

REPORT OF THE EXPERT PANEL ON THE REACCREDITATION OF THE POSTGRADUATE UNIVERSITY STUDY PROGRAMME IN ADRIATIC - A LINK BETWEEN CONTINENTS



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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 Postgraduate university study programme in *Adriatic - a Link between Continents* on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the University of Zadar.

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 (OG24/10). 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:

- President of the expert panel Alenka Tomaž, University Primorska, Slovenia;
- Walter Panciera, University of Padova, Italy;
- Zrinka Mileusnić, University Primorska, Slovenia;
- Laura Šakaja, Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb, Croatia;
- Mišo Petrović, doctoral candidate, Central European University, Hungary.

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

- Josip Hrgović, coordinator, ASHE;
- Ivana Rončević, interpreter at the site visit and 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.

The Expert Panel did not have a tour of selected research facilities. However, through the interviews with the management, supervisors, students and alumni, the expert panel has learned that research facilities and available sources are sufficient and are satisfying the needs of all parties involved in the study process of this particular study programme.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: Postgraduate university study

programme "Adriatic - a link among the continents".

Institution delivering the programme: University of Zadar **Institution providing the programme:** University of Zadar

Place of delivery: Zadar

Scientific area and field: Interdisciplinary **Number of doctoral candidates:** 55

Financed by HEI: 7

Financed from other sources: 48

Number of teachers: 28

Number of supervisors: 22 supervisors to 33 candidates

Ratio of supervisors to doctoral students: 1:1.5

Teaching / research activity ratio: 53 ECTS: 127 ECTS (1: 2, 4)

Programme outline: a minimum of 55 ECTS (out of a possible 60) acquired by meeting curricular and extra-curricular obligations of the 1st and 2nd semesters, a minimum of 110 ECTS (out of a possible 120) acquired by meeting curricular and extra-curricular obligations of the 3rd and 4th semesters, Conditions for attainment of degree: good knowledge of a second foreign language, publication of at least two scientific papers, referenced at least once at a scientific meeting, a minimum of 180 ECTS, supervisor's (and co-supervisor's) written approval for submitting the thesis, including confirmation of an originality check, a positive report from the thesis assessment commission, successful public defence of doctoral thesis.

Learning outcomes of the study programme:

LO1: to understand and interpret theoretical concepts in the wider social sciences area, especially in the field of history (for historians) and the interdisciplinary area, field of geography (for geographers), but at a level where historians can use knowledge of geography and geographers use knowledge of history

LO2: to establish and interpret issues in the area of knowledge relevant to the doctoral thesis

LO3: to acquire proficient knowledge of all relevant sources of information (historical and geographical) on the wider and narrower contexts linked to the doctoral thesis in the relevant scientific area

LO4: to acquire proficient knowledge of all relevant literature published in the wider and narrower contexts linked to the doctoral thesis in the relevant scientific area

LO5: to interpret and apply ethical norms in scientific work and scientific communication in the information age

LO6: to understand and interpret theories and models in history and geography

LO7: to expertly and independently use scientific research methodology, particularly in connection with one's own research and resulting from the selected topic of the doctoral thesis

LO8: to acquire thorough knowledge of the Adriatic as a link between continents at the historical and geographical levels, and apply that knowledge in writing a doctoral thesis LO9: to achieve a level of knowledge and skills linked to all previous learning outcomes, so that the doctoral candidate can finally write a doctoral thesis in the chosen scientific

field independently, with suggestions from the supervisor, the quality of which will represent an essential contribution to that scientific field.

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** for performing parts of activities (renew the licence)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. Introduce ECTS credits for the exchange programmes, since this possibility would impact the level of internationalisation.
- 2. The programme should implement a strategy to promote student interaction within the doctoral studies. PhD workshops should be organised with an objective of facilitating the contact and exchange of research topics, ideas and methodologies among the students and supervisors and potential supervisors.
- 3. Introducing the possibility of receiving ECTS credits for extra-curricular activities for more than one course, as suggested by the students and alumni, would stipulate the scientific work and publications of less active and also recognise the research done by the more active students.
- 4. Continue working on the promotion on international exchange for students and supervisors as well as on attracting foreign students.
- 5. Introduce international and inter-institutional co-tutoring of thesis, especially with the other countries of the Adriatic area.
- 6. Improve the rate of students involved in the projects.
- 7. Encourage candidates to mature in the expertise of project management and funding acquisition especially at EU level.
- 8. Encourage and increase the number of courses delivered by external/foreign experts.
- 9. Increase internationalization of the programme.
- 10. Introduce the possibility for an external member of the PhD evaluation committee to be from abroad, from the Adriatic region.
- 11. Increase activities to attract international applicants.

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. The self-evaluation report is well prepared, and the site visit proved good communication skills of both the supervisors and candidates.
- 2. Good legal/organizational framework of the programme. HEI has a clear and well-developed documentation and procedures for admission, the study process as well as the completion of the study.
- 3. The programme is interdisciplinary and flexible.
- 4. Good ratio of students and teachers/supervisors.
- 5. There is a good connection between the programme and research institutes, archives and potential employers.
- 6. Students receive ECTS credits for extra-curricular activities.
- 7. Good interpersonal connections among all stakeholders in the programme.
- 8. The number of courses ensures interdisciplinarity and allows effective student choice.
- 9. The students and alumni are motivated, open and dedicated.
- 10. The students and the supervisors are pleased with the structure and content of the programme.

- 11. The programme is well designed, with a balanced distribution of tasks in the programme, including classes, teaching load and time for research.
- 12. Specific focus on the Adriatic that gives the study programme the potential to be recognisable at an international level.
- 13. No gender balance issues.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- 1. The relatively high proportion of students that are currently inactive.
- 2. Lack of transparency on how funds are spent.
- 3. The programme is lacking an international component, such as recruiting international students.
- 4. Low level of internationalization.
- 5. The study programme is mainly theoretically oriented, which is good for the formation of future academics. However, management skills or organizational skills are equally important but not trained.
- 6. A lack of an international component, such as recruitment of international researchers as supervisors or co-supervisors or members of the committee for defending the thesis.
- 7. The Ph.D. thesis in Medieval and Early Modern history are few and this reduces the possibilities for international co-operation and comparison.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

- 1. Good procedures for selection, registration, follow-up and thesis submission.
- 2. Flexibility of choice in suitable courses for candidate's topic.
- 3. The programme ensures a sound balance between classes, teaching and research.
- 4. Good interaction between candidates and supervisors. Supervisors encourage students to attend international conferences and publish scientific papers.
- 5. Awarding ECTS for scientific activities motivates the candidates.
- 6. Encouraging students to write many term papers connected to their dissertation topic and to publish them as scientific articles.
- 7. The requirement of a minimum of two publications in an international journal to complete a PhD thesis.
- 8. Members of the committee for defending the thesis deliver three separate reports/grades, which is an excellent exception and not the case at other universities in Croatia.
- 9. Existing examples of interdisciplinary co-supervising.
- 10. HEI is positively minded to re-evaluate current praxis and absorb new ideas.
- 11. Good collaboration with local research institutes, archives and potential employers.

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

Minimal legal conditions:	YES/NO
	notes
1. Higher education institution	YES
(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.	
2. HEI delivers programmes in the	YES
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 (OG24/10).	
3. HEI employs a sufficient number	YES
of researchers, as defined by Article	120
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).	
4. At least 50% of teaching as	YES
expressed in norm-hours is	120
delivered by teachers employed at	
the HEI (full-time, elected into	
scientific-teaching titles).	
5. Student: teacher ratio at the HEI	YES
is below 1:30.	
6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses	YES
are public.	http://www.unizd.hr/sveucilisnaknjiznica/Digitalnirepoz
F	itorijSveu%C4%8Dili%C5%A1tauZadru/tabid/7089/Defa
	ult.aspx
	1
7. HEI launches the procedure of	YES
revoking the academic title if it is	
determined that it has been	
attained contrary to the conditions	
stipulated for its attainment, by	
onparated for the accumination by	

governo violation of the studying	
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.	VIDO
Additional/ recommended	YES
conditions of the ASHE	
Accreditation Council for passing	
a positive opinion	VEC
1. HEI (or HEIs in joint	YES
programmes) has at least five	
teachers appointed to scientific-	
teaching titles in the field, or fields	
relevant for the programme	
involved in its delivery.	VIDO
2. In the most recent	YES
reaccreditation, HEI had the	
standard Scientific and Professional	
Activity marked as at least "partly	
implemented" (3).	VPC
3. The doctoral programme is	YES
aligned with the HEI's research	
strategy.	VEC
4. The candidate : supervisor ratio	YES
at the HEI is not above 3:1.	VEC
5. All supervisors meet the	YES
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;	
b) active researcher in the scientific	
area of the programme, as	
evidenced by publications,	
participation in scientific	
conferences and/or projects in the	
past five years (table 2, Supervisors	
and candidates); c) confirms feasibility of the draft	
research plan upon admission of	
the candidate (or submission of the	
proposal);	
d) ensures the conditions (and	
funding) necessary to implement the candidate's research (in line	
with the draft research plan) as a	
research project leader, co-leader,	
participant, collaborator or in other	
ways; e) trained for the role before	
assuming it (through workshops,	
assuming it fundugh workshops,	

co-supervisions etc.);	
f) received a positive opinion of the	
HEI on previous supervisory work.	
6. All teachers meet the following	YES
conditions:	
a) holds a scientific or a scientific-	
teaching position;	
b) active researcher, recognized in	
the field relevant for the course	
(table 1,Teachers).	
7. The supervisor normally does	NO
not participate in the assessment	
committees.	
8. The programme ensures that all	YES
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.	
9. For joint programmes and	NOT APPLICABLE
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.	

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	
	Improvements are necessary
1.1.HEI is distinguished by its scientific/artistic achievements in the discipline in which the doctoral study programme is delivered.	The doctoral programme is distinguished by its scientific achievements in its discipline. The lecturers are qualified to deliver at acceptable standards on a national and international level. Overall average of the number of scientific publications, citations and <i>h</i> -index is satisfactory. However, there are large discrepancies in the productivity, citations and <i>h</i> -index at the individual level. This is noticeable in all categories: teachers, supervisors and candidates. Recommendation: inactive teachers should increase their level of publishing, or data inserted in the CROSBI database should be regularly updated and articles that are appearing more than once should be corrected to provide a clearer picture.
	In spite of an overall large number of publications, a discrepancy in the relation of the publications in university and other Croatian journals to the publications in foreign journals, this is in favour of mostly Croatian journals. Recommendation: number of publications in foreign journals should be increased.
	Most of the scientific projects that include candidates are national projects. The effort of receiving funds from the international funds is visible in the later years and ongoing international projects.
	Improvements are necessary
1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.	More than 50% of the programme is delivered by university's own faculty. However, according to the table 1 in SER there are some discrepancies in the workload of some teachers, which seems to be larger than Croatian norm of 300 + 20%.
	Recommendation: the workload should be distributed

	more evenly and in line with the Croatian standards among the faculty.
	Recommendation: according to the sufficient percentage of the university's own teaching resources, involvement of teachers from other Adriatic universities should be considered, at least at the level of guest professors.
	Improvements are necessary
1.3. The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.	Overall average of the number of scientific publications, citations and h -index is satisfactory. However, there are large discrepancies in the productivity, citations and h -index at the individual level.
	Recommendation: inactive teachers should increase their level of publishing, or data inserted in the CROSBI database should be regularly updated.
	High level of quality
1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.	The number of appointed supervisors (candidate: supervisor ratio 1.5:1) is excellent. Supervisors actively lead and/or participate in national and international projects. The quality of their supervising is reflected by the number of candidates actively participating in projects, international conferences and scientific publishing.
	High level of quality
1.5.The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.	The programme is following formal mechanisms of assessing and monitoring the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors as set by the University of Zadar (http://www.unizd.hr/o-nama/ustrojstvo/rektorat/ured-za-osiguravanje-kvalitete), published in the University of Zadar Quality Assurance Manual, Zadar, 2012 (http://www.unizd.hr/Portals/0/kvaliteta/Prirucnik kvalitete.pdf?ver=2012-03-29-114200-000) and conducted by the Office for Quality Assurance.
	High level of quality
1.6.The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.	The Expert Panel did not have a tour of selected research facilities. Through the interviews with the management, supervisors, students and alumni, the expert panel has learned that research facilities and available sources, access to literature and research databases (statistical

		information, research infrastructure, hardware, software, including GIS, etc.) are sufficient, and are satisfying the needs of all parties involved in the study process of this particular study programme.
2.	INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME	
		High level of quality
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.	The University of Zadar is following the Regulations on the procedure for initiating, approving and delivering doctoral education (http://www.unizd.hr/Portals/0/pdf/PRAVILNIK%20POK RETANJE%20DOKTORSKIH%20STUDIJA.pdf). The evaluated programme is the result of connecting two previous doctoral programmes in one, with a special focus on the interdisciplinary knowledge, as reflected by the needs from professional institutions. According to the number of already employed students, students that have received employment in professional institutions and the demand for such professional profile (as delivered by the external stakeholders), the needs are clearly defined and
		realistic. Improvements are necessary
2.2.	The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.	HEI has several documents regarding research mission and vision, and two separate research strategic documents, covering different research fields. All of these are presented in the SER. The evaluated programme is in line with the University of Zadar's Strategic programme for scientific research in the field of social sciences, humanities and arts 2015-2019 (http://www.unizd.hr/Portals/0/doc/doc pdf dokumenti/strategije/strateski program unizd humanisticko 2015 2019 20160201.pdf).
		From the supplements provided by the HEI and through the interviews during the site visit some discrepancies were noticed, showing that a certain number of dissertation topics is not in line with the vision and mission of the programme. It should be clarified whether topics that do not concern the Adriatic are an exception or if there are no limits of topic selection, and what is the focus of the programme's research mission and vision. If the focus is the Adriatic, it is recommended to introduce

more cooperation with research institutions within the Adriatic area, in the form of co-mentoring and other means of cooperation, especially regarding the research topics in Medieval and Early Modern history.

Improvements are necessary

As stated in the SER, the doctoral study programme has been analysed and monitored, and modernised by the changes in the curriculum introduced in 2016 and the new lecture schedule adopted in 2017. Also, some teachers were changed. This is based on the informal internal review and student evaluations. According to the supplements to the SER and interviews during the site visit, no periodical international and/or national programme reviews were implemented.

As stated in the SER and the previous quality assessment categories, continuous monitoring and analysis of research productivity of supervisors and candidates is linked to the CROSBI database. As noticed by the expert committee members, inputs in the database should be regularly updated.

2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the success of the programmes through periodic reviews, and implements improvements.

Feedback from candidates is implemented through the student evaluations. Supplements to the SER provided only the assessments for 2016/2017. In the interviews during the site visit continuous assessment procedure also in other years was confirmed. They have also shown that there are some discrepancies between the need for introduction of certain changes from the students (such as introduction of the doctoral workshop) and from the faculty. Recommendation: inclusion of alumni and dropouts in the assessment of the programme; implementation of the changes based on the student evaluations.

There is no formal mechanism of collecting the feedback from other stakeholders. Recommendation: inclusion of other stakeholders in the assessment and evaluation of the programme.

Evidence of changes is visible through the previously mentioned formal adopted documents in 2016 and 2017.

Improvements are necessary

The quality of supervision is monitored by the candidates' research performance as documented in the CROSBI database. However, this should be regularly updated.

Feedback from current and former candidates is documented by the student evaluations and the grades received are high, showing excellent collaboration.

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.

Completion rates are not high, but this is due to the selffinancing of most of the candidates, as well as the fact that most of the candidates are employed.

Since the beginning of the programme there was no case of changing supervisors, but there are no formal barriers for the students to change the supervisor whatever the reason may be http://www.unizd.hr/obrazovanje/uredi-za-studije/ured-za-poslijediplomske-studije/imenovanje-mentora).

There are no documents, procedures or practices that would prove the existence of mechanisms of awarding successful supervisors. Recommendation: introduction of documents defining the procedures or practices of awarding successful supervisors.

High level of quality

2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.

HEI has procedures that assure academic integrity and freedom of research. HEI uses TURNITIN software to prevent plagiarism and other forms of academic fraud.

High level of quality

2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposals transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation.

In SER HEI has provided evidence that confirms that the process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation.

- HEI has developed the procedures of producing and defending the doctoral thesis proposal (http://www.unizd.hr/Portals/0/sluzba_pds/PDS_proced ure_HRV_3.pdf?ver=2017-02-27-154445-753).
- HEI has established rules for the procedure of appointing a committee for the assessment and defence of the thesis, at least one member of which is external (from another

institution).

- HEI has established and published a detailed proposal defence protocol.
- HEI has created and published proposal templates and clear presentation guidelines.
- HEI has created and published templates for proposal assessment.

Improvements are necessary

Based on the SER and the site visit, evaluation panel committee has found out the following:

- HEI has developed the procedures of developing and defending the doctoral thesis.
- HEI does not encourage participation of international examiners in the thesis defence committee (viva assessment committee).
- HEI encourages candidates to have at least two publications with an internationally competitive peer-review in the field of thesis, prior to completion of doctoral education and accepts a variety of formats for the theses.
- HEI has created and published thesis guidelines.
- HEI has created and published thesis assessment guidelines.
- HEI has created and published a detailed thesis defence (viva) protocol.
- HEI has developed and published a template for recording the thesis defence (viva).

Evaluation panel committee has found out that HEI has established rules for the procedure of appointing a committee for the assessment and defence of the thesis, with at least one external member from another institution. However, the supervisor is also a member which lessens the number of independent assessments. The exceptional positive practice, rare in other Croatian universities, is that each thesis is evaluated by three separate grading reports, each written by one member of the committee.

Recommendation: assessment committee members should not include the supervisor. When possible, one of the members should be from abroad.

2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.

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.

High level of quality

All the necessary information on the study programme, admissions, delivery and conditions for progression and completion is published on the official web page.

2.9. Funds collected for the needs of doctoral education are distributed transparently and in a way that ensures sustainability and further development of doctoral education (ensures that candidates' research is carried out and supported, so that doctoral education can be completed successfully).	Improvements are necessary Based on the SER and the site visit, the expert panel has found out that funds collected for the needs of doctoral education are not distributed transparently and in a way that ensures sustainability and further development of doctoral education. It is not clear whether it ensures that candidates' research is carried out and supported, so that doctoral education can be completed successfully. The support for teachers and doctoral students, who participate with presentations in international scientific meetings, as mentioned in the SER, was not confirmed during the site visit. Recommendation: dedicate funds for support of students' research and activities.
2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).	Improvements are necessary Based on the SER and the site visit, the expert panel has found out that determination process for tuition fees is not transparent. Tuition fees are low with a goal of attracting students and have not changed for a longer period of time. Recommendation: determination of tuition fees should include the real needs of the study programme and foresee the expenses mentioned above (2.9.).
3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION	
3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.	High level of quality Based on the SER and the site visit, the expert panel has found out that the HEI provides for a high quality admission policy, systematically taking into account: The number of available supervisors and their teaching workload; Quality of supervisors - their competencies suit the candidates' research proposals; The number of candidates a teacher already supervises, with no more than 3 candidates per supervisor on the programme as a whole. However, the teaching workload of several supervisors exceeds the existing legal thresholds. The HEI has proven that it clearly defines the obligations of

	supervisors and co-supervisors, candidates and research teams.
	Recommendation: teaching workload of several supervisors exceeds the existing legal thresholds (for more than 100% in one case) and should be minimised and distributed in order to meet the national legal threshold.
	High level of quality
3.2. The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.	When determining admission quotas the HEI is taking into account the needs of the society and the academia and the number of students expected to complete the programme. Admission quotas are shown to be based on wider scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs.
	Improvements are necessary
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.	The HEI does not establish 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. There is not enough project activity to accommodate the needs of the candidates. Some of the admitted candidates are partially funded by research projects, economy or other public sources.
	Recommendation: More students should be included in the preparation and implementation of research projects.
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.	High level of quality Based on the SER and the site visit, the expert panel has found out that there is no need for advisors. All candidates are provided with a supervisor and none have requested for the change.
	Improvements are necessary
3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited	In SER the HEI has described the ways in which it ensures that the best prospective applicants learn of opportunities to apply.
internationally.	A programme admits the best undergraduate and graduate students leaning towards a career in research. The call for applications is published internationally, and the department is trying to attract and recruit international

	students but there have been no international students enrolled in the programme until this year (one student from Bosnia and Herzegovina).
	Recommendation: more international students should be recruited (not only from the region but also from the whole Adriatic and also Mediterranean area). This could be improved by employing international co-supervisors from the Adriatic region.
	High level of quality
3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.	The HEI publishes the calls for applications in a timely manner, and the criteria for the selection of applicants include past performance, demonstrated interest in scientific research, publications, recommendations by teachers and a prospective supervisor, and a research proposal. An interview with the applicant is a compulsory part of the selection procedure.
3.7. The HEI ensures that the selection	High level of quality
procedure is transparent and in line with published criteria, and that there is a transparent complaints procedure.	The HEI ensures that the selection is clear and that applicants have a right to complain. There is a time limit for complaints and responses to complaints.
3.8. There is a possibility to recognize	High level of quality
applicants' and candidates' prior learning.	The HEI has established a quality procedure of recognizing prior learning and achievements relevant for the doctoral programme. This is an example of good practice.
	High level of quality
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.	The HEI has an effective quality assurance procedure on the doctoral programme which ensures a high level of institutional as well as supervisory support to the candidates.
	Candidates are informed about all of their rights and obligations upon admission. The HEI has a contract on studying which is signed by each candidate.
	Above mentioned facts present the advantages of the study programme, and are confirmed by students and alumni.
3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful	Improvements are necessary

progression.	The HEI offers comprehensive institutional support to the candidates in their research and career development, with support mechanisms presented with the lists including the number of candidates' publications, the number of international conferences and the candidates presenting there, and the number of candidates that have collaborated in projects.
	However, this applies only to certain number of students who are active researchers and not to most of them. There is a low number of students whose research is funded from the projects and there is a low number of students involved in projects. We recommend to include more students in research projects and also to fund more student research from the project funds.
4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES	
4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.	A programme is research-oriented and focused on the candidate's independent work by providing for at least three years of independent research experience, as regulated by the Croatian Qualifications Framework, CroQF. It also provides for interdisciplinarity, i.e. provides opportunities to develop and implement interdisciplinary research. Teaching is included as required by the needs of a candidate's research and enables the candidate to acquire generic (transferable) skills and international experience.
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.	In order to prove that the programme meets the CroQF level 8.2 learning outcomes, on the basis of the SER, supplements to the SER and interviews during the site visit, the expert panel assessed the following skills and competencies: - Specific research competencies are ensured by the programme and the candidates can create and evaluate new facts, concepts, procedures, principles and theories that exceed the frontier of knowledge by using advanced, highly specialised knowledge and methods and are able to integrate knowledge from different scientific fields. - Project planning and management competencies are acquired by students on the level of independent

application for an active participation in conferences. Several students also take part in research activities in

projects. However, there is no obvious proof that all students do get the direct chance to learn about developing proposals, organising research research, timely identification of potential issues, budgeting, and leading a research group. High competencies in research methodologies are acquired through the teaching process, collaboration in projects and independent research. Reading and writing skills are acquired through the mechanism that requires the publication of at least two scientific articles prior to the completion of the study and also by the stimulative mechanism of rewarding ECTS points for the activities as such as active participation in scientific conferences. Teaching and assessment skills are acquired by some of the candidates, but not all by collaborating in the teaching process. Competence in demonstrating individual professional and ethical authority is reached by the active involvement in individual research activities and participation and presentation of candidates' research to the international scientific community. Readiness to accept ethical and social responsibility for performing research successfully, delivering socially useful research results as well as potential social impact, readiness to face new social and economic challenges these skills are achieved and proven by the candidates' and alumni previous and current achievements. High level of quality 4.3. Programme learning outcomes are logically and clearly connected with The study programme learning outcomes are logically and teaching contents, as well as the contents included in supervision and clearly connected with teaching contents, as well as the research. contents included in supervision and research with an added value of included interdisciplinarity. High level of quality Based on the SER, supplements to the SER and interviews 4.4. The doctoral programme ensures the during the site visit, the expert panel assessed the learning achievement of learning outcomes and outcomes (4.2) and has found out that the programme competencies aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF. indeed enables candidates to achieve the learning outcomes and competencies in line with the level 8.2 of the CroQF. 4.5. Teaching methods (and ECTS, if High level of quality applicable) are appropriate for level 8.2

of the CroQF and assure achievement of clearly defined learning outcomes.	The quality of teaching methods is assessed by the knowledge transfer delivered by different teaching methods. Courses are delivered <i>ex-cathedra</i> and by a combination of other teaching methods, such as research, experimental or laboratory work and connected teaching methods, methodological workshops, and individual work with the supervisor. Teaching methods differ in relation to the subject of the course and are flexible and appropriate, as stated in the SER and by the faculty and also confirmed by the students and alumni.
	Improvements are necessary
4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.	A programme provides for an acquisition of generic (transferable) skills through the inclusion of students in different national and international projects and in organisation and implementation of conferences.
	However, the proof of an organized education that would ensure the development of business and managerial skills, presentation, writing and project management skills, applying for funding, etc. is lacking.
	Improvements are necessary
4.7. Teaching content is adapted to the needs of current and future research and candidates' training (individual course plans, generic skills etc.).	The programme ensures that courses delivered are flexible and adapted to individual academic needs and research plans. The teaching is individualised and adapted to candidates' research plans.
	However, according to the interviews with students and alumni, the general recommendation would be to be even more flexible in the way of enabling the change of some compulsory courses into the optional, so candidates could have more options for taking the courses directly connected to their research topics.
	Improvements are necessary
4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.	The doctoral programme is providing opportunities for research staff mobility. These possibilities are not used, so internationalisation is actually not achieved. The study programme systematically provides information on the opportunities for candidate mobility and encourages it, but (except in one in 55 cases) does not achieve it. HEI and the programme do not ensure means to attract and do not attract international faculty and excellent

international candidates to the programme.
Recommendation: all of the above mentioned criteria
should be improved.

* 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.