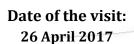


# REPORT OF THE EXPERT PANEL ON THE REACCREDITATION OF THE UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE (DOCTORAL) PROGRAMME

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB



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#### INTRODUCTION

The Expert Panel appointed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) created this Report on the Re-accreditation of the University Postgraduate (Doctoral) Programme **Comparative Politics** on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the **Faculty of Political Science**, **University of Zagreb**.

The Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE), a public body listed in EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education) and a full member of ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), re-accredits higher education institutions (hereinafter: HEIs) and their study programmes in line with the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (Official Gazette 45/09) and the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (OG 24/10). In this procedure parts of activities of higher education institutions and university postgraduate study programmes are re-accredited.

Expert Panel is appointed by the Agency's Accreditation Council, an independent expert body, to carry out independent evaluation of post-graduate university study programmes.

#### The Report contains the following elements:

- Short description of the study programme,
- The recommendation of the Expert Panel to the Agency's Accreditation Council,
- Recommendations for institutional improvement and measures to be implemented in the following period (and checked within a follow-up procedure),
- A brief analysis of the institutional advantages and disadvantages,
- A list of good practices found at the institution,
- Conclusions on compliance with the prescribed conditions of delivery of a study programme,
- Conclusions on compliance with the criteria for quality assessment.

#### Members of the Expert Panel:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Expert Panel also had a tour of the library.

#### SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

(Self-Evaluation Report – page 1)

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: Postgraduate university doctoral study program Comparative Politics

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

Place of delivery: Zagreb

Scientific area and field: Social Sciences, Political Science

Number of doctoral candidates: 76

Number of teachers: 16 Number of supervisors: 22

Learning outcomes of the study programme: Not defined

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

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

**Issue a letter of expectation** for the period up to three (3) years in which period the higher education institution should make the necessary improvements.

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

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

- students (especially the self-funded ones) for conferences, training workshops or short study visits.
- 6. Although many doctoral candidates lack general knowledge about the discipline in general, the programme must assure that gaps in students' knowledge are tackled by focused courses that should also be related to their research interests and specialisation. More methodology courses which reflect the international state of the art must be offered that would enable students to effectively use existing research methods in approaching their topics.
- 7. The programme must develop and define learning outcomes.

#### ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. This programme is the only doctoral programme in comparative politics in Croatia.
- 2. A significant number of outstanding and ambitious faculty members committed to high quality international research and teaching standards.
- 3. High standards maintained for developing and defending the theses.
- 4. Availability of some PhD studies funding through research projects.
- 5. Possibility for doctoral students to publish in the top Croatian academic journals.

#### DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

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

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

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

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

(Self-Evaluation Report- pages 2-3)

Minimal legal conditions:	YES/NO
	notes
1. Higher education institution (HEI) is listed in the Register of Scientific	YES
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 doctoral	YES
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 Article 7 of	YES
the 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 delivered by	YES
teachers employed at the HEI (full-time, elected into scientific-teaching	
titles).	
5. Student: teacher ratio at the HEI is below 30:1.	YES (including
	the teaching
	assistants)
6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public.	YES
	There is a public
	(through not
	digital) access to
	the doctoral
	thesis
7. HEI launches the procedure of revoking the academic title if it is	YES
determined that it has been attained contrary to the conditions stipulated for	
its attainment, by severe violation of the studying rules or based on a	
doctoral thesis (dissertation) that has proved to be a plagiarism or a forgery	
according to provisions of the statute or other enactments.	
Additional/ recommended conditions of the ASHE Accreditation Council	YES/NO
for passing a positive opinion	notes
1. HEI (or HEIs in joint programmes) has at least five teachers appointed to	YES
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 Scientific and	YES

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

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	appointed as
	supervisors
	or through
	training
	programmes,
	if available.
	Mostly it is
	through
	personal
	academic
	experiences,
	which could
	include
	practises at
	foreign
	universities.
	f) YES (SER and
	our
	assessment)
6. All teachers meet the following conditions:	a) YES
a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position;	b) NO (Not all
b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the course (table 1,	supervisors
Teachers).	meet these
	conditions, some
	have no
	research
	activities.
7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment	YES
committees.	
8. The programme ensures that all candidates spend at least three years	NO
doing independent research (while studying, individually, within or outside	
courses), which includes writing the thesis, publishing, participating in	
international conferences, field work, attending courses relevant for	
research etc.	
9. For joint programmes and doctoral schools (at the university level):	n/a
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.	
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# QUALITY ASSESSMENT

	Quality assessment ("high level of quality" or "improvements are necessary") and the explanation of the Expert Panel
1. RESOURCES: TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, RESEARCH CAPACITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
1.1. HEI is distinguished by its scientific/ artistic achievements in the discipline in which the doctoral study programme is delivered.	High level of quality  The HEI is distinguished by high-quality research of some of its staff.
1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.	<ul> <li>Improvements are necessary</li> <li>A few supervisors had a proportionally high to high workload (above 360 norm-hours).</li> <li>Suggestions: <ul> <li>Avoid over-burdening some professors regardless of their "popularity" or a lack of available supervisors.</li> <li>Diffuse the workload among teachers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.3. The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.	High level of quality  There is a high number of scientific publications of high quality relevant for the programme field.
1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.	• The candidate-supervisor-ratio is unaccentably l
1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and	

supervisors.	continuous quality of supervision.
	Suggestions to tackle the problem in the relationship between mentor, thesis supervisor and doctoral candidates:  • Make a clear distinction between mentor and supervisor: every PhD researcher should have a mentor from the very beginning based on the preliminary ideas for research. By the start of the second year at the latest, a supervisor should be appointed. This supervisor may be the mentor or may be a different person depending on the evolution of the proposal.  • For the inexperienced member of staff, joint supervision should be practiced. While such a staff can be a mentor at the start, to be a supervisor, they should be in a team with another experienced member of staff.  • Capacity building of inexperienced mentors so that they can be supervisors in the future can be done through a) training workshops as well as b) pairing with experienced staff.
1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.	Improvements are necessary  Suggestions:  • More funds required for infrastructure and 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.	

2.2.	The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.	Improvements are necessary  Suggestions:  • The HEI needs to develop an integrated strategy based on the needs of the discipline.
2.3.	The HEI systematically monitors the success of the programmes through periodic reviews, and implements improvements.	Improvements are necessary  Suggestions:  • There is no evidence of a systematic periodic review of the programme. This procedure should be developed also in the understanding of an internal critical self-evaluation process.
2.4.	HEI continuously monitors supervisors' performance and has mechanisms for evaluating supervisors, and, if necessary, changing them and mediating between the supervisors and the candidates.	Improvements are necessary  Suggestions:  • Monitoring procedures should be established. After establishing internal procedures they should be assessed continuously with regard to their functioning.
2.5.	HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.	High level of quality  Suggestions:  • Plagiarism software is used to detect unethical behaviour. However, the regulation "more then 1/3 of text is equivalent to already published work" is not sufficient and should be revised.
2.6.	The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation.	High level of quality  The necessary procedures are established. The Expert Panel also examined the defended theses. They comply with high standards.
2.7.	Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.	High level of quality  Members of the committee must be persons holding a research/teaching rank; at least one member can't be a teacher in this programme (nor an employee of this Faculty), so the participation of external (or international) committee members is expected. The mentor of the dissertation cannot be a member of the committee.
2.8.	The HEI publishes all necessary information on the study programme, admissions, delivery and conditions	High level of quality  The necessary information about the doctoral study

	for progression and completion, in accessible outlets and media.	programme is publicly available on the website. Also, the results of the enrolment procedure are published on the website of the Faculty.
2.9.	Funds collected for the needs of doctoral education are distributed transparently and in a way that ensures sustainability and further development of doctoral education (ensures that candidates' research is carried out and supported, so that doctoral education can be completed successfully).	<ul> <li>Improvements are necessary</li> <li>There is no clarity about the collected funds, and it seems that most of them are allocated for salaries of the researchers.</li> <li>Suggestions: <ul> <li>Funds should be allocated for the participation in (international) conferences, training, workshops and short study periods abroad.</li> <li>The criteria for applying for funds should be transparent.</li> <li>Some funds should also be available for cosupervisors or external examiners coming from international funding organisations.</li> <li>Established researchers should be engaged in research projects which involve funding for research assistants.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.10	Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).	NA The Expert Panel does not have relevant information to approach this topic accurately.
	SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION	
	The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.	Expert Panel recommends admitting a lower number of applicants to increase the quality of the doctoral programme. There is already a high number of candidates per supervisor and a high teaching workload which is not added to the individual workload of the Faculty and therefore it represents additional burden for the teaching personnel. In any way, with regard to the figures in the Self-evaluation Report and the impressions from the site visit, the Expert Panel has deduced that any increase in the number of doctoral students would push the Faculty beyond its capacity.
	The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/artistic, cultural, social, economic and other	Improvements are necessary  There is hardly any competition for inclusion within the

needs.

programme, with roughly two candidates applying for each spot of the programme. It leads to a situation where funding opportunities act as a *de facto* selection criterion, meaning that the individual financial situation of the applicant basically determines the admission of candidates. Another crucial aspect which was mentioned in the site visit is that recruitment in the public sector of Croatia will be somewhat reduced for the foreseeable future, which hints at a lower need for PhD graduates in the field of study.

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

Personal funding of the doctoral training already works as a *de facto* selection criterion. Although this is a structural problem, it has to be addressed at the level of HEI as well. HEI should take into account that the low completion rate is directly related to the lack of student funding (according to the Self-Evaluation Report, only two candidates received funding), which in turn necessitates a higher number of working hours of the candidates. The absorption of candidates into projects also appears to be meagre as remarks from the site visit suggested that the participation in projects is restricted to those candidates, which are already employed by the Faculty.

## Improvements are necessary

There are some steps in the right direction by establishing the heads of programme branches as initial mentors. However, the distinction between mentor and supervisor is not clear.

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.

## Suggestions:

- Every PhD student should have a mentor from the very beginning based on the preliminary ideas of research.
- By the start of the second year at the latest, a supervisor should be appointed. This supervisor may be the mentor or as a better solution, a different person.
- The review from the mentor (first year) and supervisor (second year) should be made an annual exercise.
- A formal procedure should be developed to access the progress of the doctoral studies which should involve a student and a mentor. The report should

		be verified by the head of the programme and any
		<ul> <li>necessary action should be taken immediately.</li> <li>Standards for mentorship (rather than informal control) should be fixed.</li> </ul>
		Improvements are necessary
3.5.	The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.	The Expert Panel sees some efforts to attract international students by offering courses in English. However, the enrolment rate of foreign students in very low and mostly applies to the students from the region (Bosnia-Herzegovina or Montenegro), who could follow the courses offered in Croatian anyhow. An encouraging development was a rising number of candidates writing their dissertations in English.
		High level of quality
3.6.	The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.	There are formal criteria and they are respected. However, many applicants lack research skills and potential PhD thesis supervisors are not clearly identified based on students' interests and research topics. For improvements see 3.4.
3.7.	The HEI ensures that the selection	High level of quality
	procedure is transparent and in line with published criteria, and that there is a transparent complaints procedure.	All transparency criteria appear to be met and a change of supervisors due to complaints is possible, even though this can become an issue in highly specialised fields of study, where there are few knowledgeable supervisors available.
		High level of quality
3.8.	There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.	The prior learning of candidates and applicants gets recognised. If there are applicants with a background in a different discipline, additional exams can be taken in order to make the PhD programme. Likewise, credit points acquired at an earlier stage can be transferred into the PhD programme, however, this does not include the enrolment of a candidate into a higher semester.
3.9.	Candidates' rights and obligations are	Improvements are necessary
	defined in relevant HEI regulations and a contract on studying that provides for a high level of supervisory and institutional support to the candidates.	It is difficult to change the supervisors, because there are not enough supervisors in the research fields. It is a general problem of a small community of researchers. However, it was noted during the site visit that all candidates appear to have signed a study contract right after commencing their

	studies.
	Improvements are necessary
	There are some mechanisms established, but for self-financed PhD candidates it is a problem to participate.
3.10.There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.	<ul> <li>Suggestions:</li> <li>The allocation of more funds should be fostered towards the academic development of self-funded students. A possible remedy to this could be that the competent ministry decides to allocate funds to the PhD programme, which according to the site visit does not appear to be the case right now.</li> <li>The introduction of scholarships to cover tuition fees, which does not exist right now.</li> </ul>
4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES	
4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.	<ul> <li>Improvements are necessary</li> <li>Due to structural reasons the programme can't be compared with internationally recognised standards.</li> <li>Suggestions: <ul> <li>Heavy coursework, unlike in UK PhD programmes, is in contradiction with students' specialised topics and should, due to the limits of the 3-year doctoral programme and lack of funding, accommodate students' specialised interests.</li> <li>A students' lack of general knowledge about the discipline was expressed by the teachers. The programme must assure that these gaps are addressed by courses that should be related to their research interests and specialisation.</li> <li>The courses in methodology are not sufficient. More methodology courses with international standards should be offered.</li> <li>The Faculty should not make the students responsible to find a supervisor. The availability and research profile of potential supervisors should be made known to students from the very beginning.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

4.2. Programme learning outcomes, as well	Improvements are necessary
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.	The SER is insufficient and does not allow the Panel to access this point properly.
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  SER is to general. This point cannot be properly assessed.
4.4. The doctoral programme ensures the	Improvements are necessary
achievement of learning outcomes and competencies aligned with the level 8.2	Not addressed in SER
of the CroQF.	The Panel checked the available thesis and it seems to comply with the quality standards.
4.5. Teaching methods (and ECTS, if	Improvements are necessary
applicable) are appropriate for level 8.2 of the CroQF and assure achievement of	Not addressed in SER
clearly defined learning outcomes.	The Panel observed a range of teaching methods, mostly based on individual efforts of teachers.
	Improvements are necessary
4.6. The programme enables acquisition of	Not addressed in SER
general (transferable) skills.	There is a lack of training opportunities and a limited number of possibilities for students, especially for self- funded ones, to present their work in front of diverse academic or non-academic audience.
	Improvements are necessary
4.7. Teaching content is adapted to the	Not addressed in SER
needs of current and future research and candidates' training (individual course plans, generic skills etc.).	There is a relative lack of methodology training and overemphasis on general subject matters. The Panel also see the need for the students to acquire general knowledge which is relevant for the discipline, which seems to take too much of their time (with regard to a 3-year long programme) and to distract students from their own research.
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## Improvements are necessary

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

Not sufficiently addressed in the SER

The Panel regrets that the information on international mobility of teachers and students was not provided in the SER. Certain Faculty members have an international profile including those who came back to Croatia form international well-known universities. The general problem is the lack of funds for the mobility of students.

# \* 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.