



**REPORT  
of the Expert Panel  
on the**

**RE-ACCREDITATION OF**  
**Catholic Faculty of Theology**  
**University of Zagreb**

**Date of the site visit:**

**20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> March 2014**

**April, 2014**

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# **INTRODUCTION**

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

Re-accreditation procedure performed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE), a public body listed in EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education) and ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) full member, is obligatory once in five years for all higher education institutions working in the Republic of Croatia, in line with the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

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

The report contains:

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

The members of the Expert Panel were:

- Professor Harm Goris, School of Catholic Theology, Tilburg University, Netherlands (Chairperson)
- Professor Elizabeth Osewska, Uniwersytet Kardinala Stefana Wyszyńskiego, Poland
- Professor Michael Mullaney, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland
- Professor Benas Ulevicius, Faculty of Catholic Theology, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania
- Dino Pašalić, Student, Catholic Faculty of Theology, Đakovo, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia

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

- Katarina Šimić Jagunić, coordinator
- Lida Lamza, translator

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

- The management;
- Working Group that compiled the self-evaluation and representatives of the Quality Assurance Board as well as the head of the Office for International Cooperation;
- Heads of departments and scientific-research institutes;
- Teachers;
- Teaching assistants;
- Leaders of scientific projects;
- The students, i.e., a self-selected set of students present at the interview.

The Expert Panel also had a tour of the library, IT rooms, student register desk, and the classrooms at the Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Zagreb.

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

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

1. **issue a confirmation** to the higher education institution which confirms that the higher education institution meets the requirements for performing the higher education activities or parts of activites, in case the Accreditation Recommendation is positive,
2. **deny a license** for performing the higher education activities or parts of activities to the higher education institution, in case the Accreditation Recommendation is negative, or

**3. issue a letter of recommendation** for the period up to three (3) years in which period the higher education institution should remove its deficiencies. For the higher education institution the letter of recommendation may include the suspension of student enrolment for the defined period.

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

## **SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATED INSTITUTION**

NAME OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Zagreb

ADDRESS: Vlaška 38, 10000 Zagreb

NAME OF THE HEAD OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: prof. dr. sc. Tonči Matulić

### **ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE:**

The internal organisational structure of the Faculty (Diagram 1) contains five (5) basic structural units: 1. Departments; 2. Scientific-teaching institutes; 3. Scientific-research institutes; 4. Secretariat; 5. Library.

Apart from that, it needs to be mentioned that there is a regional or dislocated study, called "Theology in Rijeka", within the structure of the Faculty. The Regional Study does not have its own organisational structure).

### **LIST OF STUDY PROGRAMMES (and levels):**

#### **Professional study programme:**

- undergraduate professional study programme: Theology study programme

#### **University study programme:**

- integrated undergraduate and graduate study programme:
  - Philosophical-Theological study programme
  - Religious Pedagogy and Catechetics
- undergraduate university study programme:
  - Church Music (Institute for Church Music A. Vidaković)
  - Religious Pedagogy and Catechetics
- graduate university study programme: Religious Pedagogy and Catechetics
- postgraduate university licentiate and doctoral study programme

NUMBER OF STUDENTS (2012): 915

NUMBER OF TEACHERS (2012): the Faculty has 44 teachers in scientific-teaching grades, 9 in teaching grades, 16 in assistant grades, and 8 junior researchers.

NUMBER OF SCIENTISTS: 44

TOTAL BUDGET (2012): 23.019.473 kuna

MSES FUNDING (2012): 91.76 %

OWN FUNDING (2012): 7.96 %

#### SHORT DESCRIPTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION:

Catholic Faculty of Theology (further on: Faculty) of the University of Zagreb follows the development of the Philosophical-Theological study, which has been initiated in the capital of Croatia by Zagreb's Bishop Stjepan II Babonić (1227-1247) seven and a half centuries ago.

One of his successors, Blessed Augustin Kažotić (1303-1322) founded the cathedral school with "liberal arts" and theology, with an emphasis on Scripture studies and Patristic and Scholastic texts, departments. Juraj Drašković's (1563-1578) post-conciliar (Council of Trent) Seminary, the School of Humanities, and the Jesuit College (1633) on Gradec, with generous financial support of the Bishop Franjo Erghely (1628-1637) and the canon Nikola Dijanešević, who was the Arch-deacon of Zagreb's Kaptol, all lead to the founding of the Academy (1662). On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1669 Emperor and King Leopold I inscribed the Academy with a special charter in general studies of the countries of the Habsburg Crown and gave it all university rights and privileges. On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1671 the imperial charter was ratified by the Croatian Parliament »salvis tamen iuribus et libertatibus Regni in suo vigore permanentibus«.

After the Jesuit Order has been abolished (1773), Empress and Queen Mary Theresa re-structured Zagreb's general study in the "Royal Academy of Science" with three faculties: philosophy, theology, and law.

The session of the Croatian Parliament held on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1869 voted and accepted a legal article "on founding of a university in the capital city of Zagreb", which charges the "Government to make the necessary steps so that the Arch-diocesan Lyceum would be restructured into the Faculty of Theology". With donations of the whole Croatian nation" the modern Croatian University was founded in Zagreb in 1874. According to the founding law from January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1874 and the Emperor Franjo Josip I's decree, issued

three months later (May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1874), the University “is to open the full (four-year long) Faculty of Theology”.

There was a significant reorganisation of the teaching plan of the Faculty of Theology in 1935, in accordance with the demands of the Apostolic Constitution “Deus Scientiarum Dominus”. The new “ratio studiorum” was confirmed by the Congregation for Seminaries and Universities in 1937, which made the Faculty of Theology in Zagreb equal to ecclesial universities, recognised by the Holy See, in the whole world.

At the beginning of 1952, government of the PR of Croatia issued a decree on abolishment of the Roman Catholic Faculty of Theology as a faculty of the University of Zagreb. By this decree, the Faculty has ceased to be a part of the University of Zagreb de facto, but not de iure, because the Senate of the University of Zagreb did not make the Decision on excluding the Faculty from the University.

Through firm efforts of the Dean of the Roman Catholic Faculty of Theology, Professor Vilim Keilbach and through overall support of the Bishop of Croatian language region, Roman Catholic Faculty of Theology continues to exist for thirty-eight years, on the basis of its historical and acquired right, as an exclusively ecclesial institution of higher education.

In the year 1990, after democratic changes, the then Executive Council of the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia proclaimed the decree of the Government of the PRC from 1952 to be null and void. With this proclamation, all acts of the Roman Catholic Faculty of Theology (diplomas, titles of professors, etc.) that have been valid, from 1952 until 1990, only *pro foro ecclesiastico*, became valid *pro foro civili* as well, with all legal consequences this carries in the civil area.

## **CONCLUSIONS OF THE EXPERT PANEL**

### ***ADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION***

1. The long continuous presence and reputation for academic theological teaching and research since its foundation, despite the temporary exclusion from the University under the communist regime.
2. The capacity of the Faculty to respond to changes in the institutional, social, cultural, economic and political circumstances. The Faculty is not imprisoned by its noble tradition, but rather is focusing on its future in a creative and dynamic spirit.
3. The integration of the Faculty into the structure and academic life of the University.
4. The size of the student body and its diversity which enables the Faculty to sustain departments, research activities and postdoctoral programmes in a wide range of theological disciplines.
5. A wide spectrum of highly qualified and committed staff dedicated to the mission of the Faculty.
6. The influence and impact of the Faculty's teaching and research in the life of the Church, society, culture and academia in Croatia.

### ***DISADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION***

1. The lack of a detailed strategic plan that covers an operational plan, accountability policies, etc.
2. Institutional policies on research and internationalization.
3. Teaching over-workload in some departments.
4. Recruitment and enrolment challenges with consequent poor motivation among some students.
5. Spatial challenges with class rooms in current location.

## ***FEATURES OF GOOD PRACTICE***

1. Pro-active management style that engages all members of the Faculty at all levels and takes into account their own responsibilities and specific expertise according to the 'subsidiarity principle'.
2. Fostering an institutional culture that recognizes as core values service to science, society and Church, fellowship, ambition and honesty.
3. The combination of scientific theological and artistic, specifically musical, resources on a shared location.
4. The formulation of clear strategic objectives.
5. The introduction of quality assurance structures and mechanisms in all institutional activities and at all levels.
6. The systemic and systematic approach to the introduction of study programmes in line with the Bologna Agreement.
7. The student-centred approach to learning is at the heart of the commitment and policy of the management and teaching staff.
8. The publication of six journals by the Faculty, one of them particularly prestigious.
9. The establishment of an International Office.

## ***RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT***

1. The Faculty needs to spell out more clearly and in detail how it proposes to implement and monitor its strategic objectives with particular focus on quality assurance mechanisms, accountability and research planning and co-ordination.
2. The Faculty should continue its good progress to date to create a seamless culture of quality assurance in all areas of the life of the Faculty, from recruitment of new students to the preparation of students for their professional careers. The new Quality Assurance Manual should be an effective tool for implementing a coherent and systematic policy.
3. The Faculty should continue to monitor the social, economic and ecclesiastical factors that justify enrolment quotas and respond creatively.
4. The Faculty should intensify and explore new approaches of advertising and recruiting for prospective and motivated students, e.g. social media, internet, school competitions, etc.
5. When the Faculty transfers to the new university campus, it should not only develop the ambitious and highly innovative experiment of establishing new links with natural science faculties, but also continue to nurture its long standing

relationship with the humanities, particularly music, so as to function as a bridge between the natural sciences and humanities.

6. The Faculty should continue to address the pressing issue of over-workload of teachers by improving efficiencies in teaching, for example, the amalgamation of some courses, development of e-learning, etc.
7. While all the necessary information for most courses is already online available, the Faculty should promote and facilitate the use of electronic tools for didactic purposes (extra course material, interaction students – teacher, and between students themselves, assessment methods etc.).
8. The Faculty should continue to adjust realistically the allocation of ECTS to individual courses, especially in the Philosophical-Theological study programme, and to amalgamate smaller courses into larger ones, which will also enhance the coherence of the whole Study Programme and make its structure more clear.
9. The Faculty should elaborate its initial measures for improving the pass rate of students and decreasing the number of students that discontinue their studies.
10. With the establishment of an International Office, the Faculty should continue to strengthen its international profile in improving student and staff mobility and encourage staff to publish research in high profile and peer reviewed international journals in other languages.
11. The Faculty's most prestigious journal should increase the number of articles it publishes in foreign languages.
12. The Faculty should expand its offering of courses in foreign languages; make greater use of foreign course material and avail of the opportunities provided by the University for internationalization.
13. The Faculty should identify funding to access electronic databases, technological resources and infrastructure in the event of a protracted delay in relocating to new premises.
14. The Faculty should capitalize on its regionally unique and diverse religious, cultural, ethnic and political diversity in the light of recent historical conflicts for research and teaching. This could have relevance far beyond the region.
15. The Faculty should further explore the possibility of an undergraduate degree of theology in combination with one of another suite of disciplines in the humanities or social sciences delivered by the University which might help address recruitment and employment prospects.

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

## **Institutional management and quality assurance**

### **Criterion 1.1.**

The Faculty has the basic elements of a strategic plan outlined in their objective goals. The development of a more comprehensive and detailed strategic plan that will include an operational plan, accountability policies, etc. would demonstrate how the Faculty intends to progress and implement these objective goals.

### **Criterion 1.2.**

The Faculty has an effective and functioning organizational structure with clear lines of management. These are evident in the statutes and other institutional documents. The organizational and managerial structures are comprehensively articulated in the self-evaluation report.

### **Criterion 1.3.**

The Catholic Faculty of Theology is building its strategic document on the eight basic strategic documents of the University of Zagreb. The University is still developing its eight strategic documents, and the Faculty is closely co-operating and aligning itself with this process. The Faculty of Theology's strong tradition and reputation of excellence, as well as its leading role in theological learning and research, contributes to enhance the University's national and international profile as a leading centre of education and its wide offering of academic specializations.

### **Criterion 1.4.**

Most study programmes are in line with the institutional mission. The renewed Study Programme compares favourably with study programmes in other leading theology faculties in Europe. The new Study Programme has been adjusted to the requirements of the Bologna Agreement and also with the requirements of the Congregation for Catholic Education. Learning outcomes for specific modules are geared to overarching study programme learning outcomes, which are in line with Bloom's taxonomy, especially in Religious Pedagogy and Catechetics. The overarching learning outcomes are clearly articulated in the new Study Programme handbook viewed by the Panel and also in the self-evaluation report.

The specific module and overall programme learning outcomes aim to equip students with the fundamental insights and skills, tool of critical analysis and application of

acquired knowledge appropriate to each specific programme, in society and ecclesial communities.

**Criterion 1.5.**

The Dean of the Faculty is a member of the University Quality Assurance Committee. The Faculty studied quality assurance policies at other leading theology faculties in Europe and Croatia. Relevant stakeholders were also consulted in the process. Quality assurance is organised according to the principle of subsidiarity, by which all constituencies at all levels in the Faculty are co-responsible for quality assurance and are represented on the Quality Assurance Board. This subsidiarity is facilitated by the organization of workshops which are designed to engage and involve all members of the institution in the implementation of quality assurance and best practice.

The Panel was impressed by the commitment to and demonstrable evidence of implementation of quality assurance practice by the management. The Faculty's quality assurance manual is at an advanced stage of preparation and will be published in the very near future.

**Criterion 1.6.**

There are a number of concrete mechanisms in monitoring and improving teaching quality. Chairs check the quality of teaching and assessing by teachers in their departments. Teachers in their annual reports submit, among other things, information on their teaching activities to their chair. These annual reports will be revised into self-evaluation reports. Teachers in subject departments peer-review each other.

Student surveys and feedback are gathered and analysed. These results contribute to the monitoring and improvement of teaching quality. Workshops are organized by both the Faculty and the University to enable teachers to improve their teaching methods and to introduce them to new developments and technologies.

**Criterion 1.7.**

The Faculty has some mechanisms for monitoring and improving research quality, but it lacks institutional co-ordination. Mechanisms for monitoring and improving research currently function at the level of chairs, but even here, the mechanisms of monitoring research are uneven. The new strategic research plan will address this lacuna, and it is also expected that the working group for scientific research will lead the implementation of the appropriate mechanisms in a systematic and coherent way at the institutional level.

**Criterion 1.8.**

The Faculty has a Code of Ethics which outlines mechanisms and procedures for dealing with complaints. The Ethical Committee and other constituencies like the Student

Assembly, Faculty Council and the student ombudsman participate to ensure that the Code of Ethics and other regulations and procedures are observed and implemented.

## **Study programmes**

### **Criterion 2.1.**

The Faculty of Theology introduced the Bologna process in 2001/2002, and the new Study Programme structured in terms of the Bologna Agreement was introduced in 2005/2006 using Bloom's taxonomy. Since the introduction of the Bologna Process, each course's learning outcomes and aims have been regularly reviewed to make them more precise and specific in order to introduce better teaching methods and assessment. This was demonstrated to the Panel in our meetings with teachers and management, and in our examination of the Study Programme Manual and the diploma supplements. This work is on-going and the Faculty is committed to ensure that learning outcomes of the programme as a whole and the specific objectives of individual modules are clearly integrated.

The Panel noted not only the cognitive learning outcomes, ranging from reproducing information to analysis and critical thinking, but also communicative skills and the social and ecclesial competences demonstrated in the Study Programme, such as solidarity and empathy and compassion with non-privileged constituencies.

The mechanism for ensuring on-going monitoring is the Quality Assurance Committee, which meets regularly, and student questionnaires. The Faculty is committed to the on-going improvement in the quality of existing study programmes and teaching, and implementing of new teaching and didactic equipment.

All stakeholders, staff, students, future employers participated in the renewal of the programme.

### **Criterion 2.2.**

In their self-evaluation report and in meetings with the Panel, the management and teachers state that enrolment quotas are continually monitored and, to a limited extent, adjusted to employment trends, ecclesial needs and general interest. Although the job market is only one of the main indicators when evaluating enrolment quotas, some account has to be taken, nevertheless, of the currently instability caused by the economic recession which has resulted in a decline in the demand for teachers in primary and higher education and also in restrictions in the hiring of teachers.

But other factors must also be taken into consideration when evaluating the enrolment quotas. A significant number of the students in the Philosophical-Theological programme are preparing for ministry as priests or religious life. These are trained to be

future leaders in local communities, parishes and institutions in Croatia and their future contribution exceeds any economic value as they will play an important role in the development of the social, cultural and religious fabric of their country. While the number of those enrolling in this programme can vary from year to year, it is important that the enrolment quota is adequate enough to accommodate this variation and particularly any future increase in this constituency. During the Panel's meeting with the students, a number of them stated that they chose the Philosophical-Theological programme not only for career and professional reasons but also for personal interest and development and for a wider education in the field of humanities and culture. These reasons also contribute significantly to the social and cultural capital of society and are an important factor in determining enrolment quotas.

The unique nature of the discipline of theology, wide range of professional and personal reasons that motivate students to choose it, and future potential to attract a greater number of students from Croatia and abroad justify the current enrolment quotas.

There are indications that suggest that numbers for the programme in Religious Pedagogy and Catechesis will attract more students in the next academic year than the current year. The Panel noted with interest also the plans of the Faculty to introduce new programmes, particularly, the two-subject study programme (theology and a humanities / arts combination).

### **Criterion 2.3.**

The student / teacher ratio is in line with regulations. In the doctoral programme, however, the institution has 43% fully employed full-time teachers when it should have 50%. The current financial restrictions imposed by the Ministry prevent management from resolving this issue and it hopes as soon as the economic situation in Croatia improves, this will be rectified. Those teachers coming from outside are fully qualified to teach their courses.

The management highlights in their self-evaluation report that examination pass rates have declined in all programmes over the past five years. The reasons identified in the report are poor motivation on the part of certain students, declining application numbers and average school grades and employment prospects. Responding to these factors, the Faculty has striven to enable students to rediscover an interest for study and particularly theology. The Faculty pursues a student-centred approach to learning and despite the size of its student body allows for close contact between students and teachers. The management is taking the issue of student motivation seriously by providing educational workshops for students to help them to study efficiently, manage their time and achieve their academic potential by introducing a system for monitoring students' progress and by considering other measures.

### **Criterion 2.4.**

The Faculty first introduced programmes structured in terms of the Bologna Agreement in 2005/2006 in which each course undergoes a defining process of learning outcomes / competencies on the basis of previously acquired experiential method for setting learning outcomes. This process continued in order to achieve a better connection between learning outcomes, the whole programme, and competencies of specific study profiles. This culminated in the clear and precise formulation of learning outcomes in 2012/13 and the explicit correlation between those defined for each individual course and those for a study programme as a whole, outlined in the diploma supplement. In defining learning outcomes, attention was paid to Bloom's taxonomy with its six categories of cognitive knowledge.

**Criterion 2.5.**

In many courses, assessment is in line with learning objectives. A wide range of evaluation methods are used compared with the assessments employed by similar theological faculties in Croatia and abroad. Students also confirmed this for the Panel. The majority of courses offer mid-term examinations, continuous assessment, student activities and participation. The form of assessment varies with the material being taught, but is in line with the learning objectives of that material.

**Criterion 2.6.**

The ECTS are applied to the obligatory and elective courses. The Faculty acknowledges that the initial allocation of ECTS lacked a solid foundation and justification. Adjustments have already been made, especially in the Religious Pedagogy and Catechesis programme and in the elective courses. The Faculty is working on a more realistic allocation of ECTS in the other programmes.

**Criterion 2.7.**

In developing their study programmes, the Faculty compared them to international theological faculties and looked at various other models. The content and quality of the study programmes in the Faculty conform to internationally recognized standards and to the ecclesiastical requirements regulating all Catholic Theological Faculties, outlined in the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* and by the Congregation for Catholic Education.

**Criterion 2.8.**

Teaching methods are very diversified and appropriate for the different courses, especially in the pedagogical and catechetical courses there are many different active methods of teaching and learning, including fieldwork, use of online tools and group work. Students are encouraged to engage in critical thinking and to contribute actively

to their learning process through discussion, presentations, suggestions for specific topics etc.

#### **Criterion 2.9.**

Teachers make additional resources available to students and improve the use of course material in foreign languages. However, the Ministry cut the funds for additional database access.

#### **Criterion 2.10.**

As part of their academic programme and assessment, students are required to fulfil practical and supervised placements in schools, youth groups, community projects and parishes where they have the opportunity to apply their academic and social skills. Placement supervisors provide feedback to students and faculty teachers.

### **Students**

#### **Criterion 3.1.**

Admission procedures are clearly defined and transparent, conforming to the formal requirements of the state and university. Those enrolling for the Philosophical-Theological study are predominantly students for the priesthood and this programme is designed specifically to meet the demands and expectations for their future careers. They all find full employment if they are ordained.

The programme in Religious Pedagogy and Catechetics is designed to train future teachers. The Office for Religious Education in schools in the Archdiocese of Zagreb monitors the demand for religious education teachers and graduated theologians. According to the self-evaluation report, current data indicates that in the last three years the Office for Religious Education has recorded longer than normal waiting period on its waiting lists for unemployed students. However, employment projections indicate that in the next twenty years there will be a gradual generational shift of teachers, which will give rise to a higher demand for qualified religious education teachers than there is at the moment. Nevertheless, graduated theologians and religious education teachers find a diverse range of employments open to them both in society and the Church: media, counselling, non-religious education sectors, parish associates and catechists, office management, etc.

Many of the students enrolled in the undergraduate study programme in Church Music, are employed as Church musicians in parishes or progress into the graduate study programme in Music Pedagogy and Graduate Study Programme in Organ at the Music Academy at Zagreb and other institutions of higher musical education in Europe.

The enrolment quotas for the two main programmes have been met. The enrolment quota for the music programme has not been fully met in recent years due to the criteria for enrolment having been raised; however, the number is now on the rise.

Having in mind the current unemployment situation, the Faculty has reduced by ten the enrolment quota for Philosophical-Theological study programme and by five the programme in Religious Pedagogy and Catechetics. Admission to the music programme was reduced by three. The admissions are monitored and the enrolment quotas adjusted to projected employment demands.

The issue of motivation of some of its applicants has also been identified by the Faculty. Nevertheless, the Faculty is exploring changes in the design of some of its study programmes to adapt to the market needs and also to attract new students. It continually monitors and analyses the factors involved in determining admission criteria in order to ensure the sustainability of the study programmes and respond to future employment projections.

### **Criterion 3.2.**

The institution provides excellent support for student extracurricular activities (i.e. cultural, humanitarian, social, ecclesial, sports, etc.). The Faculty collaborates closely with a number of Church and civil institutions in providing opportunities for future professional and personal development of students. Students actively volunteer in public events and the institutions of their future employers. The involvement of social partners (e.g. local Catholic archdiocese, catechetical centre, etc.) is important in providing students with opportunities for extracurricular activities connected with their future professional carrier.

### **Criterion 3.3.**

The Faculty provides each study year with a study guide to offer advice, guidance or help, which has proved to be an invaluable resource for students in the first years of study. Teachers are available for weekly consultation with regard to study materials or career guidance. Educational workshops have been provided to help students manage their time, develop efficient study skills, deal with exam anxiety, etc.

The students can access the services of psychological and spiritual counsellors. There is a mentor appointed for students with physical disabilities who liaises between students and Faculty, identifying specific supports a student with a disability may need, and co-operates with *Zamisli* (an association for promoting education quality among students with disability). A special form of support is given through the University's course Peer Support for Students with Disabilities.

Members of the student body are well represented at the level of the Faculty Council and other Faculty bodies. Conscious of the employment challenges of future graduates, the Faculty continually monitors and analyses the job market trends and situation. Career

guidance is provided by managers, teachers, and social partners to ensure the unemployment of the future graduates is reduced as much as possible.

**Criterion 3.4.**

The descriptions of study programs clearly define knowledge assessment methods and ECTS distribution throughout every course unit. The teachers use different methods of students' knowledge assessment. Students can appeal against a decision concerning their assessment; the procedure of appealing is clear and transparent and well-known and the Student Council can interfere if an exam has an extremely high number of non-passing grades. Most teachers offer preliminary exams and mid-term exams to the students.

**Criterion 3.5.**

An Alumni Club and data base are in the initial stages of being established. However, the Institution has contacts with the schools and parishes where its graduates are employed. These were consulted in the revision of study programmes.

**Criterion 3.6.**

The institution regularly informs the public about its study programmes, study conditions, re-accreditation procedures and learning outcomes via the Faculty website, visits to schools, university fairs, open days, etc. Provided information is accurate, sufficient and published in a timely manner.

**Criterion 3.7.**

Students are confident with expressing their opinion about the study process to the staff. There is a vibrant, positive and friendly atmosphere among students in the Faculty and this reflected also in their relationship with staff. The communication between the students and teaching staff is regular and constructive, ensuring that the students' voice is heard and valued. Students are included in decision making at the Faculty Council through their representatives and ombudsperson. Students are also represented in other Faculty committees. Questionnaires are regularly provided to students and they have a high response rate, some teachers have implemented additional internal surveys to improve the quality of their courses.

**Criterion 3.8.**

Questionnaires are regularly distributed in class and the results are communicated to the Dean, the individual teachers and to the Ombudsperson at the Faculty Council. The Dean meets with ten percent of the lowest graded teachers to analyse the situation and to explore what possible measures can be taken to improve the quality of a particular

study course. Individual students can also address the management. There is no systematic policy for giving feedback to the students on the measures taken.

## Teachers

### **Criterion 4.1.**

There is a satisfactory teacher / student ratio (1:28). In case of the postgraduate study programme, the ratio between fully employed Faculty and non-Faculty staff is not fully in line official regulations (43%:57%). A historical explanation for this unbalance is that until recently the Zagreb Faculty was the only institution in Croatia with a postgraduate programme in theology and attracted mentors from all other theological faculties. Motivated by the wish to prevent a fragmentation of postgraduate studies between the different Croatian faculties, the Faculty strived for strong inter-institutional cooperation, which resulted in a relatively high number of non-Faculty staff in the postgraduate study programme.

The teaching staff is very well qualified holding doctoral degrees from a variety of leading foreign ecclesiastical institutions.

### **Criterion 4.2.**

The Faculty is determined to hire the best teachers, but current budgetary constraints does not foresee the possibility of any new teachers being hired except to replace retirements. The promotion of senior assistants to higher grades is restricted by the same financial circumstances. A primary concern of the Faculty is the appointment of young researchers, but this also faces budgetary constraints.

### **Criterion 4.3.**

As stated above in 4.1.

### **Criterion 4.4.**

The Faculty provides many possibilities for teaching staff to improve their academic skills. Until now the workshops have been voluntary but in the future these will be mandatory for teaching staff. Workshops have been organized for the implementation of learning outcomes and assessment, e-learning, the use of technological resources, the EBSCO workshop, etc. The departments help (young) teachers to improve their teaching quality by supervising their teaching activities in a constructive way. Teaching staff are informed about the opportunities to avail of Erasmus teacher exchanges and calls for papers for prestigious international conferences.

Research excellence among teachers is also rewarded by ‘recognition’ which are given yearly: e.g., the Award for Exceptional Contribution of the Teaching Staff is given to those who have distinguished themselves in work through their quality, creativity and punctuality. The Award for Life Work is given to those teachers who make an extraordinary contribution to the Faculty’s activities and those who promote its reputation at in Croatia or abroad. These and other rewards are aimed to further motivate teaching staff in achieve excellence in their work.

#### **Criterion 4.5.**

Although the teacher/student ratio meets the regulations which guarantee the quality of teaching, teachers in some departments are overloaded with an exceptionally high number of teaching hours. The Faculty recognizes that there is a need to hire new teachers and has identified this as one of its strategic goals, but is confronted with budget restrictions. In the meantime, it has tried to address this issue by reducing the number of courses by 30%. This has remedied the situation to a degree. The management indicated to the Panel that it plans to amalgamate more courses without compromising the learning outcomes and aims and the specificity of the programme.

#### **Criterion 4.6.**

External obligations of teaching staff are regulated through annual mandatory submissions of yearly reports and more regularly through submissions of detailed reports on teaching, scientific and professional activities during appointments to higher grades or re-appointments to higher grades. Supervision of associates' performances of work and external obligations is conducted through submission of monthly reports on activities and other obligations.

A teacher can have a maximum of a hundred hours of teaching in an external engagement, besides his or her teaching hours at the Faculty (a maximum of 30% of additional workload). Some teachers have a higher workload than permitted; of eight teachers at the Faculty with an external engagement, four have a higher teaching load than permitted.

Many of the Faculty's teachers work in other faculties of the university and in other theological faculties in Croatia, however, the Faculty monitors all external engagements of its teachers on the basis of given consents in order to ensure the quality of its study programme. The Panel notes the monitoring mechanism of the Faculty in relation to workload and external commitments.

## **Scientific and Professional Activity**

### **Criterion 5.1.**

While the research strategic plan is not yet fully developed, there is a growing appreciation among individual researchers in the Faculty of the need for a team approach. Some cooperation already exists on the level of departments and research institutes, but only one research institute has set down formal research regulations. Occasionally, there is inter-disciplinary research co-operation, for example between the Institutes for Church History and Mariology, as documented in the published results presented to the Panel during the site visit.

The Panel recognizes that the Faculty has a wide spectrum of expertise and specializations which afford interdisciplinary co-operation on key topics and focus areas that can enhance the research profile of the Faculty. The unique regional religious, cultural, social and political context gives ample scope for further research possibilities with international relevance.

### **Criterion 5.2.**

The Faculty enjoys good national and international co-operation with other faculties. In the case of national co-operation, the Faculty has a good relationship with the University of Zagreb (Faculties of History, Philosophy, Natural Sciences) and other theological faculties in Croatia (Split and Đakovo). The Faculty has international co-operation links with Graz, Vienna, Sarajevo, Ljubljana and Fulda, and it participates in the European Values Study Programme. The Faculty also has Erasmus and CEEPUS agreements with other international theological institutions.

This level of current national and international co-operation can be easily incorporated into the management's strategic plan and research agenda that are currently being developed.

### **Criterion 5.3.**

The Faculty has an adequate number of researchers in all relevant fields and across a wide spectrum of specializations. The researchers are highly qualified, holding PhD degrees from a wide number of leading foreign ecclesiastical universities.

The recruitment of researchers is restricted by the government financial cutbacks due to the severe economic climate. In some departments researchers are experiencing difficulty in balancing their teaching and research obligations.

### **Criterion 5.4.**

The fourteen key publications listed in the self-evaluation report appear in Croatian journals (A1), except for one. A possible explanation for the near absence of key publications in foreign languages is that the list was determined by the number of 'hits'

on *Hrčak*. However, the self-evaluation report lists a number of renowned internationally recognized journals which are in Scopus and WOS data bases in which staff have published their work but these are entered as key publications.

#### **Criterion 5.5.**

The Faculty highly values research excellence of individual researchers and this is taken into account in promoting staff to higher posts. The Faculty currently has no policy for encouraging or rewarding that activity by Faculty members. This will be addressed in the strategic plan which is being developed at the moment.

#### **Criterion 5.6.**

The ratio of publications / teachers in peer review journals and proceedings is satisfactory. In their scientific publications, Faculty members are, to a large degree, tied to Croatian theological - pastoral - ecclesial - cultural context, which results in a significant number of their publications appear in Croatian journals. The number of publications in foreign languages is limited. Other publication output is good, but it is not clear to what extent those publications - books and professional publications - are peer-reviewed.

The Faculty publishes six scientific theological journals, which is an impressive number for just one institution.

1. *Bogoslovska Smotra* (A1) is one of the oldest and most prestigious peer reviewed scientific journals in Croatia in the field of art and humanities. The journal has an international council. It publishes scientific articles in the area of theological and theology-related disciplines. According to *Hrčak* calculation, it is first in web visitations.
2. *Croatica Christiana Periodica* (A1) focuses on Croatian Church history and religious culture. They both publish contributions in foreign languages.
3. *Riječki Teološki Časopis* (A2) a bi-annual and regional theological journal.
4. *Biblja Danas* is a journal of the Faculty's Biblical institute and the Croatian Catholic Biblical Work and is published four times a year.
5. *Sveta Cecilija* (A2) is a journal for spiritual music and the voice of the Faculty's Institute for Church Music.
6. *Poslušni Duhu* is a journal of the Faculty's Institute for Ecumenical Theology and Dialogue.

#### **Criterion 5.7.**

In the last five years Faculty had eight university approved and state-funded projects, three of which have successfully concluded (as listed in the self-evaluation report). Many other Faculty members participate in other significant national and international

projects on an individual basis. These projects were discussed in meetings with the Panel. The Faculty recognizes that the number of projects should be increased.

#### **Criterion 5.8.**

The academic and research work of the Faculty has an influential impact in Church and society. The Faculty has organized many conferences and lectures open to the public; research for schools (e.g. health education in high schools); artistic output (publishing previously unseen medieval musical scores); scripture studies in radio and television broadcasting; training for religion and catechetical teachers in schools and parishes; encouraging student participation in extra-circular activities. The newly approved research project on inter-confessional learning will also contribute to knowledge transfer into the public domain. The impressive number of journals published by the Faculty also plays an important role in this area.

#### **Criterion 5.9.**

Not applicable.

#### **Criterion 5.10.**

The Faculty has a sufficient number of mentors and supervisors, however, the ratio between fully employed Faculty and non-Faculty staff is not fully in line official regulations (43%:57%; cf. 4.1). New young mentors receive internal training and mentor workshops organized by the university. There is a very careful process for approving the topic of the dissertation, the candidate and the mentor. Young researchers are monitored by the heads of individual projects through annual reports. The young researchers participate actively in the Faculty's projects, including teaching.

The Panel noted with satisfaction that the doctoral programme functions very well and the quality the doctoral theses is high.

### **Mobility and international cooperation**

#### **Criterion 6.1.**

The Faculty has clear and comprehensive regulations governing the admission of students transferring from similar theological or catechetical programmes either in Croatia or abroad. Students can transfer from similar study programmes of the same level from another Catholic university, ecclesiastical university, faculty or institute. The Faculty recognizes the previously completed courses and the ECTS credits which have been awarded. Students who have completed their undergraduate studies in another Catholic university or theology faculty – either in Croatia or abroad – and wish to

progress to the postgraduate or doctoral level, must have completed a Philosophical-Theological study programme or a diploma on a completed programme in Religious Pedagogy and Catechesis, in accordance with the Faculty regulations. Especially post-graduate students are actively encouraged to follow part of their training at other Croatian faculties and abroad. The Faculty offers also courses that are open to students from other Croatian faculties.

#### **Criterion 6.2.**

The Faculty recognizes the importance of international cooperation and has intensified its efforts to build up contacts with Catholic universities and theology faculties abroad. For this purpose, the Faculty has established an Office for International Cooperation. In addition, the ECTS coordinator and the vice-dean for teaching have responsibility for student mobility. In addition to the Erasmus and CEEPUS agreements, the Faculty has a number of bi-lateral agreements with foreign faculties (Ljubljana in Slovenia, Fulda in Germany, Graz and Vienna in Austria). Last year a student of the postgraduate study programme did his professional internship at the Aristotle University of Thessalonica in Greece. All partner institutions abroad are listed on the website.

The Faculty recognizes courses, examinations, seminars and professional internships that students attended / passed abroad and they can continue to study at the Faculty after their return to Croatia without any difficulty. Seminars and electives taken in HEIs abroad, in agreement with the ECTS coordinator and vice-dean for teaching are recognized as valid electives and seminars and are inscribed in the Additional Document on Study and are taken into consideration in determining the student's final grade.

The number of students availing of the possibility of studying abroad is modest and the number of students coming to study from abroad almost negligible. The primary reason for this is language difficulties. One of the undertakings of the Faculty was the providing of more courses in a foreign language (since 2011, courses in English as of next year). This can help to improve the mobility of both incoming and outgoing students. Another solution is to focus on student exchanges with countries of similar language family (the Slavic countries). Another proposal would be to enter into bi-lateral agreements with English speaking institutions as young students are often more proficient in the English language.

#### **Criterion 6.3.**

International mobility among teachers and researchers is very low and most international exchanges are the result of personal contacts and individual arrangements. Financial and organizational difficulties are identified as among the principal reasons for this, although the management provides opportunities for outgoing teachers by offering (limited) financial support and approving applications for a sabbatical leave. Only in

recent times, some associates (postgraduate students) have decided to use these possibilities and have stayed abroad for a shorter time (around three months).

Currently, there is no international exchange of teachers or associates under the terms of the Erasmus programme. There is some teacher exchange within the CEEPUS programme. Moreover, as a part of scientific projects, on the basis of personal engagements and invitations of colleagues from other universities, teachers of the Faculty collaborate on scientific projects and give lectures at other universities (e.g. the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Sarajevo, the Islamic Pedagogical Faculty of the University of Zenica, Orthodox Theological Faculty at the University in Beograd, Sorbonne University, Paris, University of Fribourg in Switzerland, University of Ottawa in Canada, the Gregorian University Rome and the Papal Theological Faculty "St Bonaventure" Rome).

#### **Criterion 6.4.**

Currently, the Faculty is not a member of any official international association of similar institutions. While one of the strategic goals of the Faculty is to improve international cooperation through the signing of new contracts with institutes of higher education, exchanging students and staff with other institutions of higher education abroad, and participating in international projects, such cooperation exists currently, as stated above, at the level of individual staff members.

Teachers of the Faculty are active members of many international, European, American and world-wide professional societies and organizations. They also regularly participate in international conferences and symposia. The Faculty also organizes the annual *Dies Theologicus*, the international symposium of professors of philosophy and theology.

#### **Criterion 6.5.**

The Faculty admits that it has not promoted student exchange enough and it has identified this as one of its strategic goals for improvement. The establishment of the Office for International Cooperation will help achieve this. The principal challenge in attracting students is language and the lack of courses in the Faculty being delivered in a foreign language. The Faculty is planning to offer more courses, in addition to those provided, in a foreign language, especially English.

#### **Criterion 6.6.**

The Faculty also admits to not being satisfied with the number of foreign teachers who come to the Faculty, although some Faculty members invite colleagues from abroad, whom they know personally, to visit the Faculty and engage in teaching activities. The presence of more teachers from abroad would contribute to better results in teaching and in internationalizing the Faculty. The management hopes to achieve this by more intensive cooperation in international projects, a better quality webpage of the Faculty

in foreign languages, applying for European project funding and increasing the number of courses at the Faculty in foreign languages.

**Criterion 6.7.**

The Faculty's international cooperation in the Erasmus Charter, CEEPUS, bilateral agreements, etc. have been listed above. It currently does not have any other inter-institutional cooperation. The Faculty has identified this as a key item for improvement.

## **Resources: administration, space, equipment and finances**

**Criterion 7.1.**

The institution has the learning resources needed to successfully carry out studies and academic activities. Facilities are sufficient, although more class room space is needed. The institution will move to a new campus in a near future so the problem with space requirements will be solved.

The library is well equipped. The reading room is rather limited in space, yet conforms to basic requirements. The overall quality of the facilities (classrooms, library, computer rooms, etc.) is satisfactory. The institution has modern equipment needed for carrying its mission.

**Criterion 7.2.**

The ratio between teaching and non-teaching staff is adequate. The non-teaching staff is providing needed services to students and teachers. Non-teaching staff has sufficient working space and equipment.

**Criterion 7.3.**

Professional advancement is made available through the Faculty in terms of authorization and expense coverage by the Faculty for the non-teaching staff to develop their skills and upgrade knowledge needed for successful work. The Faculty ensures its appropriately qualified staff receives the necessary professional literature to keep abreast with the latest developments in the worlds of finance and law.

**Criterion 7.4.**

Since the Faculty has no laboratories, the criterion is not applicable.

**Criterion 7.5.**

Classrooms at the institution are full furnished with the necessary pedagogical supports and comply satisfactorily with the requirements for their spatial dimensions. The

Faculty is equipped with modern technology which includes computers, laptops and projectors (both stationary and mobile) that are easily accessible to teachers and students. The technical support is sufficient, although there are difficulties in filling the post of an IT-expert. The Faculty has an operational website which is regularly up-dated. Online platforms (Moodle, etc.) are available and used by a number of teachers. Wireless access through *Eduroam* is accessible in the buildings of the institution. The Institute for Church Music has a satisfactory number of practice rooms and instruments to meet the needs of the Institute.

#### **Criterion 7.6.**

The library has sufficient resources needed to ensure a quality of the studies and research. Library facilities are well equipped, space for learning and research materials is sufficient. Online resources (databases, online journals, etc.) are easily accessible both from library and home. It is easy for the student to reserve books. Teachers have a possibility to acquire books and articles needed for the courses.

The library is currently dislocated from the Faculty. While it is not a long distance from the Faculty, its current spatial dimensions are not satisfactory. This problem will be solved when the Faculty moves to the new location which is right beside where the library is currently located.

The library's annual budget is sufficient, however through donations, exchanges and good management, the library procures the necessary books and articles to meet the needs of its users. There is sometimes an issue with sufficient copies of obligatory texts. The IT/computer resources of the library have recently been upgraded which allow users to access data bases, on-line catalogues and research. The library is also equipped with wireless to allow students to use their own computers. The new programme allows for library materials to be automatically borrowed.

One of the difficulties for the library / Faculty is that the University of Zagreb does not subscribe to the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) which is a relevant bibliographical data base for the area of theology. The Faculty lacks the financial means to subscribe to this data base on its own.

The library is building good links with other HEIs with similar libraries which gives staff and students in wider access to reading materials and programmes.

#### **Criterion 7.7.**

Finances of the institution are provided by the state through the University. There are some problems with the payment of external, non-Faculty staff members, for which the Faculty has to appeal to its own financial resources, but it is expected that these problems will be solved soon. The institution is saving money for the purpose of relocation to the new campus. The sources of funding are transparent and sufficient for

ensuring the quality of studies and research. The institution had applied and received governmental funding for international research projects.

**Criterion 7.8.**

The Faculty is a non-profit organization. It uses up to 10%-30% (depending on the source) of revenue from its own income to improve its own activity and enable its staff to undertake professional advancements and financially support the organization of international and national scientific symposia, etc.