



**REPORT  
OF THE EXPERT PANEL  
ON THE REACCREDITATION  
OF THE UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE (DOCTORAL)  
PROGRAMME  
*BUSINESS ECONOMICS AND ECONOMICS*  
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, UNIVERSITY OF SPLIT**

**Date of the visit:  
10 May 2017**

**September 2017**



The project was co-financed by the European Union within the European Social Fund.

The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the Agency for Science and Higher Education.

**CONTENTS**

**INTRODUCTION ..... 3**

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

**RECOMMENDATION BY THE EXPERT PANEL TO THE ASHE'S ACCREDITATION COUNCIL..... 5**

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME ..... 6**

**ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME ..... 6**

**DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME..... 6**

**EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE ..... 7**

**COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRESCRIBED CONDITIONS FOR THE DELIVERY OF A STUDY PROGRAMME..... 8**

**QUALITY ASSESSMENT ..... 10**

## ***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) Programme **Business Economics and Economics** on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the **Faculty of Economics, University of Split**.

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:

- Prof. Peter Mason, London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom, Chair of the Expert Panel;
- Prof. Aleksandra Mrčela Kanjuo, vice rector of the doctoral school, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia;
- Prof. Rainer Niemann, Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, Austria;
- Prof. Anand Murugesan, Central European University, Hungary;
- Prof. Peter-Wim Zuidhof, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands;
- Prof. Wendy Sigle, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom;
- Doc. dr. Maja Turnšek-Hančič, University of Maribor, Slovenia;
- Prof. Julius Horvath, Central European University Business School, Hungary;
- Prof. Adele Ladkin, Bournemouth University, United Kingdom;
- Ieva Krumina, doctoral candidate, Latvian University of Agriculture, Latvia;

- Hrvoje Stojić, University Pompeu Fabra, Spain;
- Jeremiás Máté Balogh, doctoral candidate, Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary;
- Kanad Bagchi, doctoral candidate, Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Germany.

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

- Prof. Wendy Sigle, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom,
- Prof. Aleksandra Mrčela Kanjuo, vice rector of the doctoral school, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

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

- Emita Blagdan, coordinator, ASHE,
- Ivana Rončević, interpreter at the site visit, ASHE,
- Goran Briški, translator of the Report.

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

- Management,
- Study programme coordinators,
- Doctoral candidates,
- Teachers and supervisors,
- External stakeholders,
- Alumni.

The Expert Panel (henceforth 'the panel') also had a tour of the library, IT rooms, student register desk and the classrooms.

## ***SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME***

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: Business Economics and Economics

Institution delivering the programme: Faculty of Economics, University of Split

Institution providing the programme: Faculty of Economics, University of Split

Place of delivery: Split

Scientific area and field: Social sciences, Economics

Number of doctoral candidates: 79 (67 active students)

Number of teachers: 41

Number of potential supervisors: 51

Ratio between supervisors and doctoral students: 1:1.3

Learning outcomes of the study programme:

Specific LOs of the Doctoral Study Programme list the following skills and competencies:

1. Distinguish and apply advanced economic/business theories and procedures in researching complex economic/business issues in a way that it contributes to the creation of new knowledge.
2. Construct and produce original research papers and their publication in international peer-reviewed journals cited in relevant databases.
3. Prepare, present and defend individual research findings at academic events.
4. Critically evaluate peers' research findings published within one's study field.

Classes/Research ratio: out of 180 ECTS in a three-year programme 88 ECTS is delivered in the classroom (66 in coursework and 22 more in doctoral workshops).

First year: 5 courses (30 ECTS in coursework) and 2 workshops (16 ECTS)

Second year: 6 courses (36 ECTS in coursework) and 1 workshop (6 ECTS)

## ***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 the period up to three (3) years in which period the higher education institution should make the necessary improvements.**

**Joint recommendations for all of the evaluated study programmes in the cluster of social sciences and the field of economics:**

1. Research proposal should accompany applications of candidates and should be part of the assessment process when choosing the best candidates for enrolment.
2. A supervisor should be appointed at the start of the programme.
3. Transparency of doctoral students' funding should be improved.
4. Justification of fee level should be improved.
5. There should be an equal treatment of part-time and full-time (fully-funded) students.
6. All doctoral students should have at least 3 years of independent research in full capacity. With the current teaching content taking large portion of the programmes, programmes should be prolonged to last possibly 4 or 5 year, with first (classroom) part as a Masters (Research) level.
7. Systematic internationalisation of curriculum, faculty and students (incl. student experience) should be a priority.

***RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME***

1. Formalise existing informal practices (e.g. regarding quality of supervision; introduction of improvements of the organisation of the programme).
2. Better communicate established good practices and existing rules regarding students' and supervisors' roles and obligations.
3. Establish an internationalisation strategy for research outputs and collaboration.
4. Establish an internationalisation strategy for recruitment.
5. Consider ways to encourage and promote mobility of staff and students.

***ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME***

1. Qualified and devoted mentors.
2. Good entry procedure.
3. Supportive Faculty management.
4. Embeddedness in the local environment and strong ties with industry, public authorities and civil society organizations.
5. Good collegial organisational culture and high levels of commitment to the doctoral study programme.

***DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME***

1. Lack of formalised procedures.
2. Lack of clearly planned internationalisation strategy.
3. Inconsistent research funding streams.

4. Time pressures on self-funded students.

### ***EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE***

1. Research workshops providing discussion on students' project development.
2. Excellent and regular interchange and collaborative projects with the business sector, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.
3. The high number of students who have co-authored papers with their supervisors.
4. The international conference "Challenges of Europe" as a creative way of helping students develop professional international networks.

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

<b>Minimal legal conditions:</b>	
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.	NO (32.5:1)
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
<b>Additional/ recommended conditions of the ASHE Accreditation Council for passing a positive opinion</b>	
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.	YES
4. The candidate: supervisor ratio at the HEI is not above 3:1.	YES
5. All supervisors meet the following conditions:	a) YES
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) YES
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) YES
c) confirms feasibility of the draft research plan upon admission of the candidate (or submission of the proposal);	d) YES



d) ensures the conditions (and funding) necessary to implement the candidate's research (in line with the draft research plan) as a research project leader, co-leader, participant, collaborator or in other ways; e) trained for the role before assuming it (through workshops, co-supervisions etc.); f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory work.	e) YES f) YES
6. All teachers meet the following conditions: a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position; b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the course (table 1, Teachers).	a) YES b) YES
7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment committees.	YES
8. The programme ensures that all candidates spend at least three years doing independent research (while studying, individually, within or outside courses), which includes writing the thesis, publishing, participating in international conferences, field work, attending courses relevant for research etc.	NO
Comment: High proportion coursework causes less than 3 years on independent research.	
9. For joint programmes and doctoral schools (at the university level): cooperation between HEIs is based on adequate contracts; joint programmes are delivered in cooperation with accredited HEIs; the HEI delivers the programme within a doctoral school in line with the regulations and ensures good coordination aimed at supporting the candidates; at least 80% of courses are delivered by teachers employed at HEIs within the consortium	n/a

## QUALITY ASSESSMENT

<p><b>1. RESOURCES: TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, RESEARCH CAPACITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE</b></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><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>The SER provided information on relevant publications and research projects at the Faculty of Economics. That information was complemented during the study visit with detailed bibliographical data for potential supervisors from the Croatian Scientific Bibliographic database (CROSBI). We assess that the quality of research outcomes is at the level that ensures doctoral students with an appropriate research environment and supervisors' support.</p> <p>Interviews with stakeholders provided us with information on the high esteem of the Faculty of Economics and its doctoral programme in the local environment. They also mentioned that the doctoral programme attracts candidates from other Croatian universities, an indicator of acknowledgement of the Faculty's scientific and research excellence. The international reputation of the Faculty is indicated by traditionally well attended international conference "Challenges of Europe". To further improve international visibility of the Faculty, the Expert Panel recommends targeting higher-ranking international journals for publication, more than it is currently practised.</p>
<p>1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.</p>	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>The SER states that the whole programme could be delivered by its own faculty and the data on the teaching load of the involved teachers shows that quality of teaching is ensured. Conversations with current and former students during the site visit confirmed the high quality of teaching. Students also confirmed that changes in recent years have improved the quality of teaching. Envisaged changes in the scope and content of courses presented to us by the leaders of the study programme (e.g. change of the ratio between obligatory and elective courses aimed to more individualised study programme, more research methodology related topics,</p>

	strengthening scientific instead of applicative focus of analysis) should work to ensure quality in future years.
1.3. The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>Data on the research productivity in the SER and information provided to us at the site visit ('Elaborate on the Postgraduate Doctoral Study Programme in Economics and Business', p. 15 – 107) indicates that the processes used to select teachers of obligatory and elective courses ensure that they are highly qualified and actively engaged in research of topics they are teaching.</p>
1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>The ratio between supervisors and doctoral students is 1:1.6, an indicator of the high quality of the programme as the ratio is well below the maximum of 1:3. Moreover, no supervisor takes on more than one student per entry cohort, which ensures that individual supervisors are not overstretched. The data provided in the SER and during the site visit (list of supervisors and their bibliographies and information about publications of doctoral students who graduated in the last five years) indicates that supervisors have the knowledge and research experience necessary to provide doctoral students with high quality guidance on their research projects.</p>
1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.	<p><b>Improvements are Necessary</b></p> <p>While the election of teachers might be assessed as high quality, the procedures for the selection and monitoring of supervisors needs improvement, especially in terms of its formalization. The importance and good work of supervisors were stressed and praised by both former (with one exception that happened ten years ago) and current doctoral students. There are well established informal practices of transfer of experiences of good mentoring from more experienced to new and less experienced supervisors. There were examples of changes of unsuitable chosen supervisors that helped students in their research work and completion of their thesis. Students and mentors we spoke to stressed improvements regarding supervision practices during the last few years and the important role of current programme leaders in introducing those changes. In order to secure the excellence in supervision</p>

	<p>systematically, the panel recommends that good, existing informal practices should be formalised. It is positive that the Faculty management and programme leaders are aware of the need for this and already have plans on how to approach change. A training programme for future supervisors is under preparation.</p> <p>The panel also recommends that the Faculty should consider connecting its internationalisation strategy and plans for improvement of supervision by setting rules/recommendations regarding international co-supervision or membership in evaluation committees.</p>
<p>1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.</p>	<p><b>High level of quality</b></p> <p>Data provided in the SER and during the site visit indicate that the programme provides candidates with state-of-the-art research infrastructure (very pleasant modern and well equipped working spaces, library, and access to online databases and statistical and other research support software). The Faculty invests considerable financial funds and tries to receive external help and support for the provision of support for students' work that exceeds its financial capacities.</p>
<p><b>2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME</b></p>	
<p>2.1. The HEI has established and accepted effective procedures for proposing, approving and delivering doctoral education. The procedures include identification of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs.</p>	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>Based on extensive information provided in the SER regarding the reasons for launching the programme, its scientific, social, economic and other importance, the panel considers the programme to be largely of high quality. Its launching followed the established regulations on launching and approving of doctoral programmes at the University of Split. The programme has been launched and approved in line with the regulations. The documented analysis of social, academic, economic or other needs of the community justifies the start of the programme, existing enrolment quotas and the selection of content and number of courses. That was also confirmed in interviews with stakeholders from business, academic and civil society communities during the study visit. They also confirmed the high importance of the doctoral programme for its environment.</p>

<p>2.2. The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.</p>	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>Based on the elaboration in the Faculty documents (SER, 'Strategic Research programme of the Faculty of Economics in Split for the period of 2013 – 2020') and interviews with the Faculty management on the importance of the strategic research orientation of the Faculty and design of the doctoral programme in line and as a part of this orientation, the panel considers the programme to be of largely high quality. The Faculty plans to internationalise its research and to establish research groups as units that would provide an instrument of integration of doctoral study, and the overall research at the Faculty will contribute to the development of a supportive and collaborative research culture.</p>
<p>2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the success of the programmes through periodic reviews, and implements improvements.</p>	<p><b>Improvements are Necessary</b></p> <p>We saw some evidence of monitoring and its impact. Based on the data on current evaluations and information we gathered during the study visit, we saw evidence which indicates improvements were made to the performance of the programme during the last few years. However, the extent to which the procedures have been formalized was not well-demonstrated.</p> <p>Based on the analysis of available documents and interviews during the site visit, the panel estimates that the Faculty is in the process of introducing very well chosen and designed formalised instruments of systematic quality monitoring.</p> <p>The newly introduced "Rules on organisation and performance of the Postgraduate Doctoral Study Programme in Economics and Business", a document that was passed by the Faculty Senate on 21 March 2017, provides a good basis of systematic quality monitoring.</p> <p>However, as the instruments have either been recently introduced or planned and hence not all in place, we are currently unable to assess the current situation as one that delivers high quality, although we are hopeful that, if the current plans are put in place as described, that it will be.</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><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>Based on explanations in the SER, analysis of existing documents and rules and feedback from current and former candidates, the panel assesses that the monitoring of supervisor's performance is of high quality and that it will continue to improve. The quality of this doctoral programme is very much based on the quality and commitment of good supervisors. As stated above, the improvements in the supervision that were based on informal good practice have been recently further codified (e.g. by 'The Rules on organisation and performance of the Postgraduate Doctoral Study Programme in Economics and Business' that provide guidance regarding quality of supervision and mechanisms for achieving it and solving potential problems).</p>
<p>2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.</p>	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>The Faculty has procedures and rules that assure academic integrity and freedom of research. In addition to documents on the Faculty and University level, addressing ethical research topics within the courses on the doctoral study programme, it is important to acknowledge that the Faculty educates students on the topic of research ethics widely and regularly already at the undergraduate level. The academic integrity and freedom of research seems to be an integral part of the Faculty's culture.</p>
<p>2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation.</p>	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>Based on the description in the SER, analysis of the Faculty regulation and rules and checking the documentation that was ready and available during the site visit, the panel estimates that the programme is of high quality regarding the process of developing and defending the thesis proposal. The involvement of a supervisor from the point of admission is an example of good practice which provides students with access to support as they develop their research proposals.</p>
<p>2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.</p>	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>Based on the description in the SER, analysis of the Faculty regulation and rules and checking the</p>

	<p>documentation that was ready and available during the site visit, we estimate that the programme is of high quality regarding thesis assessment.</p> <p>The panel recommends that the Faculty should consider connecting its internationalisation strategy and high quality assessment procedure, by setting rules/recommendations regarding international co-supervision or membership in evaluation committees that is now the exception, rather than the norm, due to language problems.</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><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>Based on data provided in the SER, the doctoral programme is visible in the environment. The Faculty should consider implications of its internationalisation strategy on type and language(s) of information strategies.</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><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>Based on the information provided in the SER and by the Faculty management and former and current students, the panel estimate the programme to be of high quality as it determines and spends funds collected for the needs of doctoral education in a transparent and suitable way. Presented financial documents and interviewed students confirmed that the funds were used in a way that ensures sustainability and further development of high quality doctoral education.</p>
2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>Based on the information provided in the SER and by the Faculty management and former and current students, the panel estimates the programme to be of high quality as it determines tuition fees in a transparent and suitable way. Tuition fees are the main source of funding for the programme and are calculated taking into account the number of courses a student must complete (taking into account students' previous study experience).</p>
<b>3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION</b>	
3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>The optimal number of postgraduate students (current</p>

	<p>quota = 20) takes into account the number of available supervisors, the number of teachers in the programme, and the research capacity and facilities.</p> <p>No supervisor can assume responsibility for more than 3 PhD candidates at the same time, and no supervisor took on more than one student per entry cohort. Processes are in place at the admission stage to ensure that supervisors' competencies are suitable with reference to the candidates' research proposals. The potential supervisor advises candidates on the development of the research proposal and the candidate and potential supervisor are approved by the Faculty Council.</p> <p>According to the SER, the quota is officially reviewed every year by the Faculty Council and approved by the University Senate. Although the panel saw no evidence during their visit that the staff were aware of this, or that the quota had actually been changed in recent years, this could be because the number of students admitted has typically fallen short of the quota and there has never been pressure on supervisory capacities.</p>
<p>3.2. The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.</p>	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>The process of proposing and approving a new programme is outlined in the SER (pp 14-15) and involves official approval at the Faculty and University level. This process includes consideration of the community, professional organizations and potential partners. During our visit we had the opportunity to speak to a number of stakeholders and employers. Despite concerns outlined in the Self-Evaluation Report that employers are not willing to fund PhD training (p. 32), and despite the small number of people awarded a PhD who took up employment in the business sector (Table 3.3), the skills and capabilities of the PhD training were clearly valued by the people the panel spoke to.</p> <p>Although not explicitly stated, statistics provided in the SER suggest that only one student who has completed their PhD is not currently employed (Tables 2.1 and 3.1 report 48 completed theses and Table 3.3 lists 47 people in different employment areas).</p> <p>Information on completion rates per entry cohort was not provided, and it was not possible to estimate completion rates with the information provided to the panel (number of currently active students and number of completed dissertations).</p>



	<p>The panel recommends that the HEI/Faculty should officially record the outcomes by entry cohort (“generation”): completion (on-time and delayed), still enrolled, withdrawn and make use of this information when setting quotas and refining the admissions process. Because the Faculty believes that “A particular indicator of a supervisor’s performance comes out of doctoral student’s success” (p. 18), this information could also be used to monitor the performance of supervisors.</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><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>Current procedures and planned changes which were outlined in the SER suggest this is the case. The document suggests that currently only about half of the enrolment quota is filled each year, in part, because of a lack of funding opportunities.</p> <p>Efforts to establish research groups is a potentially positive development which should facilitate and encourage the development of research bids that could be used to fund PhD student research. The SER mentioned plans by the Faculty for “more intense networking and collaboration with the business sector” and the panel believes that the development of this would help promote the programme to employers and identify collaborative projects which might fund PhD research projects.</p>
<p>3.4. The HEI should pay attention to the number of candidates admitted as to provide each with an advisor (a potential supervisor). From the point of admission to the end of doctoral education, efforts are invested so that each candidate has a sustainable research plan and is able to complete doctoral research successfully.</p>	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>An initial supervisor is assigned at the time of entry (often at the point of application since the person who will be appointed as the initial supervisor helps the applicant develop a research statement which is submitted as part of the application to the programme). A different, more appropriate, supervisor can be appointed at the proposal stage.</p>
<p>3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.</p>	<p><b>Improvements are Necessary</b></p> <p>Recruiting international students will be difficult unless the teaching is delivered in English. The SER mentions that lectures in English “are about to be set up” but it was not clear how many courses would be delivered in English (all of them?) or how soon this would be likely to happen. The panel recommends that the Faculty confirms as soon as possible which courses will be offered in</p>

	<p>English and when this will occur. In the meantime, the HEI could do more to use its international networks to identify potential applicants with links to Croatia and who might be interested in returning to study.</p>
<p>3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.</p>	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>A clear procedure for selecting candidates is outlined in the SER. Each application is scored according to several criteria, and applicants whose score falls below a given threshold (51 out of 100) cannot be admitted. At our visit, we were provided with documents showing how a list of applicants was scored, but we were not provided with information on the maximum number of points that could be awarded to each of the 5 areas that are scored (e.g. 20 points each?). Students are ranked according to their total score, but given the gap between the quota and the number of students that enrol, it appears that all students who exceed a score of 51 are offered a place on the programme.</p> <p>If the number of potential students continues to fall short of the quota, the panel suggests that the Faculty/HEI should consider whether the threshold of 51 is sufficiently high to select students who are capable of PhD-level work.</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><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>As outlined above, the selection procedure, which involves scoring each candidate on 5 criteria, and which applies a minimum entry score, is transparent and appears to be carried out in practice. The SER outlines a clear and transparent complaints procedure.</p> <p>However, because complaints about the ranking must be made within a fairly short window of time (48 hours), the panel recommends that applicants should be given explicit information about when the ranking will be made, when it will be posted, and when complaints need to be filed. It was not clear in the SER that unsuccessful candidates are notified individually about the ranking/decisions (p. 35). If they are not, they should be, and information about the complaints procedure/deadlines should be made available to them at this stage.</p>

<p>3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.</p>	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>Recognition of prior learning was clearly outlined in the SER along with the information about how the policy on this has been applied in practice.</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><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>Students sign a 'Studying Agreement' (pg. 37). This document which is described as setting out the "mutual rights and obligations of the Faculty and student" (pg. 51), tends to provide very general information about what the student can expect.</p> <p>The 'Rules on Organisation and Performance of the Postgraduate Doctoral Study Programme in Economics and Business' document that was passed by the Faculty Senate on 21 March 2017 defines the obligations of supervisors in detail in Article 21. The panel recommends that the Faculty/HEI should consider revising the Study Agreement in line with this document.</p> <p>The panel also recommends that the 'Study Agreement' could provide students with more information about what they can expect from a supervisor (e.g. number of meetings per term, the kinds of professional and academic support, etc.) and from the mentoring relationship. Alternatively, a student handbook – a non-binding agreement – could be used to convey information about what the Faculty understands to be good practice in supervision.</p> <p>The Faculty/HEI mentioned plans to introduce a training programme for supervisors, and the panel supports this. In addition, they might consider requiring new supervisors to co-supervise their first one/two of PhD students with a more experienced supervisor.</p>
<p>3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.</p>	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>The PhD student research workshops appear to be structured and delivered in a way that promotes the successful progression of candidates. The SER mentions efforts to provide students with the opportunity to work as teaching assistants, which in addition to addressing concerns about tuition fees as an obstacle to application/entry (fees are waived for University employees), provides professional/career development to scholars who hope to obtain a teaching post after they complete the programme.</p>

	<p>The supervisor provides support and advice to the doctoral candidate's thesis, monitors progress, encourages and offers opportunities to publish through collaboration. In addition, the supervisor submits an annual report on the work of the doctoral candidate which is placed on the student's file. The Director of the Postgraduate Studies Programme produces an annual report which is discussed, approved, and acted upon by the Faculty Council.</p>
<p><b>4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES</b></p>	
<p>4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.</p>	<p><b>Improvements are Necessary</b></p> <p>National and international comparators are considered when programmes are proposed and approved at the University of Split. Current and proposed developments to the programme which are set out in the SER show very good efforts to align the content and quality of the programme with internationally recognised standards. However, a key issue when comparing the programme at Split with the better EU programmes is the amount of time spent on coursework. Student should spend three years doing 'independent research' to obtain their PhD. This is not case at the moment at Split. The panel recommends that, in order to bring the programme at Split into line with good EU programmes, the amount of time spent on coursework in the programme should be significantly reduced.</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><b>Improvements are Necessary</b></p> <p>During the site visit the panel was provided with outlines of required and optional courses offered through the PhD programme. The outlines elaborate on the Postgraduate Doctoral Study Programme in Economics and Business (p. 15 - 107), describe the aims of intended learning outcomes, and provide details of the ways how these outcomes are to be achieved.</p> <p>Information from the written material (the SER and course outlines) and supplemented through interviews with the PhD students, demonstrated that the PhD programme supports and promotes the development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific research competencies,</li> <li>• Competencies in research methodologies,</li> <li>• Reading and writing skills (speaking and listening),</li> <li>• Readiness to accept ethical and social responsibility</li> </ul>

	<p>for research.</p> <p>There was less evidence that the programme systematically ensures that all students develop:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Project planning and management competencies,</li> <li>2. Presenting data and conclusions to non-experts (under reading and writing skills),</li> <li>3. Teaching and assessment skills.</li> </ol> <p>The panel recommends that the HEI/Faculty develops formalised ways to more systematically promote the development of these competencies for all students on the programme. Many students, but not all, have the opportunity to develop the first and third of these, through collaborative work with their supervisor and through opportunities to work as teaching assistants. The second could, if not already, be integrated into the skills development component of the research workshop, for example, by asking students to produce a press release or one page "research brief" that presents their work to a well-informed lay audience.</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><b>Improvements are Necessary</b></p> <p>There were efforts to logically and clearly connect the outcomes that were listed in the SER with the different aspects of the programme (Table 4.1). However, only 4 outcomes are listed. The panel recommends that the programme's learning outcomes should be developed in more detail and more clearly to be precisely articulated and used to inform the design and delivery of the programme.</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><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>The structure of the PhD and processes in place which monitor progress and assess the quality of the dissertation, as described in the SER and by the staff and students we spoke to, appear to be aligned with level 8.2 of CroQF. The requirements a student must meet before submitting a PhD proposal include at least one published research paper.</p> <p>The panel suggests that more emphasis on the production of high-impact research by faculty (who often co-author with the students) should be considered: there are a lot of publications but the h-index does not suggest that the published research is highly cited.</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><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>The HEI/Faculty has reviewed and is considering/implementing a number of potentially positive innovations to the programme. The proposed changes, which will reduce the number of ECTS attained in taught courses from 37% to 30%, are motivated by a consideration of appropriateness for level 8.2 of the CroQF.</p> <p>The lack of clearly defined learning outcomes in the SER raised some questions about whether this criterion could be described as “high quality”, but the course outlines reassured us that the teaching methods are appropriate to assure the achievement of clearly defined learning outcomes.</p>
<p>4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.</p>	<p><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>The methods training (which includes the development of computer skills), and the critical thinking skills developed through the PhD student workshops provide examples of the development of general transferrable skills.</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><b>High Level of Quality</b></p> <p>Interviews with the PhD students suggested that teaching content is adapted to the current and future needs of students. The taught courses provide students with basic methods skills, but the students said that they had access to the resources and support necessary (primarily through access to faculty) to address their own interests and develop the particular skills that they need to carry out their research projects. The choice of 32 elective courses from which students choose 4 (p. 41), provide opportunities to develop field-specific expertise.</p>
<p>4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.</p>	<p><b>Improvements are Necessary</b></p> <p>There was evidence of some good practice and creative use of resources/opportunities.</p> <p>The conference (currently titled <i>Challenges in Europe</i>) has historically provided PhD students with excellent opportunities (through PhD student workshops) to interact with internationally renowned scholars. There is some evidence of (previous) international collaborations on research but it was not clear how many PhD students</p>

	<p>had been involved in these projects. Moreover, the number of current projects (as a percentage of all projects in the past 5 years) was rather low, suggesting fewer opportunities for the newest generations of students. Staff members described a small sum that they could access to cover research costs including (but not exclusive to) mobility.</p> <p>However, there is limited evidence of concerted efforts to promote and encourage the mobility of staff and students. The SER refers to “the Faculty’s efforts in offering students an opportunity to spend part of their doctoral studies in partner higher education institutions abroad and in motivating students to present their research at international conferences” but there was little evidence of the kind of support provided or that many students were taking up these opportunities. The panel recommends that much greater efforts, including more financial support, are made to ensure both staff and students are involved in mobility as part of a wider internationalisation strategy.</p>
--	---

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

The role of the Expert Panel in the re-accreditation of doctoral study programmes is manifold. The Expert Panel or part of the Expert Panel visiting a higher education institution drafts a report on the basis of a self-evaluation report, the accompanying relevant documentation, and a site visit to HEI. The draft report is adopted by all members of the Cluster Expert Panel, while the president of the Cluster Expert Panel is responsible for coordinating the assessment levels.

The report contains an assessment on whether a doctoral study programme delivered at a higher education institution complies with the prescribed laws and by-laws, as well as any additional/recommended requirements defined by the Agency's Accreditation Council, and whether a higher education institution can obtain a positive, i.e. satisfactory quality assessment according to the criteria set out in this document. Moreover, the Expert Panel must make recommendations for quality improvement.

Based on the assessment of all these elements, the Expert Panel may propose to the Accreditation Council of the Agency to issue either a confirmation on compliance, a letter of expectation for the period up to three (3) years in which period the higher education institution should eliminate the identified deficiencies, or to deny the license.

If the Expert Panel has assessed that a doctoral study programme delivered by a higher education institution does not meet legal and other requirements or that the quality of a study programme is not ensured (i.e. that HEI does not meet additional requirements or recommendations made by the Accreditation Council, or has a very poor quality assessment), they should propose to the Accreditation Council to deny the license.

If the Expert Panel considers that the relevant laws and bylaws have been met by a higher education institution, but that certain elements mentioned above do not meet the quality requirements, while they consider that the identified shortcomings can be corrected within a time frame of three years, they should issue a letter of expectation.

If the Expert Panel considers that all legal and additional/recommended requirements have been met and the quality assessment is satisfactory, i.e. that a study programme fulfils the learning outcomes appropriately defined for that level and scientific area, they may propose the issuance of a certificate and have a HEI commit to quality improvement and reporting to the Agency during the follow-up period.

Finally, if the Expert Panel has, in accordance with the criteria mentioned above, proposed issuing the certificate of compliance and assessed that, in addition to meeting the minimum quality requirements – i.e. the qualification framework level - for a study programme, the programme should be identified as a doctoral programme of a 'high level of quality', the Expert Panel may propose to the Agency's Accreditation Council that such a doctoral study programme be awarded the 'high quality label'. Thus the Agency, with the consent of the Accreditation Council, grants a higher education institution the right to use the label for their academic and promotional purposes.

The 'high quality label' cannot be proposed or awarded to a programme or a higher education institution that does not comply with the requirements laid down by the laws and bylaws mentioned



in this document, and any additional requirements recommended by the Accreditation Council. Moreover, the quality assessment awarded to a study programme should reflect a high level of quality inasmuch that at least half of the sub-criteria in each of the quality assessment criteria are assessed as being of high quality. The Accreditation Council of the Agency issues a final opinion on the label awarded. The content and form of the quality labels shall be prescribed by the Agency in a relevant general act.

The Accreditation Council of the Agency discusses the final report with all recommendations and suggestions, and issues their opinion on the report. Based on a prior opinion of the Accreditation Council, the Agency issues an Accreditation Recommendation to the minister responsible for science and higher education, and upon receipt of the minister's final decision on the outcome of the procedure, awards the 'high quality label' to a higher education institution.