

# Report of the Expert Panel on the Reaccreditation of the University Postgraduate (Doctoral) Programme Linguistics

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek

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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) Study Programme in Linguistics on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek.

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:

- President of the Expert Panel, Dr. Igor Štiks
- Emeritus Dr. Svein Mønnesland, University of Oslo, Norway,
- Dr. Catherine MacRobert, Oxford University, United Kingdom,
- Dr. Katrin Boeckh, University of Munich, Germany,
- Dr. Ljiljana Šarić, University of Oslo, Norway,
- Dr. Ljiljana Reinkowski, Universität Basel, Switzerland,
- Dr. Rozita Dimova, Ghent University, Belgium,
- Dr. Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom,
- Dr. Harm Goris, Tilburg University, Netherlands,
- Dr. David Maxwell, Emmanuel College Cambridge, United Kingdom,
- Dr. Elzbieta Osewska, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland,
- Dr. Mikhail Dmitriev, Central European University, Hungary,
- Dr. Andrej Blatnik, Univerza v Ljubljani, Slovenia,

- Dr. Vincent Gaffney, University of Bradford, United Kingdom,
- Dr. Mika Vahakangas, Lund University, Sweden,
- Dr. Nicole Butterfiled, Marie Curie Fellow, Seged University, Hungary,
- 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,
- Dajana Vasiljevicová, Charles University, Prag, Czech Republic,
- Dr. Christian Neuhäuser, Universitaet Dortmund, Germany,
- Dr. Dries Bosschaert, KU Leuven, Belgium,
- Dr. Oliver George Downing, University of Liverpool, United Kingdom,
- Dr. Hanoch Ben-Yami, Central European University, Hungary,
- Dr. Vieri Samek Lodovici, University College London, United Kingdom,
- Anna Meens, Leiden University, Netherlands,
- Kevin Kenjar, University of California, Berkeley, United States of America,
- Sonja Kačar, University Toulouse II Jean Jaurès, France,
- Garrett R. Mindt, Central European University, Hungary,
- Mišo Petrović, Central European University, Hungary.

Members of the Expert Panel who visited the higher education institution:

- Dr. Elżbieta Gajek, Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of Warsaw, Poland,
- Dr. Kyle Jerro (postdoc), University of Essex, United Kingdom,
- Dr Nadia Mifka-Profozic, University of York, United Kingdom,
- Dr. Moreno Mitrović (postdoc), University of Cyprus, Cyprus,
- Dr. Vieri Samek Lodovici, Department of Linguistics, University College London, United Kingdom.

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

- Goran Briški, coordinator and interpreter at the site visit, ASHE,
- Lida Lamza, translator of the Report, ASHE.

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

- Management,
- Heads of study programmes,
- Doctoral candidates,
- Teachers and supervisors,
- External stakeholders.
- Alumni.

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

#### SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: Postgraduate university study programme in Linguistics

**Institution delivering the programme**: Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Institution providing the programme: Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of

Humanities and Social Sciences **Place of delivery**: Osijek

Scientific area and field: Humanities, Philology

#### Number of doctoral candidates: 29

Number of funded doctoral candidates: 2

Number of self-funded and those funded by employer: 22 self-funded, 3 funded by employer

Number of inactive doctoral candidates: 20

**Number of supervisors**: 18 officially appointed supervisors, 3 appointed advisors

**Number of teachers**: 11 (7 own + 4 external)

**Ratio of officially appointed supervisors and their doctoral candidates**: 18 officially appointed supervisors with 32 doctoral students – ratio is 1:1.8

**Ratio of potential supervisors to total No. of doctoral students**: the number of potential supervisors not available

#### **Learning outcomes of the study programme:**

- LO 1 *Knowledge and comprehension*: successfully master the theoretical and practical content knowledge of obligatory and selected elected programme modules; categorise the basic concepts of scientific research work in the field of linguistics; evaluate the basic types of linguistic research.
- LO 2 *Application of knowledge and comprehension*: devise and design independent research in the field of linguistics; interpret new knowledge through various theoretical and field research; apply the latest scientific findings and tools with an aim of advancing the awareness of the importance of language in modern society; apply acquired knowledge in the future professional and academic education within the framework of relevant social, research and ethical responsibility; apply and individually improve the acquired knowledge and skills in line with the working post.
- LO 3 *Analysis, making conclusions, judgements and decisions*: analyse critically and evaluate the application of various research methods; analyse and synthetize elements of pre-existing knowledge and create new research ideas; follow, synthetize and evaluate the necessary national and international academic references in Croatian and foreign language.
- LO 4 *Synthesis and evaluation*: provide elaborate and unbiased judgments, connect and solve problems from a higher level of integration of linguistic science; synthetize and present respectable research results in a narrower and broader context; develop learning skills necessary for a life-long learning and further academic education.

#### 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:

to issue a letter of expectation for the period of one (1) year in which period the Higher Education Institution should make the necessary improvements. The letter of recommendation includes suspension of student enrolment in the academic year 2018-19.

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

- 1. Amend the learning outcomes of doctoral programme in Linguistics so that they are entirely aligned with the level 8.2 of the Croatian Qualifications Framework. See assessment point 4.2.
- 2. The programme should strengthen the assessment of the quality of doctoral theses. This should be achieved by (i) no longer letting supervisors participate in the Evaluation of the Dissertation Topic (CEDT) and the Dissertation Defence Committee (DDC), as well as by (ii) inviting foreign academics to participate in the same two committees, (iii) listing a dissertation internal structure and literature coverage amongst the criteria that need to be assessed by these committees, and (iv) making dissertation proposals publicly available. See assessment point 2.7.
- 3. The recent University's regulations banning supervisors from participating in the Committee for the Evaluation of the Dissertation Topic (CEDT) and the Dissertation Defence Committee (DDC) should be applied to all current students, including students who started their PhD before 2015 (unlike current practice). See the assessment points 2.5 and 2.7.
- 4. Take measures to restructure the doctoral Linguistics Programme so that more space is provided for research related individual and team work, and reduce the taught subject component, in order to meet the required 20:80 ratio between taught and research time. Remove those courses that are similar to MA or UG courses.
- 5. Provide more hands-on research experience during the period of study. More research related seminars and workshops should be introduced, including a range of topics aiming at developing transferable skills. Provide compulsory training on ethics related issues in research, data protection, and academic integrity in research.
- 6. Establish clear deadlines for submitting research proposal, with more explicit supervisor's involvement in the process of topic selection and methodology. Establish measures to monitor student progression towards completion. The expectation is that the focused work on the thesis should start before the end of second semester. By that time research questions should be defined, and methodology clarified.
- 7. Doctoral theses should be made easily accessible online. This is currently not the case; see assessment point 2.5.
- 8. Take measures (e.g. strategic planning, monitoring if agreed actions have been taken, incentives, introduce 'critical friend' practice, etc.) to increase the HEI presence and visibility in international/global environment. This primarily refers to more staff outputs in highly ranked

- international journals, more PhD theses written in one of the world languages, more participation in international projects, courses taught in English or German.
- 9. Teachers' and supervisors' workload should be reviewed and revised to align with the current regulations in HE and to allow for the improvement of the PUSP Linguistics.
- 10. The suggested improvements must be implemented by the end of the academic year 2018-19 in order to enrol new students in 2019-20. The failure to meet this condition should automatically result in suspension of the programme.

**NOTE related to the above recommendations**: An effective and realistically sound solution to tackle the problem of candidates who start the programme with low levels of subject knowledge would be to substantially restructure the programme so that the first two years (or one intensive year of full-time study) are transformed into a Research Master's, and a PhD starts in the third (or second, if full time) year of study, and lasts for three years. Only such a structure would allow for both preparing the students for a PhD, and conducting doctoral research at the expected level of quality. The Panel is aware that this restructuring of the programme may take longer, but it is worth considering such an option in long-term planning.

#### ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. Highly motivated and enthusiastic students.
- 2. Generally, good or very good working relationship between students and supervisors.
- 3. Excellent collaboration with the University of Tuzla and potentially great impact on HEIs in the region.
- 4. Collaboration among three departments (English, German, and Croatian) in the PUSP Linguistics.
- 5. Flexibility in terms of awarding individual student research activities by ECTS credits. More such practice is needed.

#### DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. Limited outreach and visibility in international/global environment.
- 2. The ratio between taught subject courses and research related practice is in favour of taught courses. As a result, some or many doctoral candidates at the beginning of their fifth or sixth semester (third year of study) have not yet selected the topic of their thesis.
- 3. The period of study is too long and completion rate is too low there are no procedures in place to monitor student progression towards thesis completion.
- 4. Lack of formalised/mandatory training on research ethics for both students and teachers.
- 5. Lack of transparency with regard to teachers' and supervisors' workload.

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

- 1. Collaboration among three departments in the PUSP Linguistics (German, English, and Croatian)
- 2. Collaboration with the University of Tuzla, allowing for greater influence in the region.
- 3. Dissertations written in English (more dissertations written in a foreign language would be an advantage).

- 4. Some involvement of doctoral students in projects led by staff (more would be beneficial for both students and staff).
- 5. Incentives to students for their individual research activities (e.g. publishing a paper, participation in a research project, or at a conference, but a clear distinction should be made between those who present at a conference and those who only attend the conference).

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

Minimal legal conditions:	YES/NO notes
1. Higher education institution (HEI) is listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations in the scientific area of the programme, and has a positive reaccreditation decision on performing higher education activities and scientific activity.	YES
2. HEI delivers programmes in the two cycles leading to the doctoral programme, i.e., first two cycles in the same area and field/fields (for interdisciplinary programmes), and employs a sufficient number of teachers as defined by Article 6 of the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (OG 24/10).	YES
3. HEI employs a sufficient number of researchers, as defined by Article 7 of the Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing Licence for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organisations and Content of Licence (OG 83/2010).	YES
4. At least 50% of teaching as expressed in normhours is delivered by teachers employed at the HEI (full-time, elected into scientific-teaching titles).	YES
5. Student: teacher ratio at the HEI is below 30:1.	YES
6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public.	NO A manual search for the doctoral theses in Linguistics reveals 22 theses indexed in the repository <a href="www.dabar.srce.hr">www.dabar.srce.hr</a> , among which only five are with open access. The Panel urges the HEI to ensure all doctoral theses are indexed on a single site (the Panel understands that there exists an older version of the repository indexing theses defended prior to 2012 (which are not accessible).

7. HEI launches the procedure of revoking the academic title if it is determined that it has been attained contrary to the conditions stipulated for its attainment, by severe violation of the studying rules or based on a doctoral thesis (dissertation) that has proved to be a plagiarism or a forgery according to provisions of the statute or other enactments.	
Additional/ recommended conditions of the ASHE Accreditation Council for passing a positive opinion	YES/NO (notes)
1. HEI (or HEIs in joint programmes) has at least five teachers appointed to scientific-teaching titles in the field, or fields relevant for the programme involved in its delivery.	YES
2. In the most recent reaccreditation, HEI had the standard Scientific and Professional Activity marked as at least "partly implemented" (3).	YES
3. The doctoral programme is aligned with the HEI's research strategy.	The doctoral programme is aligned with the HEIs research strategy at the level of declaration, but it is difficult to ascertain to what extent this alignment exists in practice: it seems that main strategic objectives of research development for period 2013-2017 (1. Visibility and reputation as a regional centre of excellence; 2. Competitiveness of basic, applied and developmental research; and 3. Transfer of research deliverables and newly acquired knowledge) have been achieved only partially.
4. The candidate : supervisor ratio at the HEI is not above 3:1.	YES When looking at individual supervisors, two supervisors have each four doctoral students.

- 5. All supervisors meet the following conditions:
- a) PhD, elected into a scientific title, holds a scientific b) NO or a scientific-teaching position and/or has at least Some two years of postdoctoral research experience;
- b) active researcher in the scientific area of the programme, as evidenced by publications, Many candidates do not have their research participation in scientific conferences and/or projects in the past five years (table 2, Supervisors and candidates);
- c) confirms feasibility of the draft research plan upon admission of the candidate (or submission of the proposal):
- d) ensures the conditions (and funding) necessary to implement the candidate's research (in line with the draft research plan) as a research project leader, co-leader, participant, collaborator or in other ways; e) trained for the role before assuming it (through workshops, co-supervisions etc.);

f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory work.

- 6. All teachers meet the following conditions:
- a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position; b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the course (table 1, Teachers).
- 7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment committees.

a) YES

supervisors publish mainly professional rather than research papers.

c) NO

plan even after the fifth semester.

d) NO

The HEI regulations exist, but in practice this is not implemented because the majority of candidates are self-funded. The funds from projects are limited, they usually do not support PhD students.

e) NO

Supervision at MA level is considered as experience prior to PhD supervision, which may be problematic. There are considerable differences between MA and PhD supervision. Workshops for supervisors are organised at Faculty level but they are not mandatory.

f) YES

The Panel was told that no one had received negative opinion.

- a) YES
- b) YES (for the majority of teachers, but some of them publish prevalently professional articles, rather than research).

NO

There is a discrepancy between the policy and practice. Although it is declared that the supervisor does not participate in the assessment committees, the documents presented to the Panel confirm his or her presence.

8. The programme ensures that all candidates spend NO at least three years doing independent research (while studying, individually, within or outside courses), which includes writing the thesis, publishing, participating in international conferences, field work, attending courses relevant and writing up their thesis. for research etc.

There is a clear pattern of starting the research only in the third year of study (fifth or sixth semester), so that candidates spend no more than one year effectively on research

Example: a candidate enrolled in 2012/2013; defended her proposal at the end of 2016; defended her thesis in October 2017.

Research related workshops are elective, which does not guarantee that candidates will acquire the necessary research skills and competences. SER states that in 1st and 2nd year candidates attend elective courses at graduate level - which means these are below the PhD level. Candidates may (but there is no guarantee they will) take part in some research activity or publish their work. Moreover, not all elective workshops are related to research, about half of them are related to topics in linguistics.

9. For joint programmes and doctoral schools (at the university level): cooperation between HEIs is based on adequate contracts; joint programmes are delivered in cooperation with accredited HEIs; the HEI delivers the programme within a doctoral school in line with the regulations and ensures good coordination aimed at supporting the candidates; at least 80% of courses are delivered by teachers employed at HEIs within the consortium.

Not applicable – no joint programmes.

#### **QUALITY ASSESSMENT**

**RESOURCES:** TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, RESEARCH **CAPACITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE** Improvements are necessary Research activities and citation information for teaching staff in the PUSP Linguistics are presented in SER for period 2012-2017 (SER does not provide a list of publications for each staff member, neither the list of PhD candidates' papers, so the information on the Contents page is misleading). The number of publications is impressive in terms of quantity (330 published papers in the stated period). However, most of the papers have been published in local/national journals. It seems that members of staff are internationally, while other teachers have limited themselves publishing locally to nationally/regionally. It is noticed that in the given 5-year period, only six papers authored by several individuals among the staff, were published in 1.1. HEI is distinguished by its scientific/artistic international journals of highest reputation (CC or achievements in the discipline in which the SSCI journals). One staff member published 3 doctoral study programme is delivered. articles in such journals, 2 members published each one paper and two members co-authored one paper (data from CROSBI, because the tables provided in SER are obscure, and various tables appear to contradict each other). With regard to the national journals, it is noteworthy that two linguistics journals, Suvremena lingvistika and Jezikoslovlje, are listed in Emerging Sources Citation Index. The fact that the latter is edited by a member of staff teaching in PUSP Linguistics, gives credit to the HEI. Staff members have published a number of articles in these two journals, which makes the HEI distinguished at the national and (possibly) regional level. There are also book chapters and edited books by teaching staff published mostly nationally, but also with international publishers among whom there

are some respectable names (e.g. De Gruyter, Springer, Benjamins).

The Panel members recognise that citation figures, especially those by Google Scholar may not be meaningful when assessing the quality of research and publications, since in Google Scholar any mention of a published work is recorded, including self-citations and publications in journals that are not peer-reviewed. Such metrics do not talk to the *rigour*, *originality* and *significance* of published work, which can be tested only by competition in a wider international and global community.

Regarding the research projects in the given 5-year period, members of staff have led and been involved in eight national projects, and three international (EU) projects. The number of international projects is rather low, which is acknowledged in SER too. Staff members have also organised a number of conferences, some of them international. Again, it seems that only few individual members of staff are research active with international ambitions. Joint publications with PhD candidates do happen but not on a regular basis. In short, HEI is distinguished at national and possibly regional level, but more participation on global level would be expected from an internationally distinguished institution. Recommendation: More efforts to increase the number publications high of in impact

number of publications in high impact international journals would raise the international profile of the HEI and the PUSP Linguistics.

1.2 The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.

#### Improvements are necessary

According to SER, more than 50% of the doctoral study programme is delivered by FFOS staff, i.e. full time teaching staff with the academic rank. Until 2015/2016, the ratio between the FFOS staff and external associates was 60:40 (9 FFOS teachers and 6 external associates), but since then the ratio has improved in favour of FFOS staff, so that it is now 78:22 (%). From what can be seen in Table 1 among obligatory tables (pages 1-7 in the

Appendix), it is not difficult to conclude that the workload of most teachers is far too high. The norm hours presented in SER exceed the limit of 360, and range from around 400 to even 900 (on average, double and almost triple the number of norm hours prescribed for academic staff).

However, it is unclear how it is possible that 10 contact hours of teaching account for 150 norm hours (or, 5 contact hours account for 105 norm hours) when the Collective Agreement for Science and Higher Education stipulates that one contact hour of a lecture at postgraduate level accounts for 3 norm hours, one hour of a seminar accounts for 1.5 norm hours, etc. Panel members would like to understand what causes such discrepancy and note that at present the workload of some teachers goes well beyond what is expected according to regulations, thus threatening the quality of the Programme.

Recommendation: Align the teacher workload with the existing regulations, and explain the apparent discrepancy between the contact hours required by the courses and the listed workloads.

#### Improvements are necessary

The teachers engaged in the doctoral programme are highly qualified academics who seem to be dedicated and engaged with a range of contemporary topics relevant to the doctoral programme, where various linguistic and applied linguistic areas are covered by compulsory and elective courses. There are also research-related elective workshops offered to PhD candidates. Our observation is that the topics linked to conducting research are only superficially touched upon by allocation of only 5 contact hours in workshops. Moreover, these workshops are elective, so there is no guarantee that each PhD student will acquire the necessary research skills.

There is no mention of a variety of other topics that are, or might be important for doctoral students, especially in terms of developing transferable skills. For example, there is no training on doing

1.3 The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.

qualitative or mixed methods research, no training on ethical issues in research and academic integrity, no training on academic writing - which is mentioned in SER only briefly as not being a problematic area for PhD candidates, etc. So, even though there is a considerable potential in highly qualified researchers involved in the PUSP Linguistics, the programme does not reflect this and currently does not lend itself to a high quality programme that could attract international candidates.

Recommendation: The quality of doctoral programme could be improved by reducing the number of subject related taught courses and significantly increasing the number of research related seminars and workshops. Furthermore, the programme can be improved by increasing the outreach and visibility of staff outputs in a wider global community.

#### Improvements are necessary

According to SER, there are 18 appointed supervisors working currently with 29 doctoral candidates, which shows that the ratio of a supervisor to doctoral student is well below the required 1:3. (There is no mention of potential supervisors in the SER). Although average figures are satisfactory, the Panel has noticed some anomalies: namely, two supervisors have 4 supervisees (table 1 on pages 6-9). This is against the required ratio of 1:3. Furthermore, the concern related to the teachers' workload applies to the supervisors' workload too. With only one exception, all supervisors (the HEI staff members) have the workload far above the limit of 360 norm hours. Such a distribution of supervisors' work does not provide for quality in producing a doctoral thesis. Research and publishing activities among supervisors are not balanced, i.e. some supervisors participate or lead national and international projects, but others do not follow this practice. Recommendation: An adjustment of supervisors'

workload is needed. This would allow for more

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

support provided to doctoral students and finding possible solutions to the problem of extended long period of study without having selected the topic and submitted the research proposal.

#### High level of quality

The HEI has developed mechanisms to evaluate the competences and quality of work of teachers and supervisors. According to SER, supervisors' work is being evaluated every two years, including the evaluation of their scientific and professional activities, the number of publications in the past 5 years, participation in and management of research projects, etc. The question is whether the policy is strictly implemented or not. Also, there seem to be more emphasis on quantity rather than quality.

In order to improve the quality of supervision, a number of workshops have been organised (e.g. tools for monitoring and self-evaluation of the supervising process, ethical standards in scientific research, etc.). These workshops are organised at the Faculty level and they are optional, so it is only up to an individual whether s/he will attend such a workshop. Furthermore, in 2013 a survey was conducted among doctoral candidates, which was intended to contribute to self-evaluation. There was a high turn-out for the survey that was focused on experiences with selecting the dissertation topic and proposal, searching the literature and developing the methodology. Another survey was conducted with the aim to evaluate teachers' work and the usefulness of the course, where the teachers received very positive feedback.

Recommendation: We recommend that the training for supervisors be made compulsory at the programme level, and that anonymous surveys should be conducted more frequently.

1.6 The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.

1.5 The HEI has developed methods of

assessing the qualifications and competencies

of teachers and supervisors.

#### High level of quality

Candidates in the doctoral Programme have access to the faculty library that is well equipped with the books published in the past, but less so with more recent, up-to-date publications. The problem seems to be related to the limited floor area of only 309 square metres. This doesn't allow for regular acquisition of new titles.

On the other hand, the online access to databases seems to be well-organised and students in the PhD programme have access to 16 most important and widely used databases (among which Cambridge Journals, Current Contents, DARF-Europe e-theses portal, EBSCOHost, ERIC, Sage, Science Direct, Scopus, etc.) - some via the national licence and most via the Faculty subscription. These are excellent resources for PhD students, which are comparable with the best equipped European university libraries. Compared to such ease of access to online resources, the problem with hard copy titles appears to be a minor one.

There are also three computer classrooms with a total of 84 computers, and a number of other facilities that students can use (e.g. Moodle for distance learning, SPSS for processing research data, smart boards).

Recommendation: Consider the possibility of extending the library floor area with additional space for individual work.

#### II. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME

2.1 The HEI has established and accepted detail in point 2.7. effective procedures for proposing, approving and delivering doctoral education. The procedures include identification of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs.

#### Improvements are necessary

Minor improvements are necessary concerning the procedure leading to the establishment of doctoral programmes. The procedures for monitoring the programmes are instead fine, but for the assessment of dissertations, which is discussed in detail in point 2.7.

Procedure for establishing doctoral programmes: The self-evaluation report does not procedure mention any concerning establishment of doctoral programmes, although it does mention that a proposal for the establishment of the doctoral programme in Linguistics assessed in this report had to be provided. The Vice-Dean also directly confirmed to the Panel that applications for doctoral programmes must be approved at State level, and involve approval by

the Faculty and the University. The self-evaluation reports also quotes a paragraph of the original application concerning the scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs of the region, but the information there contained is very generic and does not include a detailed identification of such needs. We recommend that future applications pay more attention to the latter area of assessment.

2. Procedures for monitoring doctoral programmes. No procedure is mentioned under point 2.1 of the self-evaluation report, however, a close inspection of the entire report and its annexes shows that the necessary procedures are in place. They include (i) annual research activity reports submitted by the Vice-Dean for Research, (ii) a Quality Assurance Committee able to provide recommendations on the basis of their Quality Assurance Guide, (iii) reports on the state of doctoral education submitted to the Agency for Science and Higher Education, (iv) reports on the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the Faculty submitted by the Commission for the Monitoring of the Implementation of the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, (v) reports on research productivity for the purpose of research funding submitted to the Ministry of Science and Education. The doctoral programme also undergoes periodical programme-internal self-evaluations.

The appointment of an Academic Research Board for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for the 2013-17 period has also been planned, and also the creation of a database of doctoral candidates and a dissertation repository.

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

#### Improvements are necessary

The HEI has produced a Strategic Research Plan for 2013-17 and the research objectives of the doctoral programme are aligned with that Plan's objectives.

However, as mentioned in the letter of expectations and also in point 2.7 below, the Panel has serious concerns in relation to qualitative

aspects of some of the doctoral dissertations that were produced. In other words, while the objectives of the doctoral programme are in line with the HEI's research strategy, the delivery of those objectives does not currently always meet those objectives. Improvements are necessary The monitoring is in place, but does not appear to be sufficiently rigorous and effective. The HEI 2.3 The HEI systematically monitors the monitors the doctoral programme in several ways, success of the programmes through periodic many of which are mentioned in point 2.1 above. reviews, and implements improvements. Yet these procedures did not succeed in identifying the qualitative deficiencies that this Panel identified with respect to dissertation scrutiny and discussed under point 2.7. Improvements are necessary As explained below, the HEI has procedures in place for the evaluation of supervisors, including anonymous surveys among doctoral candidates. The insufficient quality identified by this Panel in some dissertations suggests that the monitoring of the supervisors' performance should strengthened, at least as far as the quality of their students' final dissertations is concerned. This problem aside, supervisors appear to be sufficiently monitored: 2.4 HEI continuously monitors supervisors' 1. Supervisors are evaluated at the point of performance and has mechanisms appointment, when they need to satisfy the criteria evaluating supervisors, and, if necessary, of scientific productivity of the Ordinance on study changing them and mediating between the programmes and studying (29 July 2013). supervisors and the candidates. 2. In 2015, the HEI adopted a second Ordinance regulating the ongoing evaluation of supervisors (Articles 16, 17 and 18) including the number of published research papers, citations, management of projects, time spent in foreign institutions, etc. Supervisors receiving two negative evaluations must stop acting as supervisors (the Panel was not informed of any such instance). In the last decade, supervisors have also been

assessed twice by doctoral candidates via a thorough anonymous survey processed by the Faculty's Quality Assurance Office. The results of these surveys show that the satisfaction of doctoral candidates with the Programme is improving. Several doctoral candidates and alumni also confirmed their supervisors' high approachability and readiness to help.

Doctoral candidates are able to change supervisors if necessary. The process involves an application to the Doctoral Degree Committee or Office of Students Affairs (we received divergent information on the name of the office involved). Most importantly, one of the doctoral candidates did change supervisors and found the procedure fast and easy.

The HEI has also introduced voluntary professional training programmes at Faculty level that has been attended by several supervisors.

#### Improvements are necessary

In 2011 the HEI adopted a Code of Ethics defining the procedures and regulations concerning academic integrity and freedom. Adherence to the code is monitored by the Faculty's and University's Ethics Committees. As for plagiarism, it is prevented through the Ephorus plagiarism software.

Our concerns regard (i) the presence of supervisors in the committees that approve the dissertation submission (Committee for the Evaluation of the Dissertation Topic - CEDT) and assess the dissertation defence (Dissertation Defence Committee - DDC), and (ii) the degree of online access to doctoral dissertations.

1. Presence of supervisors in CEDT and DDC: During our interviews, we were told that in 2015 the University passed a regulation barring supervisors from participating in the CEDT and DDC committees. Nevertheless our inspection of a sample of dissertations completed since 2015 showed that supervisors were still sitting on both committees.

When asked about this, the supervisors explained that students who had started their PhD before the new regulations came into force were still allowed

2.5 HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.

to have their supervisors in both committees, even if they are not obliged to do so.

Put differently, the Head of the doctoral Programme could have implemented the new regulations barring supervisors from both committees immediately, but decided not to. The Panel was surprised that this opportunity was not taken. We wonder whether this lack of action emerges from resistance to the new regulations. Furthermore, given the significant time most candidates take for completing their PhDs, there is a real risk that unless the new regulations are immediately implemented they will not come into force for many years.

Therefore, the Panel **recommends** that the programme should immediately align with the new regulations by requesting all supervisors to stop participating in the CEDT and DDC committees. We believe that this measure will also help improving the quality of all submitted dissertations and avoid the issues discussed under point 2.7.

2. Online access to dissertation - Despite considerable effort, we have been unable to gain full online access to completed dissertations. We can find the dissertations titles in CroList or the National Library, but without access to their PDFs. In FFOS repository through www.dabar.srce.hr we found around 20 (at most 22) doctoral dissertations produced in the PUSP Linguistics, but the majority of them were tagged with the instructions that access "is only available to the employees and students of the home institution". Among these dissertations only five have open access. We also understand that dissertation authors have the right to prevent their dissertations from being public for a short period, yet we noticed that the Osijek repository still lists dissertations deposited in 2014, i.e. 4 years ago, as not publicly available.

Our **recommendation** is to ensure that dissertations are truly easily accessible. The

availability of free online repositories like Dabar should make this extremely easy.

#### Improvements are necessary

The students and the alumni reported positively on the helpful nature of the role of the supervisor, which the Panel was pleased to hear. The Panel was also unable to establish whether development and defence of the proposal is carried out in a transparent and objective way by virtue of lack of relevant evidence. While article 28 of the Regulations guarantees, and obligates, a public defence of the doctoral topic, the Panel finds the precise form and rigour of the written doctoral proposal, and the minimum standard thereof, to require revision and improvement. The Panel strongly recommends that the Department obligate a submission of a full proposal, along with the relevant form (#2 as made available on the website), which would ensure an objective high quality of the candidates' research prospects. As it stands. Form #2 does not allow for an extensive exposition of the thesis proposal. For instance: only cca. 800 words [5000 characters incl. spaces] are allowed for literature review, and only cca. 75 words [500 characters incl. spaces] are allowed for stating the contribution of doctoral research. The current form of submitting doctoral proposal/topic is inadequate for anticipating a high quality of doctoral work. The Panel thus recommends that the proposal phase of the doctoral Programme be more rigorous and require more extensive treatment. Additionally, in line with the recommendations made in §2.5, the Panel recommends that quality control be also done by a requirement that external and/or independent assessor be appointed at the phase of a candidate's submission, and consequently defence, of a thesis proposal. This would greatly contribute to the objectivity and transparency of the defence of the doctoral proposal/topic, as well as the overall quality of the thesis.

2.6 The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation. Note: Thesis proposals from the past five years were not attached to the SER, as requested.

#### Improvements are necessary

At least three of the dissertations inspected by the Panel had a severely insufficient final bibliography. Two of them had an about 6 page-long bibliography (with one-line spacing between references, so about 4 to 5 pages single spaced), while one of them had just 2 and a half pages of references (again, with significant spacing between references). These bibliographies demonstrated a literature review well below the standard expected in doctoral theses.

The Panel was very surprised to see that these dissertations had been successfully approved and defended. The fact that this applied to more than a single dissertation shows that this was not a one-off accident, but, rather, a real deficiency of the programme that needs urgent redress. Dissertations constitute one, and possibly, the most important outcome of a doctoral Programme. They should satisfy minimal academic standards that were in these instances failed.

Most members of the Panel were also dissatisfied with the structure of these dissertations, where the bulk of the thesis consisted of a long list of extremely short chapters (from 1 to 3 pages long) describing repeated applications of one or two theoretical points to a long list of empirical data, many of which appeared similar to each other. The Panel members felt that this type of description is usually provided as an appendix. Providing it as the main part of the thesis left very little space for a critical review of the existing literature and for an adequate discussion of the theoretical claims being made.

The Panel strongly feels that these shortcomings must be addressed. Amongst the possible measures that could be adopted, we **recommend** (i) that supervisors cease to participate in the CEDT and DDC committees responsible for approving the submitted dissertation and

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

assessing the final defence; (ii) that external academics ideally based abroad and not related to Osijek supervisors by established research ties (publications, projects, etc.) be actively invited to participate in CEDT and DDC committees (this does not necessarily need to cost money, as Skype could be used. Alternatively, external academics could also be asked to provide an assessment of the dissertation prior to the panel meeting); (iii) that thesis proposals be made publicly available; (iv) that a thesis structure and coverage of the literature be included amongst the criteria considered by the CEDT and DDC committees.

on the study programme, admissions, delivery conditions for progression completion, in accessible outlets and media.

#### High level of quality

2.8 The HEI publishes all necessary information | As far as the Panel could assess, all necessary information was available and accessible online. Specifically, both the current doctoral students and the alumni considered the provided information sufficient and easily accessible.

#### Improvements are necessary

As further explained in point 2.10, currently the student fees are used to pay for taught courses, and some of these courses partly repeat undergraduate and Master's level courses.

This system rewards supervisors that would otherwise be unable to carry out their supervision duties, as supervision itself does not appear to be remunerated. Some courses are also necessary because the knowledge of linguistics across the students joining the programme is not uniform and might need to be complemented.

The Panel believes that this is a problem that should be solved at the level of Ministry (i.e. the Croatian state), rather than by individual universities. We suggest that the Ministry introduce changes to the regulation of funding for doctoral education, so that the supervision of doctoral candidates by academics should be included in academics' regular workload. Without such changes doctoral education will continue to be a "grey area" in which there is no sufficient

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).

transparency, and too much depends on individual supervisor's responsibility and enthusiasm.

As far as the University of Osijek is concerned, we **recommend** that students who have already taken a course at undergraduate or Master's level should be allowed to opt out of similar courses during their doctoral programme, so that they can use their time more productively. The Panel particularly appreciates that the University of Osijek has a fund to assist students' attendance and participation in conferences.

#### High level of quality

The Self-evaluation report states that the distribution of the income collected through the student fees is regulated by the Faculty, which also keeps 45% of that income. What is left is spent on Committee's participants, the Head of programme, teachers, and external associates. Students are also entitled to have reimbursed travel expenses incurred for lectures, advising sessions, and exams. The Panel could not assess if these expenditures are high or low. The Panel also noticed that, in 2013, the fees were increased from HRK 10,000 to HRK 11,670 to include the charge of HRK 1,760, decided by the University Senate for issuing doctoral certificates and awarding doctoral degrees. It is not clear exactly which costs this fees cover.

Finally, the Panel appreciated the funding of HRK 1,500 and 3,000 made directly available to individual students for participating in national and international conferences respectively.

#### III. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION

3.1 The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.

2.10 Tuition fees are determined on the basis of

transparent criteria (and real costs

studying).

#### High level of quality

Section 4.8 of the programme suggests that the optimal number of students is 20 to 30 and that the Programme will be offered at two-year intervals, i.e. up to 30 students can be enrolled every other year. However, the first year of the programme attracted more students - which likely follows from

the fact that students are now applying to other programmes.

Thus, while the admission quotas are established with respect to the HEI teaching and supervision capacities, there are problems which require thorough analysis that probably no one so far has carried out. The academics involved in the organisation and delivery of the doctoral programme should consider the question why the number of applicants is lower each year, and why out of 101 enrolled candidates so far only 52 have graduated (possibly including 5 candidates who studied outside of the programme).

The supervisor-doctoral student ratio is 1:1.8, which is less than the required ratio of 1:3. However, information in the SER is somewhat misleading, as there are two supervisors who have four candidates each.

#### Improvements are necessary

The programme has potential for establishing itself as a regional centre for linguistic research and training, in particular with its strong regional links with collaborations at the Universities of Tuzla and Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Specifically, there are five alumni who are employed at the University of Tuzla where strong links have been created and maintained with Osijek.

However, the number of applicants has decreased sharply since 2006 when the programme was started. The SER puts the onus of this shift to a diminished market for PhDs, but we would challenge that. The HEI should also consider that various potential candidates are applying elsewhere — be it in Zagreb or internationally. The explanation provided in SER does not reflect the true situation because there is currently enormous appetite for doctoral studies in linguistics and applied linguistics, particularly among Chinese and Arab students with high scholarships. A good quality doctoral programme could attract such and similar potential candidates.

3.2 The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs. It also seems that no analysis has been done regarding the career paths of those who completed a PhD in Linguistics in Osijek. We could not find the numbers of employed/unemployed PhDs, though as of 1st October 2017, 52 students had graduated from the programme.

#### Improvements are necessary

The program has a very small number of funded students, and the support of candidates is not decided by the Programme itself but by external funders. Between the years 2012-2017, there were 11 students involved in research projects with their supervisors, which we commend, but our understanding is that these projects were not the ones by which these candidates' study was funded. The admission quotas at PUSP in Linguistics have never been linked to the number of research projects, because of the apparent lack of such projects in the humanities in the past few years; relatedly, there are very few funded students. As stated in the programme, the sources of funding are the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Croatia, which provides salaries for teaching and research assistants and the teaching and administrative staff, whereas external doctoral students are self-financed. Students can seek other sources of funding, such as scholarships from city and county administrations, which can be considered only as supplementary assistance but would not cover the costs of the programme. We encourage the application of more research-

We encourage the application of more researchbased funding that covers the fees of study for PhD students.

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.

#### 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

3.4 The HEI should pay attention to the number

candidate has a sustainable research plan and is able to complete doctoral research successfully.

#### Improvements are necessary

The supervisor is meant to be appointed at the end of the first year, however, there are inconsistencies in the declarations and practice. It very often happens that doctoral candidates do not have a supervisor at the end of the second year. It is not clear whether there is a sustainable research plan for every student, as many of the students do not yet have a topic within the intended timeframe, nor

do they complete their studies within the intended number of years (according to Regulations, three years for full-time study, five years for part-time study). There is a recent regulation that an advisor may be appointed in the first semester of study, but we have not received any confirmation that such practice has been introduced. Improvements are necessary The programme admits international students, though it is not clear how many. Our impression is that the majority of students in the programme come from the local community in and around Osijek. We recommend that the program aim to increase the number of international students, though a preliminary goal might be to attract students from outside of Osijek. We met with an alumnus who works at the University of Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina) who —-along with various other alumni—-maintains links with the Programme at Osijek. However, it is 3.5 The HEI ensures that interested, talented not clear if this relationship results in the intake of and highly motivated candidates are recruited students from Tuzla. This would be a promising internationally. way to increase the numbers of international students. Our impression was that students are permitted to write in English, and some of the dissertations that were provided for us to review were written in English. It is worth noting that in interviews with supervisors, there was a comment that "Bosnian [students] are more likely to write in English because of their insecurity" with the intricacies of Croatian [sic]. We find this to be a problematic observation, a statement that discourages the presence of international students from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Improvements are necessary The criteria for admission are two letters of recommendation and a minimum of 4 GPA (on a 5-3.6 The selection process is public and based on point scale). All of the students who meet the choosing the best applicants. criteria are admitted. A question that the Panel poses for the HEI is whether any changes have been considered in the

programme that would bring new applicants. Currently, all applicants who apply are admitted given the low number of applications. The HEI may want to consider ways in which more applicants would be attracted. This primarily implies a thorough analysis of the recent trends with applications and necessary changes to the programme, as already mentioned in previous sections.

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

The following is cited in the Self-evaluation: the recognition of prior achievements relevant for the doctoral programme is regulated in the UNIOS Ordinance on Doctoral Studies (Articles 34, 35, and 36), and the Regulations on the Implementation of the Postgraduate Study Programme in Linguistics (Articles 7 and 11). The doctoral students have often exercised this right in practice. Students who started their doctoral programmes at other institutions could complete their studies at FFOS, participants who completed their Master's programmes in Croatia or abroad prior to 2010 could complete their doctorates without enrolling in the programme. The participants who completed their Master's programmes after 2010 had a certain number of exams and ECTS carried over. Doctoral students who took courses in related postgraduate study programmes could also have some ECTS carried over. Some doctoral students could earn their PhD without enrolment in the doctoral programme.

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

Of the 180 ECTS that the students must earn, some credits can be earned outside of traditional coursework, such as working on a research project, attendance at linguistics conferences, presentation at linguistics conferences, publishing a paper, book review, or professional paper.

We think that this is a strength of the programme given the ways that these points promote research. We do not know how many doctoral candidates currently in the programme are able to earn their

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

ECTS in this way, particularly those candidates who are not employed at the HEI or some other HEI. We strongly encourage the implementation of such practice among all candidates.

#### Improvements are necessary

The programme has a Regulations on the Implementation of the Postgraduate Study Programme in Linguistics which outlines the financial responsibilities of the student, the curricular and extracurricular activities expected of the student, the right to change a supervisor once, and the requirement that the student must publish one paper before the completion of their PhD. The SER specifies the various reasons that entitle a student to a leave of absence (e.g. a pregnancy). The Panel was not presented with a copy of the contract.

The information regarding the contract does not specify the rights of the student or the expectations and responsibilities of the supervisor. The expectations of the supervisor should be made explicit by the programme and included in the contract. This should include the kind of feedback and guidance the supervisors will give, the support the students will receive in terms of their research needs, and information on external funding for PhD students. It should also include information for the process students can pursue should they have issues or complaints. A high level of institutional support would also include information on current trends in employment of graduates from PhD programmes in linguistics, as well as training for candidates to increase their employability after the completion of study at PUSP Linguistics.

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.

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

#### Improvements are necessary

According to SER, institutional support for candidates' successful progression includes the appointment of a study advisor at the beginning of the programme, who monitors their progress and keeps track of ECTS earned, as well as securing financial support for their research in the Faculty's Research Fund.

However, the fact that in our interviews, certain students had not submitted their proposals until their fifth year of study, suggests to us that there is not support from the programme for maintaining the progression of students in a timely manner.

The SER discusses that the Students' Office monitors student activities and advancement, though we recommend that the programme itself should have procedures in place for monitoring the progression of the students to ensure that they are advancing at an appropriate rate.

In short, the Panel was unable to find evidence for existing mechanisms that would ensure higher success and progression rates.

#### IV. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES

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

#### Improvements are necessary

The Panel, by comparison to other doctoral programmes, finds that one shortcoming of the doctoral programme in Linguistics at Osijek is the unregulated admission scheme, which admits to the Programme nearly all (or, as the relevant parties have testified, all) applicants with the admission standards being purely formal and laying solely in the grade point average. The crucial point in comparison to other internationally recognised programmes with which the Panel is acquainted is the lack of research proposal which forms, and should form, the core criterion according to which success of the candidate may be preliminarily established and, thus, admission should be based. Upon admission, the Panel also finds that the progression monitoring is not of internationally recognisable standard. Monitoring, on an annual or semester-based level, as practised by all competitive doctoral programmes internationally, ensures the quality of ongoing doctoral research. By comparison, some doctoral programmes require that the candidates be taught both the fundamental and advanced topics in theoretical and applied linguistics (in a researchbased mode, e.g., in a seminar setting), while other doctoral programmes specify the advanced level

for a given linguistic area as a prerequisite for admission to the programme. The Panel understands that changes in this direction may cause a lower number in admittance to the programme. However. bv international comparison, the Panel recommends that the programme focus on quality, rather than quantity of those engaged in doctoral research. This would also, we find, rectify the drop-out and overall success rate as well as adherence to the timeframe. These points concerning international comparison and international competitiveness of the programme are buttressed in the following subsections with recommendations on how changes may be implemented to achieve the best possible result in terms of the structure and implementation of the doctoral programme.

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.

#### Improvements are necessary

The Panel finds that many taught courses offered to doctoral candidates are identical to Master's or undergraduate-level courses. While reasonable, and even necessary, to introduce students without prior training in linguistics to the core linguistic disciplines, it is vital that the programme also offer advanced doctoral-level courses. The HEI may implement this improvement by, for instance, designing two-tiered courses: with the first tier providing a condensed (graduatelevel) introduction and the second tier furthering the course at an advanced level. This would not only avoid reiterations of content from lower levels of study and allow students with prior knowledge with a structured option to advance directly, but also for the faculty to teach the topics of their own research in the second tier by integrating their research in teaching.

Although SER cites Croatian Qualifications Framework in pointing out some of its core requirements for level 8.2 (e.g. creating new knowledge, using advanced skills, taking ethical and social responsibility for the research, etc.), a closer look at learning outcomes of PUSP

Linguistics in Osijek reveals that, in fact, these learning outcomes do not entirely correspond to level 8.2 of the CroQF. For example, in PUSP Linguistics, LO1 refers to "successfully master(ing) the theoretical and practical content knowledge...". This does not imply "creating and evaluating of new knowledge... that extends the frontier of knowledge" (a most significant contribution of any PhD), but only the reproduction of what is already known. In addition, it can be noticed that in PUSP Linguistics learning outcomes there is no mention of transferable skills, and no mention of ethical and social responsibility for conducted research. The Panel strongly recommends that the programme learning outcomes be reviewed and amended in these segments.

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

The Panel does not find that the research outcomes of the doctoral programme cohere with the taught component. One cause for this is due to the structural shortcomings of the doctoral courses, as explicated in §4.2, §4.5, i. a. The logical coherence of the programme could be improved by a set minimum standard of the doctoral thesis which would provide both the learning outcomes of the taught components and supervisions in the research component with an objective and hence a means for a quality-ensuring logical structure of the overall course.

4.4 The doctoral programme ensures the achievement of learning outcomes and competencies aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF.

#### Improvements are necessary

The doctoral theses, which directly reflect the achievement of the learning outcomes, do not consistently meet the minimum quality threshold. As this is the most problematic aspect of the course, the Panel urges the Faculty to design a criterion for the minimum standard of the theses produced in the programme. As mentioned elsewhere, the Panel also urges for proficient external independent assessors to be appointed in order to control for, and ensure, the quality of the dissertations. This would also contribute to achieving the goals -- as set out in the Croatian

Qualification Framework Act (Official Gazette, 22/13, 41/16) -- which requires, i.e., that the dissertations reflect creation of new facts, knowledge, tools, or methods that could not be created at a pre-doctoral level (for the latter, mastering of content knowledge may be sufficient, by crucial contrast to the doctoral level). The Panel thus recommends that learning objectives, and general desiderata, of the doctoral programme be formally stated in the programme description (with regard to how the programme aligns with the CroQF), borne in mind during the redesign of the programme, and carefully followed in the implementation of the doctoral programme. The Panel believes that the recommended appointments of independent assessors, which is normal peer-based practice internationally ensuring academic integrity, would very effectively elevate the quality standards of the theses produced in the programme.

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

Given that the teaching at doctoral level are repetitious ex-cathedra lectures, the teaching methods are not appropriate for a PhD level and for PhD learning objectives per se, at least not in absence of complementing seminar-based and research-oriented teaching. We therefore recommend that ex-cathedra lectures be replaced by seminar/workshop courses where students have more chances to apply what they learn to their dissertation topics and generally explore the topics independently. Both the alumni and the current doctoral candidates confirmed to the Panel that they find this type of courses more effective and generally more desirable in a doctoral programme.

## 4.6 The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.

#### Improvements are necessary

Students in a PhD programme should acquire the skills of academic writing, planning and managing a research project, analytical and critical thinking skills, presentation skills, and many other skills that are considered academically or business relevant as transferable skills.

The Panel finds no clear proof, beyond the brief courses in research methodology, that the doctoral programme, by design and implementation, ensures acquisition of transferable skills. As the Panel finds those skills to be central to any doctoral training programme, the HEI is urged to ensure the training for all their students in writing and teaching at tertiary level. While the latter skill is central, the Panel was not able to find any evidence that doctoral candidates (apart from those who are employed at the HEI) are integrated into the departmental teaching (e.g., as teaching assistants) or receive explicit training in higher-education teaching. Such training would provide students with generic and highly transferable skills. We believe that this, along with the general requirement for acquisition of skills, may be achieved by organising, and integrating into the doctoral curriculum, skill-building workshops that would foster skills required of a doctoral candidate while ensuring transferability of those skills to areas beyond academia.

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

Although it is stated that all courses are elective in nature, the Panel has ascertained that students are nonetheless required to pass (up to) 20 obligatory exams, which is too high a number by any assessment, with only 6 courses being elective in nature. This does not reflect the teaching content being adapted to the training needs. The Panel also finds that there is little room and flexibility in students tailoring the doctoral courses in a way which would allow them to pursue their dissertation topics more efficiently (both in terms of time and depth/quality). Appointments of external assessors and specialised seminars, combined with the recommendations integrating into the programme skill-building workshops (§4.6), would contribute effectively to ensuring that the teaching is adapted

to the level of a doctoral programme. The Panel, however, was pleased to notice a degree of flexibility on the part which gives students credits for their independent research work, e.g., for conference presentations, writing/publishing their papers.

#### Improvements are necessary

While there exists an international connection with the University of Tuzla, the Panel was unable to establish how this is directly enabling the University of Osijek doctoral candidates with the necessary international exposure and opportunities. No ERASMUS, or other formats of candidate/staff mobility, opportunities were found. Strategic Research Programme mentions that there is no interest among the PUSP students to participate in ERASMUS exchange. We think that this issue could have been addressed in an appropriate way and international exchange encouraged among students and staff. The Panel recommends that the Faculty appoint external examiners, or examination committee members (in the sense of the US doctoral system), which would achieve at least two improvements to the doctoral programme in its international impact. Firstly, international examiners would help ensure high quality of doctoral research produced in the programme. Secondly, international cooperation of this type would provide candidates with visiting opportunities and integration within foreign educational programmes. The Panel finds the structure of the Faculty to lack internationally recruited staff that, according to the SER, was practiced in the past. In light of the impact that the University of Osijek Linguistics **Doctoral** Programme has on the University of Tuzla in Bosnia & Herzegovina, and potentially on the rest of the wider region, the Panel finds the opportunities and considerable development possibilities of the Osijek programme to be additionally valuable. Improvements in the design and implementation of the doctoral programme in

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

Osijek would have immediate and long-term impact on the wider region, viz. the Tuzla Linguistics which models its linguistics course directly on Osijek's (for instance, 50% of the University of Tuzla English Department staff are doctoral graduates of the Osijek Linguistics doctoral programme). This was evident from the pool of doctoral dissertations made available to the Panel and the interview with the alumnus (now faculty member in Tuzla). An improved and highly competitive doctoral programme would thus enable other academic institutions in the region to design and build their own postgraduate programmes in collaboration with Osijek and modelled on good practices.

### \* 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.