



**REPORT
OF THE EXPERT PANEL
ON THE REACCREDITATION
OF THE UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE (DOCTORAL)
PROGRAMME
LAW
FACULTY OF LAW, UNIVERSITY JOSIP JURAJ STROSSMAYER IN
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 *Law* on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the Faculty of Law, University Josp Juraj Strossmayer in 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:

Dr Igor Štiks, University in Edinburg and Faculty for Media and Communication

Professor Dibyesh Anand, University of Westminster

Professor Ciarán Burke, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena

Dr Daniela Angelina Jelinčić, Institute for Development and International Relations

Assoc. professor Peter W. Zuidhof, University of Amsterdam

Dr. Teresa Murjas, School Director of Academic Tutoring for Theatre & Television and the School of Arts & Communication Design, Reading University, UK

Marko Radenović, Princeton University and McKinsey & Company,

Katja Simončič, Faculty of Law, University of Ljubljana

Matteo Tracchi, Human Rights Centre of the University of Padova, Italy

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

- Professor Ciarán Burke
- Marko Radenović
- Katja Simončič.

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

- Filip Vukuša, coordinator, ASHE.

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

- Management,
- Study Programme coordinators,
- Doctoral candidates,
- Teachers and supervisors,
- 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: Law

Institution delivering the Programme: University Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek

Institution providing the Programme: Faculty of Law

Place of delivery: Osijek

Scientific area and field: Social Sciences, Law

Number of doctoral candidates: 35

Number of funded doctoral candidates: 6

Number of self-funded doctoral candidates and those funded by employer: 29

Number of inactive doctoral candidates: 15

Number of teachers: 40

Number of supervisors: 19

Number of doctoral candidates whose supervisor has been appointed officially (on University Senate): 28

Learning outcomes of the study programme:

Upon fulfilment of all study obligations, and completion and public defence of their doctoral theses, candidates will be able to:

LO 1: build their careers and promote excellence at scientific-teaching or scientific institutions

LO 2: perform highly specialized jobs and promote professional excellence by implementation of acquired knowledge and generic skills within legal profession

LO 3: critically analyse, evaluate and synthesise scientific sources of literature from the field of the studies

LO 4: recognize and independently define research problems, develop and carry out research in the area of social sciences, the field of law

LO 5: understand and implement new trends in research methodology of legal science

LO 6: implement and promote high ethical principles in their scientific research

LO 7: publicly present and disseminate results of their research to wider scientific and general audience.

Structure of Programme (3 years/6 semesters/180 ECTS):

1-2 year: (1-3rd. semester) two general methodological courses (8 ECTS each x 2), compulsory module courses (10 each), elective module courses (8 ECTS each), research seminars at 1st and 2nd semester and papers (30 ECTS), and finally a topic defence (20 ECTS): 120 in total, out of which 70-100 in coursework.

Third year: 60 in research and defence.

Taught/research ratio: 70-100:110-80.

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 recommendation for the period of 2 years, during which period the higher education institution should make the necessary improvements. The letter of recommendation includes suspension of student enrolment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The programme has many advantages, but has considerable problems that were assessed by the panel, and these will require immediate attention:

1. The most important issue was that the quality of theses assessed was not commensurate with international standards, and that the theses did not seem to advance the science considerably.
2. Another concern was that students spend insufficient time on their own research. The depth of research in the thesis preparation did not seem to be commensurate with international standards.
3. This issue is partly due to the coursework burden imposed upon students. The first two years of the programme are effectively taught. It is imperative that more time is devoted to own research work and thesis development in the first two years.
4. The teaching load also meant that, as a matter of fact, the thesis topic selection happened at the end of the 4th semester. This is far from ideal. Thesis topic selection should happen as early as possible, in order to make sure that the maximum amount of time is spent on preparing the thesis, ideally the full three years.
5. Another critical concern is the with both quality and quantity of published papers not just by the students, but also by the faculty. A PhD programme should be a centre of excellence, training scholars who contribute well to the science at the highest level. This is not the case here, and requires urgent attention, including incentivising publication for both staff and students, both through formal assessment requirements and through rewards schemes.

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. The principal advantage offered by the programme is the close relationship between staff and students. The panel noted a real rapport in this regard, and an impressive work ethic.
2. The library resources and access to databases have been strongly improved, and can be considered of high quality.
3. The faculty are highly responsive to suggestions for improvement and have acted on them in the past.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. The programme, in truth, is far from a standard PhD programme. It instructs students via classes in the first two years, and fails to offer them sufficient independent research time to undertake real PhD level work.
2. There is a serious lack of internationalisation.
3. The staff are not publishing nearly enough at a high level.
4. The students are not supported and encouraged to publish at a high level.
5. The programme does not make a serious contribution towards advancing the legal science.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. The improvements to the library in recent years are remarkable and to be commended.
2. The motivation of staff is excellent; they clearly care about their work and the students' welfare.

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

Minimal legal conditions:	
1. Higher education institution (HEI) is listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations in the scientific area of the Programme, and has a positive reaccreditation decision on performing higher education activities and scientific activity.	YES.
2. HEI delivers Programmes in the two cycles leading to the doctoral Programme, i.e., first two cycles in the same area and field/fields (for interdisciplinary Programmes), and employs a sufficient number of teachers as defined by Article 6 of the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (OG 24/10).	YES.
3. HEI employs a sufficient number of researchers, as defined by Article 7 of the Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing Licence for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organisations and Content of Licence (OG 83/2010).	YES.
4. At least 50% of teaching as expressed in norm-hours is delivered by teachers employed at the HEI (full-time, elected into scientific-teaching titles).	YES.
5. Student: teacher ratio at the HEI is above 30:1.	NO ¹
6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public.	YES (3/3 available for public access on DABAR repository)
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 for passing a positive opinion	
1. HEI 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).	NO ²
3. The doctoral Programme is aligned with the HEI's research strategy.	NO
4. The candidate : supervisor ratio at the HEI is not above 3:1.	YES.
5. All supervisors meet the following conditions: a) PhD, elected into a scientific title, holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching	NO, see comments

¹ This was determined by reference to the statistical data supplied in the self-evaluation report, after cross-referencing had been completed, and on the basis of questions posed by the panel during the site visit.

² The assessment grade here was 2 (in the initial phase of implementation)

position and/or has at least two years of postdoctoral research experience; b) active researcher in the scientific area of the Programme, as evidenced by publications, 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); f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory work.	below
Comment: a) YES. b) NO: some supervisors have no papers published; the majority have 1 or 2; and 7 out of 19 do not have any project activity in the last five years, h index is very low (1-2) for vast majority of supervisors; c) NO (not upon enrolment); d) NO, many (7) have no project exposure during the past five years; e) NO, not all (although many staff members had undergone pedagogical training, upon closer inquiry, it was clear that such training had little to do with supervision); f) YES.	
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.	a) YES. b) NO. See Quality Assessment 1.6.
Comments: a.) According to the table in SER, not all teachers have publications (more than few do not have any), and information on citation or h index is missing for majority of teachers, while others in majority have h index 1-2.	
7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment committees.	NO (is a member of assessment committee).
8. The Programme ensures that all candidates 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.	NO.
Comments: The PhD Programme is envisaged as a three-year Programme, but teaching carries on for at least 2 years and takes between 70 and 100 ECTS (depending on what research seminars are counted into). A thesis proposal is due at the end of the second year, or before the third year. This leaves only the third year for research on the thesis. This is not optimal or appropriate for a PhD	

programme, and is unlikely to advance legal science.

Also, only one doctoral student published a paper resulting from doctoral research (although, in principle, a published paper seems obligatory and brings ECTS necessary for completion). Completed theses were not demonstrative of research excellence.

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.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>Not all supervisors and teachers have publications, and many have no project exposure in past 5 years.</p> <p>The number of citations in past 5 years is very low, and the h index ranges between 1 and 2 for most of the supervisors and teachers.</p> <p>The list of research projects furnished in the self-evaluation report includes mostly projects that have been completed long before 5 years ago (the time period for SER) and only three were running during the SER period (these in principle are not research projects and HEI is not the holder of the grant): Planning the future of cross-border families; TRANSFORMATION – New code of practice in management of NATURA 2000 and protected areas; and SEE EU Cluster of Excellence in European and International Law.</p> <p>Very little evidence of funding or research excellence was provided, apart from the establishment of a Jean Monet chair. Even there, the funding attracted was meagre in the circumstances.</p> <p>Very few significant international publications have been produced at the faculty in recent years.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>Incentives need to be provided to amend the points listed above.</i></p>
1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study Programme ensure quality doctoral education.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The overall workload of teachers is within the limits of Collective Agreement and legal requirements.</p> <p>However, with regard to the doctoral programme, there is</p>

	<p>undoubtedly too much teaching. The fact that students are effectively obliged to take a large number of taught courses during the first two years of their doctoral studies is entirely inappropriate. The panel is concerned that teachers are to some degree financially dependent upon the existence of such courses, providing pressure to retain them.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>Supervision of doctoral researchers on an individual basis is more appropriate. The existence of such courses is a distraction and should be discontinued.</i></p>
<p>1.3. The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral Programme.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The majority of teachers are active, at least to some degree. However, according to the table in the SER, not all have active research profiles.</p> <p>The panel was concerned about the small number of papers, lack of citations, h index, and project activities in which they are the project leaders, as well as the international exposure of publications and collaborative activities.</p> <p>In addition, many of the most cited articles in Scopus Journals were not legal, though published by persons working at the law faculty. Inter alia, the most cited article by the whole faculty in the last five years was actually from a medical journal. Once this was removed, the remainder of total citations was very low. See 2.3. below for more details.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>A metric-centred system, involving rewards for high-level publications, should be implemented.</i></p>
<p>1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>In light of the above, the panel expressed doubts concerning the quality of supervision. If the supervisors are not actively engaged in the science internationally and at the highest level, their aptitude for supervision at the highest level must necessarily be called into question.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>Measures should be undertaken to encourage and oblige supervisors to engage in the science internationally.</i></p>

<p>1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The HEI has a number of prizes in order to encourage publication on the part of its staff, which is to be commended. However, the methods employed in this regard are problematic.</p> <p>Firstly, the metric used to assess whom should receive the prize is qualitative (who can write the most articles in a year) rather than qualitative (who can contribute to the science).</p> <p>Secondly, there is no evidence that the existence of this prize is pushing staff to strongly improve their research profiles.</p> <p>In addition, while staff have undergone pedagogical training in some cases, there is no evidence that such training pertains to supervision particularly.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>The above issues need to be tackled immediately.</i></p>
<p>1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the Programme discipline.</p>	<p>High Level of Quality</p> <p>Some literature is available directly in the Law school library, which includes a section for PhD reading materials, as well as in the “mini-libraries” faculty members have in their offices. Students can also use the interlibrary loan service to order books from other libraries. The library has recently increased the number of subscriptions to online journal databases, which now also include HeinOnline, etc. Students can access online resources anytime via VPN, without being physically present at the school.</p> <p>The library is open 8AM-7PM, while books can be checked out between 9AM-7PM. The panel recommends extending the library hours to 8PM, especially to accommodate part-time students who work longer hours. The students also reported that the support staff was very accommodating and helpful, from extending the hours (if needed) to quickly procuring books via interlibrary loans etc.</p> <p>The panel noted that the library has been significantly improved in the past five years. This is to be strongly commended, as is the attitude of the library’s staff, which</p>

	<p>was extremely positive and widely praised by the students.</p> <p>While students receive plenty of info on calls for conferences or funding, there is very little funding provided by the Programme itself. Some students reported that their participation cost for international conferences were covered, but other said they had to pay out-of-pocket with no reimbursement. Sometimes the faculty attending the same conference provides transportation, but these seem to be informal arrangements. Based on our conversations with students, the Programme does not provide any financial resources for their research.</p>
2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME	
<p>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.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The Programme was created in 2014, pursuing the decision by the HEI's Senate and based on the 2013 Elaborate for Doctoral Studies. However, both the Elaborate and the Programme itself had to be revised in 2015, due to inadequacies observed in the first generation of the Programme. The panel would also like to commend the Programme leadership for further changes introduced to the Programme based on recommendations made in the previous ASHE review. This is reflective of an open and positive attitude, and the panel hopes that recommendations in the present report will be taken in the same spirit.</p> <p>The panel was provided with the "Strategic Program of Scientific-research activity for the period 2015-2020" for the Programme. The strategic program has 7 dimensions, with a special focus on two of these, namely "scientific research" and "international cooperation", for which specific aims and expected outcomes are also defined. The strategic program also lists research topics, as well as specific goals and related (key performance) indicators of achievement, along with methodologies for their calculation.</p> <p>However, although ostensibly intended to detail the elements of the "Strategic Plan", this "Strategic Program" is still rather high-level, and does not include direct actions and recommendations. (The panel has also received the Action Plan that the Programme created and implemented</p>

in 2015/16 following the previous assessment by ASHE. Our recommendation is that something similar to this Action Plan should be appended to any strategic program.)

Additionally, in the strategic program itself, there is no attempt at the “identification of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs” that the Programme should address. (It is possible that those were provided in the Elaborate that was referenced in the self-evaluation review, but the panel was not provided with the copy of the Elaborate.) Consequently, the list of “research topics” for the 2015-20 period reads like the laundry list of research interests of the faculty (this impression is further strengthened by having topics listed in alphabetical order, rather than in conceptually/thematically coherent clusters), while at the same time, there is no assessment of which subfields / topics are insufficiently covered and what kind of research profiles among faculty (and students) are needed.

Furthermore, the indicators in the strategic program do not always correspond to the goals they are supposed to measure, nor do they collectively capture some of the key aspects of those goals. E.g. for the goal “Improvement of the quality of postgraduate studies (specialist study, PhD study), adjustment to the needs of labor market [sic]”, the listed indicators are: 1.) number of students enrolled, 2.) student satisfaction, 3.) number of papers in co-authorship, and 4.) number of modules offered. However, the number of students enrolled is in part determined by Programmes own admission quotas, tuition fees, etc. and is hardly a direct measure of the Programme’s “quality” (after all, students can flock to bad Programmes.) Same holds for the number of modules offered. On the other hand, not a single indicator refers directly to international cooperation, even among those measuring the goal of “Encouragement of involvement of teaching staff in national, international and European projects and other forms of scientific-research activity”. Finally, none of these indicators are provided with actual targets and/or external peer benchmarks, making objective progress assessment harder and performance comparison with peers *de facto* impossible.

Recommendation:

- Prepare a detailed mid-term (3-5 year) strategy plan defining research priorities, setting clear targets

	<p><i>(comparable to external benchmarks) in key KPIs and creating an incentive system, identifying research/teaching/student profiles for recruitment, laying out financial plan, etc. Refresh every year and review every five years.</i></p>
<p>2.2. The Programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>As mentioned above, the courses offered, and research strategy seem driven more by the existing expertise and research interests of current faculty members involved in the Programme, than being derived based on assessment of “needs”.</p> <p>Furthermore, to truly align the Programme with the Law School’s mission to “achieve excellence in scientific-research and educational process” as well as HEI’s mission to “[prepare] students for professional work based on scientific knowledge and methods” and “to involve students in scientific research activities”, will require a stronger curricular emphasis on research methods, more frequent involvement of doctoral students in the research projects carried out by the faculty, and financial support for students to cover the costs of conducting own research or attending international conferences.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>- Prepare strategy plan (supra at 2.1.), and implement other changes highlighted elsewhere in this review.</i></p>
<p>2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the success of the Programmes through periodic reviews, and implements improvements.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>Over its five years, the Programme has undergone at least two reviews, both of which led to the implementation of recommended improvements (see also 2.1. <i>supra</i>). The panel recommends that such reviews become a regular internal practice, and be driven by an internally-appointed panel, in order to forego the need for external advice to function as a driver of change.</p> <p>The Programme regularly tracks the success metrics of students, professors, and the institution itself, but some monitoring challenges remain, as noted below.</p> <p>The Programme Director is responsible for monitoring the scientific production and other research activities of students. As part of their progress review, students are also responsible for providing their mentors with information concerning their scientific publications and</p>

	<p>other research activities.</p> <p>The panel was provided with a list of scientific publications and other activities of the alumni and current students, which was rather long (over 80 publications), but mostly with a very limited academic impact – many publications were either in conference proceedings, the HEI's own journals, or even non-scientific journals. Furthermore, the list included publications prior to student's entry into the Programme. It is unclear if there are standardized processes by which these publications are acknowledged/rewarded by the Programme, or that promote publication in more highly-regarded journals. (Although there is an annual excellence award for research publications for the professors, it seems that there is not one for the students. Moreover, as noted above, the research excellence prize for staff is not structured so as to reward excellence, but is rather assessed quantitatively.)</p> <p>Also, while the Programme tracks some longitudinal data on the progress of all students admitted (including inactive students and even those who never enrolled), the dataset that the panel received contained no info on the actual (e.g. job/career change, becoming a parent, losing interest in obtaining an academic degree, financial challenges, dissatisfaction with the Programme itself etc.) or even formal (e.g. failure to enrol in the next semester, failure to submit the work needed for successful completion of a course or a research seminar etc.) reasons for "inactivity".</p> <p>The data does show that only 3 out of 16 (19%) students in 1st generation (enrolled from April 2014) have started their V. semester by September 2018, meaning that almost all other students have by then been <i>de facto</i> inactive for at least 2.5 years. Similarly, only 10 out of 19 (53%) of the 2nd generation students (enrolled from March 2016) have started their IV. semester by September 2018, meaning that by then, the rest have been <i>de facto</i> inactive for at least a year. Hence the panel believes that the Programme would strongly benefit from tracking such data to better understand and try to mitigate some of the underlying causes of delay and attrition.</p> <p>Current students are also surveyed regarding their satisfaction with each of their courses and professors, as well as support services. While overall the grades are</p>
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rather high, the survey has several serious flaws that limit the usefulness of the feedback. Courses and professors are assessed via a single grade, rather than across several dimensions, and there are no open-ended questions, which could provide additional insights. Further constraint is that courses and professors are often rated by a single person (raising further concerns regarding not just about actual, but also expectations of anonymity by the respondents and their potential self-censorship).

With respect to the faculty, the Programme is tracking their publication and other activity, with special attention to the internationally recognized journals (listed on Scopus, WoS, etc.) as well as their impact factor. Furthermore, in 2018, the Law School also instituted excellence awards for faculty, covering: 1.) teaching and student relations, 2.) scientific research, and 3.) application and realization of international and EU research projects.

However, the list of publications by faculty we received from the programme was rather short, and had many publications that were either in conference proceedings or HEI's own journals. Even more concerning was that most of the articles had an extremely low number of citations / impact factor.

Scopus lists only 34 publications by the entire faculty over five-year period (2014-18), with a mere 28 citations in total (~0.8 per publication). Worse still, the articles that attracted the most citations were not in the field of law (an article on radio-therapy of a certain type of cancer had 12 citations, and the only other with more than once citation was in library sciences). Excluding those, the whole faculty published just ~25 Scopus-listed articles in legal sciences with ~10 citations total (~0.4 per publication). While the number of articles on HeinOnline is considerably higher (136 in 2013-18 period, but this includes conference proceedings and HEI's own journals), the citation score is even worse, with just 13 citations in total (~0.1 per publication). Finally, there were 64 WoS-listed publications (+18 that were still being processed) in 2014-18 period, with just 8 citations in total (also ~0.1 per publication).

These results raise considerable concerns regarding the scientific production of the faculty, both in terms of

	<p>quantity and in terms of impact. Monitoring is not in and of itself sufficient, if it is not accompanied by direct measures to address the problem. This panel believes that it is absolutely vital for the success of the Programme to improve scientific production of its faculty.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Collect more data on causes concerning delays in progress and attrition of students.</i> - <i>Encourage publications in peer-reviewed and international journals and support the students by covering the costs of English language proof-reading of papers ready to be submitted to international scientific journals</i> - <i>Establish an excellence award for scientific publications for PhD students. Have this assessed in terms of quality, rather than quantity</i> - <i>Assess the research profiles of the faculty to identify under and over-represented research areas, and incorporate the findings in future recruitment processes</i> - <i>The criteria for excellence award for scientific research should primarily focus on the impact factor of the publications, rather than their quantity</i> - <i>Assure better scientific production of its faculty, whether through improved support and incentives, stricter publication requirements, or even via changes in the faculty personnel.</i>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>In 2017, the Programme created a Supervisory Council and Committee for the purposes of monitoring the work of supervisors, with the latter providing the Law School with guidelines regarding improving the Programme quality in this respect.</p> <p>As noted in 2.3. supra, the Law School (although not the Programme itself) provides one of the excellence awards to faculty for teaching and student relations. However, successful mentorship of a doctoral candidate counts for just 2 out of a maximum of 15 points for that award, limiting the incentive structure for supervisor excellence.</p> <p>Alumni are surveyed anonymously regarding the supervisor's work and concerning their satisfaction with the provided service and quality of the Programme. However, based on the results presented to the panel, it seems that the survey has only five general questions, with</p>

	<p>possible answers placed on a 1-5 scale. Without more open-ended questions, where the students could provide more detail behind the given grade, the usefulness of this survey will remain limited.</p> <p>The Programme Director and Law School's Vice-dean for Science and Post-graduate Studies act as mediators between supervisors and candidates when necessary. As noted in 4.5. <i>sub</i>, the students can also change the mentor/topic once each.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider creating/increasing rewards for supervisors whose students successfully complete their thesis proposals and thesis defences - Improve alumni surveys to capture more relevant data on the strengths and weaknesses of the Programme
<p>2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.</p>	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>Overall, the panel is satisfied with the HEI's efforts at assuring academic integrity and freedom:</p> <p>The HEI has developed an Ethics Code regulating <i>inter alia</i>, "ethical principles in science and higher education" (Section 4.), including integrity, freedom, data collection and representation, academic authorship, plagiarism, counterfeiting, collegial and teacher-student relations;</p> <p>The Programme uses the anti-plagiarism software 'Turnitin', but only for the PhD thesis, while there is no obligation to use such software for PhD topic defences or for seminar and scientific papers.</p> <p>As part of their thesis submission, the students are obliged to sign a "Statement on originality of [submitted] work" and give approval for publishing the doctoral dissertation in institutional physical and digital repositories (including other University libraries). The panel would recommend that a similar statement is also included in the thesis proposal submission;</p> <p>The panel has received no complaints from students or alumni regarding the limiting of their academic freedoms.</p> <p>Students also have a right to change their supervisor (as</p>

	<p>well as their thesis topic) once, based on a written request to the Council and with mandatory comment by the previous supervisor.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Place even stronger emphasis on academic ethics in methodology courses;</i> - <i>Make use of anti-plagiarism software mandatory for PhD topic defence, as well as for seminar and scientific papers, and make such software available to students themselves;</i>
2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and it does include a public presentation, which must be announced both online and on Programme's notification board at least one week prior to defence.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>The Programme should also consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>moving the timing of thesis proposal approval (currently at the end of the fourth semester) to an earlier juncture.</i> - <i>passing an ordinance excluding the thesis' mentor (even if not yet officially designated as such) from the thesis proposal defence committee</i> - <i>Submitting the thesis to international scrutiny</i>
2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The panel was informed that, although the HEI Ordinance only precludes mentors from serving as thesis committee chairs to their mentees, the Programme passed an additional Ordinance in 2018, precluding mentors from serving on the mentee's thesis committee altogether. Also, so far (with three PhD defences), the Programme has satisfied the requirement that "at least one" member of the thesis defence committee must be "an external member or a person who is not a teacher at the postgraduate university study." (Note that, in one case where mentor was also member of the thesis defence committee, that mentor was also the only external member.)</p> <p>Still, despite being publicly available and with English summaries, the exposure of theses to international</p>

	<p>scientific scrutiny remains limited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - both the theses and the thesis defence itself are typically in Croatian; - consequently, external committee members are typically from other HEIs in Croatia or its immediate neighbourhood (ex-Yugoslav countries, without considerable language barriers to Croatian). <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>The above issues should be addressed</i></p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The Programme publishes most of the necessary information on its website and, according to self-evaluation review, a regional daily newspaper “Glas Slavonije”, even occasionally includes a HEI-sponsored insert <i>Sveučilišni glasnik</i> (“University Courier”). It has also produced a booklet with all the relevant information that is both available online and is also distributed to potential candidates (e.g. members of the Croatian Bar) via email. Additionally, based on financial reports, it seems that (at least in certain instances), the Programme has also advertised in the national daily newspaper “Jutarnji List”. The website is also available in English and German.</p> <p>Unfortunately, despite seemingly having a dedicated page for each faculty member, many of the links are not working or point to empty/placeholder pages, while even those with content mostly provide just general biographical data, with little-to-no indication of research profile or interests. (The situation is even worse for the English and German versions.) Thus, the website does not offer prospective students an overview of faculty research profiles and interests, which is key to attracting future academic talent and achieving a best-fit between research interests of students, faculty, and overall Programme.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Make the missing information (in Croatian / English / German) available on the website.</i> - <i>Update faculty profiles (at least in Croatian and English) for all faculty members, listing their research interests, publications, and courses, at the Programme website</i>

	<p>- Consider advertising/publishing information about the Programme in international media.</p>
<p>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).</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The panel found very limited institutional support for candidates' field research or participation in academic conferences (unless specifically organized by the HEI or the Programme). This is despite the existence of financial reports (from "Izvještaj o radu i poslovanju") showing that the Programme's revenues are regularly and considerably outpacing its costs.</p> <p>The programme revenues from the first two generations of students (from 2013 until the end of Nov 2017), collected were ~220% higher than costs. Even excluding the 5% and the 30% of total Programme revenues being earmarked for the University Fund and the Law School respectively, the remaining revenues are still ~110% higher than total reported costs for the period. [Note that the self-evaluation report from 2018 claimed that only 20% of total revenues were earmarked for the Law School, raising the possibility of an even higher disparity between revenues and costs.]</p> <p>Consequently, 34% of total revenues collected during the period remained unspent. All of this suggests that there should be available funds for investment in supporting the students and their research, or that tuition fees could be decreased.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p>- Invest more in the students (stipends, conference funds, research funds) or reduce tuition fees</p>
<p>2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>Given the financial reports that the panel received (<i>supra</i> at 2.9.), which consistently show the Programme revenues to be higher than the costs, and rapid accumulation of unspent funds, the panel cannot agree that the fees are determined based on the real cost of studying.</p> <p>Additionally, it seems that during the 2nd generation of students, the labor costs have been considerably reduced (as the hours taught as part of the Programme were added and counted towards the overall required hours for the faculty), and yet this has not impacted the tuition fees.</p>

	<p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p>- First, assess the costs, align with implementation of the mid-term strategy plan, and then assess the tuition fees as just one of the (and not the only) source of financing.</p>
3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION	
3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>According to the SER, there are 35 doctoral candidates currently enrolled, and 28 have appointed supervisors, meaning that the suggested 3:1 ratio is respected. However, it is unclear how many of these supervisors are formally appointed supervisors, and how many are temporarily appointed until the end of the 4th semester when the formal procedure for the appointment of the supervisor takes place.</p> <p>Supervisors meet the relevant criteria to supervise candidates' research proposals. Their scientific publication output should, however, should be considerably improved (see 2.3. <i>supra</i>).</p> <p>The teaching workload of most supervisors does not seem to exceed the existing legal thresholds. The teaching workload of 4 supervisors does exceed legal thresholds, placing an additional burden on supervision.</p> <p>The Contract on studying at the HEI defines only broad obligations for supervisors and candidates.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>The expert panel recommends the establishment of detailed guidelines for supervision in order to ensure the scientific quality of candidates' work as well as monitoring conducted by HEI to ensure these guidelines are followed.</i></p>
3.2. The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The expert panel is unconvinced that the admission quotas indeed are based on wider scientific, cultural, social and economic needs. However, a number of students have noted the location of the faculty as the reason for the enrolment, confirming the fact that there is some demand</p>

	<p>for a doctoral programme in law in the region.</p> <p>According to the Elaborate of the Doctoral Study Programme of Law: "Taking spatial capacities, equipment and number of teachers into account, the optimal number of students enrolled in Doctoral Study Programme is set to 20." (p. 133, point 4.8) This is a positive practice, ensuring that not too many students are accepted into the program.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>When establishing the admission quotas, the HEI does not take into account of the funding available to the candidates. Only 6 out of 35 students are funded by HEI. Teachers involved in the doctoral programme are involved with a very limited number of projects, and from the panel's meeting with the students, we were able to gather that less than five students are or have been included in these projects at some point.</p> <p>According to the European University Association: "High quality doctoral education requires adequate, sustainable and doctorate-specific funding opportunities." (Salzburg II recommendations, European University Association, 2010, p. 6).</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>The expert panel encourages HEI to proactively look for research projects that could serve as a source of funding for perspective doctoral candidates. The opportunity to participate in research projects is crucial for doctoral students as it allows them to deepen their understanding of scientific research and broaden their professional network.</i></p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The fact that supervisors are only appointed at the end of the 4th semester, when the defence of the research topic takes place, is problematic. Doctoral students do, however, have a provisional supervisor from the 1st semester onwards, who, in most cases, also becomes the formal supervisor. Nevertheless, international standards demand that the student tackles a specific research problem that he or she has chosen before admission, from the beginning of his or her doctoral studies. Exploring various topics for two years and possibly dedicating only one year to the development of the doctoral thesis is in stark contradiction</p>

	<p>with the essence of doctoral studies, “(...) the core component of (which) is the advancement of knowledge through original research” (Salzburg II recommendations, European University Association, 2010, p.4). The expert panel thus highly recommends that a supervisor is appointed to each student in the first semester of the doctoral programme.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>While students were extremely satisfied with the flexibility and frequency of communication with their supervisors, the expert panel recommends that, in order to achieve higher scientific production, clear guidelines on how to set up a sustainable research plan are officially established, followed by the supervisors and monitored by the HEI. An informal student-supervisor relationship does not represent an issue as long as high scientific research standards are met. In an effort to reach such standards, we recommend an approach that is a bit more structured. The newly established entry paper that all prospective candidates are obliged to produce could serve as an extremely welcome starting point of a research plan that the supervisor and the candidate should start developing in the 1st semester. The expert panel recommends that a provisional timetable is set up for every student, defining tasks that should be undertaken by the candidate, such as reading specific literature and writing parts of the thesis.</i></p> <p><i>A student mentioned that her supervisor asks her to write a few pages on a topic relevant to her research, which can be considered as an example of good practice. Another positive practice: a teacher told the expert panel that she has a talk with the students on the development of their theses, shows them a motivating video and talks about issues, such as “how many cases should a researcher look at?” and “are there any stupid research questions?”.</i></p>
<p>3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>Wider international recruitment does not seem to take place at HEI. It appears that the HEI does not take any steps to ensure that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited <i>internationally</i>. There have been two foreign students in total participating in the programme.</p>

	<p>Although teachers claim that they would like to offer courses in English, this has not been done so far, preventing non-Croatian speakers from applying to the programme.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>The expert panel recommends that the HEI offers the possibility of English (and other foreign language) courses as well as makes an effort to promote their programme internationally in order to attract highly motivated students from different countries.</i></p>
3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The selection process is public and includes an interview as well as a motivation letter in which candidates are expected to briefly elaborate on a research topic that they would like to further explore. A welcome addition in 2018 was an entry paper that the candidates must likewise submit in which their research question, methodology and potential scientific contribution of their future research are described on a few pages.</p> <p>However, during the site visit it became clear that not many candidates were rejected from the programme indicating that HEI does not only pick the best applicants. It is commendable that teachers encourage students to continue their studies, even if they see that their progress is insufficient. Yet, HEI should be cautious about accepting students who are only interested in obtaining a degree as well as students who would only like to expand their knowledge of a chosen field of Law without a clear interest in producing <i>original</i> scientific research.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>A more vigorous selection procedure should be implemented, in order to ensure only excellent candidates are selected.</i></p>
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.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>According to the SER (p.45) the applicants are entitled to look into their application dossiers and the candidates who have been denied admission are given the reasons for the rejection as well as the information on the possibility of duly challenging the decision of HEI to reject their</p>

	application.
3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The HEI has established a procedure for recognizing prior learning and achievements of doctoral candidates.</p>
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.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The HEI has an ordinance that describes candidates' rights only in the very broadest of terms.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>The expert panel encourages the HEI to revise the ordinance and describe in detail how structured and effective supervision should be provided. In order to ensure that the candidate's research will make a valid contribution to the scientific field, clear guidelines for supervisors should be established. These guidelines should include: the obligation of the supervisor to formulate a research plan at the beginning of supervision (see 3.4), the obligation of the supervisor to meet (live/video chat/phone call) with the candidate at least once a month to discuss the candidate's research topic as well as the obligation to work on the candidate's research proposal from the time the supervisor is appointed (which should be in the 1st semester).</i></p>
3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression at HEI could be improved. It is commendable that teachers are continuously informing students about possible international conferences and other opportunities that students might be interested in via emails. Students reported that they are obliged to write and/or present papers as a way of passing exams which allows them to acquire academic writing and presentation skills. This is indeed a good alternative to written exams, yet, a course on academic writing and presentation skills would nevertheless be welcome, allowing students to learn the basics.</p> <p>Another positive practice is the Doctoral Colloquium which serves as a platform to exchange experiences and ideas and to plan future activities and three doctoral conferences. However, the Colloquium, which is supposed to take place twice a year was only carried out once so far. Furthermore, only six students are funded by the HEI and the funds available for students, who are not funded by HEI to visit</p>

	<p>international conferences abroad appear to be quite limited or almost non-existent. Additionally when asked about how the acquisition of general/transferable skills is achieved, management replied that they do not have special activities planned because they are a small programme.</p> <p>The HEI states in its SER that 35 PhD candidates have published a total of 82 scientific papers (an equivalent to 2.34 papers per student) (and) have participated in 64 conferences (i.e. 1.82 conferences per student)." (p.47) However, of the articles that the panel was able to obtain, a quarter of them were written before the initiation of the programme (2014) and a number of them were professional, not scientific papers.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>The expert panel recommends HEI to take steps to ensure: - that more funding is available for perspective students' studies as well as for visits to international conferences;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>- that more students are included in research projects;</i> <i>- that the Doctoral Colloquium is held twice a year as envisioned;</i> <i>- that Doctoral Colloquium also serves as an opportunity for students to practice presenting their research, get feedback from peers and other Programme faculty, and foster the sense of intellectual community;</i> <i>- that additional courses are offered on project management/project application/presentation skills/academic writing skills.</i>
4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES	
4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral Programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>When compared with international standards, the programme is found significantly wanting.</p> <p>This is in particular notable in relation to time and depth of research (at least 3 years of independent research in full time equivalent, on a scientifically relevant issue, with new and inventive results are the norm, whereas this programme crams the scientific work into the final year)</p> <p>Also of concern is the defence/assessment of dissertation. This is generally done either internally or locally, and thus</p>

	<p>fails to assure dissertations are comparable in quality internationally.</p> <p>Another problem concerns coursework. The Salzburg Recommendations II state that not more than 20% of Programme should be courses. However, here, the bulk of the first two years are course.</p> <p>Finally, mentors should be recognised and active researchers (publications on international level, project activities, cooperation with wider social context, other). This is patently not the case here.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>All of the above issues require urgent attention.</i></p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The programme fails to produce future independent researchers with all the skills and knowledge needed to resume academic or other type of careers at an international level. There is little evidence of graduates with a level of research excellence commensurate with receipt of a high level PhD.</p> <p>Theses, as well as other experiences during studying (project activities, conference participation, published papers, generic skills, other) are a proof of this. While students are fulfilling learning outcomes, and while they are clearly happy and well supported, the course design is not conducive to producing this type of researcher.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>Wholesale reform, in order to ensure that the course is more focussed on the doctoral dissertation, with less classroom learning, fewer exams, and more time spent on the thesis, improving its depth and general excellence.</i></p>
<p>4.3. Programme learning outcomes are logically and clearly connected with teaching contents, as well as the contents included in supervision and research.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The programme has a logical and clear structure that students could successfully complete within 3 years and would enable them to realize the stated learning outcomes. The module-based approach, with core and elective module courses, allows students enough flexibility and specialization. The panel does have some concern that the students often get stuck in IV. semester and are unable to</p>

	<p>satisfy the requirements needed to defend their thesis proposals.</p> <p>It should also be noted that higher PhD.-level learning outcomes are not sufficiently realized or only in the later part of the programme. Overall, the research focus both in terms of theoretical breadth and depth, and research methods and research design, should be strengthened.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>It is advisable that at the end of year one (if not earlier), all students declare a topic and are assigned a supervisor, so they can begin working earlier on developing their own research questions, methods and research design.</i></p>
4.4. The doctoral Programme ensures the achievement of learning outcomes and competencies aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The doctoral theses that the panel reviewed were not of a sufficient calibre to represent doctoral level internationally. They would not be acceptable at a Western European university.</p> <p>The panel surmises that, while the staff at the faculty are clearly not engaging enough with international academia, it is not a lack of staff competence that is causing problems. Rather, it is the fact that the research work is, in the main, concentrated into the final year of study.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>Significant reform of the programme, in order to choose a thesis topic much earlier, with less structured class time, and more time developing the doctoral thesis and researching it, in order to ensure a higher quality output.</i></p>
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.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The programme and teaching methods are in principle appropriate for level 8.2 of the CroQF. However, a review of the courses, course contents and teaching methods (based on the syllabi that were provided by the HEI), as well as of the already-defended theses, indicates that the courses still do not sufficiently prepare students for PhD research that is aligned with current international standards, primarily when it comes to research design and methodology.</p> <p>While the Programme now has two mandatory courses in</p>

	<p>research methods and design (Methodology of Social Sciences and Methodology of Legal Sciences), the total number of taught hours in the methods courses stayed the same (as each course is now down to just 15 taught hours, with no workshops or seminars). Furthermore, research methods and research design are not sufficiently covered in other courses and only feature in methods courses. Finally, both methods courses would be improved by “internationalizing” their reading lists, to assure the most up-to-date introduction to current debates, topics and methods in the field. (Methodology of Legal Science would further benefit from introducing a more diverse reading list, as it is currently mostly focused on the course teacher’s own publications.)</p> <p>Teaching methods are mostly class/lecture based and assessment in the form of oral or written exams, which is more appropriate for a Master-level of training.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>The panel recommends reducing or eliminating credits given to students for “attendance” and “participation”, and focus on their written papers, instead of exams.</i></p> <p><i>Also recommended is a more focussed approach to relevant issues such as methods, as noted above.</i></p>
<p>4.6. The Programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.</p>	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>When asked about how the acquisition of general/transferable skills is achieved, management replied that they do not have special activities planned because they are a small programme.</p> <p>Students reported that they are obliged to write and/or present papers as a way of passing exams which allows them to acquire academic writing and presentation skills. This is indeed a good alternative to written exams, yet, a course on academic writing and presentation skills course would nevertheless be welcome, allowing students to learn the basics.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>The expert panel recommends that additional courses are offered for the acquisition of project management/project</i></p>

	<i>application/presentation skills/academic writing skills.</i>
4.7. Teaching content is adapted to the needs of current and future research and candidates' training (individual course plans, generic skills etc.).	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>Courses delivered are flexible and adapted to the individual needs and research plans of the students. Supervisors are available to the students and make an effort to allow them to focus predominantly on their topics of interest. Individual research plans, however, do not exist.</p> <p>There seems to be a discrepancy between the methodology courses offered, which are, according to the teachers, adapted to individual student's needs and the quality of methodology design in the finished doctoral theses. It thus appears that the teaching programme does not sufficiently prepare students for current and future doctoral research.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>The expert panel recommends that supervisors create individual research plans with each of their candidates at the time they are appointed. Furthermore, efforts should be made by HEI that the knowledge the students gain at the methodology classes translates to high quality research methods and research design in their doctoral theses.</i></p>
4.8. The Programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.	<p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The level of internationalisation at the faculty in general, and in relation to the programme, specifically, is insufficient.</p> <p>There is a lack of internationalisation of the thesis defence committee. There is little mobility of students. Mobility of supervisors and their international exposure are also of concern. Issues in relation to English-written thesis and courses in English have already been outlined. There is also a dearth of papers in internationally recognized journals.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p><i>As stated earlier, such issues require attention.</i></p>

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.