



**RE-ACCREDITATION OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF MARITIME STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF ZADAR**

**Site Visit: 21st May 2012**

**July 2012**

## **COMPOSITION OF THE EXPERT PANEL**

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### ***Short Description of the Evaluated Institution***

The Department of Maritime Studies as a component of the University of Zadar (at first, known as the Department of Transport and Maritime Studies) was founded at the end of the 2004 carrying out two undergraduate study programmes: Nautical Studies and Maritime Transport Technology, and Marine Engineering and Maritime Transport Technology. After the department had been founded, from the academic year 2005-2006, the mentioned study programs started functioning as the studies of the University of Zadar with a new structure in line with the Bologna Declaration. The Department of Transport and Maritime Studies was later renamed the Department of Maritime Studies. After the name change, the Professional Council of the Department issued a Rulebook of the Department of Maritime Studies which was used as a basis of the new structure of the Department, encompassing four sub-departments: Nautical, Marine Engineering, Electrotechnical, and Marine Technologies and Sea Protection.

## ***The Work of the Expert Panel***

For its work the Panel drew upon the self-evaluation report, prepared by the Maritime Department of the University of Zadar. A site visit to the Department was carried out on 21 May 2012. During the visit to the Department the Expert Panel held meetings with the representatives of the following groups:

- University Management (Rector, Head of Department, Deputy Head of Department)
- The Self-Evaluation Group and the QA Committee
- Students
- Teaching Assistants
- Junior Researchers
- Teachers
- Principals of Sub-Departments
- Department Coordinators

The Expert Panel also had a tour of the library, IT rooms, student register desk and the classrooms at the Department, in one of which they held a brief question and answer session with the students who were present.

## **DETAILED ANALYSIS BASED ON STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR RE-ACCREDITATION**

### ***1) Institutional Management and Quality Assurance***

**1.1.** The mission and vision of the Department define the Developmental Strategy which determines the position of the Department of Maritime Studies in the integrated University of Zadar, state of the activities at the Department and strategic goals in education, development of personnel, technological development, international cooperation, student care and quality assurance. For all strategic goals within the developmental strategy a strategic plan was defined in segments of education, science, personnel, technology, international cooperation, quality assurance and promotion.

**1.2.** The management of the department understands its role, but there are no formal solutions to ensure the high level of marine education. The main problem is the lack of formal arrangements and rules for permanent access to the simulators, which are actually owned by Pomorska Škola. The management practices evidenced by the panel are acceptable which is reflected in the current study program. However this situation from a formal point of view should be viewed as temporary because there is a possibility of different interests or needs when assigning financial funds. In addition, high quality graduates are coming only from Pomorska škola and there are no solutions to improve this situation. The identified systems of operational and management level are informal and are not always compatible. Practices and their documents do not fully comply with the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Convention.

**1.3.** The Department of Maritime Studies of the University in Zadar is completely integrated. The Department has issued its strategic documents (Mission, Vision, Strategy, and Strategic Plan). An evaluation system of departmental academic quality is also in place.

**1.4.** Study programs carried out by the Department of Maritime Studies are aligned with its mission and enable students to obtain qualifications which can be used for employment in Croatia and abroad.

**1.5.** All study programs carried out by the Department are aligned with the Baseline of the Croatian Qualifications Framework.

**1.6.** There is a system of quality assurance in place. The institution does have an effective ISO system. The Department is conscious about the importance of quality assurance, and the university aims to harmonize the system of quality assurance in accordance with other departments.

**1.7.** Quality assurance systems are in place, and will continue to be further developed. In terms of monitoring the current self-evaluation has been a positive experience. The next step is using these system outcomes for further improvement. The fact that the University as such is now also subject to a quality assurance assessment will help establishing these improvements. Teachers evaluating teachers might be an interesting topic.

**1.8.** Quality assurance systems are in place, and will continue to be further developed. Here again the need to produce a self-evaluation report has contributed to a better monitoring of the research output. Scientific production (papers, conference participation, etc.) needs to be systematically kept up-to-date, and preferably also accessible through the department's website. An introduction of an award system to stimulate scientific excellence might be helpful. The management acknowledges these important issues, and stresses that the department is now moving towards a more science-orientated position. In this respect the department has organized workshops on how to write scientific papers.

**1.9.** An Ethical Code exists, but only since recently (one year ago). No reports are available yet. Hence this is in an early stage of implementation. The code is publicly available.

**1.10.** Staff and students know that there exists a code with rules for ethical behaviour, but are not sure whether it is also being applied. The Code of Ethics is published on the website. According to the management at the beginning of every academic year students are informed about the code. At the interview, the students dominantly stated they have not actually read the Code of Ethics.

## ***2) Study Programmes***

**2.1.** Anticipated enrolment quotas are compatible with the labour market, staff and spatial conditions of the Department. In their opinion enrolment quotas correspond to market requirements which is confirmed by exceptionally high employment rate of their students.

**2.2.** The enrolment quotas are not in line with institutional resources for quality teaching and analysis of pass rate. During the conversation with assistants, they advised assessors about having lectures and exercises which are considered as not acceptable. In further conversations with teachers, it was noted they, as well as assistants are overloaded with lessons. Some of teachers teach STCW subjects although they have no STCW certificates and licenses of competency (for example Sea ecology and protection of sea, GMDSS). Pass rate is low in some subjects (for example Mathematics). According to the comments from the AZVO website and the conversations with students, some comments are against the way of examination of Mathematics because no colloquiums in mathematics are being organized.

From the interviews with teachers, it is found that the teaching groups are too big (more than 80 for lectures, and 60 for exercises). It is unknown where these students sit or whether they attend lessons because the biggest classroom has 40 seats.

Such an approach is considered as not in compliance with the Bologna way of teaching. Hence, the recommendation is to lower the enrolment quotas or to employ more teachers, especially teachers with sea experience and necessary certificates and licenses.

Students informed the assessors that they have 5-6 lessons in a simulator which is considered as below standards and against STCW requirements. Although teachers and the management presented the panel with the workshop (at the premises of the Nautical School Zadar) and its' equipment being used by department for education, students advised assessors that such equipment is not used for education at the Department.

**2.3.** Important objectives the Maritime Department had in mind in determining the learning outcome are that students, after audited and passed courses, obtain given competences which will make them professional and competitive at the labour market and in their future jobs. These objectives were determined by the level of competences in accordance with recommendations and regulations of the Croatian Qualification Framework. The aim of both undergraduate studies is to educate competent nautical officers and marine engineers and this aim is accomplished when looking at the high employability at Croatian and international companies after graduation.

**2.4.** In the interviews with the teachers we have learned that teachers assess the student learning outcomes and that these outcomes are aligned with the stated learning outcomes. However, whether this can be said for the full range of learning is less clear. We foresee no problems; hence, we state that this criteria is being partly to mostly implemented.

**2.5.** Allocation of ECTS is not realistic. After conversations with students, it is found that some of the subjects are overpriced and some of them carry less ECTS credits than they should. Students informed the assessors about losing most of their study time for Mathematics. They think that the Math's program is overloaded. Students are considered as overloaded with lessons and subject with bad allocations of ECTS. Hence, we advise to update the study programs in order to better allocate ECTS, and to reduce the workload of students (and teachers).

**2.6.** The content and the quality of the study program conforms with the internationally recognized standards. However, whether this statement can be asserted for each study program is difficult to say. Therefore we rate this criterion as *mostly implemented*.

**2.7.** Lectures are performed by combining "ex-cathedra" and "case-based" methods, auditory exercises, workshop exercises, exercises on simulators, exercises in maritime medicine and field practice. Teaching staff of the Department is improving the teaching process by new teaching methods which are why a cycle of workshops was initiated with the aim of educating teachers.

**2.8.** The institution has implemented Moodle. Students have access to databases which engage them in various learning methods.

**2.9.** Students have the opportunity to reinforce and apply their learning in the context of practical applications. But as is usually the case, more can always be done. Hence we rated this criterion as partly implemented. More attention should be given to internships, and more students should be encouraged to participate in exchange programs.

**2.10.** The institution has defined and adopted formal processes by which new study programs are proposed, approved and implemented. This is being done through self-evaluation and also includes other stakeholders; but as is the case in most circumstances, more can be done. Hence, we rated this criterion as partly implemented, and suggest to include more different stakeholders, and to include more on board training.

The team that worked on the self-analysis report was talking about the economic relationship with the industry. However, we are aware that the cooperation is realized only through a maritime company and those are not linked with any serious project or agreement.

### ***3) Students***

**3.1.** The information packages available to potential students do not clearly inform them about the level of the programs, qualifications and academic titles as well as possibilities for further education and employment. Application for enrolment is made via the Croatian Agency for Science who publishes the Faculty's programs and a call for enrolment is made in the press and on the Faculty web pages. The Faculty web pages are part of the University web pages, and it is hard to find the needed information. It is necessary to call attention to each department of the University, or to make a separate web page with better content.

**3.2.** Admission criteria and procedures are publicly stated and consistently applied. They are regularly reviewed in respect to their effectiveness in predicting and assessing student success rates. The students are enrolled according to the results achieved at the *State Matura* exam.

**3.3.** The competencies of applicants are not evaluated upon admission with demands and expectations in the future career of the graduates.

The subjects of the *State Matura* exam and valuation are considered inappropriate. The programs are not set up in accordance with the latter demands. The same goes for the exams which should be done at simulators and in labs.

**3.4.** Zadar University offers good support for extracurricular activities. Students can learn additional foreign languages.

**3.5.** There are two levels of support offered to the students: at the level of Department, there is an individual approach by all the teachers; and at the level of University, there exists a Center for Student Standard, International Cooperation and other means of support such as career counseling, assistance in learning, assistance to students with special needs and international students, legal and financial support etc.

**3.6.** As this institution is a part of an integrated university, the panel concluded that this criterion does not apply.

**3.7.** The institution partly supports the work of the Student Council. The representative of students said that they do not get any financial support for students' activities. They did not get any support for the students' party (for freshmen). Representative of students said that they have their representative in the University Senate but also that their suggestions and questions are usually neglected. The expert panel could not get the information about the exact amount allocated for the Student Council and student activities. In sum, there is not a good communication between the Student Council and the management. The management should cooperate more with the student representatives, and try to solve their problems, as well as to accept their ideas to improve the curriculum.

**3.8.** The problem is with some subjects (like math) where it is not possible for students to take a midterm test. The professor tried to use some other methods, but they have been approved not to be efficient. The equipment for marine engineering is not suitable for various method of students' knowledge monitoring.

**3.9.** Way of monitoring graduates and collecting information about their employment is carried out by the Student Association of the Department of Maritime Studies of the University of Zadar, with the last research, prior to the site visit, carried out in July 2010 on a sample of 35 graduates.

**3.10.** The institution maintains contact with the alumni.

**3.11.** Studies have one regular representative in the Department Professional Council with a right to vote. There is also an appeal form available at the Department web page, and a mailbox at the Department where students can cast the completed forms. A relevant body (Professional Council or the Head of the Department) gives a written reply to each applicant. The Student Council decides on the student representatives in the Senate.

**3.12.** The Maritime Department has a good quality communication with the media at a local and national level. The University of Zadar organizes an Open Door Day every academic year and regularly prints brochures, leaflets and posters to be distributed at the high schools in the region.

**3.13.** Students can express their opinions through a 'suggestion box'.

**3.14.** Students are informed, but have the feeling that the management does not take their suggestions seriously into account. They do not get enough feedback.

#### **4) Teachers**

**4.1.** Due to the structure and external constraints on the employment of teachers the Department has problems with the number of teachers with maritime qualifications. This problem was even highlighted in the SWOT analysis which reflects well on the realism of the management. What is needed is to increase the number of teachers with the privileges of the STCW, although at this stage a modest minimum is preserved. An alternative serviceable solution would be to send already employed teachers on board, but this practice could result in temporary and already overloaded teaching. The effect would be positive skills of teachers certified by the diplomas but also significant drop in the number of scientific publications.

**4.2.** The institution does not care enough about the growth and development of human resources. They do not have a policy of growth and employment. Employment at the University is reduced by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. There are no projects which could enable employment of young researchers. Teachers are overloaded with teaching activities. This overload reduces overall scientific activity and output. Assistants teach students and have lectures and exercise. Teacher said that they have no time for science due to overload in education. Despite this, some of teachers navigate at ships.

**4.3.** The institution, when it comes down to demonstrating the employment of sufficient number of full-time teachers at a study program, is evaluated as early stage of implementation. The panel would like to see an increase in the number of teachers with the necessary STCW qualifications.

**4.4.** The optimal ratio between students and full-time teachers is not reached. As stated before, an increase of full-time teachers is needed.

**4.5.** The institution has not developed policies for teaching staff that ensure their development as needed to advance the institution's mission. Overloaded assistants have reduced time for their doctoral training. Some of the teachers do not have licenses and certificates for STCW subjects. The number of teachers with PhD is rather low. Assistants should not lecture students. Assistants should be included only in exercises.

**4.6.** The procedures for teachers' advancement are adequately developed. They are carried out in a fair and consistent manner, with the possibility of appealing advancement decisions.

**4.7.** The workload of the teachers is primarily focused on teaching, and not so on doing research. The reason for this is the limited staff available. In the conversation with the teachers, this was, however, not stressed as a problem.

**4.8.** Some teachers are employed 50% in the industry. This alone is an obstacle in performing at the top level both scientifically and as teachers. Although some assistants claimed that they have too much teaching load, there was a scientific novice who did not

have any teaching activity. It is hard to talk about the scientific research at all when there is only one scientific project at the Department.

## ***5) Scientific and Professional Activity***

**5.1.** A strategy of the scientific work of the Department of Maritime Studies does not exist as a separate document, but it is contained in the strategic plan of the University of Zadar from 2011 to 2017, and the Strategy of Scientific Development of the University of Zadar from 2009 to 2014. Strategy of scientific work of the Department is derived from the Department's mission and is defined by the contribution of the Department to the society through research in the field of maritime studies and marine technologies at the highest level of excellence.

**5.2.** Plans and implementation of research agenda is partly implemented. The Department cooperates with maritime companies, but has no relations with any organizations in order to provide better scientific result. The Department has contracts of collaboration with the Faculty of Maritime Studies in Portorož and some faculties in Croatia but has no research activity with any of them.

**5.3.** The self-evaluation report states that teachers from the Department of Maritime Studies and associates from the University of Zadar have published a total of 96 scientific articles in journals represented in CC, Web-of-Science and Scopus databases from 2005 until 2012. This number is rather limited and should be improved. A mere increase in the total number of publications should, however, not be interpreted as publishing in less relevant journals.

**5.4.** The Department does not provide policy support to young researchers. The problem must be split into two categories: internal and external solutions - at a level outside the university. The internal solution to a small degree promotes scientific output, merely by providing limited funds for the publication or participation at international conferences. At the University level, there are no formal solutions provided towards putting into place significant awards for outstanding and hardworking young researchers. The problem stems from the lack of external solutions that ensure the acquisition of extra additional funds from the research activities. Young teachers can benefit financially by taking on extra work but this paid overload has its negative scientific consequences.

**5.5.** There is no policy for promoting research excellence.

**5.6.** There is no system of encouraging and rewarding academic publishing. But some of the Department teachers whose scientific research activity belongs to the field of natural sciences regularly publish their works in high ranking journals with high impact factor, without any special encouragement. They do not understand the need for such encouragements since publishing their works in such journals is a natural aspiration of every serious scientist. For publications in the natural sciences the panel perceives no

particular problems, but the number of publications in the maritime sciences is very limited.

Some teachers, and those who worked on the self-analysis report, were assessed by the expert panel to be rather frivolous, and some teachers were not ready for the accreditation. Although the Maritime Department is a relatively young department, very little has been done to improve teaching. Some answers concerning scientific activities are considered to be light-hearted (for example the development of a robot arm that will work for medical operations on the ship). The University has at present no resources for such actions. The Department does not have one European project, let alone the capacity for the development of robotics.

**5.7.** The institution keeps track of multiple evidences productivity.

**5.8.** The department has initiated a technology transfer and supports professional activities, although of a fairly limited range. It should be noted that a significant disparity exists between scientific achievements of the researchers at the level of the entire Department, and scientific achievements in maritime science, which are provided almost solely by the Head of Department. Since the research is devoted to one area only (mainly natural sciences), the whole Department cannot be given higher grade than *partly implemented*.

## ***6) International Cooperation and Mobility***

**6.1.** The institution facilitates and promotes mobility of students from other higher education institutions. The Department developed a system of recognition of exams for students who had started their studies both before and after the introduction of the Bologna reform and the system functions well.

**6.2.** International cooperation and mobility are weak. There is no separate service at the level of the Department which would facilitate international mobility. The Department does not participate in the Erasmus program, but an Erasmus contract has already been signed with the Faculty of Maritime Studies and Transport in Portorož, and another contract is planned with the University in Scotland (University of the Highlands and Islands), which has undergraduate studies similar to planned study of Underwater Sciences and Technologies.

At present, courses are available in Croatian language only. The University and the Department do not encourage students to complete some partition of program abroad, but the interviewed students also indicated that they were not interested in completing a part of the program abroad.

**6.3.** The institution does not strongly encourage teachers to explore external mobility and international cooperation. In the past three years, six teachers have gone abroad for 1-3 months (scientific purposes), and six for teaching purposes. There have been one scientific visit between 3-6 months in the past three years. However, the Department has one teacher from Germany. Panel members therefore considered this requirement as partly implemented.

**6.4.** The University of Zadar is a member of international organizations such as European University Association (EUA) and Danube Rector's Conference (DRC). Hence, the Department of Maritime Studies, as a part of University, participates (or can participate) in the activities of these institutions. This is evident from the fact that one of the Department teachers also carries out the function of a vice-rector for mobility and projects of the University of Zadar, and is a representative of the Croatian Rectors' Association in EUA.

**6.5.** An Erasmus contract has already been signed with the Faculty of Maritime Studies and Transport in Portorož, and another contract is planned with the University of the Highlands and Islands in Scotland.

**6.6.** Although some students are taking part in the Erasmus program, there is no substantial participation of teachers and students in the Lifelong Learning Programme (i.e., Leonardo da Vinci.). This should be pursued more.

**6.7.** The Department has applied for two IPA projects.

## ***7) Resources, Administration, Space, Equipment and Finance***

**7.1.** The Department is aware of the need for effective learning support. Classrooms are modest, but are considered of a sufficient level to provide educational activities. Laboratories are common to the Nautical High School and University (Department) which is hardly a solution for this particular problem. Although the size of the library is not objectionable, one should pay attention to the greater availability of magazines and journals relating to maritime subjects. The solution might be to look for discounted and convenient arrangements with publishers - universities, consisting of a mutual exchange of each of the volumes in the number of 2 - 3 copies. In addition, a database of maritime journals should be introduced in the library with a link to the open published journals.

**7.2.** As this institution is a part of an integrated university, the panel concluded that this criterion does not apply.

**7.3.** The research laboratories and equipment are in the early stage of implementation. The Institution does not have its own laboratories, but uses the laboratories from the Nautical High School (Pomorska Škola is the owner). The simulator for engine type UNITEST is below standards according to STCW requirements. The nautical simulator is also below standards according to STCW. It is not full mission and has too little scenarios. There are no sections of engines, etc., marine equipment, navigation, and

mechanical work on marine equipment stands. Simulators are an effective source of knowledge; however, even the best exam simulator will not get a driving license.

**7.4.** Taking into account the academic profile of study it is hard not to notice the lack of software available for students. This is particularly important for the mechanical engineering where the design and use of FEM is a common tool for engineers. Moreover, the lack of properly equipped laboratories transferred to the research activity. None of facilities and numerical tools promote the development of young researchers.

**7.5.** The institution collects, analyses and uses information relevant to improvement of its activities.

**7.6.** Equipment is bad (except boards, chalks and projectors). Electronic lab and GMDSS lab is small and has obsolete software. Simulators are old-fashioned. Library does not contain enough titles about the maritime profession. There are no maritime journals in the library. Workshop is situated in the Nautical High School. The Department has an agreement about its use, but the students warned the panel members that they have only few lessons in simulators, but none in workshops.

**7.7.** The Department of Maritimes Studies is a constituent of an integrated university and has two administrative employees. The University of Zadar has dedicated services and offices for all other administrative and technical activities. Their organization, job descriptions and the number of employees is as prescribed by the university regulations.

**7.8.** The Department is not financially autonomous as it is a part of an integrated university. The institution has at its disposal a part of the market income (tuition fees, scientific and professional program or projects, donations).

**7.9.** Panel members found that the Department has a Special program of education as a financial resource. The Department receives money from the University for enrollments. Salaries are provided by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. Assessors did not find that the institution's own funds are used for investments in equipment, laboratories, simulator, library, workshop etc., other than a new classroom.

# **FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE EXPERT PANEL FOR THE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL**

## **STRONG POINTS**

- The Department of Maritime Studies has excellent (even exceptionally high) employment rates of their students
- A variety of new teaching methods are being used and are also very much appreciated by the students
- Support offered to the students at both the level of Department and at the level of the University is excellent
- The institution maintains good contacts with its alumni
- The Department of Maritime Studies has a good quality communication with the media

## **WEAK POINTS**

- Teaching work loads are rather substantial, which is –among others– reflected in a (very) modest scientific publication output
- The study program and some teacher's qualifications are not fully aligned with Standards of Training, Certification and Watch-keeping (STCW) Convention
- International cooperation and mobility are weak
- The institution is very dependent for its practical training on the laboratories and the facilities offered by the Pomorska Škola
- Research laboratories and equipment are obsolete
- Library does not contain enough titles and journals related to the domain of maritime sciences

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY

*Suggestions to the Institution by the Expert Panel:*

## **1) Institutional management and Quality Assurance**

- To formalize the arrangements and rules for permanent access to the simulators, which are owned by Pomorska Škola
- To align teachers with the STCW Convention
- To harmonize the system of quality assurance across departments
- To use the results of the quality assurance system to further improve teaching standards
- To set up an award system to stimulate scientific excellence
- To further implement the Code of Ethics in relation to student's awareness
- To take the initiative to include the head librarian to be a member of the Senate which is the case for other Croatian Universities

## **2) Study Programmes**

- To restructure the study programme so that teachers and assistants are less overloaded with teaching
- To reduce teaching groups
- To increase the number of lessons in the simulator, and increases the number of scenarios
- To align the study programme to STCW requirements
- To re-assesses certain ECTS
- To pay more attention to internships
- To encourage students to participate in (foreign) exchange programs
- To includes more stakeholders (in particular from the maritime side) in the study programme
- To stimulate the number of on-board trainings

## **3) Students**

- To better structure the Department's website so that information become more easily accessible and visual

- To increase the amount of financial support for student's activities
- To ameliorate the equipment for marine engineering
- To make sure students get enough feedback when they make suggestions through the 'suggestion box'
- To install, besides the Rector's award, an (or several) award(s) for the best students on each academic year (for each Department)

#### **4) Teachers**

- To make sure that (more) teachers are fully qualified according to the STCW requirements
- To employ more (full-time) teachers to decrease existing teaching workload
- To take better care of the growth and development plans of the existing human resources
- To make sure that teachers are able to spend more time to do scientific research (which should be reflected in an increased number of scientific publications)
- To make teachers more aware of the importance of scientific research

#### **5) Scientific and Professional Activity**

- To urge teachers and professors (in particular in field of maritime sciences) to increase the number of scientific publications
- To provide policy support to young researchers
- To implement a policy for promoting research excellence
- To implement a system for encouraging and rewarding academic publishing

#### **6) International Cooperation and Mobility**

- To pay more attention to international cooperation and mobility
- To encourage students to complete some partition of the program abroad
- To encourage teachers to explore the possibility of external mobility and international cooperation
- To participate more in such programs as Lifelong Learning Programme

#### **7) Resources: Administration, Space, Equipment and Finance**

- To pay more attention to a greater availability of journals in relation to maritime subject

- To introduce a database of maritime journals in the library
- To re-assess (re-evaluate) its collaboration with the secondary maritime school (Pomorska Škola) in order to insure more time can be spent on the simulators (with more different scenarios)
- To make available more specific software for students
- To takes a renewed look at the available equipment and invest where is necessary. The electronic lab and GMDSS lab are small and have obsolete software.