

**Report
of the Expert Panel
on the REACCREDITATION
of the University Postgraduate (Doctoral) Programme
Sociology
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Zagreb**

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 3

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME..... 5

RECOMMENDATION BY THE EXPERT PANEL TO THE ASHE'S ACCREDITATION COUNCIL..... 7

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME 7

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME 7

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME..... 7

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE 8

COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRESCRIBED CONDITIONS FOR THE DELIVERY OF A STUDY PROGRAMME..... 9

QUALITY ASSESSMENT 11

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) *Sociology* on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb.

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

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

The Report contains the following elements:

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

Members of the Expert Panel for Humanities and Social Sciences:

1. Prof. Alan O'Leary, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, University of Leeds, United Kingdom
2. Prof. Tim Woods, Department of English and Creative Writing, University of Aberystwyth, United Kingdom
3. Prof. Claudia Tiersch, Philosophische Fakultät, Humboldt-Universität Berlin, Germany
4. Prof. Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom
5. Prof. Bojan Aleksov, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, United Kingdom
6. Prof. Kurt Villads Jensen, Stockholms Universitet, Sweden
7. Prof. Emmerich Kelih, Department of Slavonic Studies, Universität Wien, Austria
8. Prof. Barbara Sonnenhauser, Universität Zürich, Switzerland
9. Iuliana Soficaru, doctoral candidate, Central European University, Hungary
10. Dajana Vasiljevićová, doctoral candidate, Charles University, Czech Republic
11. Prof. James Wickham, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
12. Prof. Gergely László Rosta, Institut für Soziologie, Universität Münster, Germany

13. Prof. Václav Štětka, Loughborough University, United Kingdom
14. Ieva Bloma, doctoral candidate, European University Institute, Italy
15. Nika Đuho, doctoral candidate, Catholic University of Croatia, Croatia.

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

1. Prof. James Wickham, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
2. Prof. Gergely László Rosta, Institut für Soziologie, Universität Münster, Germany
3. Prof. Václav Štětka, Loughborough University, United Kingdom
4. Ieva Bloma, doctoral candidate, European University Institute, Italy
5. Nika Đuho, doctoral candidate, Catholic University of Croatia, Croatia.

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.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme: Sociology

Institutions providing the programme: University of Zagreb

Institution delivering the programme: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Scientific area (and field, if applicable) and the academic degree: social sciences, sociology; doktor/ica znanosti u području društvenih znanosti, polje sociologija (dr. sc.)

Level of qualifications in relation to other country's Qualifications Framework: Croatia: level 8.2; level 8 (EQF).

Enrolment years: 2013/14-2017/18 – 5 years of enrolments

Duration of the doctoral programme in academic years: 3 years, 180 ECTS

Number of doctoral candidates (all): 33 (funded: 10)

Number of teachers at the doctoral study: 12 own and 10 external

Number of supervisors: (22)

Learning outcomes of the programme:

Learning outcomes (hereinafter: LO):

LO 1: critically uses scientific literature to get acquainted with theoretical concepts and empirical research in the area of interest; LO 2: defines relevant research questions and goals in the area of interest; LO 3: translates theoretical concepts and problems into measurable form; LO 4: sets theoretical and/or empirically-based hypotheses and clearly explains them; LO 5: analyses and evaluates the methodology and results of various sociological researches; LO 6: distinguishes sample types and sampling techniques and selects and constructs an appropriate sample with respect to the research question and/or hypotheses; LO 7: performs basic and complex parametric and nonparametric statistical analyses; LO 8: critically uses and interprets the research results; LO 9: presents the results of empirical research in a clear and structured manner; LO 10: formulates oral and written presentations of insights in the given area; LO 11: explains the social and practical value of the scientific approach in addressing current issues and problems; LO 12: independently conceives and carries out empirical research in the area of interest; LO 13: applies highest ethical standards of social research.

Programme outline: courses 80 ECTS + 23 ECTS in midterm exams and participation – a total of 100 ECTS in courses and exams. 29 ECTS in research or consultations (the remaining ECTS are unclear)

1st year: 40 ECTS in coursework (4 courses); 10 ECTS for presenting a paper (for midterm exam); 8 ECTS for consultations with mentor-advisor.

2nd year: 40 ECTS for individual courses; 5 ECTS for presenting a paper (midterm exam); 5 ECTS for defended research proposal, 8 for consultations.

3rd year: 5 ECTS for midterm exam; 4 ECTS for consultations with mentor; 20 ECTS for writing and defending the thesis.

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

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

Issue a letter of expectation for two years during which the Department must make required improvements; student enrolment should NOT be suspended during this period.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Restructure programme: clearly differentiate between individual research supervision and graduate-level teaching. In the first two semesters students should attend taught non-elective courses on (a) general sociology (b) research methods. This period MIGHT include a very small number of elective courses in specific areas of sociology aligned with staff expertise and the Faculty research plan. By the end of the third semester student should submit their dissertation outline (a developed research proposal); they should then carry out research and writing up under a designated supervisor.
2. Clarify admission procedures and rationalise entry numbers in line with availability of funded places and opportunities for participation in research projects; admit students on basis of initial (preliminary) research proposal; select students whose research proposals are in line with Faculty research strategy.
3. Enhance the teaching of quantitative methodology allowing development of specialist doctoral level skills. At the same time ensure all candidates have a familiarity with basic quantitative and qualitative methods.
4. Formalise supervision requirements (frequency of contact hours, reporting etc.).
5. Plan mandatory courses (see above) to ensure general Learning Objectives are actually fulfilled.
6. Teachers and supervisors should usually be Faculty staff – all such teaching and supervision should be part of the normal workload of staff.
7. Provide training in doctoral supervision for all supervisors.

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. High profile of some individual staff.
2. Flexibility to accommodate students' own interests (but see above – this has costs which undermine the programme).
3. According to the students, teachers are approachable and supportive.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Students do not necessarily receive a doctoral level training in sociology; supervision and teaching is restricted to their individual interests and/or those of an individual supervisor.
2. No effective international experience.
3. Most staff do not participate in international scholarly debates and consequently their students are unlikely to do so.

4. Students receive very little training in general research skills.
5. High drop-out rate – little monitoring of inactive students.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Some intellectual enthusiasm from both students and their supervisors.
2. Participation of some students in research projects.

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

Minimal legal conditions:	YES/NO notes
1. Higher education institution (HEI) is listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations in the scientific area of the programme, and has a positive reaccreditation decision on performing higher education activities and scientific activity.	YES
2. HEI delivers programmes in the two cycles leading to the doctoral programme, i.e., first two cycles in the same area and field/fields (for interdisciplinary programmes), and employs a sufficient number of teachers as defined by Article 6 of the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (OG 24/10).	YES
3. HEI employs a sufficient number of researchers, as defined by Article 7 of the Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing Licence for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organisations and Content of Licence (OG 83/2010).	YES
4. At least 50% of teaching as expressed in 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.	YES
6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public.	YES
7. HEI launches the procedure of revoking the academic title if it is determined that it has been attained contrary to the conditions stipulated for its attainment, by severe violation of the studying rules or based on a doctoral thesis (dissertation) that has proved to be a plagiarism or a forgery according to provisions of the statute or other enactments.	YES
Additional/ recommended conditions of the ASHE Accreditation Council for passing a positive opinion	
1. HEI (or HEIs in joint programmes) has at least five teachers appointed to scientific-teaching titles in the field, or fields relevant for the programme involved in its delivery.	YES
2. In the most recent reaccreditation, HEI had the standard Scientific and Professional Activity marked as at least "partly implemented" (3).	YES
3. The doctoral programme is aligned with the HEI's research strategy.	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 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);	NO / Not possible to determine for all supervisors

<p>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;</p> <p>e) trained for the role before assuming it (through workshops, co-supervisions etc.);</p> <p>f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory work.</p>	
<p>6. All teachers meet the following conditions:</p> <p>a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position;</p> <p>b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the course (table 1, Teachers).</p>	<p>NO/Not possible to determine</p>
<p>Note by Expert Panel:</p> <p>A number of teachers on the doctoral programme have a rather limited research output in the last five years, and it is difficult to assess if they are still research active. In addition, many teachers' publication profiles indicate they publish almost entirely in the local language, which is not consistent with the international aspirations of the University of Zagreb, as evidenced in the Strategy for Development.</p>	
<p>7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment committees.</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>NO (Note: the intensity of the teaching part of the programme makes it potentially difficult for the students to focus on the actual research in the first four semesters.)</p>

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

	<p>Quality assessment (“high level of quality” or “improvements are necessary”) and the explanation of the Expert Panel</p>
<p>1. RESOURCES: TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, RESEARCH CAPACITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p>	
<p>1.1. HEI is distinguished by its scientific/artistic achievements in the discipline in which the doctoral study programme is delivered.</p>	<p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p> <p>The Department of Sociology in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb has long dominated sociology within Croatia. Overall staff of the Department are well published within Croatian sociology in terms of publications and citations¹; several staff members have played leading roles in the development of sociology in Croatia. Some members of the Department contribute to the national intellectual and cultural life of Croatia through their publications; at the same time several staff members are involved in international projects (notably the European Values Study) and have held visiting positions in other European universities.</p> <p>Most of the Department’s publications are in Croatian and therefore were not directly accessible to most of the Panel members. This may make the following comments not as precise as one would wish.</p> <p>As evidenced by its publications, most of the Department’s research lies in the general area of cultural sociology. Within this very broad orientation, the Department seems to lack any clear areas of research strength beyond the achievements of its individual members. There are no identifiable clusters of expertise or achievement and this suggests there is no clear research strategy. There appears to be the desire to include many areas of contemporary sociology, but the consequence is that the Department has no clear profile. Despite the broad or even eclectic range of research, it is noticeable that the issues of social inequality, social structure and social and economic policy do not figure highly in the Department’s work. Given the debates within European social science about the nature of ‘post-</p>

¹ The Tables in the Self-evaluation report request a count of publications and citations ‘relevant to this area in the last five years. For a few individuals this appears to be what is reported, but at least for the Google Scholar entries most individuals simply report the total for all years (publications, citations, h index). This makes those individuals who have reported correctly appear rather less prolific than their colleagues!

	<p>socialist' societies, one would have expected members of the Department to be making an important contribution to this area.</p> <p>There appears to be little development of possible synergies between staff; there appears to have been no prioritization of specific areas in terms of staff appointments. Consequently the doctoral thesis topics also seem to be the result of the individual preferences of students. In other words, the doctoral programme appears to simply facilitate the interests of individual applicants and of individual teachers/supervisors rather than utilising and developing areas of strength.</p> <p>The Self-evaluation report notes some international mobility within the doctoral programme (a visit from an incoming doctoral student and from a teacher), but realistically this is far too little for a department that aspires to national leadership.</p>
<p>1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.</p>	<p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY</p> <p>The categories of 'teacher' and 'supervisor' overlap (some 'teachers' are also 'mentors' or 'supervisors'). While 'teachers' are identified as those providing formal courses within the doctoral programme, such 'courses' turn out to be in fact individual tuition in areas of the teacher's expertise and tailored to the interest of the student. This cannot be justified; as can be seen from the table of learning objectives, this procedure conflates many different objectives. <i>Teaching</i> within a coherent sociology doctoral programme could be expected to deliver (1) advanced level research skills (2) an advanced understanding of general sociological theory and debates (3) familiarisation with 'state-of-the-art' in the student's topic area. Whereas (1) and (2) would normally be provided through advanced level courses, (3) is usually provided by the supervisor(s) of the thesis. By contrast, the Zagreb doctoral programme appears to not only outsource much of (3) to teachers from outside the institution, but also allows this initial stage of the dissertation to continue over nearly four semesters. 'Teachers' from outside the Department are actually paid separately for their work. While this may provide useful additional income to those scholars, it ensures that the Department is not focusing and utilising its own strengths; the possibility of such ad hoc additional 'teaching' in randomly selected specialist topics contributes to the continuing fragmentation of the programme.</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>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY The individuals employed as ‘teachers’, whether or not they are members of the Department, all hold doctorates. Of those teachers who are not supervisors, one has very minimal publications, but would seem to have been recruited for her specialist knowledge of research methods; others are mostly well published and seem well regarded within the Croatian research community.</p>
<p>1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.</p>	<p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY The doctoral programme pays teachers from outside the University and also utilises supervisors from other institutions. At the same time, it appears that some staff of professorial rank are not currently supervising doctoral students. One would expect that all full-time salaried staff of research level would be supervising doctoral students as part of their workload.</p>
<p>1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.</p>	<p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY Overall, teachers and supervisors are well published within Croatia, confirming that most make a substantial contribution to sociological scholarship within Croatia. However, in line with an earlier study of Croatian sociological publications (Prpić and Petrović 2010), not only are nearly all of these publications in Croatian, but virtually all citations are also in Croatian publications. Most scholars clearly have high visibility within Croatia, but realistically they remain largely invisible outside Croatia. This in turn means that these Croatian sociologists are largely recipients of ideas and concepts from outside, but not contributors to the broader European and/or international discussion. A not inconsiderable number of teachers and supervisors do have an involvement in European research networks and projects, but the Department should not overstate the extent of this and needs to do far more to support broader international engagement.</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 Access to journals and international databases appears to be adequate.</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</p>	<p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY The University has strictly defined regulations for proposing and accepting new doctoral programmes. The Senate makes the decision of approving a new doctoral</p>

<p>identification of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs.</p>	<p>program based on an evaluation procedure defined in the Regulation on the Evaluation Process of Doctoral Studies at the University of Zagreb.</p> <p>The mentioned Regulation prescribes, inter alia, the social, cultural, scientific and economic needs for the introduction of a doctoral study.</p> <p>The FHSS has an established procedure for proposing and accepting doctoral programmes, which are then submitted to the UZ for accreditation. Accepted programmes are endorsed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Council and the Senate of the University.</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>According to the Self-evaluation report, the programme of PDSS is in accordance with the Strategy for the Development and Research of the FHSS of the University from 2018 to 2023, which also includes the development strategy of the DS. This Strategy identifies three fields of research: 1. Social inequality 2. Sustainability of social community, security and social cohesion 3. Impact of digital transition on social changes.</p> <p>However, the selection of the doctoral students, the topics of the dissertations as well as the topics of the courses do not clearly reflect these main thematic foci. Though the students choose their research topic during the first semesters, they are not motivated sufficiently to focus on one of the main strategic topics.</p> <p>Recommendation: The DS needs to discuss the ways in which the programme content, selection of candidates and supervisors etc. are aligned with the main topics defined by the Strategy of UZ.</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>According to the Self-evaluation report, basic elements of this mechanism at the University include monthly meetings of the Doctoral Study Council, as well as continuous monitoring and analysis of the scientific production of mentors by the Ordinance on Requirements for Appointment to Scientific Positions that teachers and mentors must fulfil every 5 years.</p> <p>In our understanding, monitoring of the program is done at the informal level rather than by using formal mechanisms such as collecting and analysing feedback from candidates, alumni and drop-outs, especially concerning the supervision system and the support provided by the PDSS, or reasons to drop out.</p> <p>There were explicit concerns from the doctoral students</p>

	<p>about missing channels of feedback or complaint. Recommendation: Elaboration of more systematic elements for monitoring the success of the program.</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 The same applies here as in the previous point. There are numerous bodies and committees to contact in case of problematic issues between the supervisor and the candidate. However, such cases are rare, and usually solved informally. According to the Self-evaluation report, a systematic analysis of annual reports of doctoral candidates and mentors is planned. Furthermore, a system of rewarding successful mentors and defining clear criteria to define a successful mentor are planned. The Panel fully supports the introduction of such formal measures of monitoring supervisors' performance. Especially the collection of feedback from current and former candidates as well as the monitoring of the relatively low completion rates are suggested.</p>
<p>2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.</p>	<p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY The University has proper procedures to assure academic integrity and to prevent unethical behaviour. The Panel strongly recommends the introduction of the use of plagiarism software to detect eventual cases of plagiarism.</p>
<p>2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation.</p>	<p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal seems well regulated, transparent and objective. There are, however, minor issues to improve on. One is the deadline of the defence of the research synopsis. According to university regulation, it should happen until the end of the sixth semester. According to PDSS regulation, the deadline is the end of the fourth semester. It should be unified. Our general proposal is to ask the potential candidates to submit a short synopsis already when applying for the program. The final deadline for "inactive" students to submit their thesis proposal remained unclear to us.</p>
<p>2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.</p>	<p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY The procedures seem to ensure a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee. We would like to mention the same issue like at the previous point: the final deadline for "inactive" students to</p>

	<p>submit their thesis remained unclear to us. Since no thesis has been defended under the new program, yet, it seems to be a rather important point.</p> <p>We strongly support the idea that (potential) mentors do not participate in the initial phase of the dissertation proposal defence, especially when evaluating / defending the finalized thesis.</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>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p> <p>According to the SER, all necessary information are available on the webpages of the PDSS and on webpages of the Service for Postgraduate Studies of the FHSS. All relevant information are also forwarded to doctoral candidates via e-mail, directly during courses and especially during consultations with the mentor- advisor and during midterm exams.</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>According to the annual financial plan, fees are paid for: teachers and mentors, guest lecturers and mentors, participation of doctoral candidates in domestic and international scientific conferences, (co)organization of domestic and international scientific conferences and summer schools, midterm exams and contemporary scientific literature available to doctoral candidates (as well as to all others) in the Library of the FHSS.</p> <p>We strongly recommend motivating (potential) mentors much more, either by paying a significant amount extra for this work, or by including lectures and seminars at the doctoral level in their regular teaching hours.</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>According to the SER, "Tuition fees are determined by the Council of FHSS based on criteria for doctoral study." Some doctoral students criticized that a part of the tuition fee serves to finance the faculty.</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</p> <p>Teacher : student ratio at the FHSS is 1:14 and the dissertation mentor : PhD candidate ratio is 1:1.16 (the maximum number of PhD supervisees some mentors have is 2).</p> <p>Suggestion: even though the teacher : student ratio at the FHSS corresponds to the legal requirements about the</p>

	<p>mandatory threshold (i.e., 1:3), it might be useful to also account for the parallel workload the teachers and professors might have outside the FHSS. There are strong indications that the ratio would not be so beneficial anymore if this aspect would be considered.</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</p> <p>The most important criterion in deciding on admission quotas seemed to be the Faculty's own teaching capacity. Besides, the information provided in the Self-evaluation report on this criterion very much focused on the supply side (the Faculty) and not so much on demand side (the analysis of the needs, be they within the Faculty or outside it). In this way, the information provided does not entirely tackle the issue this criterion seeks to find about.</p> <p>Even though there are a couple of strategic planning documents defining development and scientific research strategy of the FHSS, it did not become clear in which way the decision-making process on admission quotas embraces and draws on the mentioned strategic documents. A much clearer link between the both would be necessary.</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>In the academic year 2017/18, only 3 (of the active 28) doctoral candidates were engaged in scientific research projects.</p> <p>In addition, the number of self-funded or non-scientific employer-funded PhD students accepted into the programme almost doubles that of the PhD students who are employed by HEIs. Moreover, it is very likely that – if counting in currently inactive 5 students as well – the number of self-funded/non-scientific employer-funded students would increase.</p> <p>At the same time, though, the decision-making on admission quotas did not seem to depend on the number of existing/upcoming research projects within the FHSS. It might be so because, as claimed by the Faculty members during the meeting with the Expert Panel, such a situation increases research freedom of the PhD students. Equally, however, it might be interpreted as a sign that there is no strongly established link between (a) the number of admitted PhD students, and (b) the number of PhD students needed to carry out the research projects ongoing (or scheduled to be started in the future) at the FHSS.</p>
<p>3.4. The HEI should pay attention to the</p>	<p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY</p>

<p>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>The ratio mentor : student is fine (if not considering the aspect of having additional workloads outside the FHSS which is very often the case).</p> <p>There is also a requirement set to have a study/research plan. Nevertheless, one might raise concerns if the existing structure of the programme (6 full-time semesters, where synopsis needs to be defended only at the end of the 4th semester; and, practically, the Faculty allows to defend synopsis up to the 6th term) implies a truly “<u>sustainable</u>” research plan. This is a systemic-level concern.</p> <p>An additional issue refers to the nature of the individual study/research plans. Firstly, the annual plans the PhD students have (the so-called <i>privatissimum</i>) are rather study plans and not so much <i>research</i> plans. This reflects the general problem of the programme being more focused on teaching/studying (depending on the perspective) than developing students’ research skills. Secondly, the way how the requirement about the existence of a study/research plan is implemented allows situations where these plans are rather a formality, not a proper guide for the new researcher who is still honing the necessary research skills. It is advisable that the existing regulations elaborate in more detail on the rationale, functions and obligations of different mentors (there are three types of mentors altogether). Also, one should consider how to effectively deliver this information to the students as the impression was that some of the students could benefit from such clarification.</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 Expert Panel was not convinced that the Faculty had done everything in its power to attract international students.</p> <p>The new Development and Research Strategy which – at least on the paper – lists internationalization as one of the main development directions is a good first step. But such commitment still needs to be accompanied with practical implementation measures.</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 seems to be transparent.</p> <p>The programme could benefit from an application requirement that applicants must submit a preliminary research proposal outlining their possible research project. This would serve as a better evaluation criterion than the current requirement to submit a description of research</p>

	<p>interests (which does not exceed 1 page). The submission of a more concrete research proposal does not necessarily mean that the applicant – if accepted – cannot change his/her initial research project’s idea. Such a change can happen and should be allowed. However, more detailed outline (which would also correspond to the usual structure of research proposals) would give to the Faculty an opportunity to better assess the applicant’s research potential.</p> <p>It was indicated during the meeting with the faculty that the previous year was the first time when applicants needed to describe not only their general research interests, but also a possible research project. The Self-evaluation report, however, does not explicitly refer to such a requirement. In any case, if such a practice has been initiated, it should be retained and strengthened in the future.</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>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p>
<p>3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.</p>	<p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</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</p> <p>The students criticized the fact that each year there have been only a few dates when the synopsis could be defended and these dates were announced with very little warning. This creates difficulties related to calendar adjustment. In particular, this seemed to be an issue for the students who were self-funded or employed (but not at the scientific institution). The recommendation is to create and publish the calendar with the most important deadlines / dates of the upcoming academic year already at the beginning of the academic year.</p>
<p>3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.</p>	<p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY</p> <p>The programme could benefit from having a higher number of PhD students that do not need to work full-time (at non-scientific institutions) parallelly to their PhD studies. There is a tendency that many aspects that were identified as problematic above were more of concern exactly for self-funded students and students with a non-scientific employer.</p> <p>Also, the programme could definitely benefit from the use</p>

	<p>of available international (short-term) exchange programmes abroad, as well as announced grants for participation in international conferences and workshops (taking place outside Croatia), etc. The Expert Panel was left with an impression that the programme does not put enough efforts in attempting to obtain that type of funding. The above-raised (please see criterion 3.4.) issue of properly implemented study/research plans must be reiterated here as well. The research plan – if not established as a formality – can be an extremely useful tool to ensure individual student’s progress over time.</p> <p>Also, it must be noted that a successful student’s progression towards mastering research as a craft can only be provided if the programme puts its focus on practical research skills and experience, not so much on taught courses. In this regard, the recommendation is to schedule the defence of synopsis already at the end of the 2nd semester / in the beginning of 3rd semester (if the length of the full-time programme remains to be 6 semesters). Also, one might want to reconsider the current situation where there is no <i>mandatory</i> requirement for the students to follow methodology courses. Similarly, one might question the overly great emphasis that has been put on qualitative methodology (as opposed to quantitative methodology) courses within the programme.</p>
<p>4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES</p>	
<p>4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.</p>	<p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY</p> <p>In general, the programme is designed in accordance with the international standards for doctoral education in the discipline, largely fulfilling the formal requirements and expectations associated with PhD provision; however, in some particular aspects of the programme and in the ways in which it is delivered, the international standards are much less visible.</p> <p>The curriculum offers a mixture of theoretical courses and research workshops, though methodology training seems to be rather limited, especially with regards to quantitative methodologies. By having all courses as elective, the curriculum emphasizes individual approach, giving students considerable amount of freedom to choose the direction of their studies; the drawback of this approach is, however, lack of coherence and focus of the study programme as a whole. The programme somehow deviates from international standards by having only loosely defined admission procedure without almost any</p>

	<p>requirements, notably without a research proposal. In addition, the fact that a full-scale dissertation proposal is defended only at the end of the second year inevitably shortens the amount of time needed to successfully complete the dissertation, in consequence of which the vast majority of students gets to graduate well beyond the three year mark.</p> <p>The supervision procedure appears not to be formalized, e.g. there are no fixed amount of contact hours or meetings between students and their supervisors. International experience is not being actively encouraged through the curriculum (credits are awarded for participation at summer schools or mobility schemes but given these are all voluntary there is not a sufficient incentive for students to go study abroad and expand on their skills and knowledge beyond the curriculum offered by their home department).</p> <p>There does not seem to be an institutionalized process of organizing and implementing a student feedback (on either the individual courses or the doctoral programme as a whole).</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 learning outcomes are described in a rather too general fashion, and their alignment with the activities in the curriculum is not always fully clear. Moreover, given the elective nature of all the subjects in the curriculum, it is unclear whether all the students have equal chance to fulfil all the 13 learning objectives. In addition, there is no discernible alignment between the activities within the study programme and the priority topics in the field of sociology set out in the Strategy for Development and Research of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb. `</p> <p>The Panel was not presented with any account of assessment procedures for individual courses; the learning objectives are only identified in a very general way for individual courses (Table LO in SER). Accordingly, the Panel cannot assess whether and to what extent they are mutually compatible and fitting for the programme as a whole.</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 alignment between the programme learning outcomes and the teaching content could not be properly assessed due to unavailability of detailed information on the content of the courses.</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>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY Despite the shortcomings identified in 4.2., the majority of the dissertation theses that the Panel were able to view were up to a reasonable standard, and indicated that the students have a chance to acquire both specific and generic skills and competencies relevant for the discipline, as outlined in the study programme. The Panel was unable to assess the candidates' publications or other types of published materials.</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 As far as the Panel was able to understand, the curriculum involves a variety of teaching methods, including workshops that seem to be particularly well suited for the transfer of knowledge and development of research skills appropriate for the doctoral level. However, since from the 2nd year onwards an individualized/tailored teaching appears to prevail, it is not entirely clear how the achievement of learning outcomes is safeguarded across the courses in a standardized and transparent way.</p>
<p>4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.</p>	<p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY The acquisition of generic (transferable) skills seems to be mostly related to the three workshops that deal with research drafting, structuring of the dissertation and foundations of scientific communication. This appears to be insufficient, and the Self-evaluation document rightly points out that there is a need to include more workshops into the curriculum, especially those that teach general methodological and research skills. The ability to participate in such workshops outside of the University as part of the programme is encouraged on paper, but in practice it is clearly limited, and to a large degree it seems to depend on either student's own activity or on the recommendations of their mentor/advisor, which might clearly disadvantage some 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>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY The format of the doctoral programme ensures a considerable degree of flexibility and adaptability to individualized students' needs and plans. This has its drawbacks, as mentioned earlier, but it offers the opportunity to accommodate individual study preferences.</p>
<p>4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.</p>	<p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY The degree of internationalization of the doctoral programme appears to be rather limited. International mobility is encouraged on paper – and the Department has</p>

	<p>apparently a number of contracts with foreign universities through the Erasmus programme – but there is no visible evidence of its importance for an average student on the programme. The Panel was not presented with any statistics regarding the participation of students or lecturers/mentors on international mobility. There does not seem to be any involvement of international supervisors or teachers on the programme. Students are formally motivated to take part in international conferences and publishing of papers through ECTS, which is something to be commended, but this is again based on a voluntary system which fails to ensure that everybody will get in contact with international academia during their doctoral studies. On the other hand, international standards are obeyed when it comes to the possibility of writing the dissertation in English, or to substitute dissertation (partly) with papers published in high level journals.</p>
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*** 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.