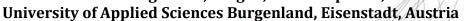


# Report of the Expert Panel on the Re-accreditation of the Postgraduate (University) Doctoral Programme in International Economic Relations and Management

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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 Postgraduate university study programme in *International Economic Relations and Management* on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the University of Pula.

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. Othon Anastasakis, Oxford University (Panel President)
- Prof. Jarolim Antal, University of Economics, Prague, Czech Republic
- Prof. James Davis, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland
- Prof. Rowena Pecchenino, Maynooth University, Ireland
- Kanad Bagchi, PhD Student, Max Planck Institute, Germany
- Tea Mijač, PhD Student, University of Split.

#### Site visit was conducted by:

- Prof. Othon Anastasakis, Oxford University (Panel President)
- Prof. Jarolim Antal, University of Economics, Prague, Czech Republic
- Tea Mijač, PhD Student, University of Split.

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

- Dr.sc. Josip Hrgović, coordinator, ASHE
- Leon Cyrtila, assistant coordinator, ASHE
- Lida Lamza, interpreter at the site visit and Report translator, ASHE.

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

- Management
- Study programme coordinatorsDoctoral candidates and alumni
- Stakeholders
- Teachers and supervisors.

#### SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: Postgraduate university doctoral study "International Economic Relations and Management".

**Institution providing the programme:** Juraj Dobrila University of Pula

#### **Institutions delivering the programme:**

- Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Faculty of Economics and Tourism "Dr. Mijo Mirković" Croatia;
- University of Economics in Bratislava, Faculty of International Relations, Bratislava, Slovak Republic;
- University of Sopron, Alexandre Lamfalussy Faculty of Economics, Sopron, Hungary;
- University North, Croatia;
- University in Mostar, Faculty of Economics, Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- University of Life Sciences Prague, Faculty of Economics and Management, Prague, Czech Republic and,
- University of Applied Sciences Burgenland (UAS), Eisenstadt, Austria (administrative and organizational partner)

#### Place of delivery:

- Eisenstadt, Austria (University of Applied Sciences Burgenland) (first year)
- Supervisor home university partner university (second and third year)

Scientific area and field: Social sciences: Economics

Number of doctoral candidates: 77

Financed by HEI: 4

Financed from other sources: 0

Self-funded: 73

Number of teachers: 8

**Number of potential mentors: 32** 

Number of doctoral candidates to whom a supervisor was officially appointed: 67

**Teaching / research activity ratio**: 30 ECTS: 150 ECTS (1:5)

#### **Programme outline:**

## Enrolment requirements for the first year

Prerequisites for admission to doctoral studies are:

- Completed undergraduate studies at respected universities or universities of applied sciences, or completed master's studies consisting of at least 300 ECTS with evidence of proficiency in C1 level English.
- Persons who have completed postgraduate professional or postgraduate specialist studies in economics but have not completed the relevant university study of economics must pass the Distinguished Exams in Microeconomics and Macroeconomics.
- Persons who have completed postgraduate studies in economics are awarded up to 120 ECTS credits (decided by the Enrollment Committee).
- Persons who until the completion of the postgraduate scientific study in the field of economics have only the preparation and defense of the master's thesis are awarded up to 90 ECTS credits (decided by the Enrollment Committee).
- Persons who have completed postgraduate specialist studies in economics are awarded up to 90 ECTS credits (decided by the Enrollment Committee).
- Persons who, until the completion of the postgraduate specialist study in economics, have only the to write and defense of postgraduate specialist work are awarded up to 90 ECTS credits (decided by the Enrollment Committee).
- Minimum two years of professional experience.
- English language proficiency (C1 level).

Each year, the application deadline is July 31st.

The following documents should be attached to the application form in English or translated into English:

	a. Curriculum vitae b. a letter of intent and a letter of motivation, a research orientation and a brief research proposal c. certified copy of diploma, transcript of grades and / or diploma supplement / "supplement" d. a list of published works e. a letter of recommendation f. evidence of C1 level English proficiency  The selection between the candidates for admission to study is made through a selection procedure / personal interview before the members of the Consortium as representatives of partner institutions. The interview consists of two parts: within the first part, the candidate presents his / her CV, completed education, work experience and the reason/motivation for applying to study. In the second part of the interview, the candidate presents a proposal for his / her research activity (thesis title, objectives, hypotheses, methodology, list of basic literature), his ability to do independent scientific reserach and his / her published papers (if any).  Attached is the application form for enrollment in the study. (Attachment 17, Document: Application Form PECO)
Enrolment requirements for	Attendance at all lectures and all exams passed (30 ECTS credits)     Assigned mentor     Conducted research / thesis writing (20 ECTS credits in total)
the second year	Once a year, PhD students must submit the annual progress report to the Consortium on their work, signed by the mentor.
Enrolment	Individual work with a mentor (10 ECTS credits in total)
requirements for	- Thesis (total of 20 ECTS credits)
the third yeard	- Research work
	Credits for publications     Once a year, PhD students must submit the annual progress report to
	the Consortium on their work, signed by the mentor.
Qualification requirements	- Individual work with a mentor (6 ECTS credits in total)
Qualification requirements	Participation in scientific conferences, research, workshops, doctoral / scientific seminars (50 ECTS credits).
	- Research work (44 ECTS credits in total).
	- Public defense of doctoral dissertation.

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

**LO 1.: Specific knowledge,** required to create and evaluate new facts (policies, programmes), concepts (international economics, management, big data, artificial intelligence, cryptocurrencies, neuroscience), procedures (Bayesian analysis, fractional integration, spectral analysis, econometric filters, neural models), principles and theory in the field of scientific research (INET - institute of new economic thinking, CORE - economics for a changing world - an open platform leading to the shifting of the boundaries of the knowledge in the field of social sciences and the field of economics.

- LO 2.: Cognitive skills, for the use of advanced (mathematical models for behavioural analysis), complex (advanced, modern econometric methods for data analysis), original (introduce and expose students to existing frontiers in economics) skills (methods and methods of presenting their own research results), highly specialized knowledge (mastering econometrics content provides the skills needed to use advanced statistical techniques to analyse and manipulate economic data, both at the household (micro) and aggregate (macro) levels, activities and procedures required to develop new knowledge and new methodology and to integrate different areas (appropriate level of problem identification and conceptualization skills to focus on realistic and relevant scientific problem research).
- LO 3.: Psychomotoric skills, required to create (the ability to integrate theory, technical information and appropriate methods in the effective analysis and resolution of resource management problems), evaluate and execute new proposed specialized actions (the ability to contribute effectively in a large number of situations requiring applied economic and managerial analysis) and new methods, instruments, tools and materials (development of our own, new empirical methods and analytical approaches when conducting and undertaking analyses and research of applicable, development policies).
- **LO 4.: Social skills**, aimed at creating and implementing new socially and civilizationally acceptable forms of communication (adopting an appropriate level of communication skills for the effective dissemination of research and technical information, including the practical implications of research analyses) and the process of cooperation in interaction with individuals and groups of different orientations and different cultural and ethnic backgrounds (adopting skills to disseminate and promote new insights to collaborators and stakeholders in the field and branch of research and the community).
- **LO 5.: Independence** for expressing personal professional and ethical authority (acquiring an articulated set of advanced-level skills that includes "core" and "branch" competences within economics), for managing research activities (acquiring critical thinking and research skills to become independent scientists, at and a commitment to developing new ideas and / or processes (acquiring the skills needed to process statistics, historical analysis, case studies, experiment-neuroscience to develop and promote new theories that are consistent with the evidence).
- **LO 6.: Responsibility** for assuming ethical and social responsibility (SDG) for the success of the research (self-awareness and willingness to accept the fact that economics as a science encounters guesses, trial and error, and mistakes that we should be prepared to accept in order to correct them not justify), for the social usefulness of the research results (understanding of theoretical basic ideas and insights in economics through their application in quantitative economics in order to be able to shed light on a range of real-world issues and encourage applicable research relevant to society's political and real problems; may call ethics a political economy and which seeks to determine ideals in economics as a science).

**LO 7.: Interdisciplinarity** for students to master the theories underpinning their dissertation research in the social sciences but also related sciences such as the humanities and STEAM, with the depth of knowledge and skills required to produce advanced, quantitative research (data-based) as well as theoretical information (theoretical background). In order to adopt interdisciplinarity, students must develop, adapt, and apply (if possible: new) research methodologies to expand and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice in economics and economy-related sciences.

LO 8.: The application of acquired knowledge and skills through the acquired content of a study programme in order to apply the knowledge and skills to demonstrate their autonomy, authoritative judgment, adaptability and responsibility as an expert, leading expert or researcher. Doctoral students will master a specific set of methods appropriate to their dissertation, with the depth required to produce methodologically rigorous research and publish them in reputable scientific journals. Students as researchers will be able to identify the relevant economic problems facing modern societies and economies in order to solve them.

Learning outcomes								
	LO 1	LO 2	LO 3	LO 4	LO 5	LO 6	LO 7	LO 8
Compulsory courses	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Elective courses	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Research work	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mobility at a host	x	x	x	x	x		x	
institution								
Research (seminar				x	x			
papers and workshops)								
Doctoral Conferences	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Published papers	x	x	x		x	x		
Research activity	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Mentoring cooperation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Thesis writing, thesis	х	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
defending								

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

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

**Issue a confirmation on compliance** for performing parts of activities.

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

- 1. Need for better harmonisation among institutions when distributing ECTS and learning.
- 2. More funding needed to support student's tuition and/or living expenses.
- 3. Better connection with industries, stakeholders and alumni.

#### ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. Multidimensionality and multidisciplinarity of the programme.
- 2. Network, mobility and knowledge sharing.
- 3. Good infrastructure and academic resources.
- 4. Regionality and familiarity and proximity among partner institutions.
- 5. Commitment from academic actors involved.
- 6. Clarity and visibility of programme rules and procedures.

#### DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. Unclear assessment of performance and credit system during 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years.
- 2. Not convincingly explained existence of uniformity among partners.
- 3. Limited funding and limited diversity of funding for students coming from Croatia.

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

- 1. Academic rules and procedures are well designed and clearly described.
- 2. A consortium based on good intentions regarding the principles of academic freedom, knowledge sharing and international cooperation.
- 3. The monitoring of thesis is careful and beneficial to the student.
- 4. The programme sets a good precedent for other similar endeavours.

## 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	YES
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 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 1:30.	YES
6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public.	YES Since 2016, the University has been part of the DABAR project; digital academic archive and repository, and all doctoral theses since that year are done on their portal. As part of the DABAR project, doctoral dissertations will be published in DART EUROPE, a collection of doctoral theses of all European universities: <a href="http://www.dart-europe.eu/basic-search.php">http://www.dart-europe.eu/basic-search.php</a> + https://fhb.summon.serialssolutions.com/
7. HEI launches the procedure of revoking the academic title if it is determined that it has been attained contrary to the conditions stipulated for its attainment, by severe violation of the studying rules or based on a doctoral thesis (dissertation) that has proved to be a plagiarism or a forgery according to provisions of the statute or other enactments.	YES

Additional/recommended conditions of the	
ASHE Accreditation Council for passing a positive opinion	
1. HEI (or HEIs in joint programmes) has at least	YES
five teachers appointed to scientific-teaching titles	1E3
in the field, or fields relevant for the programme	
involved in its delivery.	
2. In the most recent reaccreditation, HEI had the	NO
standard Scientific and Professional Activity	The scientific and professional activity
marked as at least "partly implemented" (3).	was evaluated as: "in the initial stage of
and the second of the second o	implementation" for Juraj Dobrila
	University of Pula.
	,
	YES
	University North passed reaccreditation
	procedure of higher education institutions
	in academic year 2014/2015, where it was
	evaluated through 7 standards. In the
	standard "Scientific and professional
	activity", University was rated with rating
	"partially implemented".
3. The doctoral programme is aligned with the	YES
HEI's research strategy.	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
4. The candidate: supervisor ratio at the HEI is not	YES
above 3:1.	a) VEC
5. All supervisors meet the following conditions: a) PhD, elected into a scientific title, holds a	a) YES
scientific or a scientific-teaching position and/or	b) YES
has at least two years of postdoctoral research	D) 1E3
experience;	c) YES
b) active researcher in the scientific area of the	
programme, as evidenced by publications,	d) YES
participation in scientific conferences and/or	
projects in the past five years (table 2, Supervisors	e) YES
and candidates);	
c) confirms feasibility of the draft research plan	f) YES
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) YES
a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching	b) <b>YES</b>
position;	) III
b) active researcher, recognized in the field	
relevant for the course (table 1, Teachers).	
7. The supervisor normally does not participate in	YES
The supervisor normany aces not participate in	120

the assessment committees.	
8. The programme ensures that all candidates	YES
spend at least three years doing independent	
research (while studying, individually, within or	
outside courses), which includes writing the thesis,	
publishing, participating in international	
conferences, field work, attending courses relevant	
for research etc.	
9. For joint programmes and doctoral schools (at	YES
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.	

#### 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 This joint doctoral programme, which involves 7 institutions from the region of Central and South East Europe, is innovative and original; it combines diversity and interdisciplinary; it is based on a prior familiarity between the participant institutions. The institution has staff that has expertise in the field. This is a key for delivering a Ph.D. programme of good quality.
1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.	High level of quality The number and workload of teachers involved is suitably adequate to ensure a high-quality programme - 50% are teachers of Pula University, 40% are teachers from University of Sopron and 10% are from the University of Economics Bratislava.
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 The teachers are highly qualified researchers and engage actively with the topics that they teach. They have a number of scientific publications relevant for the programme area and subjects. From the provided data, it was evident that the faculty from the University of Pula has a solid record of publications in international scientific journals.
1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.	High level of quality The programme employs a sufficient number of quality supervisors (with candidate: supervisor ratio below 3:1), based on the data we were given. The supervisors participate in international and/or national scientific research projects. The majority of the supervisors have a solid track of publications in the field. The Panel's general assessment of performance is positive.
1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.	The programme has established the framework and the

2.4. HEI continuously monitors	High level of quality
2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the success of the programmes through periodic reviews, and implements improvements.	High level of quality It is clear from the material given to the Panel and the subsequent discussions that the consortium has established the proper instruments to regularly monitor the quality of the programme, through regular meetings of the partners, review of progress of PhD students, review of performance of staff. In addition, there is an effort to improve the programme based on evaluations and feedback on a yearly basis. PhD students also confirmed that they have experienced improvements during their study.
2.2. The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.	High level of quality The mission and the vision of the programme is aligned with the mission and research strategies of the participant institutions. The assessed doctorate programme is compatible with their wider PhD policy. There is a special document on cooperation strategy where all participating institutions declare their common interest and intention to advance the goals of the programme.
2.1. The HEI has established and accepted effective procedures for proposing, approving and delivering doctoral education. The procedures include identification of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs.	High level of quality The way the programme is set up it reflects the social and economic needs of the society of the countries involved in this joint academic enterprise. The stakeholders are involved in the progress and updating of the study programme. Having said that, more direct linkages and concrete ways of involvement are suggested to better reflect the needs of the industries. The Panel did not have enough information to see how and whether this is happening in other countries beyond Croatia.
2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME	
1.6.The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.	High level of quality The programme has advanced infrastructure including modern equipment and laboratories, quality library resources, and access to relevant databases. From our discussions with students, it was confirmed that the institutions ensure that databases, literature and also data set and specific software are available when required.
	supervisors, to a satisfactory standard.
	supervisors, to a satisfactory standard.

supervisors' performance and has mechanisms for evaluating supervisors, and, if necessary, changing them and mediating between the supervisors and the candidates.

The supervisor is assigned to the candidate during the first year of the study. The procedure of monitoring the supervisor-candidate relationship is described convincingly in the Ordinance on Postgraduate University Studies. The programme has regular assessment tools for monitoring. Table 2 (supervisors and candidates) explains convincingly the issues relating to the relationship between supervisor and candidate as well as the mechanisms of monitoring and improving the quality of supervision.

## 2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.

#### High level of quality

The consortium has tools to ensure the academic integrity and freedom based on the Ordinance of Postgraduate University Studies. It also has tools to recognise plagiarism. The University of North has set up a Committee for Ethical Issues, which investigate whether the Code of Ethics is being implemented.

# 2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation.

#### High level of quality

and The programme has several levels of thesis presentation from the early stages ending with the final defence. There and is a public hearing and the defence at the department before the final defence which is a very positive and transparent way of receiving feedback on the thesis.

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

#### High level of quality

There is rigorous procedure described in the Ordinance, and each part of the process is archived in the form of protocol report. It was pointed out during the discussion that instructions for the design of the doctoral dissertation are not precise, and that more concrete and unified formal requirements would be welcome.

# 2.8. The HEI publishes all necessary information on the study programme, admissions, delivery and conditions for progression and completion, in accessible outlets and media.

#### High level of quality

There is adequate promotional material and explanatory video of the programme is available. Having said that, there is always space for better promotion, visibility and advertisement of the programme outside the consortium.

# 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).

#### High level of quality

There is transparency in the way that funds are distributed and there is clear commitment for the sustainability of the programme from all partner institutions. Special funds for individuals are available in the University of Pula and University of North, yet the Panel did not have enough information regarding other partners. It was mentioned to us that more financial support should be made available for candidates in need or candidates with disability.

2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).	High level of quality As far as the Panel could, this appears to be the case.
3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION	
3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.	High level of quality Admission quotas are in place according to teaching and supervision capacities. In the discussions during the visit, it was mentioned that the consortium prefers to keep the numbers of candidates at moderate levels in order to maintain the quality of teaching and education for the students, which was a welcome remark.
3.2. The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.	High level of quality The selection criteria are well designed and try to assess the potential of the candidate in a comprehensive way; in addition, admission quotas are based on comprehensive needs and the data provided to us support this reality. The programme aims at selecting active and motivated candidates.
3.3. The HEI establishes the admission quotas taking into account the funding available to the candidates, that is, on the basis of the absorption potentials of research projects or other sources of funding.	Improvements are necessary  The programme relies overwhelmingly on self-funded candidates and has a very limited number of fully funded students (University of North). None of the students is fully or partly funded through research projects, economy or some other public source. More diversity in funding is required. More funding should be secured through connection with research projects, businesses, science foundations and employers.
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.	High level of quality The consortium provides each student with an advisor from year 1. It also makes the efforts, from the beginning to the end of doctoral education, for each candidate to have a sustainable research plan which will allow them to complete doctoral research successfully.
3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.	High level of quality The programme has rigorous criteria in selecting motivated individuals, particularly from partner institutions. One third of the students are from outside the consortium, which proves that there is international

	attraction, but there is always potential for more international visibility and inclusion in the degree.
3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.	High level of quality The selection process includes rigorous criteria (at least 66% grade for acceptance from all partners - as the Panel was told), which are convincing for choosing the best applicants. The fact that they include interviews is an extra insurance that they try to reach out to the best possible applicants. The Panel was told that approximately 50% of applicants are being rejected during the selection, which shows that this is a rigorous process.
3.7. The HEI ensures that the selection procedure is transparent and in line with published criteria, and that there is a transparent complaints procedure.	High level of quality The entire documentation of the application process is archived, and the list of candidates is available through a code; non-successful candidates can appeal within a reasonable amount of time.
3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.	High level of quality According to Self-evaluation, the programme has possibilities to recognise previous studies of the candidate, and there is a special committee to evaluate this.
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.	High level of quality The formal institutional practices are in place, and students confirmed that procedures are clearly stated and transparent. All PhD candidates sign education contracts, which contain their rights and obligations.
3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.	High level of quality  The programme has various instruments to support and encourage students in their research. There are opportunities with conferences organised by partnering institutions where students can present their work. Students are regularly notified on such information related to conferences and workshops, which was confirmed during our discussions with them. Having said that, concrete numbers of PhD students' outputs could not be assessed (no data on conference or workshop participation were available to us).
4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES	
4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.	Improvements are necessary The programme is designed to provide students' expertise in the subject area through engagement with innovative research, published in top ranked national and international academic journals and to subsequently contribute to the field through their own research. Thus,

the focus of the curriculum appropriately is on developing the research skills of the students. Supervisors confirmed in our discussion that students are ready to start research on their own after completing first year. The design of the second and third year of the study is flexible and focuses on the interaction between mentor and the candidate. It is not clear on what research output the student can collect ECTS points, as this is something which is decided exclusively by the mentor. Another concern is whether the limited number of courses offered can serve as adequate background for individual work with the mentor in second and third year of the study. 4.2. Programme learning outcomes, as well High level of quality as the learning outcomes of modules The learning outcomes are aligned with the relevant CroQF and subject units, are aligned with the and European frameworks. It appeared from the level 8.2 of the CroQF. They clearly discussions that competences acquired are sufficiently describe the competencies the addressed, with the possible exception of project management. In addition, it seemed to us that the learning candidates will develop during the doctoral programme, including the outcomes are written in a rather generic way. ethical requirements of doing research. Improvements are necessary In order for learning outcome to be logically and clearly 4.3. Programme learning outcomes are connected with teaching content, more structure in logically and clearly connected with assessing the competences of PhD students is needed. It teaching contents, as well as the appears that there is not objectively defined assessment of contents included in supervision and the learning outcomes. The standardisation of assessment research. of the competences of PhD candidates among 6 different partners is not fully clear and may vary. High level of quality According to Self-evaluation report, students are obligated to obtain credits through publications; learning objectives are connected with new knowledge, cognitive skill 4.4. The doctoral programme ensures the obtained through conference participation achievement of learning outcomes and presentation of new results, and it appears that learning competencies aligned with the level 8.2 objectives are being met. Students have published some of the CroQF. conference papers in national scientific outlets, which indicates successful achievement. Achieving of the learning outcomes is proven by the provided theses, publications and attendance of students in scientific conferences. Improvements are necessary 4.5. Teaching methods (and ECTS, if Teaching methods and requirements are appropriate for applicable) are appropriate for level 8.2 level 8.2 of the CroQF, and appear to be appropriately of the CroQF and assure achievement of

clearly defined learning outcomes.

mapped to well-defined learning outcomes. For the 2<sup>nd</sup> and

the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the study, it is hard to assess how intended

	learning outcome are achieved, as there is lack of information what concrete outputs are assessed. How these ECTS are awarded during the second and third year was not clear to the Panel.
4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.	High level of quality  The programme is ideally suited to provide general and transferable skills. It aims at interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral and cross border training, methodological rigor and practical relevance.  Given that many students come with at least two-year professional experience in business, a strong basis of relevant skills should already be present. The faculty and students provided evidence that relevant workshops for the development of important skills are offered.  The candidates are regularly informed about events such as workshops through the programme.
4.7. Teaching content is adapted to the needs of current and future research and candidates' training (individual course plans, generic skills etc.).	High level of quality After analysing the Self-evaluation report and speaking to students, it can be stated that courses are adapted to their needs and specific requirements are addressed by the mentors.
4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.	High level of quality The programme is ideally suited and built in order to address the criteria of international networking and mobility. There is plenty of evidence that the programme regulations enable and encourage international cooperation.

## \* 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.