



**REPORT
OF THE EXPERT PANEL
ON THE REACCREDITATION
OF THE UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE (DOCTORAL)
PROGRAMME
LAW
FACULTY OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA**

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INTRODUCTION

The Expert Panel appointed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) created this Report on the Re-accreditation of the University Postgraduate (Doctoral) Programme *Law* on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the Faculty of Law, University of Rijeka.

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:

- Dr. Gerhard van der Schyff, Tilburg University, Netherlands;
- Prof. Tamás Hoffmann, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary;
- Dr. Dagmar Simon, The WZB Berlin Social Science Center, Germany;
- Prof. Dibyesh Anand, University of Westminster, United Kingdom;
- Dr. Igor Štikš, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom;
- Prof. Mare Leino, Tallinn University, Estonia;
- Max Lügert, doctoral candidate, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Germany;
- Marko Radenović, doctoral candidate, Princeton University/McKinsey & Company, Croatia;

- Katja Simončič, doctoral candidate, Inštitut za kriminologijo pri Pravni fakulteti v Ljubljani, Slovenia.

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

- Dr. Gerhard van der Schyff, Tilburg University, Netherlands;
- Prof. Tamás Hoffmann, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary;
- Katja Simončič, doctoral candidate, Inštitut za kriminologijo pri Pravni fakulteti v Ljubljani, Slovenia.

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

- Maja Šegvič, coordinator, ASHE,
- Maja Briški, assistant coordinator, ASHE,
- Goran Briški, interpreter at the site visit,
- Goran Briški, translator of the Report, ASHE.

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

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

The Expert 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: Law

Institution delivering the programme: Faculty of Law, University of Rijeka (hereinafter: FLR)

Institution providing the programme: Faculty of Law, University of Rijeka (hereinafter: FLR)

Place of delivery: Rijeka

Scientific area and field: Social sciences, Law

Number of doctoral candidates: 12

Number of active DSP doctoral students: 11

Number of the DSP doctoral students with granted intermission: 1

Number of the DSP doctoral students with tuition financing: 7 fully funded through projects.

FLR defines admission quota by taking into account the available means of financing from research projects and other sources. This is supported by the fact that the research for 11 out of 12 enrolled doctoral students are funded through the public and/or private sector, while only 1 doctoral student in the DS is paying for the study on his own.

Number of the DSP self-financed doctoral students: 1

Number of teachers: 36

Number of supervisors: 12

Ratio of active mentors to doctoral students enrolled in the DSP is 1:1

Learning outcomes of the study programme:

Upon completion of the DSP and acquiring the title of the doctor of science at the FLR, student will be able to:

LO 1 build an academic career at one of the scientific and teaching or scientific institutions;

LO 2 perform highly specialised tasks within the legal profession in the private and the public sector;

LO 3 continue education on a postdoctoral level;

LO 4 make in-depth critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of contents in the field of legal sciences;

LO 5 apply techniques and methodologies and to adapt the research process in the field of legal sciences;

LO 6 individually conceptualise and carry out research in the field of legal science;

LO 7 communicate and evaluate the results of research in the field of legal science; and

LO 8 promote excellence in the academic and professional context in the field of legal science within a knowledge-based society.

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 confirmation on compliance for performing parts of activities (renew the licence).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Ensuring that statements of method in theses are implemented in a consequential fashion.
2. Incorporation of ethical authority in explicit terms as one of the programme's learning goals.
3. Ensuring that research output will be sustainable by further incentivizing international publications.
4. Further assisting the students to be able to cover their expenses, including foreign study and research trips.

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Students have a dedicated supervisor upon enrolment.
2. Students are admitted on the basis of a personal research plan.
3. Students write joint academic papers with their supervisors.
4. Personalized approach to doctoral students.
5. Emphasis on foreign study and research trips.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Small number of doctoral students.
2. Obligation to spend time abroad while students have to defray the incurring costs.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. The organisation of a Doctoral Conference in 2016.
2. The design and implementation of quality controls, such as regular evaluations of students and supervisors.
3. Operation of the library, such as ensuring that it might stay open in the weekends so part-time students can have access.

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

Minimal legal conditions:	YES/NO notes
1. Higher education institution (HEI) is listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations in the scientific area of the programme, and has a positive reaccreditation decision on performing higher education activities and scientific activity.	YES
2. HEI delivers programmes in the two cycles leading to the doctoral programme, i.e., first two cycles in the same area and field/fields (for interdisciplinary programmes), and employs a sufficient number of teachers as defined by Article 6 of the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (OG 24/10).	YES
3. HEI employs a sufficient number of researchers, as defined by Article 7 of the the Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing Licence for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organisations and Content of Licence (OG 83/2010).	YES
4. At least 50% of teaching as expressed in norm-hours is delivered by teachers employed at the HEI (full-time, elected into scientific-teaching titles).	YES
5. Student: teacher ratio at the HEI is below 30:1.	YES
6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public.	YES
7. HEI launches the procedure of revoking the academic title if it is determined that it has been attained contrary to the conditions stipulated for its attainment, by severe violation of the studying rules or based on a doctoral thesis (dissertation) that has proved to be a plagiarism or a forgery according to provisions of the statute or other enactments.	YES
Additional/ recommended conditions of the ASHE Accreditation Council for passing a positive opinion	YES/NO notes
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) 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;	a) YES

<p>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);</p> <p>c) confirms feasibility of the draft research plan upon admission of the candidate (or submission of the proposal);</p> <p>d) ensures the conditions (and funding) necessary to implement the candidate's research (in line with the draft research plan) as a research project leader, co-leader, participant, collaborator or in other ways;</p> <p>e) trained for the role before assuming it (through workshops, co-supervisions etc.);</p> <p>f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory work.</p>	<p>b) YES</p> <p>c) YES</p> <p>d) YES</p> <p>e) YES</p> <p>f) YES</p>
<p>6. All teachers meet the following conditions:</p> <p>a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position;</p> <p>b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the course (table 1, Teachers).</p>	<p>a) YES</p> <p>b) YES*</p>
*Comment: For panel recommendations, see 1.3.	
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.	YES
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

	Quality assessment (“high level of quality” or “improvements are necessary”) and the explanation of the Expert Panel
1. RESOURCES: TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, RESEARCH CAPACITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
1.1. HEI is distinguished by its scientific/ artistic achievements in the discipline in which the doctoral study programme is delivered.	<p>Improvement is necessary.</p> <p>Even though the FLR’s academic staff are undeniable active researchers and experts in their respective fields, the international publication record demonstrates that international publications are mainly connected to a handful of professors. While the Faculty of Law in Rijeka made palpable efforts to improve the situation, the Expert Panel recommends that it should continue with the plan to improve the international publication record of the academic staff and incentivize the involvement in international projects.</p>
1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>The FLR doctoral studies programme meets all the prescribed criteria. All 36 members of the academic staff have been elected into the scientific and teaching titles, 92% of whom are in the field of law. Most of the FLR academic staff is involved in the programme as a supervisor and their workload is well within the 300 norm hours limit, even though teachers of the Faculty cover more than 90% of the programme content. It is also commendable that teaching only takes place in the first semester of the full-time study and in the first year of the part-time study programme.</p>
1.3. The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.	<p>Improvement is necessary.</p> <p>Even though the academic staff of FLR is composed of dedicated researchers, the academic output varies quite significantly. A few staff members produce the overwhelming majority of the publications and very few</p>

	<p>papers are published in internationally recognized foreign law reviews. The Faculty of Law should make increased efforts to create a balance between academic achievements of respective teachers.</p>
<p>1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.</p>	<p>Improvement is necessary.</p> <p>The supervisor to candidate ratio of the FLR is very favourable, which guarantees that enough attention is devoted to the doctoral candidates.</p> <p>However, an overview of the publication and citation record reveals that a few mentors produce the majority of publications and receive citations.</p> <p>For instance, the overall G-Scholar citation number of the mentors is 148 but 3 mentors have 126 citations while the remaining 12 only received 22. The number of international publications reveals a similar skew. The FLR should devote more resources to remedy this situation which could endanger long-term sustainability of the doctoral programme.</p>
<p>1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>The doctoral study programme has established and developed formal mechanisms for assessing and monitoring the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors, based on research excellence.</p> <p>Only supervisors who fulfil the requirements of having published at least 5 papers in the last 5 years, one of which should be in an indexed journal; or have authored a book and published 2 research papers; or at least 1 research paper in a journal with impact factor greater than 1 can participate in the programme. Moreover, mentors should have at least an H-index of at least 2 and at least 3 papers published in the field of the doctoral dissertation topic.</p> <p>Furthermore, an annual research plan ensures that the teachers and supervisors will consistently maintain their academic output.</p> <p>However, given the fact that this is still a transitional period for the doctoral programme, having recently involved a large number of young researchers, it is understandable that these criteria have not yet been</p>

	implemented and will come into force as late as 19 June 2018.
1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>The FLR has state-of-the-art research infrastructure, a well-equipped library which is open even on the weekends if the research students wish so, and access to a variety of English and German language electronic databases. There is also a possibility to get access to unavailable articles and books through inter-library loans and purchase, depending on the budget.</p>
2. INTERNAL ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMME	
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>High level of quality.</p> <p>The Faculty of Law has shown that it has established effective procedures for proposing, approving and delivering doctoral education. For instance, the Faculty accepted the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and follows the Regulations on Accrediting Study Programmes of the University of Rijeka. The Faculty has shown that it takes scientific/artistic, cultural, social and economic needs into account in carrying out doctoral research. Evidence of this can be found in the fact that the director of the programme checks the relevance of the research in accordance with the Salzburg II Recommendations. Moreover, almost all of the research is funded by funds other than candidates' personal funds, with one half financed by the private sector, indicating relevance.</p>
2.2. The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>The programme's research strategy is aligned with that of the Faculty, whose strategy is aligned with that of the University. The quality of this strategy is evidenced by the fact that the Faculty aims to promote the public good, academic integrity, transparency, strategic management, self-sustainability, integration, excellence, international comparability and quality assurance. In particular, the</p>

	<p>programme aims to enable candidates to carry out scientific research independently, with an emphasis on internationalisation and mobility. The latter is an important element of the research vision, and one which is actively promoted by requiring of doctoral candidates to undertake a foreign study (20 ECTS) visit as part of the programme, for instance. The Faculty also requires rigorous qualifications from both staff and applicants, the latter being carefully selected upon admission based on the proposal of a personal study plan and an interview. This gives ample opportunity to select candidates in line with the research focus of the programme/Faculty/University.</p>
<p>2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the success of the programmes through periodic reviews, and implements improvements.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>Apart from the fact that the programme underwent external evaluations such as the ASHE thematic evaluation of 2012/2013, the Faculty also has a system in place for the multi-layered periodical monitoring of the programme's quality, which includes monitoring the progress of each candidate and the effectiveness of the supervisor on a semi-annual basis – in our discussions with them candidates verified this procedure and also pointed to the possibility of giving anonymous feedback. Importantly, the Faculty also analyses the reasons for candidates withdrawing from the programme to identify any reason for action. As to the improvements carried out, the Faculty has taken action regarding the requirement that a paper be published by a candidate (changing the requirement from 'published' to 'accepted for publication' to avoid timing issues arising in case of long publication times); improving access to databases by arranging the option of individual/group training in the use of such databases; anticipating issues, the Faculty has also published a Guide for Doctoral Students. A copy of the guide revealed that it was easy to understand and helpful in guiding (prospective) students on their research trajectory (a similar guise is also available for mentors). In improving the quality control even further, the Faculty could consider organising its own external review from time to time, in addition to the measures already in place.</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>High level of quality.</p> <p>In light of the information provided in SER as well as at the site visit, we were able to conclude that FLR adequately monitors supervisors' performance and has satisfactory mechanisms in place for evaluating them.</p> <p>Firstly, according to SER, supervisors are continually monitored through reports they are obliged to submit during the study of each doctoral candidate they supervise. While in two general reports mentors evaluate the student's progress, the special report serves as a basis for assessing the quality of the supervisor and his or her doctoral student. Supervisor's performance is furthermore evaluated on the basis of two reports written by their doctoral candidates. The analysis of existing doctoral candidates' reports indicates a high level of satisfaction with the supervisors, as the average cumulative score for the DSP mentors was between 4.8 and 5.0 on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest score). For the 2015/2016 academic year, these results were likewise confirmed through the Anonymous Survey: Quality of Doctoral Study for the 2015/2016 academic year (SER, p. 26).</p> <p>Completion rates are only a semi-useful indicator of supervisors' performance due to the fact that the programme is quite young. However, it is positive that 3 candidates have earned their degrees so far and that the length of study for those who have earned their degrees was, on average, 6.3 semesters (SER, p. 27).</p> <p>Informal and formal procedures are in place in case a disagreement arises between the doctoral candidates and the supervisor. Advice on what to do is provided in the Guide for Supervisors and in the Guide for Doctoral Students. Candidates also have a coordinator for communication, an experienced doctoral candidate, at their disposal. In addition, a possibility to contact Candidate Ombudsman exists in certain situations. The procedure of changing the supervisor, appointing a co-supervisor or changing the thesis topic is outlined in the</p>
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	<p>Regulation on Studies at UNIRI. No requests to change a supervisor have been made thus far (SER, p. 27).</p>
<p>2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>FLR has several procedures in place aimed at assuring academic integrity and freedom of research. It is clear that UNIRI academic staff is deeply committed to maintaining and improving the standards of ethical conduct in science and education. It is significant that UNIRI was the first university in Croatia to sign the Declaration on Accession to the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and to adopt a Code of Ethics. UNIRI Code of Ethics which applies to UNIRI academic community is extensive in scope, as it regulates basic principles, unacceptable behaviour, professional rights and responsibilities, ethics of scientific research, professional advancement, authorship of research papers and other publications, acceptance of gifts, conflict of interest, transparency and confidentiality, public appearances, and responsibility toward university community. Additionally, a special Code of Ethics for UNIRI Students that applies to all students has been adopted (SER, p.27-28).</p> <p>For those who violate the Code of Ethics UNIRI prescribes the harshest sanction in its Regulations on Studies (Article 62, paragraph 5), i.e., the loss of the status of a student. In addition, certain disciplinary measures exist for academic staff and students that commit violations related to their obligations and work or if they damage the reputation of the FLR or UNIRI (for more see Article 52 of the FLR Statute) (SER, p.28). Ethical conduct in scientific research is likewise promoted in the FLR's Guidelines for Writing Student Papers (SER, p.29).</p>
<p>2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>We conclude that the process of developing and defending the doctoral dissertation topic is clearly regulated and thus transparent and objective. It includes a public presentation. The procedure is outlined in the UNIRI Regulations on Studies, and defined in the FLR Decision on</p>

	<p>the Procedure concerning Application, Public Defence and Evaluation of the Doctoral Dissertation Topic. (SER, p.30)</p> <p>It is particularly commendable that, according to Article 65 of the UNIRI Regulations on Studies and Article 6 of the FLR Decision, the supervisor cannot be a member of the Committee for Topic Defence and Evaluation. The addition of this provision, which is in contradiction to Croatian practice, indicates FLR' willingness to uphold contemporary standards. Furthermore, according to the UNIRI regulations, equal representation of sexes must be taken into account when appointing the committee members.</p> <p>The protocol of defence is prescribed in detail in the FLR decision. (SER, p.31)</p>
<p>2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>The doctoral programme has a detailed procedure on the evaluation of doctoral dissertations. The dissertations are evaluated by a committee of at least 3 members, at least one of whom is from another university or research institution. It is also commendable that the FLR does not include the supervisor in the committee thus ensures a greater level of impartiality.</p> <p>It is also praiseworthy that the FLR takes efforts to increase the participation of external members in the doctoral defence procedure, however, given the low number of theses defended, it is too early to determine whether it reflects a trend. It would be advisable to ensure that in all future defence procedures the number of external members exceed the number of internal members.</p>
<p>2.8. The HEI publishes all necessary information on the study programme, admissions, delivery and conditions for progression and completion, in accessible outlets and media.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>All necessary information regarding the PhD programme is available on the FLR webpages.</p>
<p>2.9. Funds collected for the needs of doctoral education are</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p>

<p>distributed transparently and in a way that ensures sustainability and further development of doctoral education (ensures that candidates' research is carried out and supported, so that doctoral education can be completed successfully).</p>	<p>Based on the available information, the tuition fees are spent on the development and ensuring the sustainability of the doctoral programme. Teachers and supervisors participate in the programme in a non-profit manner, which enables the majority of the total tuition income (65.8%) to be used for the improvement of the quality of the programme.</p>
<p>2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>Tuition fees are determined focusing on the long-term sustainability of the doctoral programme. The criteria are laid down in Article 10 of the Decision on Admission to the Doctoral Studies Programme and the tuition fee can be paid in monthly instalments.</p> <p>The HEI explains the amount of the tuition fee when discussing the costs of studying. (SER, p. 37)</p>
<p>3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION</p>	
<p>3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>It appears that FLR provides for a high-quality admission policy, taking into account the number of available supervisors and their teaching workload, the quality of supervisors and the number of candidates a teacher already supervises.</p> <p>Firstly, according to SER, "(...) the current ratio of doctoral students to mentors in the doctoral studies is 1:1; the ratio of doctoral students to teaching staff is 1:3; the ratio of teaching staff and students at all levels of the FLR study programmes is 1:29." The quotas indicate that the ratios are favourable for doctoral students. The teaching workload of supervisors does not exceed the existing legal thresholds. Secondly, the competencies of supervisors appear to suit the candidates' research proposals and,</p>

	<p>thirdly, the number of candidates a teacher already supervises does not exceed 3 candidates per supervisor on the programme as a whole.</p> <p>In addition, the rights and obligations of doctoral students and supervisors are stipulated by the UNIRI Regulation on Studies (Chapter V), by the DSP Description, the Decision on Admission to the DSP at the FLR level, by individual admission decisions and most importantly, by the contract that the FLR signs with every doctoral candidate. (SER, p. 43-44).</p>
<p>3.2. The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>FLR has adequately shown that its admission quotas (20 doctoral students per year) are based on wider scientific, cultural, social and economic needs. To make their case, the FLR list several factors. For one, since the accession to the EU, Croatian higher level officials have been facing several challenges, as the legal system of the EU is quite complex and multi-layered. FLR has the longest tradition of education in EU Law in Croatia with highly qualified academic staff and thus has the potential to educate a new generation of Croatian experts who will be able to contribute to Croatia's successful participation within the EU.</p> <p>Furthermore, the areas of expertise supervisors cover correspond to the topics of their research projects (or plans for such projects), all of which have been through a selective process, indicating that the social and economic relevance of their topics was clearly recognised.</p> <p>Another mechanism helping FLR take into account wider scientific, cultural, social and economic needs is the cooperation with the Committee of External Stakeholders represented by distinguished lawyers. The Committee advises FLR on issues such as whether the programme is in line with the needs of the profession and whether the content is connected with the needs of the labour market in the private and the public sector and with the needs of the local community (SER, p.22).</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>High level of quality.</p> <p>FLR states that the research for 11 out of the 12 enrolled doctoral candidates is funded through the public and/or private sector, while only 1 doctoral candidate is self-funded (yet, he still receives a UNIRI scholarship, which partially covers his tuition expenses). Furthermore, all of the 3 candidates that have completed their studies until now were funded from the public sector. Moreover, according to FLR SER: “A large part of doctoral research for 7 out of 12 doctoral students involved in projects is financed from a rich portfolio of the FLR projects, whose project leaders or members of the research team are the DSP academic staff.” (SER, p.39) In addition, FLR doctoral candidates have until now applied regularly for UNIRI funds that are annually made available in the form of scholarships for specific activities of doctoral candidates and were often awarded the scholarships. (SER, p.39)</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>High level of quality.</p> <p>FLR invests efforts that each candidate has a sustainable research plan and is able to complete doctoral research successfully and it does so from the point of admission on. This is done, firstly, during the selection process, where strict admission requirements are applied and, secondly, through demanding study obligations, one of which is, for example, the obligation to apply for the approval of the doctoral dissertation topic and defend it in the 5th semester.</p> <p>The Expert Panel finds the requirement that each applicant must obtain a potential supervisor before admission extremely favourable to candidates. The fact that candidates must decide on their research topic already before admission also sends the message that innovative research is at the core of doctoral studies at FLR.</p>
<p>3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.</p>	<p>Improvement is necessary.</p> <p>The Expert Panel is convinced that FLR makes adequate efforts to admit the best undergraduate and graduate</p>

	<p>students leaning towards a career in research on the national level. This is indicated by the list of activities for the promotion of the DPS, a promotional leaflet of the DSP that is made available and distributed, the wide advertisement of the call for application, strict admission requirements and their consistent implementation as well as the fact that potential supervisors use their own networks and informal contacts in order to ensure wide access to information about the DS and stimulate interest in it. (SER, p.41)</p> <p>It is favourable that the DSP website is user-friendly and also available in English and that the Faculty staff, due to a highly individualised approach, can teach foreign students in English. Nevertheless, we recommend that FLR intensify their efforts in regard to the recruitment of doctoral candidates on the international level. While the call for applications to the DSP is widely advertised on the local and national level in the media and on the Internet, greater efforts should be put in international diffusion of the call. FLR could start by approaching universities that have managed to attract motivated international students and learning from their good practices.</p>
<p>3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>Strict admission requirements and the selection process in place at FLR (most notably, the interview, a submitted proposal or a personal study plan as well as the ability to defend the proposal at the interview) suggest that the Faculty is serious about choosing the best applicants for the doctoral programme. The fact that the share of rejected applications is nearly 1/3 further indicates that inadequate candidates do not make the cut, sustaining a desired quality level of candidates. The call for applications is likewise published in a timely manner.</p>
<p>3.7. The HEI ensures that the selection procedure is transparent and in line with published criteria, and that there is a transparent complaints procedure.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>Transparency of the selection process and of the complaint procedure is guaranteed by provisions in a FLR document titled DSP Description, paragraph 2.5.</p>

	<p>While respecting the right to the protection of personal data of candidates, the call for applications to be admitted to the DSP and the results of the admission procedure are publicly announced on the DSP website. DSP Description further provides for the period of 7 days to submit the complaint and the period of 15 days for the FLR Council to reply to the complaint. The decision (denying or rejecting admission to the DS) also states the reasons for the denial or rejection. In addition, the entire documentation in regards to the admission process is archived and rejected candidates have the right to access these documents. (SER, p. 42-43)</p>
<p>3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>Taking into account the fact that the system of recognizing non-formal and informal learning is insufficiently developed in Croatia, FLR still manages to recognise prior learning and previous achievements of candidates and chosen doctoral candidates by taking into account ECTS credit points of future doctoral candidates acquired in the postgraduate master's degree of law and postgraduate university study of law. ECTS credit points are recognised if they are awarded at a university graduate programme other than the university graduate programme in law. Additionally, the in-depth nature of the interviews allows the Faculty staff to assess the ability and the quality of candidates also in light of the candidates' prior learning.</p> <p>The fact that FLR DSP staff participated in the Project of Recognition of Extracurricular Activities through ECTS Credit Points (based on programme contracts of the UNIRI and the MSE), a project initiated by UNIRI, and thus influenced the creation of a policy of recognition of prior learning is encouraging and shows that FLR is actively engaged in the issue.</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</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>It appears that at the level of FLR the rights and obligations of doctoral candidates are regulated by various documents, i.e., the DSP Description, the Decision on Admission to the DSP and by individual admission</p>

<p>supervisory and institutional support to the candidates.</p>	<p>decisions as well as by the contract that the FLR signs with every doctoral candidate. Chapter V of UNIRI Regulation on Studies likewise regulates these rights and obligations. Future doctoral candidates are informed of their rights and obligations already in the pre-enrolment stage as these are made public on the FLR website, while accepted doctoral candidates are informed about their rights and obligations through individual admission decisions (its content is defined in Article 19 of the Decision on Admission to the DSP) and the contract (Article 2) that each doctoral candidate signs with the FLR.</p> <p>FLR has convinced the Expert Panel that the candidates' rights and obligations are not only defined in relevant Faculty regulations and in the contract, but that the content of these regulations provides for a high level of supervisory and institutional support to the candidates. This is evident from a multitude of rights of doctoral candidates that show the exceptionality of FLR in comparison to many other Croatian doctoral programmes. Some of the most notable are the right of the student to have a supervisor appointed already upon admission to the DSP, the obligation of the supervisor to hold regular consultations with his or her candidate and keep a log of cooperation of these meetings, the right to an informal support by the Coordinator for Communication (a doctoral candidate in the DSP) and so forth (SER, p.44).</p>
<p>3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>On the basis of information that the FLR has presented us with, we can conclude that FLR offers doctoral candidates comprehensive institutional support in their research and career development.</p> <p>To list a few of the mechanisms of support employed by FLR and the results of these mechanisms: in the last 5 years, 10 doctoral candidates have written a total of 40 scientific papers and 12 doctoral candidates have presented their papers at 5 conferences organised by FLR and 20 conferences organised by other institutions. Furthermore, research done by a large part of the doctoral</p>

	<p>candidates (7) is funded from a rich portfolio of research projects in which the FLR is participating (SER, 45-46).</p>
<p>4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES</p>	
<p>4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>The content and quality of the programme are clearly aligned with recognised international standards, being based on the Bologna process and the Salzburg II Recommendations, as the Self Evaluation Report also explains. An important indication of this is that the programme is research-based and not teaching-based, stimulating the acquisition of independent research skills over a period of three years, as regulated by the Croatian Qualifications Framework. This is evidenced by the fact that 150 ECTS are devoted to research of the 180 ECTS comprising the programme as a whole. The quality of the research component is amplified by the fact that each candidate has a dedicated supervisor upon admission, as well as a research proposal which to develop and implement over the course of the programme. This helps candidates to practice their research skills from the very beginning of the programme, while their skills are sharpened by the participation in academic conferences. Flexibility is evident, as only one course is compulsory, namely that on methodology, while students select (in conjunction with their supervisor) the remaining five courses based on the needs of their research. Our discussions with candidates during the site visit also pointed out the flexible nature of the programme tailored to their research needs, regarding both content and teaching methods (see also points 4.5 and 4.7). Supervision procedures are also of high quality, candidates have regular opportunities to evaluate their supervisors (on a semi-annual basis as well as the possibility to submit anonymous remarks, see also point 2.3). Candidates and employers pointed to the range and quality of generic and scientific skills acquired in the programme, thereby supporting the explanation given in the Self-Evaluation Report (see also point 4.6). In this regard, the holding of Doctoral Conferences, such as that of 2016 is to be supported (a Book of Abstracts of this</p>

	<p>Conference was made available during the site visit). The Conference allowed candidates to be confronted with each other's work and ideas, as well as with input from established academics and their peers from other/foreign universities – such events stimulate the development of range of useful skills. Generic and scientific skills are also developed as students must study abroad for at least four months (20 ECTS) and publish a scientific paper (see also point 4.6). By excluding the supervisor from the final evaluation committee the programme goes even further than what can be expected in international terms.</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>High level of quality.</p> <p>The programme learning outcomes, as well as the learning outcomes of specific courses (examples were included in the Self-Evaluation Report), are aligned with level 8.2 of the Croatian Qualifications Framework. Competencies that candidates have to acquire are clearly formulated. The competencies are evidently geared towards training researchers to conduct high-quality independent research by allowing them to acquire a wide range of academic and non-academic skills.</p> <p>The commitment to conducting research in a manner which is ethical and speaks of integrity and instilling these values in the candidates who follow the programme cannot be doubted. This became apparent during the site visit and when reading point 2.5 of the Self-Evaluation Report, which lists the relevant definitions and codes according to which research is conducted and controlled. In this regard, the Turnitin programme is used in detecting cases of possible plagiarism. Acquiring ethical authority is implied by the learning outcomes of the programme – such as Learning Outcome 8 which focuses on promoting 'excellence in the academic and professional context in the field of legal science'. It could be considered to include an express reference to ethical requirements in this learning outcome, to reflect the programme's practice and goals more clearly.</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>High level of quality.</p> <p>The programme learning outcomes are logically and clearly connected with teaching contents and supervision in research, this is evidenced by the Self-Evaluation Report outlining the results achieved on the basis of the outcomes, (points 4.2) and was confirmed by the candidates and alumni. On improving the implementation of research methodology, based on a PhD thesis sample, see point 4.4.</p>
<p>4.4. The doctoral programme ensures the achievement of learning outcomes and competencies aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>The programme's quality assurance procedures (see 2.3) meet international standards, and as mentioned under 4.1 even surpass international practice by excluding the supervisor from the evaluation committee. In general, sampling theses illustrated the acquisition of the competencies at level 8.2 of the Croatian Qualifications Framework. It may be remarked though, based on a doctoral thesis sample, that more effort could be invested in ensuring that appropriate research methods are selected and implemented in the writing of PhD theses – stating a method implies that it is carried through. Sampling abstracts, from the Book of Abstracts, Rijeka Doctoral Conference 2016 illustrated the practice and gaining of relevant learning outcomes by candidates.</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>High level of quality.</p> <p>No evidence of ex-cathedra teaching could be found. Instead, appropriate and flexible methods are selected that involve students in the teaching that takes place. This became evident during the site visit when discussions were held with current candidates and alumni. Candidates spoke of being challenged during lectures and being actively involved in the learning process. Continuing such teaching methods is important in ensuring that candidates take responsibility for their own learning and for the development of their research skills, in conjunction with appropriate guidance and supervision.</p>
<p>4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p>

	<p>Candidates are equipped with a set of general transferable skills upon completion of the programme. Point 4.2 of the Self-Evaluation Report outlined the skills and their acquisition quite clearly. Apart from scientific skills, these include the skills of planning and leading projects (gained by for instance participating in research projects), writing and reporting skills (gained by for instance writing course seminar papers, presenting papers at international conferences) and teaching skills and skills of supervision (gained by the compulsory giving of two lectures to graduate or postgraduate programmes). Candidates are also made aware of opportunities that arise which could help them gain valuable skills. They attested of gaining general (transferable) skills, as well as to the value of such skills, as was confirmed also by (possible) employers.</p>
<p>4.7. Teaching content is adapted to the needs of current and future research and candidates' training (individual course plans, generic skills etc.).</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>The content of delivered courses is flexible and adaptable to individual candidates' academic needs and research plans. Apart from one compulsory methodological course, candidates have to select courses that are suitable to their research plan, under the guidance of their supervisor. Apart from scientific skills, the necessary attention is also paid to acquiring generic (transferable) skills (see also point 4.6). During the site visit, candidates and alumni attested to the appropriate nature and flexibility of teaching content.</p>
<p>4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.</p>	<p>High level of quality.</p> <p>The importance of international mobility for candidates enrolled in the programme is evidenced by the fact that candidates have to spend a period of at least four months doing research internationally (amounting to 20 ECTS of the total programme). Candidates attest of receiving tailor-made advice and assistance in furthering their international research experience, such as in selecting institutions and applying for funding to the extent that the Faculty cannot be of assistance. The programme also caters for international candidates, as doctoral theses may be written in a foreign language while taking courses in</p>

	<p>other languages than Croatian are also possible. Recruitment of international candidates is stimulated by organising doctoral conferences (evidence of such a conference was provided in the form of a Book of Abstracts of the 2016 conference) aimed at publicising the programme. The Book of Abstracts attested of a truly international conference with participants (supervisors and candidates) from a variety of institutions and countries, such as France, Italy and Hungary. The Faculty also has a large network of international contacts which facilitates teacher mobility. In our discussions with teachers it became clear that although a number of opportunities are available and known, making time to actually make use of these opportunities proves difficult. Accordingly, we recommend that the Faculty pays more attention to helping its teachers (and by implication also supervisors) to make use of the opportunities available to them in furthering their international experience. The University signed the European Charter of Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and has implemented a pilot project in this regard.</p>
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*** NOTE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPERT PANEL TO THE ASHE'S ACCREDITATION COUNCIL AND QUALITY LABEL**

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

The report contains an assessment on whether a doctoral study programme delivered at a higher education institution complies with the prescribed laws and by-laws, as well as any additional/recommended requirements defined by the Agency's Accreditation Council, and whether a higher education institution can obtain a positive, i.e. satisfactory quality

assessment according to the criteria set out in this document. Moreover, the Expert Panel must make recommendations for quality improvement.

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

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

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

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

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

The 'high quality label' cannot be proposed or awarded to a programme or a higher education institution that does not comply with the requirements laid down by the laws and bylaws mentioned in this document, and any additional requirements recommended by the Accreditation Council. Moreover, the quality assessment awarded to a study programme should reflect a high level of quality inasmuch that at least half of the sub-criteria in each of the quality assessment criteria are assessed as being of high quality. The Accreditation Council of the Agency issues a final opinion on the label awarded. The content and form of the quality labels shall be prescribed by the Agency in a relevant general act.

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

on the outcome of the procedure, awards the 'high quality label" to a higher education institution.