there is only an embryonic faculty research culture from which doctoral students can benefit. To date resources have been largely devoted to improving the research capabilities and international standing of faculty members. There are few formal opportunities for students to present their work such as graduate seminars, showcase events, student led conferences, reading groups, and workshops. The best student papers presented at summer conferences are published but once again invitation to conferences often depends upon the initiative of the supervisor.

The doctoral candidates are encouraged to participate in national and international conferences both at home and abroad. This encouragement happens predominantly through the supervisors. However, from the point of view of equality between the candidates, a more functioning system of communication about the conferences and funding possibilities is recommended. The faculty occasionally finances the students' participation in conferences.

The Faculty could invest more in Generic Skills to advance the future careers of their students. Some supervisors give their students opportunity to teach within their course but the practice is not widespread. Doctoral students do have the chance to participate in Summer Language Schools in English, yet this seems to be poorly advertised. The Faculty further could guide students with offering courses/workshops/information sessions in project management, research ethics, building academic careers. This could fit in with the elective courses.

As mentioned before, the Panel would recommend the establishment of a single committee responsible for both student progress and proactively stimulating a research

3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.

culture. This could be done by establishing and promoting the above good practices. In addition, this single committee could be in charge of a central fund of bursaries for travel/conference participation/fieldwork/archival research. This committee would also be responsible to search for new funding, distribute the existing funds through a system based on research performance, and announce these opportunities widely.

#### 4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES

#### Improvements are necessary

The programme contents between the two programmes differ considerably. What is common to both of the programmes is that both of them contain plenty of coursework in order to comply with the ecclesiastic licentiate requirements. (What is confusing, however, is that this licentiate degree is described on the programme website as an academic MA – and yet the entry level is a completed MA.) The exact number of ECTS's of compulsory courses is 56 according to the SER but the programme websites mention 16 core courses of 4 ECTS's each. Additionally, the student is supposed to take 18 ECTS's elective courses. Taking the information on the website as leading, the study load for class work is 82 ECTS's, leaving 98 ECTS's for independent research.

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

The SERs point out that the structure of the program is equivalent to international standards, referring to e.g. Pontificia Università Gregoriana (PUG). However, the PUG terzo ciclo/dottorato in theology has the ecclesiastic licentiate degree as an entry requirement. The three-year doctoral program contains only very little coursework (essentially only cursus ad doctoratum). Thus, at least in comparison to PUG, these evaluated programmes expect the student to produce a doctoral thesis in much less time. The Bologna standard for a PhD is indeed three years but in that case the whole time is supposed to be spent on individual research or studies that directly contribute to the writing of the thesis which is not the case with the programmes at hand: most courses are not mainly directed at contributing to research. In some cases, European universities have deemed it necessary to include also courses as an integrated element in the PhD programme, but then the time of the doctoral program is usually extended. For example, at Lund University (Sweden), the doctoral studies involve total 60 ECTS of coursework and because of that the programme duration has been extended

to four years. The first year of studies is formally considered as a preparatory year. The situation is similar in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom: the doctorate is 100% pure research. The KU-Leuven has a very limited amount of coursework (about 20 hours in total during the first year). However, in Poland the structure of the doctoral programmes in theology is similar to the two programmes of the Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Split.

Let it be noted that the planned three years are by no means the deadline for doctoral studies. They can be extended up to ten years thereby providing the candidate ample time for individual research beyond the official duration of the programmes.

#### Improvements are necessary

The programme learning outcomes of both programmes are problematic. First of all, there are different versions of learning outcomes in both of cases – one in the SERs' section on general information, another version later in the SERs' chapter 2, section 4.2 and a third version on the respective programme website. These versions differ from each other substantially. Here, only the versions available in the SERs will be dealt with.

In both of the cases, the versions provided in the SERs' chapter 2.4.2 are generic in nature, so much so that they are identical. These generic identical learning outcomes are fitting for doctoral programmes in the sense that they cover well methodological, theoretical and application dimensions as well as generic skills. Due to their general nature, however, one may wonder how much this description of learning outcomes actually reflects the learning outcomes of the two programmes.

The learning outcomes in the beginning of the SERs differ from each other and definitely relate to these programmes but are otherwise problematic.

The description learning outcomes of History of Theology and Christian Institutions programme is rather concise, with four learning outcomes. The nature of the learning outcomes is normative and teleological. The expressions "a correct evaluation" or "a correct insight" point to a rather normative approach although the nature of the normativity is left vague. The emphasis laid on "particular prominent figures" is outdated as is also the fact that the learning outcomes portray no relation to subdisciplinary insights from e.g. social, cultural and religious history. Current

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.

approaches in historical studies are not reflected in the learning outcomes. The outcomes are overlapping and are not clearly distinguishable from each other. There are several clear omissions like lack of reflection on methodology (even though the courses contain quite a bit of methodology) and lack of generic skills (which are, however, mentioned in the version available later in the document, in chapter 2.4.2).

The Christianity and Contemporary Culture programme has fifteen learning outcomes. All of them relate predominantly to coursework and the outcomes appear as a list of learning outcomes of a number of individual courses rather than a consistent PhD programme. They cover actually the licentiate degree but do not reflect the standards for a PhD program. Internal cohesion between the learning outcomes is lacking and there is no clear hierarchy or organization between them. This is hardly surprising as the learning outcomes reflect the coursework which, in turn, is incoherent. Reflection on methodology and generic skills are missing from the learning outcomes as specified in chapter 1 of the SER (pp. 4-5). The other learning outcomes mentioned in chapter 2.4.2. (pp. 25-26) are the same in the SER of the History of Theology programme. Again, it is not clear to which extent the description of these more generic learning outcomes reflects the actual learning outcomes of the programme.

On the positive note, one can conclude that the learning outcomes are broad and genuinely relate to contemporary culture and pressing social concerns. There is a tension between normative emphasis on Christian truths, a Christian academic's correct relation to them and science and an ecumenical and inquisitive openness towards other ways of seeing the world. The learning outcomes of the Christianity and Contemporary Culture programme need to be reformulated in such a manner that the gaps in methodology and generic skills are covered, which can partly be achieved by integrating the latter version of the learning outcomes into the first one. However, the resulting learning outcomes need to form a coherent whole, a description of a programme learning outcomes and not only a collection of learning outcomes for a mixed selection of courses. This presupposes naturally a thorough reexamination of the nature and content of the courses as well as their relation to each other and to the doctoral programme's main aim of providing the student with a deep understanding of academic research in the field(s) at

	hand. A detailed scheme that shows how the specific learning outcomes of all separate courses relate to the general learning outcomes of the whole programme should be made. This helps to check if all of the latter are covered by the course work in its entirety and by other learning activities.
4.3. Programme learning outcomes are logically and clearly connected with teaching contents, as well as the contents included in supervision and research.	Improvements are necessary In the case of the History of Theology programme, the programme learning outcomes are not completely in line with the course learning outcomes because the courses contain methodology which is not reflected in the learning outcomes.  In the case of Christianity and Contemporary Culture programme, the learning outcomes are largely in line with the coursework. However, this is not only positive because the courses do not form a coherent whole that systematically contributes to the students' development into academic researchers.
4.4. The doctoral programme ensures the achievement of learning outcomes and competencies aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF.	High level of quality  The sample of theses available was rather limited due to the fact that so few have graduated from the doctoral programmes so far. Furthermore, the theses had been written in Croatian which limited strongly the Panel's possibilities to assess the theses more in detail.  The Panel's general impression, based on the available theses as well as interviews with staff and students, is that the learning quality of the programmes is notably higher than one would expect on the basis of the SERs as well as the procedures. This better than expected outcome relies on the enthusiasm and commitment of the teaching and supervising staff as well as the students. Additionally the high quality of the first and second degree studies lays a good foundation for the doctoral studies.
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.	Improvements are necessary  Teaching methods have been shifting from a predominantly ex cathedra teaching towards more discussion type of teaching as well as workshops which is a welcome development because the latter methods contribute better to the development of critical and analytical skills. However, the fact that there are no doctoral thesis seminars where the doctoral students can present parts of their thesis manuscripts for peers for discussion in a seminar. Cf. also 3.10 above.
4.6. The programme enables acquisition of	Improvements are necessary

general (transferable) skills.

As already noted above in 4.1, the two programmes do not contain visible elements contributing towards acquiring generic skills. However, interviews with the students and supervisors revealed that in many cases individual supervisors provide the advisees possibilities to participate in teaching, organizing and participating in conferences and publishing. All these provide the student ample opportunities to gain generic skills. These good practices on the level of individual supervisors need to be systematized so that the acquisition of generic skills is secured for each doctoral student.

4.7. Teaching content is adapted to the needs of current and future research and candidates' training (individual course plans, generic skills etc.).

#### Improvements are necessary

See also 4.1 and 4.6. The students' progress is assessed annually on the basis of their reports and reports by the supervisors. How and to which extent the students' upcoming academic year is planned in cooperation with the supervisor depends apparently on the supervisor as there is no planning mechanism in place.

#### Improvements are necessary

Internationalization appears to be an acute concern in the Faculty, and several steps have been taken to broaden and deepen international contacts. The fact that a considerable number of the teaching staff has acquired doctoral degrees abroad and retain their contacts with their former universities contributes to, increases and shapes the international contacts of the Faculty. The imprints of contacts with Italy, Austria and Switzerland are omnipresent - in the publication lists, theses' lists of contents, library selection, international conferences organized and participated. There is a general goodwill and willingness of the Faculty to facilitate the doctoral students' internationalization - also according to the students. However, the Faculty would need to develop means of communication about international opportunities such as conferences, courses and scholarships. Additionally, a clear system of allocating funds for such activities could lower the threshold for students to venture in international activities.

A functioning system of language consultancy for research manuscripts in foreign languages available for both doctoral students and staff would also smoothen the way to international publishing. This could be done either on faculty or university level.

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

## \* 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.