



**Report  
of the Expert Panel  
on the REACCREDITATION  
of the University Postgraduate (Doctoral) Study Programme  
in Psychology  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
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) Study Programme Psychology on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of 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:

- Prof. Nihad Bunar, Stockholm University, Sweden, President of the Expert Panel
- Dr. Rachel Shanks, University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom
- Prof. Juana M. Sancho Gil, University of Barcelona, Spain
- Prof. Rachel Msetfi, University of Limerick, Ireland
- Dr. Matthew Schuelka, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom
- Prof. Bosse Bergstedt, Lund University, Sweden
- Justīne Viķe, Rīga Stradiņš University, Latvia
- Ieva Bloma, European University Institute, Italy
- Prof. Annkathrin Schacht, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany
- Prof. Cathy Craig, Queen's University Belfast, United Kingdom
- Dr. Michel Raymond Denis, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, France
- Prof. Thomas Morton, University of Exeter, United Kingdom
- Dr. Hrvoje Stojić, University College London, United Kingdom.

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

- Prof. Cathy Craig, Queen's University Belfast, United Kingdom, Moderator of Expert Sub-Panel
- Prof. Annekathrin Schacht, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany
- Dr. Michel Raymond Denis, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, France
- Prof. Thomas Morton, University of Exeter, United Kingdom
- Dr. Hrvoje Stojić, University College London, United Kingdom.

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

- Emita Blagdan, coordinator, ASHE

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

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

The Expert Panel also had a tour of the library, IT rooms, candidate register desk and the classrooms.

## SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: Postgraduate university (doctoral) study in Psychology

Institution delivering the programme: University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Institution providing the programme: University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Psychology

Place of delivery: Rijeka

Scientific area and field: social sciences, psychology

Number of doctoral candidates: 26 (17 active, 9 inactive)

Number of funded doctoral candidates: 0

Number of self-funded and those funded by employer: 2

Number of inactive doctoral candidates (still entitled to graduate): 9

Number of supervisors involved in the doctoral study programme: 22 available

Number of teachers involved in the doctoral study programme: 21 (18 members of the Faculty out of whom 16 is from the Department of Psychology, and 3 external associates)

Ratio of officially appointed supervisors and their doctoral candidates: 1 supervisor : 1.7 doctorand

Ratio of potential supervisors to total no. of doctoral candidates: 1 potential supervisor : 1.2 doctorand

Taught / research part of the programme (ratio):

Obligatory part: 30 ECTS + 10 ECTS discussion groups (60% methodology, 40% research area:

theories/models); Elective courses: 10 ECTS – related to the PhD research topic

Learning outcomes of the study programme

Specific and generic skills that PhD candidates are expected to have developed by the end of their doctoral studies and after they have written their PhD thesis are:

1. information gathering skills (literature research, critical reading and discovery of bias, interviewing skills, construction of measuring instruments)
2. planning and project management skills (designing a scientific research outline, organising the delivery of research, discovering potential problems on time, determining required funds, leading a research team)
3. familiarity with statistics and deductive skills (familiarity with computers and appropriate programmes, knowledge of statistical analyses, statistical reasoning skills, ability to draw conclusions on the basis of quantitative data)
4. writing and presentation skills (speaking and listening skills, ability to present data and findings to a non-expert audience)
5. observation and candidate evaluation and assessment
6. presentation of personal professional and ethical authority
7. readiness to take on ethical and social responsibilities required for the successful delivery of research, the social benefit and possible social consequences of research
8. readiness to confront new challenges in society and the economy.

## **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:

1. **issue a confirmation on compliance** – with the label of 'high quality'

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

1. Explore alternative funding opportunities (e.g. interdisciplinary collaborations) to enable more candidates to study full-time (too many part-time candidates who are struggling to balance work and study)
2. Implement regulations that will allow for closer annual monitoring of candidate progress to aid completion within the time frame
3. Build on existing international links at both a candidate and supervisor level (e.g. joint supervision model)
4. Embrace a hybrid model of thesis submission that is a blend of the Scandinavian model and a monograph
5. Review selection criteria to ensure they are clear about candidates from a non-psychology background and ensure that excellence criteria are applied (focus on quality not quantity)

### ***ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME***

1. Excellent training that meets the research requirements
2. Excellent Head of Programme who is very responsive
3. Excellent Supervisor support to realise research ambition
4. Candidates have a voice that is listened to and changes are implemented in a timely and effective manner
5. Potential to exploit external links with stakeholders and international HEIs (using international professors to teach on the programme)

### ***DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME***

1. Lack of funding for PhD candidates (too many part-time candidates (working full time and having difficulty balancing work and study))
2. Absence of regulations to define and deal with unsatisfactory progress (need for annual monitoring that will impact on progression and help focus candidate's attention on completion)
3. Postgraduate teaching and supervision not seen as core to the educational profile of the HEI (this is a national issue and one that needs to be resolved to ensure doctoral training has the profile it deserves within HEIs in Croatia)

4. Lack of transferable skill development opportunities provided outside the department (employability focus needs to be developed to ensure development of skills that enrich other sectors of society)

***EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE***

1. Opportunities to engage with research-related activities to further training (e.g. project design, seminar delivery, journal clubs and practical sessions)
2. Annual progress review and planning with the supervisor (though note the HEI needs clear procedures for consequences when candidates fail to meet progression targets)
3. Comprehensive procedures and information surrounding the running of the programme
4. Inviting international experts to give classes during the doctoral training (can be expanded upon)
5. Excellent leadership in terms of programme head

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

<b>Minimal legal conditions:</b>	<b>YES/NO notes</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 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. Candidate: 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.
<b>Additional/ recommended conditions of the ASHE Accreditation Council for passing a positive opinion</b>	<b>YES/NO (notes)</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:	



<p>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;</p> <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>a) YES.</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>YES.</p>
<p>7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment committees.</p>	<p>YES.</p>
<p>8. The programme ensures that all candidates spend at least three years doing independent research (while studying, individually, within or outside courses), which includes writing the thesis, publishing, participating in international conferences, field work, attending courses relevant for research etc.</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

## QUALITY ASSESSMENT

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>RESOURCES: TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, RESEARCH CAPACITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE</b></li> </ul>	
<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 QUALITY</b></p> <p>A number of signs attest to the quality of the scientific work produced by the teachers who are contributing to the doctoral programme. Teachers have been engaged in a number of successful research projects, some of them involving cooperation with recognized national and international scientific and academic institutions. Especially noted are 12 projects supported by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (2007-2013), 9 by the University of Rijeka (2013-2017), and 3 by the Croatian Science Foundation. International projects include one supported by Horizon 2020 and one by Erasmus ++. Teachers involved in the doctoral programme publish scientific papers in a variety of scientific journals, including high-standard international ones. The Department of Psychology is also in charge of the scientific journal "Psychological Topics", which offers a communication channel connecting researchers from different areas in the field of psychology.</p>
<p>1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.</p>	<p><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>The doctoral program involves a total of 20 teachers (17 are faculty employees). Based on the data provided in Table A.1, the total number of NH for the doctoral programme amounts to 2935, which reflects quite a substantial effort put in by teachers in the various components of the programme (obligatory and elective courses). The average per teacher is 146 NH, with wide variations (from 15 to 285). This workload comes in addition to the high number of NH used to ensure teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels (3827.5) and in other institutions (425). The number and workload of teachers involved in the programme are seen as ensuring good quality of doctoral education.</p>
<p>1.3. The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the</p>	<p><b>IMPROVEMENTS NECESSARY</b></p>

<p>topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.</p>	<p>Based on Table A.1, the overall number of papers classified "A" is 148, for a total of 20 teachers contributing to the doctoral program (average per teacher: 7.4). When considering only the 17 teachers who are faculty employees, the total number is 137 (average: 8.1). There is wide variation from teacher to teacher. The highest noted figures are 12-16 (that is, about 2-3 papers/year). The quality of scientific activity is reflected by high citation rates (around 1000) and associated H-indices (10-11) for several teachers. Given the potential of the faculty committed to the programme, there is room for improvement in the production of scientific publications.</p>
<p>1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.</p>	<p><b>IMPROVEMENTS NECESSARY</b></p> <p>There is a total of 17 supervisors and a total of 28 doctoral candidates. Each supervisor is in charge of 1-3 candidates, with an average number of 1.6 candidates per supervisor, a figure which appears reasonable and likely to guarantee adequate availability of the teachers in charge. Altogether, the supervisors have published 138 articles, which results in an average number of 8.1 articles, the same value as the one for the whole set of teachers. Given the potential of teachers participating in the programme, there is room for improvement in the production of scientific publications on the part of the supervisors.</p>
<p>1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.</p>	<p><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>The HEI has established procedures for assessing the competencies of supervisors. Research output of the staff is important for their career progression and is regularly monitored on an annual basis by the HEI. With respect to the supervision, a clear set of criteria around the quality threshold for eligibility of staff to supervise are published and adhered to. The Postgraduate Board of Studies assesses whether a researcher satisfies the criteria and Faculty Board gives final approval. The criteria include both research quality and activity in terms of research projects and appear to be appropriate for the discipline. In terms of teaching, our discussions with candidates suggest the teaching is of very high quality. Furthermore, candidates praised the Head of Programme for her</p>

	<p>responsiveness in dealing with any issues related to the course.</p>
<p>1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.</p>	<p><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>The HEI has access to high-quality research infrastructure. The literature provided by the library is good, important textbooks are accessible and national journals are available in paper. The reading room in the library is rather small and shared with all the undergraduates and would not be suitable for more extensive usage by PhD candidates. That being said there is office space available within the department. There is electronic access to most of the relevant journals provided through the National Library, and through the University of Rijeka's subscription to JSTOR. PhD candidates did, however, state in the surveys that access to full-text articles should be improved. However, with a move towards open access this will be resolved.</p> <p>According to the SER, the HEI has access to quality premises that can be used for lectures and seminars. Full-time candidates have office space and a desk with shared space is available for part-time candidates. To create more of a sense of community, a dedicated PhD candidate space where full-time and part-time students can mingle would help create more of a sense of belonging and improve communication between the two groups and also the department/Faculty.</p> <p>Due to recent flooding, we were unable to examine the experimental lab. According to our discussions with staff and our reading of the SER, the lab is very well equipped to carry out different types of behavioural research. Facilities include access to computers for behavioural testing, equipment for psychophysiological measurement and access to eye-tracking equipment. In terms of access to imaging</p>

	facilities, the panel recommends building on existing collaborations with medical departments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME</b></li> </ul>	
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><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>The HEI has a clearly established and accepted procedures for proposing, approving and delivering doctoral education at the University of Rijeka. These are outlined in the document <i>Regulations on Accreditation of Study Programs at the University of Rijeka</i>. The current procedure appears to be comprehensive and requires details of the cultural, social and economic benefits to putting on the programme along with pedagogical reasons. The procedure relies appropriately on external review.</p>
2.2. The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.	<p><b>NEEDS IMPROVEMENT</b></p> <p>Detailed research strategies exist at both University and Faculty level. The SER said very little about the ways in which the programme content, choice of candidates and supervisors are aligned with these. The SER lists over 20 research topics in which the Department specializes. The panel feels that this is too broad and would recommend that the Department narrows the list, and identifies three or four research areas that reflect the departmental staff's core strengths. This narrower focus will help create more coherence and will also serve to better advertise the programme's research strengths to potential candidates (particularly international candidates). A coherent research strategy can also be used for long term planning and as a vehicle to employ new staff to strengthen these few areas. It can also give a more strategic focus when bidding for funds to finance new research equipment.</p>
2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the success of the programmes through periodic reviews, and implements improvements.	<p><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>Both the SER and interviews with staff and candidates highlight the Department's effectiveness at continually evaluating the success of the PhD programme. Although this is conducted annually by the Department's Postgraduate Board of Studies, there is also a culture of continually monitoring and improving</p>

	<p>current practices. Indeed, one of the most common themes we heard from both alumni and candidates was praise for the programme director's responsiveness and openness to feedback. Candidates also evaluate staff's research and also their teaching on the courses.</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 QUALITY</b></p> <p>Minimum criteria for supervision are determined by the University Board. Based on the criteria fifteen supervisors have been selected. Supervisors' research performance is monitored on an annual basis. Staff are asked to submit a summary of research activities. In line with the guidelines candidates also assess their supervisor's performance. No conflicts of interest appear to exist with candidates having regular opportunities (meetings) to raise concerns with the Programme Head. Candidates have changed supervisor and this is facilitated by the programme Head. Although not raised as an issue, the panel felt that the department should consider making it clear to candidates how they can raise a complaint if they feel it has not been/or cannot be resolved within the department.</p>
<p>2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.</p>	<p><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>The department has a clearly defined Code of Ethics, including principles for the conduct of scientific research, and there is a Board of Ethics at the Faculty level that reviews the conduct of research and academics within the department. There are clearly defined statutes for the revoking of degrees where ethical violations deem this necessary. The department uses Turnitin software to detect plagiarism and to alert supervisors to excessive reproduction of published material. The department is aware of the effects of conflicts of interest (e.g., via close relationships between staff and candidates) and has procedures to mitigate against these in the examination and evaluation of candidate work. The overall research framework of the faculty emphasises academic freedom.</p>
<p>2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and</p>	<p><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p>

<p>objective, and includes a public presentation.</p>	<p>The Faculty has clear procedures for the approval, defense and are publicly available, and candidates themselves commented on the transparency of the bureaucratic processes as a strength of the programme. PhD topic and thesis defense committees include at least one member who is not employed at the University of Rijeka and supervisors cannot be a member of these committees either. As such, evaluation processes have external checks on objectivity. Defenses are conducted publicly and awarded theses are also publicly available.</p>
<p>2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.</p>	<p><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>As above, thesis defences are public, and notification of a defence is given publicly in advance. The defence is minuted. The evaluation committee comprises an uneven number (we assume to avoid tied evaluations), includes an external member, and excludes the candidate's supervisor. Thus the committee is constructed to ensure proper evaluations of the candidate's work and to avoid bias (positive or negative). Although external academics are appointed to PhD defence committees, it is not specifically stated whether these are international. We assume they could be, but in practice probably are not. It would be excessive to suggest that all evaluation committees should include international experts, but it is also true that the regular inclusion of international experts would lift the overall profile of the programme outside Croatia. This is not a necessary improvement, but something to think about.</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><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>All relevant information about the programme, its requirements and procedures, are published online and in English. They are easily accessible and complete.</p>
<p>2.9. Funds collected for the needs of doctoral education are distributed transparently and in a way that ensures sustainability and further development of doctoral education (ensures that candidates' research is carried out and supported, so</p>	<p><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>The SER reports that the funds collected for the needs for doctoral education are distributed transparently according to the Ordinance on the Criteria and Ways of Using Public Higher Education and Scientific-Research Institutes' Own Market Revenues, which is</p>

<p>that doctoral education can be completed successfully).</p>	<p>managed by the Faculty's Accounting service. According to the SER funds from tuition fees are distributed in the following way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30% for maintenance and advancement of doctoral study programme activities (17% for procurement of literature, research equipment and computer programmes; 10% for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka; 3% for the University of Rijeka);</li> <li>• 10% for co-financing of tuition and other costs incurred by the doctoral study programme;</li> <li>• 60% for other costs (delivery of teaching, supervision, membership in committees, travel and accommodation costs – for committee members and visiting teachers outside the University of Rijeka, doctoral study programme and administration management, management of finances, maintenance of the doctoral study programme's webpage).</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted that funding a doctoral training programme from tuition fees alone when numbers are low is not a sustainable financial model and will require support from other sources. Considerations should be given to exploring new ways of growing funding to allow for scholarships, research expenses, international travel and conference attendance.</p>
<p>2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).</p>	<p><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>Tuition fees are determined at a departmental level and are partly related to the number of candidates on the programme. Due to the Decree on Job Titles and Complexity Coefficients in the Civil Service issued by the Government of the Republic of Croatia, staff engaged in the programme need to be paid.</p> <p>In accordance with Article 2.9. three different cost projections were presented to the Postgraduate Board of Studies of the Department of Psychology. The first projection is based on five (5) PhD candidates estimated to have an annual cost of 20,000.00 kuna per candidate. The second is based on 10 PhD candidates with an annual cost of 16,000.00 kuna per candidate. The third option is based on 15 PhD candidates with a projected annual cost of 15,000.00 kuna. Having considered all options, the Postgraduate Board agreed on a fee of 17,000.00 kuna per year of</p>



	<p>study (maximum 3 years). The minimal number of candidates for launching the study programme is set at five (5). Tuition fees can be paid in full at the start of the programme or divided into several instalments. The panel recommends that fee payment is linked to progress expectations and divided over a fixed period of time. Non-payment of fee would result in withdrawal from the programme.</p>
<b>3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION</b>	
<p>3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.</p>	<p><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>According to the SER, the admission rates are determined annually by the Faculty Board of the programme. Currently, admission rate is set at 30 candidates per generation. The number of potential supervisors in the Faculty of the programme is 22, with 15 active supervisors currently involved. The ratio of (potential and currently active) supervisors and (potential) PhD candidates allow for quality assurance of supervision, also considering the programme's established curriculum. According to the information provided in the on-site discussions with the head of the programme, a small number of applications have been rejected. Once the programme has been successfully established, the Faculty Board might consider to introduce stricter selection criteria, to secure an increased number of successfully completed PhD projects of international visibility (please see also point 3.7).</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 QUALITY</b></p> <p>In addition to the capacity criteria, the programme ambitiously considers the current and future needs of the Croatian scientific and economic society, leading to the relatively high number of PhD candidates that could be enrolled in the programme.</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>NEEDS IMPROVEMENT</b></p> <p>According to the information provided during the site visit, only a small number of current PhD candidates have been financed by research-related positions at Rijeka University with the majority of candidates being self-financed holding down full-time positions at other institutions. None of the PhD candidates appear to be</p>

	<p>directly funded by the programme (e.g. revenue from tuition fees, see point 2.9). Considering the established structures as well as the overall low funding rates for research projects at the national level, it appears questionable to what extent the programme itself could change the admission quotas with respect to funding opportunities.</p> <p>Although it might be beyond the department's capacity to provide scholarships, it is clear that the overall quality of the candidate experience – and the quality of the science being conducted – would be dramatically improved by the provision of funds to support PhD candidate research more generally. Such funds might come from the Faculty, the University, or the Croatian Government. Alternatively, or in addition to this, the department might want to explore interest in co-funded scholarships with local businesses, industry, the public sector or charities. Elsewhere in Europe there are examples of external bodies seeing the value of supporting PhD research directed towards solving problems that are both practically important and theoretically interesting. Psychology is in a unique position to make these types of connections.</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>NEEDS IMPROVEMENT</b></p> <p>The Department admits the appropriate number of candidates, with each candidate being matched with a potential supervisor. The candidates either get in touch with potential supervisor before applying (mode 1), or they are being matched to a potential supervisor by the Postgraduate Board of Studies after reviewing applications (mode 2). Supervisors start working with candidates from the outset, jointly developing a research program and ensuring appropriate training is being undertaken to complete the research. This includes literature searches and robust methodology training. It should be noted that supervisors were less in favour of mode 2 and often felt if candidates were accepted they had to supervise them, whether or not they believed there was a good fit between the member of staff's research interests and those of the candidates. Given the close working relationship that needs to be established to ensure the successful completion of a PhD, the panel would suggest a better matching process where the supervisor has a say in the pairing</p>

	<p>process. This could be done, for example, by involving the potential supervisor(s) in the interview with the applicant, and if a willing supervisor is not found, the applicant should not be accepted onto the programme. It should also be noted that the successful completion of doctoral research will be determined through the monitoring of progress with respect to the research plan. This issue is addressed under section 3.10.</p>
<p>3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.</p>	<p><b>IMPROVEMENT NECESSARY</b></p> <p>One international candidate is enrolled on the programme. To attract international candidates some of the documents regarding the programme have already been translated into English and published on the website. To ensure a greater number of international applicants it would be advisable to translate all relevant documents (e.g. timeline for applications including application forms and selection procedure including the publication of results) and make them freely available on the website. The department could also ensure the programme is visible to the wider scientific community by publishing the programme on international sites (e.g. FindAPhD.com). The panel was pleased to note that the programme does have international teachers. This scheme could be extended and also advertised on their website. Furthermore, a tighter focus on a few key areas of research strength, showcasing certain staff and their publications could also help internationalise the programme and attract high calibre candidates. Furthermore, international candidates are required to provide official Academic Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications when applying to the doctorate programme. Whilst it is normal to provide evidence of academic qualifications, requiring the documents to be officially translated into Croatian may be a deterrent. A good online application system where scanned copies of international certificates can be uploaded directly would help facilitate the process. When offered a place official verification of the documents can take place.</p>
<p>3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.</p>	<p><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>The Department publishes the call in a timely manner. For example, the last application call was published in</p>

	<p>December 2016, an application deadline at the end of February, with results published in May 2017. Selection criteria include past academic performance, interest in research, publications and the submission of a research proposal. The research proposal is a document within which the candidate has to outline a concrete research question, describe the appropriate methodology required and demonstrate a knowledge of the relevant literature. We commend the Department for having very clear and thorough forms – application, CV and research proposal (although an English version is not available). Finally, the interview is an obligatory part of the selection procedure. Although the described selection process is of high quality and mechanisms for identifying the best candidates appear to be in place, our reading of the data is that almost all candidates who apply get a place on the programme. Given the majority of candidates who apply are part-time (working full-time in another institution/organisation) realistic expectations in terms of workload when studying for a doctoral degree part-time should be made very clear at the time of selection, to ensure candidates complete their studies to the appropriate quality level and in a timely manner (see section 3.10 for comments around progression monitoring).</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>IMPROVEMENT NECESSARY</b></p> <p>The department has clear and published criteria for the selection of candidates, and discussion with candidates themselves suggest that these criteria are applied consistently. Although the decision of the selection panel is final, there appears to be no right to appeal. Furthermore, supervisors appear to have little input into the selection of candidates and the match between candidate and the supervisor’s research interests. As such, while selection criteria might be clear, they might not be maximising the synergy between candidate and supervisor that is at the heart of a successful PhD project. The importance of this factor to the selection processes (e.g., requiring identification of a supervisor, and agreement from that person to supervise prior to acceptance) is something that needs to be considered for the future.</p>

<p>3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.</p>	<p><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>Applicants' prior learning is recognised and the programme seems flexible and well-equipped to create study plans that are individualised and tailored to the candidate's specific learning needs.</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 QUALITY</b></p> <p>The rights and obligations of both candidates and supervisors are defined in the university ordinances, and there is good communication between candidates and the programme head. The candidates feel well supported by the department.</p>
<p>3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.</p>	<p><b>IMPROVEMENT NECESSARY</b></p> <p>Within the means that it has, the department is clearly doing its best to support candidates to do high quality research, and to access funding that will allow them to benefit from visits to other labs, conferences, workshops and other training activities. Impressively, the department invites international experts to visit and deliver workshops/ classes to their candidates; something that is undoubtedly a valuable experience for them. In general, the quality of the equipment available for research is good, and the department is being resourceful in accessing expensive equipment elsewhere (e.g. MRI at the hospital).</p> <p>There is also a clear interest in developing best practice for supervision, and for monitoring candidates through their PhD journey. However, as noted above, these monitoring processes could be improved in a way that ensures good progress from candidates, or identifies poor performance more quickly, so that interventions can be made before excessive time is lost.</p> <p>The capacity for the department to support candidates is also financially constrained (e.g. there are no/ limited resources available for candidates who are not employed on research projects to access money for participant payment), and this reflects the overall composition of the candidate body (who are mainly working externally/ self-funding and conducting research away from the department). In the SER, the department draws its own conclusion that</p>

	<p>“institutional support is crucial for the successful completion of the doctoral study programme and increased candidate mobility”. This judgment is echoed by the evaluation panel.</p>
<b>4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES</b>	
<p>4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.</p>	<p><b>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>Compared to other programmes across Europe that the senior members of the panel are familiar with, the programme in Rijeka is aligned in terms of classroom obligations. The balance between time spent on teaching and research was felt to be right. As mentioned in other sections, any concerns are around part-time candidates’ ability to juggle the demands of working life and studying. According to all the senior members of the panel, who have extensive knowledge and experience, it was felt that the classroom obligations were in line with those at other international institutions including their own.</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>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>The courses offered as part of the PhD programme meet the criteria defined under 8.2 of the CroQF. Importantly, they are tailored to the necessary and desired competences of doctoral candidates and future independent scientists. The main part of the curriculum is clearly research-oriented and contains formats that enable in-depth literature studies and critical reflections (e.g., journal clubs, discussions with international scientists). Courses also include advanced methodological and statistical procedures that go beyond Masters level education, as well as ethical requirements. It should be emphasized that the course programme can be completed in the first year of the doctorate.</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>HIGH QUALITY</b></p> <p>Learning outcomes of the programme are clearly and logically connected to the teaching content. According to SER, discussions with supervisors, current PhD candidates, and alumni, the majority of courses focus on the study of current scientific literature and on the critical examination of recent debates within the scientific community.</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 QUALITY</b></p> <p>To date three candidates have completed the programme, with two completing within three years. All three theses are fully aligned with international standards. Importantly, the research outputs include a number of peer-reviewed publications in prestigious journals appropriate to the discipline. The three alumni impressively demonstrated the appropriateness of the curriculum and the high level of supervision they received during their programme.</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 QUALITY</b></p> <p>Considering the heterogeneous background of the enrolled PhD candidates, the research opportunities available at the department, and the standards required under 8.2. of CroQF, the programme's curriculum is excellent, both in terms of offered course formats and content that is tailored to the successful completion of the individual PhD projects (but see 4.6 for potential improvements to extend the curriculum to include general (transferable) skills).</p>
<p>4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.</p>	<p><b>IMPROVEMENT NECESSARY</b></p> <p>From the SER and general discussions with candidates and alumni, there is no structured opportunities to acquire more general (transferable skills). This should include project management, entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership. The delivery of the content of these courses is beyond the scope of the psychology department but should be incorporated into the training provided by the Doctoral School model proposed by Faculty/University. Having these courses delivered through a Doctoral School model provides an opportunity to bring together candidates from different disciplinary backgrounds, which creates a fertile ground for discussion and invites interdisciplinary dialogue. The educational gain from these experiences is invaluable for the candidate's development. Candidates who have ambitions to pursue a career in research would benefit from more training on how to apply for research funding. This includes raising awareness of what sources of research funding are available (e.g. fellowships, post-doc</p>

	<p>funding abroad) and what it takes to make a successful application.</p> <p>Finally, the panel feel that the new Doctoral School should also provide the candidates with more information around employability and help them write academic and non-academic CVs. This could help raise awareness of the value of holding a PhD to external stakeholders.</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 QUALITY</b></p> <p>The panel were impressed with the structure and content of teaching offered as part of the candidates' research training. It particularly appreciated the diverse means with which candidates could engage in research related activities. This included journal clubs to promote critical thinking and evaluation skills (led by both candidates and visiting professors), seminars led by the candidates and practical sessions to hone statistical skills using statistical packages and real-world data.</p>
<p>4.8. <b>The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.</b></p>	<p><b>IMPROVEMENT NECESSARY</b></p> <p>Although the panel recognised and appreciated the attempts being made to internationalise the programme, there is considerable room for improvement. To internationalise the programme and strengthen research connections for supervisors the panel recommends the following: 1) Teach courses in English so that they are attractive to an international candidate body 2) Engage more visiting professors to deliver content in English (and deliver journal clubs) 3) Advertise the programme as an international programme of excellence on different websites (e.g. Find a PhD.com) 4) Adopt a joint supervision model where a second supervisor is a collaborator at an international university. Meetings can be organised over Skype where the second supervisor is involved in all aspects of the research process (experimental design, data collection/analysis), interpretation of results). 5) Ensure funds are earmarked for psychology PhD candidates to visit/spend time in another research lab (i.e. promote candidate mobility). Seek funds from Faculty or the University (or external stakeholders e.g. the Croatian Tourist Board).</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.