



**REPORT
OF THE EXPERT PANEL
ON THE REACCREDITATION
OF THE UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE (DOCTORAL)
PROGRAMME
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
UNIVERSITY OF ZADAR**

**Date of the visit:
30th January 2019**

30th March 2109

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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 *International Relations* on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) of the Programme, other documentation submitted by University of Zadar and a visit to the place of delivery in Zagreb at Libertas International University.

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 *International relations*.

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:

Professor Dibyesh Anand, University of Westminster, the chair

Assoc. professor Peter W. Zuidhof, University of Amsterdam, moderator

Professor Ciarán Burke, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, moderator

Katja Simončič University of Ljubljana

Marko Radenović, Princeton University and McKinsey & Company

Dr Igor Štikš, University in Edinburgh and Faculty for Media and Communication

Dr Daniela Angelina Jelinčić, Institute for Development and International Relations

Dr Teresa Murjas, Reading University

Matteo Tracchi, University of Padua.

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

- Professor Dibyesh Anand, University of Westminster – chair
- Dr Igor Štikš, University in Edinburgh and Faculty for Media and Communication
- Dr Daniela Angelina Jelinčić, Institute for Development and International Relations
- Dr. Peter-Wim Zuidhof, (Associate Professor), University of Amsterdam (Dept. of European Studies)
- 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.

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

- Marina Matešić, 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.

The Expert Panel also had a tour of the library and the classrooms.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: International Relations

Institution delivering the programme: University of Zadar

Institution providing the programme: University of Zadar and Libertas International University

Place of delivery: Libertas International University, Zagreb

Scientific area and field: Social Sciences, Interdisciplinary Social Sciences

Number of doctoral candidates: 71

Number of funded doctoral candidates: 0

Number of self-funded doctoral candidates and those funded by employer: 71

Number of inactive doctoral candidates: 3

Number of doctoral candidates whose supervisor has been appointed officially (on University Senate): 20

Number of teachers: 21

Number of supervisors: 14 appointed to 20 doctoral candidates

Learning outcomes of the study programme:

LO 1: interpret and critically evaluate theories of international relations and diplomacy

LO 2: compare and critically interpret issues in the field of international relations, diplomacy and international business

LO 3: list the most significant research in the fields of international relations, diplomacy and international business

LO 4: adequately use research concepts and categories in the fields of international relations, diplomacy and international business

LO 5: postulate, formulate, explain and operationalise issues in the fields of international relations, diplomacy and international business

LO 6: demonstrate the ability to conceptualise, design, implement and adapt the process of scientific research

LO 7: demonstrate the ability to collect and process data relevant for scientific research in the area of social sciences

LO 8: formulate a scientific hypothesis and use methods of proving and disproving scientific hypothesis in the field of international relations

LO 9: autonomously and independently research issues of international relations in the broadest sense and publish original research results

LO 10: participate in scientific research team work and conceptualise new scientific-research projects in the fields of international relations, diplomacy and international business

LO 11: critically analyse, evaluate and synthesize new and complex research ideas on international phenomena

LO 12: apply fundamental indicators related to diplomacy trends

LO 13: apply knowledge in foreign affairs to suggest strategies in specific situations

LO 14: demonstrate the ability to communicate and negotiate on a diplomatic level

LO 15: apply knowledge in the area of diplomatic skills in development of a country

LO 16: interpret and critically contemplate the globalisation phenomenon from a political, ethical, economic and social aspect

LO 17: analyse the political and social significance of international and national security

LO 18: connect global trends with the situation in Croatia and predict new trends in diplomacy, international relations and international business

LO 19: use logic, theories, concepts and functions of existing international institutions and international organisations

LO 20: critically and theoretically contemplate the dynamic role of international institutions in international politics and its consequences on countries and citizens

LO 21: connect and synthesize knowledge in various approaches to international and global phenomena

LO 22: identify ethical issues in the fields of international relations, diplomacy and international business, and apply ethical contemplation and argumentation

LO 23: publish scientific papers in accordance with scientific and professional standards

LO 24: disseminate scientific knowledge and use scientific arguments to communicate with colleagues, the broader scientific community and wider social environment in their disciplines of international relations, diplomacy and international business.

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

Taught/research ratio: **60/120**. According to the SER, the entirety of the first year is exclusively reserved for coursework. The “approximate” (sic) PhD topic and approved supervisor are among 4th semester enrolment requirements, while the dissertation synopsis defence is a prerequisite for enrolment in the 3rd year (5th semester) of the programme.

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 (SER, 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 to **deny the license** (and to stop the admission process immediately).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. The scope and content of the doctoral programme does not conform to the international relations field as a defined subset of political science. The Expert Panel has no confidence that this can be remedied in a short-term period. Theoretically, however, in order to fix this, HEI should improve the curriculum with more traditional areas of IR theory and methods, which are now only partially covered and hire teachers in the field of political science/IR sub-field accordingly.
2. The scope and the content of the programme is more aligned with an international business degree or an international MBA programme, and does not correspond to the PhD level. A number of enhancements are required in this respect, e.g. in the quality of theses, selection of best candidates, teachers' competences, academic integrity, methods training, etc.
3. The absence of supervising capacities within the field is evident. For the currently enrolled students, the Expert Panel suggests changing the name of the entire programme and the degree it offers so that it corresponds to the field of interdisciplinary social sciences. As it stands now, the HEI should not continue issuing PhD degrees in international relations. Also, capacity-building of existing HEI supervisors is advised so that the enrolled students get the best possible supervision for their dissertations.
4. Required processes are understood in a very flexible way and are often not followed (e.g. non-compliance with criteria in admissions), or procedures are set in a way which allows for their avoidance (e.g. selection of reviewers for the approval of doctoral programme which is potentially biased due to the fact that the reviewers are proposed by the applying programme itself; possibility for the HEI Senate to ignore the negative review). The Expert Panel strongly advises setting unambiguous procedures so as to assure academic integrity.
5. Quality of theses does not comply with the PhD level programme. Time and depth of candidate's research is not satisfactory, so supervisors should be assigned earlier. Also, it is recommended that supervisors hold mid-or senior positions (not entry level positions of 'docent');
6. Teachers' competences should be enhanced in terms of a greater number of published papers in competitive scientific journals as well as in their involvement in research projects. Teachers should endeavour to benchmark their work with their international peers.

7. Institutional support for students, in terms of assuring finances for candidates' participation in conferences, publishing of papers, involvement in research projects and assuring appropriate literature, should be enhanced. This could potentially also result in an increased number of published papers by doctoral candidates, which has also been detected as an issue.
8. International exposure of teachers and candidates, as well as of the programme itself, should be greatly enhanced by promoting greater mobility, involvement in research and exchange programmes, as well as publishing in competitive scientific journals.

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning;
2. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. The programme does not conform with the IR field;
2. The programme is not at the PhD level;
3. Supervision quality issues;
4. Weak final outcomes;
5. Weak publishing activities by the teachers, publishing in non-competitive journals, low h-index, low number of teachers involved in research projects;
6. Tendency to non-comply with or circumvent the procedures in place;
7. Inexistence of financial support to students in their research activities.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

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

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| 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 (all 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). | NO* |
| <p>* The programme is listed in the field of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences. Neither University of Zadar not DIU Libertas do not deliver programmes on BA and MA level in the field and subfield of interdisciplinary social sciences.</p> <p>According to the legal framework both institutions should employ at least 16 full time academics in the fields relevant to the doctoral programme. University of Zadar employs sufficient number of academics, while Libertas has only 4 academics registered in the Registry of Scientists. As far as presented in Agency's information system, only one teacher and two more supervisors were elected in political science/international relations. Although the Expert Panel requested this information, the total number of teachers-researchers at DIU Libertas is unclear, as the management did not deliver requested contracts. Agency information system shows 36 teachers though majority of them comes from Zadar. In total, Libertas staff amounts to 9 FTE or 7 fulltime teachers.</p> | |
| 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 below 30:1. | - |
| According to the SER, the student : teacher ratio is below 30:1. The University of Zadar student : teacher ratio is 13.74:1 and the DIU Libertas one is 24.73:1, but as stated above, the Panel was unable to find out how many full times employees Libertas has. | |
| 6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public. | NO* |
| * No theses so far were made available at the DABAR repository. The Panel was told that both theses were in the process of implementing changes suggested by the defence committee as well as being proof-read for publication. More than 8 months have passed since the theses were defended in May 2018. | |
| 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, | YES* |

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| 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. | |
| * Article 42 of the Ordinance on Postgraduate Study Programmes at the University of Zadar. | |
| 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. | NO* |
| Note: Only one person from the list of teachers presented to the Panel is in the field of political science or international relations or interdisciplinary social sciences. | |
| 2. In the most recent reaccreditation, HEI had the standard Scientific and Professional Activity marked as at least "partly implemented" (3). | NO* |
| *Uni Zadar report for Social Sciences (site visit May 2015, final report July 2015) had the standard Scientific and Professional Activity graded as "starting phase of implementation" (2). | |
| 3. The doctoral programme is aligned with the HEI's research strategy. | NO* |
| *See 2.2. | |
| 4. The candidate : supervisor ratio at the HEI is not above 3:1. | NO* |
| *There are 68 active students, and currently 15 supervisors, who actually supervise at least one student. Aside from them, there are another 13 teachers who are currently not supervisors. In total, it is a pool of potential 28 supervisors, which results in the 2.42:1 ratio at the moment. However, if more than 16 students are admitted this year, the 3:1 ratio will be surpassed. This poses a problem since it was already announced that the programme would accept up to 25 students in 2019. Further on, the real problem is seen in the fact that supervisors supervise topics in fields outside of their expertise and most of the supervisors/potential supervisors are at the entry level positions (docent). | |
| 5. All supervisors meet the following conditions: a) PhD, elected into a scientific title, holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching 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. | NO* |
| a) many do not hold teaching or scientific position - some are retired or work outside the academic or research system; b) there are 15 appointed supervisors of which only two in are Political Sc. H-index is non-existent or low, ranges between 1 and 3-4. The provided tables state a number of publications, but the majority of supervisors does not comply with the required criteria. The detected issues are: - <u>supervisors do not have publications in the past 5 years</u> | |

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| <p>- <u>supervisors are appointed to fields which are marginal to IR,</u> - <u>they supervise on topics falling outside their academic qualifications</u> - <u>they publish primarily in DIU Libertas's own</u> - <u>they tend to publish in publications edited by or co-authored with the same person</u></p> <p>c) no research proposal upon admission (only 20 have a topic of research, out of 68 active students) d) no funding available for any of the candidates e) and f) We did not find much convincing evidence</p> | |
| 6. All teachers meet the following conditions: a) hold a scientific or a scientific-teaching position; b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the course. | NO* |
| <p>* a) Many do not work at an academic institution or hold a title, or are retired b) a large number of supervisors have no or few research papers or publications in past 5 years, or have no publications at all or these are not research publications.</p> | |
| 7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment committees. | NO* |
| *SER: "A supervisor participates in committees in accordance with the Ordinance on Postgraduate Study Programmes of the University of Zadar". This ordinance allows supervisors in the 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* |
| The programme encompasses 8 basic courses throughout first year – 60 ECTS (1/3 of the programme). Second year (3 rd semester) includes again a structured programme in a form of two seminars. This also brings 30 ECTS (90 in coursework in total). All and all half of the programme is structured in courses. The thesis proposal is envisioned only at the end of 4 th semester. Majority of students (51 out of 71) do not have research proposal, nor a supervisor. | |
| 9. For joint programmes and doctoral schools (at the university level): cooperation between HEIs is based on adequate contracts; joint programmes are internationally recognized, and delivered in cooperation with accredited HEIs; the HEI delivers the programme within a doctoral school in line with the regulations (it is based on contracts in the case of multiple institutions, and the HEIs ensure good coordination aimed at supporting the candidates); at least 80% of courses are delivered by teachers employed at HEIs within the consortium. | YES |

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

| | Quality assessment (“high level of quality” or “improvements are necessary”) and the explanation of the Expert Panel |
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| 1. RESOURCES: TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, RESEARCH CAPACITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE | |
| <p>1.1. HEI is distinguished by its scientific/artistic achievements in the discipline in which the doctoral study programme is delivered.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary Based on the teachers' research profile and publication record, and the HEI's approach in delivering the doctoral programme in 'international relations', HEI has so far failed to position itself as a distinguished institution providing a high-quality doctoral programme. This specifically applies to how the programme relates to the discipline of international relations. Almost all teachers, except 2 or 3 of them, do not have an appointment within the discipline of international relations and do not have relevant publications in the field. The content of the curriculum puts together diverse topics, ranging from diplomacy to business, under the umbrella of 'international relations', over-stretching the usual understanding of international relations and of scientific interdisciplinarity.</p> <p>This is further not supported neither by the academic achievements in terms of supervisors'/teachers' publications, nor their project exposure in past 5 years. The number of citations in the past 5 years is very low, h-index is non-existent or ranges between 1 and 3-4 for most supervisors and teachers. The list of HEI's involvement in research projects was not provided, but according to the information obtained during the site visit, it is low.</p> <p>The current programme is barely covered with what is internationally recognized expertise and knowledge in international relations to be able to offer a doctoral degree in that field. The entire programme, as well as the research profile of teachers, has to be clearly aligned with a recognizable scientific field. This is not currently the case.</p> |
| <p>1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary Formally speaking, the number of teachers and their workload would be sufficient to ensure quality doctoral education. However, as mentioned in 1.1., the profile of the teachers (in some cases also non-scientific) and</p> |

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| | <p>qualifications do not ensure a high quality doctoral education in the field of international relations. A substantial number of teachers are external teachers and not academics, nor academics working in academic institutions. The majority of lecturers employed by DIU Libertas are not active researchers.</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 As mentioned above, apart from a very limited number of teachers with expertise in the field of international relations, the majority of teachers are not highly qualified researchers and many of them are not active researchers in terms of (international) publications and participation in (international) research projects. Publication record is weak and for the most part not in the field of IR. Many teachers come from 'real sector', meaning they have experience in diplomacy, local and international business or in international institutions. However, the connection between their experience in the 'real sector' and their research profile is not established and it does not seem to be the HEI's priority. The Panel understands that some doctoral students might benefit from the 'real sector' experience of some teachers, but the programme as it stands does not provide quality <u>doctoral (scientific)</u> programme i.e. cannot ensure the minimal quality of a PhD scientific degree that the HEI is accredited for.</p> |
| <p>1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary As noted, the supervisors' research profile reveals that they mostly do not work in the field of IR and that not all researchers are research active. Too many supervisors have only an entry-level scientific position (<i>docent</i>), which necessarily poses the problem of quality in producing the doctoral thesis. For instance, 5 out of 6 supervisors of the two PhD dissertations defended at the HEI are at the level of assistant professors (<i>docent</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 There appears to be no clear mechanism to assess qualifications and competences in the relevant discipline. The uneven nature of hiring/employing/subcontracting teachers suggests there are not sufficient mechanisms to ensure that the qualifications and competencies correspond to the field of IR. Again, we are faced with a voluntary and highly subjective assessment of what IR are (a wide umbrella for anything <i>international</i>), which is in conflict with internationally established scientific fields. This creates a conflict between the degree in IR that the HEI</p> |

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| | <p>can issue on one hand, and the actual doctoral programme and, finally, the expertise that students actually receive on the other.</p> |
| <p>1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary DIU Libertas does have a library that can provide for some basic research, but certainly cannot provide high-quality resources for doctoral research (library resources in the field of IR are very weak). The University of Zadar provides on-line access to students. Accessing the Zadar-based facilities is not practical due to the fact that the programme is based in Zagreb. Students could use external facilities such as the National and University Library. Financial resources for the needs of student research are not available (e.g. the costs for conference participation), and students are very rarely involved in the research project by their supervisor. Mobility scheme is formally existent, but students rarely participate in it. There is no special space dedicated only to doctoral students for work and activities.</p> |
| <p>2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME</p> | |
| <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 The programme was established according to the University of Zadar Ordinance on the Procedure of Initiating, Approving, Implementing, Monitoring and Evaluating Doctoral Study Programmes, adopted in February 2012. However, there are some concerns regarding these procedures as outlined in the Ordinance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Article 8 specifies that the two reviewers (one domestic and one international) of the programme, whose reviews are key prerequisite for the approval, are appointed by the HEI Senate, but selected based on the proposal by the applying programme, raising potential concerns about their impartiality. Panel recommendation: The programme should be reviewed by at least 3 reviewers (2 of them international), who should be appointed directly by the Senate, but should not be proposed by the applying programme. 2. Article 8 also seems to imply that even if one of the reviews are negative, the HEI Senate still has the right to decide “on further action”, potentially ignoring or circumventing the negative finding (“Ako je jedna od |

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| | <p>recenzija negativna, Senat donosi odluku o daljnjem postupanju u svezi s predloženim doktorskim studijem.”).</p> <p>Panel recommendation: Following a negative review, the initial accreditation process should stop and the applying programme should have to consider reviewers’ findings and address their concerns before re-applying.</p> <p>3. Neither the 2012 Ordinance nor the 2010 by-laws for approval (“Pravilnik o sadržaju dopusnice te uvjetima za izdavanje dopusnice za obavljanje djelatnosti visokog obrazovanja, izvođenje studijskog programa i reakreditaciju visokih učilišta”, NN 24/10) require the “identification of scientific/artistic, cultural, social and economic needs.”</p> <p>Panel recommendation: Amend the 2012 Ordinance to require the “identification of scientific/artistic, cultural, social and economic needs”.</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>The Vision of the Strategic Programme of the Research Activities in Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts of the University of Zadar 2015-2019 states that the University of Zadar has a strong focus on research; it strives to academic excellence, lifelong learning, mobility and cooperation with European institutions. The Vision of the Strategic Programme of the Research Activities (both 2013 and 2019-2023) of the DIU Libertas states that the University aims to have a distinctive research profile that strives for research excellence and is internationally recognised. The Doctoral Programme of International Relations poorly contributes to these visions given its limited number of publications in general, and especially those in the field of international relations or publications which are not published in relevant scientific journals (which would prove focus on research as well as excellence); small number of research projects in general and no research projects in the area of international relations (especially in the case of DIU Libertas) (which would prove focus on research and possibly cooperation/international recognition); low level of student mobility. In addition, the research topics listed by the University of Zadar’s research mission hardly relate to the field of political science and/or international relations.</p> |

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| | <p>The strategic programmes of both Universities share the following five strategic goals:</p> <p>SG1. To increase research activities;</p> <p>SG2. To increase the quality of research activities;</p> <p>SG3. To enhance the presence of the University in the international research community;</p> <p>SG4. To increase cooperation with the private and public sector as well as with the local community;</p> <p>SG5. To establish new postgraduate studies.</p> <p>Except for the SG5 to which the Doctoral Programme of International Relations directly contributes, and SG4 (e.g. cooperation with the Croatian Chamber of Economy, the City of Zagreb), it is not aligned with neither of the SGs. Thus, neither teachers' scientific production nor the quality of that production (low quality of scientific journals, very low h-index for most of them) contributes to SG1 and SG2. Although both Universities have international contacts, the real contribution to the SG3 would be seen in international research projects which are practically non-existent within the programme of International Relations.</p> <p>In general, there is a poor alignment of the Doctoral Programme of International Relations with the Strategic Programme. The programme, thus, requires major revisions primarily in terms of stronger research activities, their quality, and their internalisation.</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>Given the observed shortcomings in the qualifications of teachers and supervisors regarding their publications, citations, research activity, or field of expertise (as detailed supra in Section 1 of Quality Assessment), whatever monitoring and improvement process is currently taking place, appears to be insufficient.</p> <p>The Panel was informed that the University of Zadar does have some monetary incentives for publishing in higher-ranked / international journals, but it is unclear if these also apply to teachers/supervisors who are directly employed by Libertas, and/or those who are affiliated with external institutions.</p> <p>Furthermore, while faculty members mentioned that there are regular faculty meetings to discuss goings-on, they could not confirm that there were regular meetings to discuss</p> |

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| | <p>strategy for development and improvement of the programme.</p> <p>Finally, there are also student surveys conducted annually for all 7 postgraduate programmes, covering about 20 aspects. The IR programme scored lowest of all 7 programmes in student satisfaction with the quality of teaching (3.9 out of 5), content of teaching (3.9), access to literature (3.7), and even satisfaction with communication with the programme director (albeit still fairly high, at 4.3). The programme also had second-lowest scores in satisfaction with the feedback on submitted written works (3.8), opportunity to test acquired knowledge and skills in practical setting (3.8), and availability of teachers for consultations (4.1). On the other hand, students are satisfied with their mentors, and are familiar with the content of the programme and curriculum.</p> <p>While there have been improvements in certain aspects between 2015/16 and 2017/18 academic years, including in students' impressions of quality and content of teaching, this programme still ranks the lowest or second-lowest in at least a third of analysed aspects.</p> <p>There also seems to be fairly low engagement on the part of the students (only 32% for this programme in 2017/18, and as low as 4% for one of the other programmes), which needs to be addressed to assure the quality of reporting.</p> |
| <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>The appointment of a supervisor proceeds through three stages at which the proposal needs to be approved by the relevant bodies (Doctoral Programme Council, Expert Council, and Senate of University of Zadar), but given that supervisors were approved for topics for which they have little academic credentials and that approved topics sometimes fall well outside of the IR field, the process clearly requires improvements. The problem is likely exacerbated by the fact that University of Zadar itself does not have experts in IR (filling this void was listed as one of the key reasons for partnering with Libertas on this project in the first place), as at least the Doctoral Programme and Expert Councils should have IR experts involved when approving IR theses supervisors.</p> <p>There also seems to be no system for continuous monitoring</p> |

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| | <p>of supervisor performance and the supervisors we spoke to were not aware of such a system being used.</p> <p>The Panel was provided with University of Zadar’s 2006 “Ordinance on evaluation of assistants, postdoctoral candidates and supervisors”. However, that document was primarily intended for full-time PhD students who are already employed by the University as instructors (“asistenti”), of which this programme has none, and it is <i>unclear whether its rules apply to any of this programme’s students</i>. For example, Article 10. of the 2006 Ordinance specifies that at least once in two years, the Senate of University of Zadar, reviews the work of mentors to instructors (“asistenti”) based on report on the work and report and grade by the instructor (“asistent”) of the supervision provided by his/her supervisor.</p> <p>Panel recommendation: Develop own report form for PhD students.</p> <p>There is a mechanism for changing one’s supervisor, as well as a process of mediation between students and mentors, if necessary, which goes through the director of the programme.</p> |
| <p>2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>There are several processes in place to assure academic integrity of student’s work:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A methodology course in the first semester begins with instructions on citations and plagiarism; 2. Students are obliged to sign a statement that they have not plagiarized as part of their thesis; 3. University uses anti-plagiarism software (Turnitin) to check the theses. However, its use is only mandated once the thesis has already been defended and before it is made publicly available. The Panel believes that such checks by supervisor should be mandatory and regular throughout the course of the supervision, and, at the very least, conducted before the thesis defence takes place. <p>There seems to be considerable freedom for students to pursue their own topics of interest in their PhD theses. However, this practice of diversity of topics may pose a challenge for supervisors in terms of their expertise and academic credentials to supervise such PhD theses, as well</p> |

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| | as for the PhD thesis defence committees in the meaningful assessment of the PhD thesis defence and its quality. |
| 2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation. | <p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>Thesis proposal process is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation. The procedures permit a supervisor to be a member of the thesis proposal defence committee. The Panel recommends to abandon this practice so as to assure independence and academic integrity.</p> <p>An important concern about the thesis proposal approval process is that some proposals were approved for topics that do not fall within the domain of International Relations as defined, and that the committee approving the thesis proposal might not have the required expertise.</p> <p>The Panel would also suggest considering moving the timing of thesis proposal (currently at the end of IV semester) to an earlier stage.</p> |
| 2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee. | <p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>In both PhD theses that were defended so far, the Panel has observed several elements of potential conflict of interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One thesis was assessed by a person working in the same institution as the student (the Police Academy in Zagreb), - In another case, the candidate was already working occasionally as a lecturer at DIU Libertas and was effectively assessed by direct colleagues. <p>The Panel has previously (supra in Section 1. and 2.5.) expressed its concern with the scientific capacities of the staff/supervisors in order to provide a sound scientific assessment of the theses.</p> <p>Also, based on the two successfully defended theses, the Panel has noticed that the thesis defence committees had some members coming from the fields different from political science (e.g. library sciences, criminalistics sciences, religious studies). Also all members but one of the defence committees hold junior positions (docent) which is not ideal for doctoral candidates.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Panel was informed that, as of time of our review, the defended PhD theses were still undergoing revisions as per committee recommendations and were thus not made publicly available yet.</p> |
| 2.8. The HEI publishes all necessary information on the study programme, | Improvements are necessary |

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| <p>admissions, delivery and conditions for progression and completion, in accessible outlets and media.</p> | <p>Most of the information on the study programme, curriculum, admission requirements, delivery and progress through and completion of the study programme, as well the current course schedule are published on the DIU Libertas web page and in the Guide for the Joint Postgraduate Doctoral Study Programme of International Relations (available in printed form, as well as digital form at the web pages of both Universities). The programme has occasionally been covered by the media, usually in the form of promotional content.</p> <p>However, potential students cannot see the list of programme's teachers or supervisors, their research, or the syllabi for courses.</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 Expert Panel has received the breakdown of fees and costs. However, since we were not provided with financial reports for the Doctoral Programme, despite having asked for them during our visit, we are unable to fully ascertain whether funds collected are distributed transparently and in a way that ensures sustainability and further development of doctoral education.</p> <p>However, we have heard from the students that the programme does not financially support any potential research expenses or costs of attending relevant conferences. [see 2.10 for more details].</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>The Panel identified certain mismatches between fees and costs as reported:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fees are higher than costs by about 7% (90 vs. 84 thousand HRK) 2. The costs include 8000 HRK for "literature and other support for doctoral students" ("Literatura i ostala podrška doktorandima") – but given the very limited size of the programme library, as well as students' comments that they received no financial support for potential costs of doing their research, the figure seems overinflated. 3. The costs include 7000 HRK for "presentation/conferences" ("Izlaganje/konferencije") but since students' told us they received no financial support for attending relevant conferences, the figure seems overinflated. |

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| | <p>Additionally, it seems that, based on the contract between the University of Zadar and Libertas establishing the Programme, the fees were to be split so that 10% goes to Zadar, 10% to Libertas, and the rest for the programme – it is unclear how this particular agreement is reflected, if at all, in the fees/cost structure we have been provided.</p> |
| <p>3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION</p> | |
| <p>3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary There are currently 68 actively enrolled doctoral candidates and 15 potential supervisors, meaning that if all students were to have a supervisor appointed, the suggested ratio 3:1 would be exceeded. Furthermore, a recent decision of the Council of Postgraduate Studies at the University of Zadar (January 29, 2019), which would allow enrolment of up to 25 new candidates for the academic year 2018/2019, raises further concerns that the HEI admission quotas are not determined based on its teaching and supervision capacities.</p> <p>Supervisors do not always meet the relevant criteria to supervise candidates' research proposals, e.g. they have limited competencies and expertise in IR as well as very few (international) scientific publications.</p> <p>The teaching workload of supervisors does not exceed the existing legal thresholds. However, the HEI defines rather generic obligations for supervisors, candidates and research teams. Therefore, 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.</p> |
| <p>3.2. The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary The Self-Evaluation Report presents hardly any evidence that admission quotas are based on wider scientific, cultural, social and economic needs, except that there is a relatively high interest from candidates.</p> <p>The Expert Panel is concerned that too many candidates are admitted to the programme, reflecting a lenient admission policy that does not seek for the most engaged and talented candidates. We therefore recommend a more critical approach to the selection of doctoral students. Since the admission criteria allow for the opportunity to set the tone</p> |

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| | <p>of the doctoral programme, the Panel is convinced that it is imperative that the HEI sends the message to the potential applicants that research and innovative critical thinking are at the core of doctoral studies. Project proposals should likewise be assessed in line with scientific/artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.</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 admission quotas, the HEI does not seem to take into account the funding available to the candidates, reasoning that ‘all candidates fund the study programme from their own resources or are funded by their employer’.</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). At HEI, none of the candidates are fully funded or co-funded by research projects. It also appears that supervisors are hardly engaging in research projects in which they could include their candidates and give them opportunities to grow academically. In our discussions with 10 of the 15 available supervisors, the Panel was informed that only one supervisor included a student in his research project.</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 HEI pays insufficient attention to the number of candidates admitted in relation to available supervisors: see supra at 3.1. on programme’s unsatisfactory candidate : supervisor ratio. The programme appears to follow the logic of first admitting students, while next looking for (often external) supervisors to meet supervision needs. For a high-quality programme, the reasoning should be the inverse.</p> <p>There are also serious concerns about the fact that supervisors are only appointed at the end of the 4th semester, which is also when the defence of the research synopsis takes place. This means that candidates do not have individually-focused guidance and are not working on their research for the first two years of their doctoral programme. Since “the core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research” (Salzburg II recommendations, European University Association, 2010, p.4), the Expert Panel highly recommends that a supervisor is appointed to each student in the first semester of the doctoral programme.</p> |

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| | <p>The Self-Evaluation Report highlights that “the function of an adviser is often performed by the head of the study programme as well as the entire Council of the Doctoral Studies” (p. 27), a clearly an impossible task considering the number of active doctoral students (68).</p> <p>While students expressed positive feedback regarding 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. The current student-supervisor relationship seems to be rather informal, which does not represent an issue as long as high scientific research standards are met. Since this is not the case, the Panel recommends a more structured approach, including, for example, a supervision log kept by the supervisor to keep track of the dates and content of the meetings with the candidate, general research updates and developments, etc.</p> |
| <p>3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The HEI does insufficiently ensure that candidates are recruited internationally. Apart from an English-language leaflet and webpage, wider international recruitment does not seem to take place at HEI. Although teachers claim to have the language capacities to conduct their courses in English, no courses in English have been offered so far, effectively shutting out international students (except those limited few that speak Croatian) from applying to the programme. The HEI does not take any steps to ensure that interested, <i>talented and highly motivated</i> candidates are recruited internationally. Besides, the case is that not even interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited nationally (see 3.6.).</p> |
| <p>3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The selection process is public and based on a clear criteria. A detailed interview is also part of the application procedure. Despite these measures, several candidates (at least five) have been accepted in the academic year 2017/2018 without meeting the criteria listed by the same HEI (e.g. had GPA lower than 3.5, had no proof of proficiency in English). Furthermore, the system of taking into account four categories summing up to a total score of 40, as outlined in the Self-Evaluation Report (“area and field of the previous study programme, corresponding to this study programme</p> |

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| | <p>and the GPA; scientific and professional activity thus far (corresponding to the disciplines of the study programme); justification of the topic proposal for the desired doctoral research of the candidate; compatibility with research projects at the institution and the availability of supervisors”, SER p. 28) has effectively not been used for the admission to choose the best applicants since all the candidates who applied (except a candidate who applied without a university degree), including a number of candidates who scored less than 25 out of max. 40 points, were accepted.</p> <p>Additional concern is that the programme has admitted applicants who were previously rejected by the University of Zadar. For example, an applicant with GPA below the 3.5 threshold was unanimously denied admittance to another University of Zadar doctoral programme in January 2017, but was then approved for this programme in March 2018, despite no evidence of e.g. additional scientific or even professional activities in the meantime (she scored a zero on that dimension in her application to this programme). Both decisions were signed by the same University of Zadar official. This creates an impression that this programme represents a more expensive, but also an “easier” path to a University of Zadar PhD.</p> <p>Similarly, a few of the admitted applicants had university degree GPAs that were so low they raise serious questions regarding their academic potential (in one case, as low as 2.31, which implies that the candidate must have had received the lowest passing grade in more than 2/3 of his university courses). Although, if the GPA is below the 3.5 threshold, there is a possibility for admittance by providing recommendations by 2 professors. The question raised here is why this practice is introduced since no recommendations should be given to students with such a low GPA for a doctoral study. It is strongly recommended to abandon this practice.</p> |
| <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> | <p>Improvements are necessary See 3.5. and 3.6. above. According to the Self-Evaluation Report, students have a right to complain; however it is unclear whether they are aware of this right.</p> |

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| <p>3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.</p> | <p>High level of quality The HEI has established a procedure for recognizing prior learning and achievements of doctoral candidates.</p> |
| <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> | <p>Improvements are necessary The HEI has an ordinance that describes candidates' rights in general terms. While it is commendable that supervisors are requested to meet with their candidates at least once a month, this is the only precise obligation prescribed in the ordinance. Therefore, 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 meet (live/video chat/phone call) with the candidate at least once a month; the obligation to work on the candidate's research proposal from the time the supervisor is appointed and to keep a log of supervision in regards to these meetings in order to monitor the candidate's progression.</p> |
| <p>3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary The institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression at HEI are not adequate. None of the students are funded by the HEI and, as far as we were able to conclude, no funds are available for students to visit international conferences abroad. The Expert Panel was informed that the HEI organises two conferences a year and manages a journal, where some students participate and publish. However, a doctoral programme must envision more ambitious plans for its candidates, including supporting them to participate and present at international conferences abroad and publish in internationally-recognised journals. According to the Self-Evaluation Report, only one doctoral candidate participated in a research project, 27 participated in conferences and there were 27 publications by doctoral candidates (SER, p. 31). While the Expert Panel acknowledges that the programme has started relatively recently, these numbers still remain too low. Furthermore, according to the Self-Evaluation Report, "Doctoral candidates are encouraged to suggest to their supervisors and co-supervisors participation in scientific and/or doctoral conferences" (SER, p. 30) which appears to put the burden of engagement on the students, instead of recognizing the role that the</p> |

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| | supervisors should play in providing necessary support to the candidates. |
| 4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES | |
| <p>4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The content and quality of the doctoral program and its alignment with international standards as currently offered, is seen as wanting in the following respects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The content of the program is not sufficiently aligned with internationally recognised standards for a PhD in international relations. The program has a strong focus on international business, international economics and economic diplomacy, as well as a strong practical orientation. It only partially covers traditional areas of international relations theory and methods, such as international politics, foreign policy, and international law for instance, or international development, international conflict, and area studies on regions such as Europe, transatlantic relations, or the relation between Asia and Europe for instance. The program as it is currently offered is more aligned with an international business degree, or given its emphasis on teaching by practitioners, as an international MBA programme. For students who have completed the programme and who would want to enter the international labour market, the label International Relations is in a number of respects misleading. 2. This inclination is also reflected in the disciplinary backgrounds of the lecturers and supervisors on the programme, who predominantly have a background in economics or business and many other disciplines ranging from history, philosophy to psychology. Whereas international relations is traditionally seen as a subfield of political science, the number of supervisors who are active researchers in the latter discipline is very low. 3. As a consequence of 1. and 2., the largest share of dissertation topics is more aligned with international business or economics and would not necessarily be classified as belonging to the field of international relations. 4. The level of the courses and research seminars does not sufficiently prepare students for conducting innovative research in international relations (see 4.2 to 4.5 below for further substantiation). The programme does not sufficiently stimulate students to conduct research that is at the frontiers of the field of international relations, both in terms of topics, relation to existing literature and research methods and design. |

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| | <p>5. While only a few dissertations have been defended to date or are in preparation, the dissertations that have been reviewed do not meet international standards of quality, partly in terms of topic, but especially in terms of their relation to the existing literature in the field and research design, research methods and empirical research (see also 4.4 below). The Panel also notes that, according to the documents provided by the HEI (annex Zajednički Poslijediplomski Doktorski Studij „Međunarodni Odnosi“ Tablica 2: Mentori), students do not publish their research nationally or internationally.</p> <p>6. In general, the programme does not impose a sufficiently rigorous research orientation on its students that can match international standards for PhD research in the field of international relations. Due to this, the nature of the programme is more aligned with that of specialist or professional graduate degree, and not a research degree on the PhD level.</p> <p>The Self-Evaluation mentions that its program is aligned with international programmes such as those offered at LSE or the Woodrow Wilson School of Government at Princeton University. The first programme referenced is a programme in Government and not International Relations. The latter is a programme in Public Affairs and offers a PhD curriculum in Security Studies and Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy. Neither of these tracks are comparable to the programme offered, nor are they representative of the field of international relations as internationally understood, and hence do not contribute to aligning the programme internationally.</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 learning outcomes defined by the programme are only partially aligned with level 8.2 of the CroQF. The majority of learning outcomes are formulated on level 7 of CroQF. Especially learning outcomes LO 1-8 and LO 12-22 listed in the Self-Evaluation Report fit within level 7 of CroQF as they are primarily concerned with the critical evaluation and application of existing knowledge and methods to complex problems in international relations, diplomacy and international business, and communicating these in complex social contexts (see also CroQF criteria on knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility). Only learning outcomes LO 9-11 and LO 23 – 24 are reaching for CroQF level 8.2 which requires developing new</p> |

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| | <p>knowledge (facts and knowledge) using new methods, and new forms of communication with a high level of autonomy and responsibility.</p> <p>The stated learning outcomes impart the impression that the programme is not sufficiently geared at training students to become independent researchers who can contribute to the field by extending the frontiers of knowledge, developing new insights, knowledge, methods, or new applications of that knowledge in society. The majority of learning outcomes are directed at developing specialist knowledge (LO 1-8) and effectively applying these in the field of international relations, diplomacy and international business (LO 12-22), and therefore lead to postgraduate specialist and/or professional degree on level 7 of the CroQF.</p> <p>It is necessary that, besides synthesis of existing research in the field, research methods, research design, research ethics, and (international) communication of research become a much more central feature in the programme.</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 that would enable them to realize the stated learning outcomes. It should, however, be noted that the higher PhD-level learning outcomes (especially LO 9-11) are realized only in the later part of the programme.</p> <p>It is necessary that these skills (together with LO 22-24) are made much more central from the outset of the programme. Also as stated under 4.2, much more attention should be devoted to questions of research methods and research design.</p> <p>It must also be noted that practically all students take much longer to complete the programme, which may be taken as a sign that the programme structure poses a problem to students.</p> <p>It is advisable that at the end of year one, 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.</p> |
| <p>4.4. The doctoral programme ensures the achievement of learning outcomes and competencies aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>It was found that the achievements of learning outcomes were not sufficiently aligned with level 8.2 of the CroQF. While the programme has resulted in a very small sample of doctoral theses (2 defended, 1 approved for defence), it was</p> |

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| | <p>noted that these fell short of the requirements of research resulting in new knowledge, methods and solutions on level 8.2 of CroQF. The theses reviewed were especially weak in terms of research methodology. Considerations of methodology (justification of research question and empirical research methods) were too limited. Also, the theses were found wanting in their review of and relation with the existing international field of research.</p> <p>A review of proposal defence forms also suggested that insufficient attention and stress is put on important elements such as international literature review and a discussion of research methods in the proposal stage.</p> <p>It is necessary that attention for relation with international research literature, research methods and research design are improved and brought in alignment with level 8.2 of CroQF.</p> |
| <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> | <p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The teaching methods are in principle appropriate for level 8.2 of the CroQF.</p> <p>However, a review of the courses, course contents and teaching methods (based on the syllabi that were provided by the HEI) in the first year indicates that these courses do not sufficiently prepare students for PhD research that is aligned with current international standards. Especially research methods and research design are not sufficiently covered in the courses, and only feature in the course devoted to methodology. It was also noted that the literature covered was slightly dated and does not provide students with the most up to date introduction to current debates, topics and methods in the field.</p> |
| <p>4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.</p> | <p>High level of quality</p> <p>The programme sufficiently secures the acquisition of transferable skills such as academic writing, presentation skills, project management, and especially cooperation with actors in the field.</p> <p>To facilitate international publication and research dissemination, it is recommended to provide more teaching in English or English language training to students.</p> |
| <p>4.7. Teaching content is adapted to the needs of current and future research and candidates' training (individual course plans, generic skills etc.).</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>Teaching content is sufficiently adapted to the needs and candidate's training. Teaching content and its topics and interdisciplinary nature is generally much appreciated by the students.</p> <p>It was found, however, that the teaching programme does not sufficiently prepare students for current and future PhD</p> |

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| | <p>research (see 4.1 to 4.5 above). It is necessary that more attention is paid to research methods and research design. An additional difficulty is posed by the diverse disciplinary background and relevant prior education of the student population for adapting the teaching content to their needs and those of the field: students have a diverse prior education, none of which is in international relations (because of the absence of this degree on primary and secondary cycle) and some students have a relatively weak academic standing in prior education (see also 3.6).</p> |
| <p>4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary</p> <p>The programme has very little international connections that could help ensure its quality and alignment with international standards. There are no international lecturers or supervisors in the programme. Lecturers and supervisors publish very little in English and in internationally peer-reviewed journals or books (less than ten in past five years). Thesis defence committees have no international members. According to the information provided by the HEI, supervisors hardly participate in (international) research projects (of the list of supervisors provided only 5 out of 15 participated in research project, out of which 4 were external members, not employed by the institution).</p> <p>None of the courses are taught in English, and only very few students write their course work or dissertations in English. Students are hardly stimulated by the programme to conduct their research abroad or attend international conferences. As a consequence, international mobility of the students is low. According to the list provided by the HEI, none of the students who have been assigned a supervisor has published his or her research.</p> <p>It is strongly recommended that international connections are initiated and strengthened, to ensure that the work of both lectures/supervisors and students is more aligned internationally.</p> |

NOTE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPERT PANEL TO THE ASHE'S ACCREDITATION COUNCIL AND QUALITY LABEL

After analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report provided by the HEI as well as of a number of available documents (e.g. procedural documentation, theses, evaluation reports, etc.), and after the site visit to the HEI supported by the meetings with the HEI management, study programme coordinators, doctoral candidates, teachers/supervisors and external stakeholders, the Expert Panel proposes to the ASHE to **deny the license** to the doctoral programme. The proposal is based on a number of issues explained in detail in the Report by the Expert Panel. The main objections are summarised below.

The Panel found that:

1. the content of the doctoral programme is not aligned with internationally recognized standards for the field of international relations;
2. the programme does not provide the required quality for the PhD level;
3. the quality of the doctoral programme does not meet internationally recognized standards for the field of international relations;
4. the programme has insufficient number of teachers who are research active in the field of international relations;
5. the programme has too limited supervising capacities within the field of IR;
6. the programme engages teachers who may have strong 'real sector' knowledge, but have no relevant and internationally competitive scientific track record;
7. the programme does not provide quality support to doctoral candidates (e.g. financial resources, involvement in research projects, adequate literature, designated premises, etc.).

Based on these findings, the Panel has too little confidence that the Doctoral Programme can be remedied so the denial of the license is proposed. However, it is absolutely necessary to assure that the currently enrolled students get the sufficient support to complete the Programme successfully. In that matter, the Panel recommends:

1. to encourage the University of Zadar to take over the leading role;
2. to issue a PhD degree to successful doctoral students by the University of Zadar in the area of interdisciplinary social sciences or in the areas that actually reflect the content of this programme;
3. to fix the supervision issues (see Section 3.).

More detailed recommendations for the improvement of the study programme are listed on p. 7.