



**REPORT
of the Expert Panel
on the
RE-ACCREDITATION OF
Faculty of Law University of Rijeka**

**Date of the site visit:
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INTRODUCTION

This report on the re-accreditation of the Faculty of Law of the University of Rijeka was written by the Expert Panel appointed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education, on the basis of the self-evaluation of the institution, the supporting documentation and a visit to the institution.

The re-accreditation procedure performed by 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*), is obligatory once in five years for all higher education institutions working in the Republic of Croatia, in line with the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

The Expert Panel is appointed by the ASHE Accreditation Council, an independent expert body, to perform an independent peer-review-based evaluation of the institution and their study programmes.

The report contains:

- a brief analysis of the institutional advantages and disadvantages,
- a list of good practices found at the institution,
- recommendations for institutional improvement and measures to be implemented in the following period (and checked within a follow-up procedure), and
- detailed analysis of the compliance to the Standards and Criteria for Re-Accreditation.

The members of the expert panel were:

- Prof. András Jakab, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary (chair)
- Prof. Anne Meuwese, Tilburg Law School, The Netherlands
- Prof. Maria Alessandra Livi, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy
- Prof. Ciarán Burke, Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena, Germany
- Branka Obradović, student, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, Croatia

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

- Maja Šegvić, coordinator, Agency for Science and Higher Education
- Lida Lamza, interpreter at the site visit and report translator, Agency for Science and Higher Education.

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

- The Management;
- The Working Group that compiled the Self-Evaluation and members of the Quality Assurance Committee;

- The students;
- The Vice-Dean for University Study Affairs and Vice-Dean for Professional Study Affairs;
- Heads of Study Programmes;
- Heads of Research Projects;
- The Vice-Dean for Research;
- Heads of Departments;
- Teaching assistants and junior researchers;
- The Vice-Dean for International Affairs.

The Expert Panel also had a tour of the laboratories, library, IT room, student register desk, and the classrooms at the Faculty of Law in Rijeka, where they held a brief question and answer session with the students who were present.

Upon the completion of the re-accreditation procedure, the Accreditation Council renders its opinion on the basis of this Re-accreditation Report, the Assessment of Quality of the higher education institution and the Report of Fulfilment of Quantitative Criteria acquired from the Agency's information system.

Once the Accreditation Council renders its opinion, the Agency issues an Accreditation Recommendation by which the Agency recommends to the Minister of Science, Education and Sports to:

1. **issue a confirmation on compliance** with the requirements for performing higher education activities or parts of activities (renew the licence),
2. **deny the license** for performing the higher education activities or parts of activities to the higher education institution, or
3. **issue a letter of recommendation** for the period up to three (3) years in which period the higher education institution should make the necessary improvements. The letter of recommendation may include suspension of student enrolment for the defined period.

The Accreditation Recommendation also includes an Assessment of Quality of the higher education institution as well as recommendations for quality development.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATED INSTITUTION

NAME OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: The University of Rijeka Faculty of Law

ADDRESS: Hahlić 6, 51000 Rijeka

NAME OF THE HEAD OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: Professor Eduard Kunštek, Ph.D.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE:

There are 21 chairs at the Faculty. Chairs are teaching organisational units at the Faculty. A chair gathers lecturers and assistants who take part in teaching the courses within the chair. The duties of the chair are: organising teaching, research and professional activities for all chair courses; preparing drafts of course curricula; improving teaching at the Faculty; providing textbooks, handbooks, and other teaching materials and aids; taking account of lecturers, assistants, and researchers and their professional and scientific training; taking account of student achievement. The chairs are organised in a way that they include related courses.

There are 8 departments at the Faculty. Departments are Science and research organisational units at the Faculty. A department gathers lecturers, assistants, and researchers who take part in teaching, research, and professional activities at the Faculty.

LIST OF STUDY PROGRAMMES:

Undergraduate level (1):

1. Public Administration (professional bachelor level)

Graduate level (2):

1. Law (5 yr integrated study programme)
2. Public Administration (professional master level)

Postgraduate specialist study (2):

1. Corporate Finance Law
2. Law of European Integrations

Postgraduate Doctoral study (1):

1. Law

NUMBER OF STUDENTS

- full-time: 1338
- part-time: 590

NUMBER OF TEACHERS:

- full-time – 36

- external associates – 21

NUMBER OF SCIENTISTS (doctors of science, elected to grades, full-time): 34

TOTAL BUDGET (for 2013): 25,372,032.04 kuna

MSES FUNDING: 16,751,544.71 kuna

OWN FUNDING: 8,620,487.33 kuna

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION:

The Study of Law was started in 1973. At first, it was a part of the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Economics. In 1976 the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Law was established as an independent higher education institution, where the study of Law continued to be carried out. In 1985 the Faculty changed its name and became the University of Vladimir Bakarčić, Faculty of Law in Rijeka, and then changed the name again in 1991 into what it is known as today: the Faculty of Law of the University of Rijeka. Today the Faculty of Rijeka carries out 6 study programmes and has around 2000 students.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE EXPERT PANEL

ADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION

1. Relatively small size of the Faculty allows for a more personal atmosphere.
2. Service-mentality of staff towards students.
3. Continuous search for better teaching methods.
4. Support for young researchers.
5. Motivational pay structure rewards achievements by staff.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION

1. Low number of publications in internationally acclaimed law journals.
2. Data collection systems are underdeveloped.
3. Concentration on descriptive knowledge at examinations.
4. Low number of international research projects.
5. Unequal teaching load of staff members.

FEATURES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Continuous evaluation system of students resulting in 70% of the final marks.
2. General responsiveness towards students.
3. Up to 30% monthly salary bonuses for publications or other achievements.
4. Open door policy of staff towards students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Management of the Higher Education Institution and Quality Assurance

- In the development of the strategic plan, stakeholders should be more closely involved.
- The collection and analyses of relevant data (e.g. teaching hours, research quality) should be improved.
- Awareness of ethical rules should be raised both amongst teaching staff and students.

2. Study Programmes

- Learning outcomes of courses should be explicitly matched to learning outcomes at the study programme level, formulated in terms that rely on Bloom's taxonomy and tested systematically (i.e. through the introduction of a 'testing matrix').
- It should be clear and transparent how the actual work load for students matches the number of ECTS allocated to a certain course.

- Possibilities for practical learning should be facilitated to a greater degree, should be integrated into the programme and, most importantly, should be made accessible to all students.
- Maintaining contact with and tracking of alumni should be carried out in a more systematic manner.

3. Students

- Implementation of extra measures to ensure the quality of the students who enrol in the first year of law studies (an extra examination prior to the enrolment, extra courses for those who lack the required knowledge).
- In order to achieve objectivity, written examinations should be entirely anonymised, a stronger emphasis should be put on written examinations, and the remaining oral examinations should always happen in front of a committee of teachers.
- In order to achieve consistency in terms of grading, the best, the worst and 10% of all other written examinations, the latter being randomly selected, should always be checked by another (ideally external) teacher.
- The alumni database should be used for data collection regarding the current occupation of the former students.
- A strong concentration on applied knowledge (case solving exercises instead of descriptive essays and multiple choice questions) at least in the final exam is highly recommended.

4. Teachers

- Once the employment ban is lifted, we recommend that jobs in which teaching in English is possible (e.g., international law, EU law) should also be advertised in English on international websites and should be disseminated via different mailing lists in Europe.
- For these jobs, any requirement of speaking Croatian should be lifted (and an obligation to learn Croatian within 2 years after taking up position could be introduced).
- Inequalities in teaching load should be minimised.

5. Scientific and Professional Activity

- Systematic and transparent financing of proofreading is desirable in order to help with the shortfall in international publications.
- Administrative help should be secured for project applications.
- The number of publications in internationally acclaimed law journals should be substantially increased.
- Staff should be more actively encouraged to acquire external funding.

6. International Cooperation and Mobility

- A more ambitious plan of action for greater engagement with European projects should be implemented.

- Dedicated financing for the law department's Erasmus students should be secured. The current situation – in which law students compete with students from other faculties for places on exchange programmes – is unacceptable and illogical.
- The faculty should seek to secure funding from European and international sources, rather than focussing on Croatian sources (such as the Ministry) alone.
- Measures should be taken to ensure that the full breadth of Erasmus places (both incoming and outgoing) are subscribed to, in particular through raising greater awareness of the benefits thereof.

7. Resources: Administration, Space, Equipment and Finances

- More modern IT equipment should be acquired.
- The quality of group study spaces should be improved.
- Physical library resources should be updated (more recent editions of standard international textbooks should be purchased).
- More administrative support is needed both for management and project applications.

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE TO THE STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR RE-ACCREDITATION

1. Management of the Higher Education Institution and Quality Assurance

The Rijeka Faculty of Law (RFL) did develop a strategic plan, but the inclusion of stakeholders could have been more systematic, and should be more systematic in the development of such documents in the future (criterion 1.1.). Annual operational plans and monitoring of the implementation thereof would be helpful in fulfilling the tenets of the strategic plan.

Due to the small size of RFL and to the careful crafting of procedures, a healthy mixture of formal and informal practices contributes to the effectiveness of the organisational structure (criterion 1.2.).

Expert panel has not discovered any major issues concerning the conformity of the RFL's strategy with the overall university strategy, and study programmes with institutional missions (criteria 1.3. and 1.4.).

There is a conscious effort throughout RFL to improve both in terms of teaching and research, but the collection and analyses of relevant data (e.g. teaching hours, research quality) were incomplete and/or not systematically monitored (criteria 1.5. and 1.7.).

The monitoring system of teaching is exemplary: if students' evaluations are below a certain level, the staff member who has been the subject of such evaluations is asked to fill in a self-evaluation and to discuss the issue with the management; further steps can be taken if this remains ineffective; there is a special scrutiny procedure for courses in which the pass rate is below 50%; and alongside these already functioning mechanisms, a peer review system is being introduced (criterion 1.6.). The rate of students filling in the forms is rather low (an issue which causes dilemmas at all HEI known to the Panel throughout Europe: incentives to fill in the forms might be considered), but the forms are well designed, similar to the one in the most renowned European institutions.

Both staff members and students seemed to be either entirely unaware of any Code of Ethics or had only very vague information about its very existence (there is a Code of Ethics at university level) (criterion 1.8.).

2. Study Programmes

RFL has been very active in improving their study programmes and ensuring they are tailored to its students' needs. In general, RFL has an atmosphere of responsiveness towards students, relying strongly on student evaluations and on the kind of informal contacts that occur easily in a small Faculty for quality control. The purpose of the comments below is to point to some potential vulnerabilities in this generally informal system and to what appear to be small 'blind spots' in what is, overall, a very well-functioning system.

The Expert panel like to emphasize that there are no indications that there are problems with the quality of teaching, rather to the contrary, but, on the other hand if there were a problem (e.g. subjectivity in assessment), especially if it would not be the kind of problem that students pick up on directly or may not be aware of, it is not evident that this would appear on the radar of RFL management. The great deal of trust that appears to exist at all levels of RFL, and which the Expert panel commends the management for, and the fact that RFL is a close-knit community, for all its clear benefits for students and staff, may in some cases also result in missed opportunities for reaching a higher level of excellence.

We see no issues with the enrolment quota (criterion 2.2.), because – even if a formal labour market analysis is missing – the quota have been established with reference to the labour market. Also, in times of economic difficulty a higher employment rate among graduates does not seem realistic, and it is not clear that lowering the quota would help. Alumni tracking could be carried out in a more systematic manner.

The institutional resources (criterion 2.3.) for quality teaching, as expressed in the student-teacher ratio, are far from optimal. However, in the face of hiring restrictions, RFL compensates by simply putting in a lot of effort – even if this may happen at the expense of research (see Section 5). Apart from great enthusiasm for teaching on the part of teachers and assistants, the staff has an exemplary 'service-oriented' mentality towards students. For instance, many have an 'open door policy', which means that teachers are accessible to students outside normal office hours. RFL also has a policy that courses with a pass rate of below 50% will need to undergo additional scrutiny. Finally, they have adjusted the examination structure (the 70-30% system) to facilitate more spread-out learning among students. There are usually two midterm exams, resulting in a combined 70% of the final grade and an exam at the end of the semester resulting in 30% of the final grade. This system motivates the students with regard to midterm learning, and it also provides them with feedback about their progress prior to the final exam.

With regard to the learning outcomes (criterion 2.4. and criterion 2.5.) there are some limited issues. Learning outcomes have been defined, but are not necessarily regularly updated and/or discussed with stakeholders, and do not necessarily match the testing (in individual cases, this may not be detrimental, but there is no use of devices such as testing matrices, which would ensure that students are actually *tested* on the learning outcomes and are tested on *all* learning outcomes). It appears to be the case that most teachers are very passionate about providing the best teaching they can, but this may in some case still result in sub-optimal testing (e.g. testing mainly on the basis of knowledge when the learning outcomes presuppose strategic skills). For

instance, the common use of multiple choice exams, which (although they are easy for teaching staff to correct) the Panel is critical of, do not necessarily ensure that the more active learning outcomes are tested. This also links with our general observation that, although we see no problems with the monitoring system of teaching in general, and admit that informal contact may solve a lot of problems, there is no effective mechanism for forcing those less interested in quality to take a critical look at their own courses. Also, the use of Bloom's taxonomy is encouraged, but again only in an informal way and without having an impact on the formulation of learning outcomes at the programme level. It is unclear how the match between course level learning outcomes and programme level learning outcomes is ensured. In this respect, it is a good development that RFL, together with the Faculty of Law in Osijek and the Faculty of Law in Split, have applied for a grant for the purposes of redefining learning outcomes.

Similarly we see a 'blind spot' with respect to the allocation of ECTS (criterion 2.6.). The ECTS calculation is based on the number of lecturing hours alone. And although it should be mentioned that there are not many complaints regarding work load among students, it is still the case that teachers do not appear to set the study requirements (literature and assignments) while bearing the number of hours students are expected to study for 1 ECTS (30 hours) in mind – or at least there is no mechanism to ensure this. Without necessarily intending to advocate a strict system for ECTS allocation (such as one that is based solely on the number of pages students have to read), the Panel nonetheless feels that some form of guideline in this respect will help teachers prioritize within their subjects and help students in determining what is expected of them. Some courses have quite a lot of literature, and even though teachers provide guidance to students informally in class, making more explicit how students are supposed to 'tackle' certain material will also help clarify why in some cases choices are made to put older literature on the list. Automatic listing of 'classical works' may hinder the inclusion of the latest scientific discoveries (criterion 2.7.). Obligatory literature from a few decades ago (no matter how prestigious their authors might be or might have been), unless it concerns extracts selected for historical reasons or other specific didactic purposes, seems to be inappropriate in legal subjects where contemporary case law, legislation and literature must be regularly added to any learning material. If there are no updated textbooks in the Croatian language, staff members should consider writing new textbooks themselves or updating old ones (if copyright allows for the latter solution).

As mentioned, the passionate approach that many teachers at RFL take towards their work, also results in the employment of many different teaching methods (criterion 2.8.) – here too, a potentially problematic issue is whether these teaching methods are optimally combined with testing methods (see above regarding learning outcomes).

Students enjoy access to many different electronic and other resources (criterion 2.9.), a positive point being the possibility of accessing electronic subscription-based databases from home via a proxy server system.

One final point that we believe may represent a good aim for the future is to ensure students have even more opportunities for practical learning (criterion 2.10.). RFL offers moot courts and law clinics, but due to minimum grade requirements, only a few students have access to them. Here, too, the individual efforts by teachers to involve students in their projects or even consultancy work have certainly been noted by the Panel. However, in order to help not just excellent students, but rather all students, to advance, and to prepare them well for a job in legal practice, a more systematic approach to internships in particular would be welcomed.

3. Students

3.1. RFL does not evaluate applicants before they enrol into the study programs due to the State Matura system. Due to its state-wide approach, State Matura does not prepare or evaluate future students in the fields needed to prepare them for undertaking study in law, although extra points are given for admission purposes for subjects such as Logic, Philosophy and History. RFL finds that, in the case of some students, the knowledge not even in the subject that is officially evaluated at the State Matura (i.e., Croatian language) is at an acceptable level. RFL evaluated the students' prior knowledge concerning and found that the prior education was lacking in the aforementioned fields, to the extent that it can influence their success rate in completing the first year within the set term. RFL planned to implement a new short course for new students, preparing them for their studies. RFL did not succeed in this goal, due to the amount of time that would be needed to execute the course and the period in which the course would be held, as such a course would necessarily coincide with the autumn examinations. RFL is considering putting extra measures in place in order to ensure the quality of the students who enrol in the first year of studies (including an extra examination prior to enrolment, and extra courses those who lack the required knowledge).

3.2. RFL supports a variety of extracurricular student activities. There are several active student associations, and RFL supports their activities financially. There are also special terms of study available to qualified athletes in order to allow them the time needed to prepare for and participate in major competitions, in order to balance their study and sporting obligations. RFL encourages students to participate in both sports and academic competitions and there are currently multiple Moot Court options available to students as well as the Student Sports Association *Pravnik*, which organises various sports activities for students.

3.3. Counselling for students is provided at university level through the University Counselling Centre, which provides various forms of free support and assistance to students. It is divided into multiple offices, which offer psychological counselling, assistance in meeting the specific needs of students with disabilities in accordance with their specific type of disability, and legal counselling. Financial aid is available to economically disadvantaged students through the solidarity programme of the Aleksandar Abramov Foundation and through various scholarships. Mentorship is provided during the period that the student is working on his/her final thesis. In

addition, most teachers are available to students for questions throughout the time that they spend in the faculty building.

3.4. RFL has implemented various knowledge assessment procedures and methods. Most exams are in written form, but there are some courses that also have oral or that exclusively have exams. Teachers have the right to choose which type of written exams they are going to use for their courses, and this has resulted in a variety of written exam types that are used while assessing knowledge (multiple choice, essays, and case studies). Teachers assess the students throughout the course duration using different types of knowledge assessment tools (presentations, oral examinations, short tests, et cetera). Teachers are obliged to write a full teaching programme, which is confirmed by the Faculty Council and published on RFL's web page. There are also effective procedures for appeal against a decision concerning students' assessment. The procedure is transparent, and it resolves the issue in a short timeframe after the original assessment has been made. Students do not usually appeal (even though there have been a few appeals, including a number of successful ones in the last couple of years), since they find that other choices, such as rejecting a lower grade and *de facto* failing the exam, are much more beneficial. The level of the diversity of the assessment methods is exemplary, but a strong concentration on applied knowledge (case solving exercises instead of descriptive essays and multiple choice questions), at least during the final 30% exam, is highly recommended.

In order to achieve objectivity, written examinations should be entirely anonymised, a stronger emphasis should be put on written examinations, and the remaining oral examinations should always happen in front of a committee of teachers. In order to achieve external validity, the best, the worst and some randomly selected written examinations should always be checked by another (ideally external) teacher.

3.5. RFL has a database containing former students, but does not maintain contact, nor does it collect statistic data after they finish their education at RFL. There are certain individual contacts between professors and former students, but these are not organized by RFL, nor do they serve to collect employment data from former students.

3.6. All the relevant data concerning RFL's study programmes, learning outcomes and qualifications are published on the official web page of RFL. RFL should consider putting more effort into promoting its study programmes vis-à-vis potential future students, especially those with top grades.

3.7. Students can express their opinions and suggestions through student representatives, the student ombudsman or by engaging directly with the teachers. Students are generally of the opinion that they can talk to teachers about any kind of problems that they might have with a particular teacher, including via direct engagement with that teacher him/herself. Student representatives are also available to students to resolve any kind of problems that might occur.

3.8. All of the feedback on measures of improvement that have been taken on the basis of the student initiative, as well as the measures taken on the basis of the complaints, is offered through multiple platforms (e-mail, Facebook, in person) by the student representatives.

4. Teachers

4.1. The number and qualification of scientific-teaching staff are mostly in line with the strategic goals of the institution and adequately cover core disciplines. RFL employs a sufficient number of qualified full-time teachers to ensure the quality and continuity of teaching and learning on all study programmes. The data in Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 of the Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter "SER") show that, in the academic year 2013/2014, lecturers employed full-time at RFL hold almost all classes (99.5%) of Integrated Studies of Law; 93% of classes of Administrative Study of Law; 85% of classes of the Specialist Graduate Professional Study; and 100% of classes within Postgraduate Doctoral Study. RFL also employs part-time lecturers (selected from professionals and experts well known in science and practise for their skill and competences) to teach at the Postgraduate Specialist Studies in (i) Corporate Finance Law and (ii) Criminal Investigation. In these courses the number of part-time lecturers is higher (31% and 82% respectively) given that they require specific practical knowledge to be taught. As a consequence, the qualification of teaching and research staff is mostly adequate for RFL's strategic goals and in line with the Ordinance on the Content of Licence and Conditions for Issuing Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, carrying out a Study Programme and Re-accreditation of Higher Education Institutions.

4.2. The system of selection of new human resources is based upon the potential retirements and sustainability of study programmes and research activities, and it is advertised internationally. It seems, however, that a large proportion of new human resources are coming from within RFL itself (see also page 92 of SER where it is stated that "it is reasonable to expect that these persons - teaching assistants - will be elected into the research and teaching position with the opening of new job positions for assistant professor at the Faculty"). Moreover, the critical point is that no new job position can be created by RFL because of current employment policy in Croatian higher education (according to which advancement can occur only exceptionally within a five-year period) and, especially, because of the lack of funds. In any case, RFL promotes the development of human resources: doctoral programmes appear to be well organized, as referred to by doctoral students. RFL provides mentors guiding the new human resources; stimulates their participation in important conferences and mobility programmes; and requires them to show evidence of scientific productivity and teaching experiences.

4.3. The institution takes into account the number of full-time teachers, pursuing the optimal ratio between students and full-time teachers. In fact, the ratio of full-time lecturers to students in the academic year 2013/2014, in all study programmes at RFL together, was 1:33.8 (see SER, p. 93), above the ratio prescribed (which is 1:30), but better than that in previous academic years. In any case, it does not significantly affect the calibre of taught at RFL. The opinion of

students consulted during our visit is that the classes work well, and we also learned that tutorials and seminars are held in smaller study groups, and that these generally function in an appropriate manner. The optimal ratio has only been partly implemented because of the economic crisis and cost cutting carried out in science and higher education, which prevented – and continues to prevent – the opening of new job positions and the advancement of teaching staff.

4.4. RFL organises a structured introduction programme to teaching and learning for new employees without previous experience in teaching. Research staff is involved in special professional development programmes for acquiring skills in writing project proposals and applying for international project funds, managing project teams, communicating research results to the private sector and to the public at large, and publishing papers in leading international journals. The scientific productivity of teachers in terms of quality level is also taken into account by RFL: teachers are obliged to submit a monthly report on their productivity and the Dean of RFL, after looking through the reports, can decide upon a monthly increase to their salary. Every five years, a report is also needed in order to maintain the position of employee of the Faculty, as was indicated by lecturers during our visit. The University also gives several awards and other forms of recognition in order to motivate lecturers and teaching assistants to invest more effort in their job. Students are satisfied by the teaching staff and enjoy a good relationship with them. However, it seems that the student evaluation of classes and lecturers in an anonymous form does not work well, given that only a small percentage of students fill out the questionnaire. Moreover, to increase the professional development of scientific-teaching staff, it would be necessary to employ more persons in administration and technical services.

4.5. All teachers we met during our visit were satisfied and did not complain about their own workload (which includes teaching, research, mentoring and student consultations), although Table 4.3 of the SER (see page 109) shows a very different workload (with an enormous amount of teaching hours for some staff members).

4.6. RFL ensures that the teaching and research activities of the lecturers are not affected by their external commitments. As shown in Table 4.3 of the SER (see page 109), only a few teachers have additional workload at other institutions, with these staff no being so burdened in terms of standardised teaching hours. Such commitments seem not to have a negative impact on the quality and efficiency of their work at the parent institution, as referred to by students met during our visit. They contribute to increasing the competence of lecturers. Moreover, the external commitments of scientific-teaching staff are quite regularly monitored by RFL in order to ensure the quality and efficiency of their work.

5. Scientific and Professional Activity

RLF does not have a separate research agenda (there is a university level research agenda), and only 3 pages in its general strategic document are devoted to this topic (criterion 5.1.). RFL aims at national and international cooperation, but due to the lack of a research agenda, cooperation remains *ad hoc* in its nature (criterion 5.3.). There are sufficient staff members with PhD degrees, and some of the staff members are doing high quality research and publish articles in internationally recognised law journals or book chapters with internationally recognised publishers, but a substantial portion of staff members lacks the ambition and/or the capacity to do so (criteria 5.3., 5.4. and 5.6.). The incentive mechanism for publishing is exemplary, i.e. 30% salary bonus when a prestigious publication is issued (criterion 5.5.). RFL has a number of domestic projects, and participated in EU funded projects (TEMPUS) in the past, but has failed to secure new internationally funded projects (criterion 5.7.). A stronger and more systematic cooperation with the local judiciary and bar is encouraged (criterion 5.8.). The potential for gaining private funding could be explored via consultancy and/or mediation (criterion 5.9.).

RFL runs a PhD programme (criterion 5.10.). PhD students are required to spend at least 4 months abroad during their studies and must finish their studies within 6 years (both rules seem appropriate). A general methodological course is obligatory for them (introducing them into the methods of legal research), and a further 5 courses (mostly from other postgraduate programmes) can be chosen by them. The approach of PhD students and assistants seems to be concentrated on domestic law to too great a degree; a stronger emphasis on comparative approaches is recommended. Three out of 21 assistants received their PhD degrees abroad, a ratio which could be further improved upon in the future. Assistants have the possibility to attend courses on higher education and on career management. RFL is generally supportive of young researchers (paying for international conferences, sometimes also for research stays). Systematic and transparent financing of proofreading is recommended in order to help with the securing of international publications. In general, young researchers seem to enjoy good communication with the management.

RFL publishes one double blind reviews periodical called Collected Essays. The main language of the publication is Croatian, and it is contained in Croatian electronic databases. 80% of authors come from outside of the Law School, which is a good sign, showing that the forum is not too inward-looking. The periodical is also published in 600 printed samples; it is subscribed to by a considerable number of practitioners.

Applied research (research for practitioners) seems to be stronger at RFL than basic research (research aimed at other researchers as an audience). The low number of internationally recognised publications in double blind peer reviewed law journals might be due to this fact.

6. International Cooperation and Mobility

RFL engages in a number of activities involving international co-operation. It is clear that improvements have been made in this regard in recent years, and that many individual

initiatives are worthy of praise. However, there is still clearly quite some work to be done in this area. This section aims to offer a brief appraisal of the performance of RFL in this field.

6.1. RFL engages with the Erasmus programme, in co-operation with other European universities. In the current year, there have been fifteen outgoing Erasmus students, while eleven students from foreign universities have come to Rijeka to study law. RFL has signed learning agreements with twenty-five universities in a number of European countries, including Portugal, Germany, Italy and the Czech Republic. A typical learning agreement will cover student mobility, with either two or three student places offered, both in Rijeka and at the co-operating university. Staff mobility is also contemplated in many of these learning agreements. However, this latter tenet is rarely utilised in practice.

In order to facilitate student mobility, RFL offers courses providing an introduction to the German and Italian legal systems in the respective national languages, as well as an English language course on sports law, co-ordinated with a UK university. This is certainly a commendable initiative and something that could be expanded upon.

6.2. The Erasmus programme is usually undertaken by students in the fifth and final year of their studies, since this year is generally principally composed of elective subjects. As a result, rather than undertaking a year of electives, students may travel abroad and accrue an equal number of ECTS credits in a foreign university. Once the courses abroad have been completed, they are treated the same as if the courses had been undertaken in Croatia, that is, the courses will count toward the final grade that the student receives. International mobility is therefore seen as a serious – albeit optional – tenet of students' legal education. This is certainly positive.

Less positive, however, is the question of financing for the Erasmus programme. No particular financing is reserved for law students, who must compete with students in all other faculties for scholarships to study abroad. This financing amounts to 410 euros per month, which seems adequate. Given the fact that many European countries are significantly more expensive than Croatia, such financing is essential for many students to contemplate travelling abroad. Adding to the problem is the fact that in several other faculties, it is customary to award higher grades than in legal sciences. In practice, therefore, fewer students travel than perhaps might like to. This year, there were thirty applications from the law department. Eight candidates succeeded in obtaining funding, while six elected to travel abroad without a scholarship. However, this option is clearly not open to everyone, and in any case, these figures suggest that half of those who applied and who were interested in mobility will not be able to avail of the advantages offered by the Erasmus programme, despite a surfeit of places being provided via the twenty-five existing co-operation agreements with other universities. It is therefore recommended that a specific number of grants (not fewer than 20) per year should be reserved for RFL in order to encourage student mobility.

6.3. With regard to doctoral candidates, it is an obligatory requirement that they should spend time abroad while writing their Ph.D. This is certainly positive. In addition, it is planned to create

a joint Ph.D. programme with the Universities of Porto and Maribor. Candidates must also co-author a paper with their supervisor and engage in at least one international conference with him or her. Assessment of staff and researcher mobility is undertaken through monitoring of research publications and doctoral theses. If the researchers in question have travelled abroad in the framework of a particular project, then they are obliged to submit a specific report upon their return to Rijeka, outlining their activities and achievements. This system of reports should be extended to cover all trips abroad of a duration longer than one month.

Doctoral candidates are limited in their opportunities to seek employment opportunities abroad, however. Money is seen as a big issue, and researchers see their home university as being a safer bet in that regard. More positive is the fact that Max Planck, Fulbright, and Lausanne scholarships have been taken advantage of, both by Ph.D. researchers and postdoctoral researchers, in order to facilitate short to medium-term mobility. It seems as though most early career researchers have spent several months abroad in the last years.

In terms of outgoing staff mobility, it was noted that, while the staff was dominated by Croatian nationals, a good number of staff members had travelled abroad for work or study at some point in their career. This figure was estimated at 40% by one staff member. This is certainly positive, meaning that staff can import some international perspective and some foreign networks into their working environment. It was noted that the Dean is certainly keen for staff to participate in international conferences and research. The Panel learned that the Dean is prepared to finance trips abroad for staff members, providing costs for hotel accommodation and transportation. It was noted that the Dean has never refused such a request from a staff member, which is a record that speaks for itself. Staff also participate in international training programmes on occasion. It is less clear, though, why the relatively strong presence of RFL staff at conferences abroad, does not translate into more publications in acclaimed international journals.

6.4. Engagement with international research projects is an important area for any law faculty. Rijeka is no exception in this regard. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that RFL has been involved in international co-operation with the Universities of Saarbrücken, Tilburg, and Maccerata, under the 'Tempus' funding programme. The outcomes from this co-operation have included publications in English, German and Italian. This is certainly to be encouraged. RFL has also attracted approximately 180,000 euros in funding from the European Social Fund, to implement a new quality assurance system. However, it should be added that the research sums attracted thus far have been comparatively small, and that a more ambitious plan of action for greater engagement with European projects should be implemented, particularly in order to offset the financial difficulties that RFL is currently experiencing.

6.5. In order to increase the attractiveness of RFL as a destination for foreign students, the website is currently being upgraded, with additional information being provided in English in order to improve the accessibility for foreign researchers. This will include profiles of the staff, and is to be commended. However, Croatian language requirements still represent a significant barrier.

Accessibility for incoming foreigners is further aided by the employment of a dedicated administrative assistant for international affairs, by the fact that once a semester an introduction day is held for incoming exchange students and by the 'Erasmus buddy' programme, consisting of each incoming student being assigned a Croatian counterpart, who will be tasked with introducing the Erasmus student to Croatian university and social life. These aspects are deeply positive.

See also above criterion 6.1.

6.6. With regard to staff, it was noted by the Panel that only one member of the staff of RFL is of a nationality other than Croatian. In addition, this individual is of Croatian heritage, and seems to have been recruited as part of a deliberate strategy to 'bring ethnic Croats home'. While job announcements are posted online, and apparently circulated elsewhere in Europe, it is nonetheless clear that the requirement of Croatian language competence stands as a significant barrier to broader engagement with international jurists and their potential future employment as faculty members. Whether this is justified as an approach may be discussed. It is clear, for example, that certain areas of tuition, such as European Union law and public international law are perhaps best dispensed in French or English. As such, potential employment of foreigners and the removal of an absolute requirement of competence in the Croatian language could be encouraged.

Compensating the above somewhat is the fact that an average of three to four visiting guest lecturers will attend RFL each year. These individuals stay for periods of between five days and two weeks, and usually give block seminars, as well as engaging with the research community. The bulk of these visitors come from Western Europe and North America.

6.7. RFL maintains a Jean Monet Centre of Excellence, ensuring some professional engagement with foreign universities and may invite international speakers and visiting fellows. However, it is no longer in receipt of any international finance, meaning that it must be self-funding. This entails that the Centre must apply, inter alia, to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and the Danish Research Foundation for funding for individual speakers and conferences. However, the Centre maintains a significant role within the university. While the continued presence of the centre is certainly desirable, a solution to the funding problem certainly needs to be found.

The department for international comparative law was founded on the basis of European Union Tempus project funds. This facilitated the acquisition of over 600 volumes on EU law and European integration. This is quite a positive development. Opportunities to build on this should be found, including efforts to avail of greater sums from EU funding projects.

See also above criterion 6.1.

7. Resources: Administration, Space, Equipment and Finances

RFL provides appropriate learning resources for all students enrolled at the Faculty, lecture halls and seminar rooms seem large enough, and library and IT rooms seem functional. Group study spaces are scarce, however (criterion 7.1.). More administrative help would be needed both for management purposes, and for the preparation of research projects (criterion 7.2.). There are courses for non-teaching staff (e.g. on how to prepare project applications) (criterion 7.3.). The IT equipment in the IT room and in the library seems to be rather old and slow (criterion 7.4.). Equipment in lecture halls seems appropriate; there is special IT equipment in the library for a student who suffers from restricted vision (criterion 7.5.).

Electronic databases in the library are good, but the physical resources (books) are scarce and partly outdated, in particular those in English and other foreign languages (criterion 7.6.). Opening hours of the library are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., which at first sight seems very limited, but students can use the central library of the University of Rijeka, which is open until 2 a.m. and due to the geographic location of RFL and public transport conditions (situated on the outskirts of Rijeka, with the last bus leaving at 11 p.m.), we admit that night-time opening hours for RFL library would indeed be unreasonable.

Funding and possibilities for the use of funding (especially with regard to hiring new staff) are limited, partly as a result of central ministerial measures (criterion 7.7.). The incentive mechanism of 30% of salaries seems to represent a very efficient way of motivating staff for the purposes of RFL (criterion 7.8.).