



**REPORT  
OF THE EXPERT PANEL  
ON THE  
RE-ACCREDITATION OF THE  
Faculty of Education  
Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek**

**Date of preliminary site visit: 26 October 2020  
Date of on-line re-accreditation: 27-30 October 2020**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Agency for Science and Higher Education (the Agency) is an independent legal entity with public authority, registered in the court register, and a full member of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

All public and private higher education institutions are subject to re-accreditation, which is conducted in five-year cycles by the Agency, in accordance with the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education* (Official Gazette 45/09) and subordinate regulations, and by following *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) and good international practice in quality assurance of higher education and science.

The Agency's Accreditation Council appointed an independent Expert Panel for the evaluation of the Faculty of Education, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek.

Members of the Expert Panel:

- Professor Nihad Bunar, Stockholm University, Department of Child and Youth Studies, Kingdom of Sweden,
- Professor Smiljana Zrilić, University of Zadar, Department of Teacher and Preschool Teacher Education, Republic of Croatia,
- Asst. prof. dr. sc. Danijela Blanuša Trošelj, Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka, Republic of Croatia,
- Mr. sc. Andreja Silić, Senior Adviser for Preschool Education at the Agency for Education, Republic of Croatia - representative of the expert body,
- Valentina Horak, student, Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka, Republic of Croatia.

During the online re-accreditation procedure, the Expert Panel held meetings with the following stakeholders:

- Management board (dean and vice deans),
- Representatives of Quality Assurance Committee and Office for Quality Assurance,
- Students,
- Heads of departments,
- Full-time teaching staff,
- Assistants and postdoctoral researchers,
- Heads of research projects,
- Heads of centres (the Career Development Centre for Students, the Centre for Talent Research and Education, and Alumni Centre),
- External stakeholders.

Members of the Expert Panel, Prof. Smiljana Zrilić, PhD and Mr. Sc. Andreja Silić, participated in the preliminary site visit to the higher education institution on 26 October 2020 and

visited professional services, the library, computer rooms, the Students' Office and classrooms and attended sample lectures, where they held a brief Q&A session with students. They also examined additional documentation during the preliminary site visit.

The Expert Panel drafted the Report on the re-accreditation of the Faculty of Education, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, on the basis of the Faculty of Education, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek Self-evaluation Report, other relevant annexes, documents, the preliminary site visit and on-line meetings.

The Report contains the following elements:

- Short description of the evaluated higher education institution,
- Brief analysis of the institutional advantages and disadvantages,
- List of institutional good practices,
- Analysis of each assessment area, recommendations for improvement and quality grade for each assessment area,
- Detailed analysis of each standard, recommendations for improvement and quality grade for each standard,
- Appendices (quality assessment summary by each assessment area and standard, and site visit protocol),
- Summary.

In the analysis of the documentation, preliminary site visit to the Faculty of Education, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, online meetings and writing of the Report, the Expert Panel was supported by:

- Marina Cvitanušić Brečić, coordinator, ASHE,
- Maja Šegvić, assistant coordinator, ASHE,
- Ivana Rončević, translator of the Report, ASHE.

On the basis of the re-accreditation procedure conducted, and with the prior opinion of the Accreditation Council, the Agency issues a following accreditation recommendation to the Minister for Higher Education and Science:

1. **Issuance of a confirmation on compliance with the requirements** for performing the activities, or parts of the activities,
2. **Denial of license** for performing the activities, or parts of the activities,
3. **Issue a letter of expectation** with the deadline for resolving deficiencies of up to three years. A letter of expectation can include the suspension of student enrolment within a set period.

The accreditation recommendation also includes a quality grade of a higher education institution, and recommendations for quality improvement.

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

**NAME OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION:** Faculty of Education, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek

**ADDRESS:** Cara Hadrijana 10, pp 330, 31000 Osijek

**DEAN:** Full professor Damir Matanović

### **ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE:**

The organisational units of the Faculty are departments, centres, sub-departments, secretary office and library. The dean represents the Faculty and is its head and leader and is responsible for the legality, implementation of the Statute and the resolutions of the university units at the Faculty. The dean is assisted by the vice dean and the secretary. The Faculty of Education has four vice deans: vice dean for teaching, vice dean for science, vice dean for development and professional work and vice dean for business relations and international cooperation. The dean's advisory board is the expert board comprised of vice deans, secretary and the head of the Finance and Accounting Office. The department is a basic organisational unit at the Faculty which is focused on teaching, scientific and professional work. The departments can have sub-departments. The department is managed by the head of department. The Faculty comprises six departments and 10 offices.

### **STUDY PROGRAMMES:**

According to the Registry of Study Programmes maintained by the Ministry of Science and Education the Faculty delivers the following study programmes:

- University undergraduate study of Early and preschool education, Osijek,
- University undergraduate study of Early and preschool education, Slatina,
- University graduate study of Early and preschool education, Osijek,
- Integrated undergraduate and graduate university Class Teacher studies, Osijek,
- Postgraduate university specialist studies Inclusive education, Osijek,
- Postgraduate specialist studies Management in educational institutions, Osijek,
- Postgraduate university (doctoral) studies Educational sciences and perspectives of education, Osijek.

Up to academic year 2020/2011 the Faculty also delivered the following study programmes:

- Undergraduate Kinesiology studies, Osijek,
- Graduate Kinesiology studies, Osijek,
- University undergraduate study of Early and preschool education, Slavonski Brod,
- University graduate study of Early and preschool education, Slavonski Brod,
- Integrated undergraduate and graduate university Class Teacher studies, Slavonski Brod.

From the academic year 2020/2021 two new higher education institutions were established - the University in Slavonski Brod and the Faculty of Kinesiology in Osijek. Due to that the programmes that had been delivered in Slavonski Brod were transferred to the new

university, and the Kinesiology studies were transferred to the new faculty. Due to the mentioned changes, this procedure focused on the evaluation of study programmes that the Faculty of Education continued to deliver. Moreover, the Faculty requested that two postgraduate specialist study programmes be exempt from the procedure of re-accreditation because they had not had any students enrolled.

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS:** 1299 (881 full-time, 418 part-time students) in the academic year 2018/2019

Study programme name	Full-time students	Part-time students
Teacher Education (839), integrated undergraduate and graduate university study programme, Osijek	394	0
Teacher Education (840), integrated undergraduate and graduate university study programme, Slavonski Brod	221	0
Early Childhood and Preschool Education (845), graduate university study programme, Osijek	23	12
Early Childhood and Preschool Education (846), graduate university study programme, Slavonski Brod	0	58
Early Childhood and Preschool Education (847), undergraduate university study programme, Osijek	124	151
Early Childhood and Preschool Education (848), undergraduate university study programme, Slavonski Brod	0	197
Kinesiology (849), undergraduate university study programme, Osijek	119	0
Total	881	418

#### **NUMBER OF TEACHERS:**

According to the information from the documents delivered in the procedure of re-accreditation, there are 44 full-time teachers appointed in scientific and teaching grades and 26 associates.

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

The education of teachers began with the Franciscans in 1733 with their Teacher Training Course, after which teacher education continued at the Teacher Training School in 1893, and within the Academy of Pedagogy since 1961, then within the Faculty of Pedagogy since 1976, continued at the Teacher Training College from 1999 and the Faculty of Teacher Education since 2005 and finally since 2014 under the present name Faculty of Education.

The mission of the Faculty of Education is to contribute to society by improving knowledge through research, as well as educating and preparing students for work in educational institutions. The Faculty seeks to develop in each member of the community the ability and desire to work wisely, responsibly and effectively for the progress of the community, striving to become a regional European faculty and a desirable place to study.

The vision of the Faculty of Education is to develop a Faculty with a clear research profile focused on sustainable development. By implementing quality and effective education based on learning outcomes and the concept of lifelong learning, it will actively cooperate with the economy and engage with partners for the development of the community in European

research area and in the European higher education area, which includes the highest level of organisation and responsibility.

## **BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES**

### **ADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION**

1. Regional character of the University and the Faculty and the vicinity of three foreign countries.
2. Interdisciplinary character of the Faculty (teaching staff, study programmes, scientific activity).
3. Support infrastructure to the Faculty's activities (various offices, the HEI's own IT services).
4. Popularity of study programmes (a large number of students apply in relation to the admission quotas).
5. Good student progress and pass rates during and between seminars.
6. The possibility to enrol in all levels of the study programmes (undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate specialist and doctoral study programmes).

### **DISADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION**

1. Low outgoing and incoming student and teacher mobility.
2. Insufficient international cooperation and participation in international projects.
3. The level of quality and scientific production should be improved. More attention should be paid to publishing in internationally recognized peer-reviewed journals.
4. Internal organizational system with offices and departments is unclear in the context of quality assurance of teaching and scientific activity, including the overlap of duties, as two vice deans share the responsibility for teaching and students.
5. The organization and implementation of student practice should be improved.
6. Peer review and lack of due diligence (using the results of the conducted surveys to carry out changes in operation).
7. The integrated undergraduate and graduate university Class teacher studies have not been revised since 2005.

## **LIST OF INSTITUTIONAL GOOD PRACTICES**

### **EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

1. A large number of elective courses.
2. Role and cooperation with the local community, such as the reward for the best work by secondary school graduates. The Faculty encourages students to become actively engaged in society and volunteering.
3. Support to, and investing in junior staff.
4. There are two internal journals and one student journal *Foo2rama* issued by the student association Futuri magistri.
5. Study year coordinators.

# **ANALYSIS OF EACH ASSESSMENT AREA, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND QUALITY GRADE FOR EACH ASSESSMENT AREA**

## **I. Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution**

### **Analysis**

Based on document analysis and interviews with the stakeholders, the Expert Panel concluded that the internal quality assurance and the social role of the Faculty are at a satisfactory level.

The atmosphere among staff, students and external stakeholders is positive and all groups gave evidence of good communication and understanding.

The Faculty has all preconditions to be an exemplary institution in the country and abroad regarding its personnel and infrastructure organization, as well as the overall stimulating environment.

During the previous period significant changes have been introduced to the organizational structure of the Faculty as the Kinesiology studies were separated and dislocated studies in Slavonski Brod are no longer delivered by the Faculty. However, the management board and the Faculty staff do not consider this a loss, but as an opportunity for future development and the establishment of an internal quality system. The Faculty is currently focused on the region, while its distance from other similar faculties and the vicinity to foreign markets opens up new opportunities for the Faculty.

Although there are many documents that regulate the internal quality assurance system, various bodies and offices focusing on quality, there are fundamental deficiencies regarding the lack of a systematic and documented development and functioning of quality assurance, i.e. examples and improvements and the ways of implementation of evaluation in practice. Roles and tasks are not clearly defined, there are overlaps in responsibilities, and there is a lack of cooperation among bodies in which these responsibilities overlap while the activities should complement each other.

### **Recommendations for improvement**

The Faculty should do the following in the area of quality assurance:

- Clearly define roles and tasks and ensure transparency and try to link various bodies whose responsibilities overlap.
- Document evidence of implementation and examples of improvement of internal quality.
- Consider and develop deeper quality assessment mechanisms in addition to the existing ones.
- Evaluate and document the performance of the existing organizational units.
- Involve a broader community and external stakeholders in the processes of internal quality assurance system.
- Regularly and systematically identify the needs of society and propose or terminate lifelong learning programmes.

Regarding the social role of the Faculty, the Panel believes that the Faculty has taken significant steps and may serve as a role model. There is a lot of evidence of professional and



artistic activities, volunteering, popular lectures, cooperation of the Faculty with associations, etc.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## II. Study programmes

### Analysis

The higher education institution has defined the learning outcomes of the study programmes, and they are aligned with the mission and goals of the higher education institution. However, it is not clear how the Faculty systematically monitors and harmonises learning outcomes of the study programmes with the changes in society and new levels and qualification profiles obtained.

The Panel concluded that there are many elective courses in the study programmes that are related to the teaching profession. However, it is necessary to introduce new courses and revise study programmes, especially Class teacher studies. That study programme has been delivered since 2005, with minor revisions (up to 20% with the consent of the Senate). All revisions in the last 15 years were minor changes, and they mostly referred to elective courses and C module courses (English language). Furthermore, the Early and preschool education studies were not revised on time in accordance with the legislative changes, first of all the National Curriculum for Early and Preschool Education (Official Gazette 5/15).

Study programme revisions would include a more systematic assessment of defined learning outcomes. The Panel noticed that the final papers are of low quality, lacking in structure and proofreading, and it was stated in the Self-evaluation Report that the synthesis of learning outcomes at the postgraduate and graduate level is checked by final, i.e. graduation theses.

It is also evident that the student practice is not systematically organized and that students are not sufficiently familiar with the learning outcomes at study programme level.

Heads of study programmes and study year coordinators should be mentioned as examples of good practice, but it is necessary to clearly define their duties and responsibilities.

Regarding the quality of study programmes, learning outcomes and the organization of student practice, the Expert Panel concludes that this criterion is of minimum level of quality. The assessment was passed following the examination of documents and annexes to the Self-evaluation Report and based on interviews with students and professors.

### Recommendations for improvement

The Faculty should do as follows:

- Make a systematic revision at the level of the study programmes and establish a committee which will assess the needs for practice in modern schools and kindergartens, with a special emphasis on the modern pre-school curriculum, reflexive practice, inclusion in schools and kindergartens, etc.
- Revise learning outcomes in accordance with the necessary changes of the study programmes.
- Introduce students to learning outcomes at the level of the study programmes.
- Involve students in the revision of the study programmes.

- Systematically organize student practice by adopting the Regulations on student practice, clearly define the duties of the student practice coordinator in each study programme and encourage students to engage in mobility as part of student practice.
- Increase the quality of final papers of Early and pre-school education students.

### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

## III. Teaching process and student support

### Analysis

Following the examination of all available documents and meetings with the stakeholders, the Expert Panel concluded that the teaching process and student support are satisfactory and meet all standards. During the meetings the Expert Panel established that the students were primarily satisfied with the communication with professors and they stress they can contact them at any time through formal and informal communication channels. Study year coordinators and their deputies are a bridge in the communication between students and the management board and their names are published on the Faculty's website. Students also expressed their satisfaction with all available information on events at the Faculty and on opportunities for participating in them, but they also said that the communication between the management board and part-time students of Early and pre-school education studies is not equally good.

The Faculty of Education has published criteria for enrolment in the Ordinance on studies and studying at the University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek, which is also available on the Faculty's website. According to the documents in force, they are consistently applied. The Faculty has a mechanism for recognizing prior learning in cooperation with the Centre for improvement and quality assurance of higher education, the Office for academic recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, University of Osijek, and the Section for academic recognition. The Self-evaluation Report contains the decisions on conducting bridge exams/ on conducting the bridge year for enrolment in the university graduate study programme in Early and preschool education. The Panel also found out from the available documents and during the meetings conducted that the Faculty collected data on student performance from the academic year 2014/2015 to 2018/2019 for each course, and in case of a lower student pass rate the students stated that teachers often provide them with support in the form of individual conversations. Learning outcomes are also available for students on the website of the Faculty and students are introduced to LOs by teachers in the introductory class, which was confirmed by both students and teachers at the meetings with the Expert Panel. A University student survey is conducted at the Faculty, which is a requirement for enrolment in the next study year, as well as an internal survey, but the Expert Panel did not find out for which purpose the gathered data are used.

Based on the Self-evaluation Report and the conversations with the Panel, the HEI provides support to students through the Career Development Centre for Students, the Centre for the

Improvement and Quality Assurance of Higher Education of Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek and the Centre for Information and Career Counselling at the University. Students have psychological counselling available at the University. Students also mentioned that the Faculty's library is available to them along with the City and University Library in Osijek and that they do not have any problems with access to literature. They also expressed satisfaction with technical equipment and the student service at the Faculty.

The Faculty allows adjustments stated in the Self-evaluation Report to students from vulnerable and underrepresented groups. This includes allocating a special quota for students enrolling in Year 1 of study who are over 25 years of age in the Call for enrolment of students in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of undergraduate university, integrated undergraduate and graduate university studies and undergraduate professional studies in the academic year 2019/2020. Moreover, it was stated that the Faculty has made a recommendation sent to the Ministry of Science and Education and the Ministry of Demographics and Social Policy for the improvement of the conditions of study for student parents as part of EduPolicy Lab project. There is also the Committee for students with disabilities at the Faculty and according to the Self-evaluation Report, in the period from 2015 to 2019, it received a request from a student who asked for extended time on the test, which was granted by the Committee. The Faculty has rooms marked with braille and there is a special access for students to the front door, and there is an elevator in the building, while the library and the administration office are located on the ground floor to facilitate access for all groups of students.

During the conversations with the management and the students the Expert Panel found out that the incoming and outgoing student mobility was very low, although the HEI stated in the Self-evaluation Report that they support students in applying for and implementing exchange programmes by helping them find a higher education institution abroad and putting them in touch with students who have already been to one of the foreign universities. Nevertheless, the number of students who apply for mobility is low, i.e. 20 outgoing and 15 incoming students in the period from the academic year 2014/2015 to 2018/2019. According to the Self-evaluation Report and the information from the conversations with the management board the recognition of ECTS credits earned at another HEI depends on a previous agreement between the student and the professor and on comparison of the learning outcomes from a home faculty with the learning outcomes of a HEI abroad. According to the information from the Self-evaluation Report it is not clear who the contact person for foreign students is and how they can contact them.

### Recommendations for improvement

- The Faculty of Education could introduce a motivational interview with students as support during the studies to solve the problem of students' dissatisfaction with the study, which leads to their inactivity in senior years, but they still manage to complete the studies in order to earn a degree.
- Completing the University survey should not be a requirement for enrolment in the following study year because students do not complete the survey having in mind the improvement of the quality of study, so the results obtained are questionable.

- The Faculty should develop strategies to increase the number of incoming students, as well as strategies to motivate students to complete a part of the studies abroad.
- The Expert Panel recommends the establishment of a sustainable system, which includes the recognition of ECTS credits gained at a foreign HEI, while students can freely continue to take a seminar at their Faculty.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## IV. Teaching and institutional capacities

### Analysis

The number and qualifications of teachers are appropriate for the delivery of study programmes and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and performance of a scientific activity. The student-teacher ratio at the higher education institution ensures a high quality of study.

Specific information from the licences and lists of full-time teachers are in line with the legal requirements and standards. Teachers' workload is in line with relevant legislation and bylaws, regulations issued by competent bodies, and collective agreements. It is possible and necessary to improve and introduce systematic direct communication between teachers and students and to take an equal approach in the communication with part-time and full-time students.

The Faculty invests resources in junior staff and ensures support to their development and advancement. There is a large number of assistants who were appointed into the grade of assistant professors. The HEI provides the opportunities and supports teachers to improve their competencies at the level of the Faculty, but it is not evident how and whether it is available equally for all. The employees advance and publish scientific papers in their profession at the local (national) level.

It is necessary to improve the quality of planning of teaching activities through cooperation, joint planning and peer review and improvement of the educational process, and by providing adequate support to students in learning and studying. There is also room for publishing individual and/or joint papers in top-ranked international journals and for participating in projects and applying to relevant international calls and sources.

Having examined the resources of the HEI during the site visit and the available information on the space, equipment and the overall infrastructure the Panel established that the space and infrastructure are adequate for the performance of scientific, artistic and professional activities. The space, equipment and the entire infrastructure are appropriate for the delivery of the study programmes and ensure that the intended learning outcomes are achieved. The Panel concluded that the higher education institution plans and improves the infrastructure development in line with the strategic goals.

The library and library equipment, including additional resources, ensure a high quality of scientific-teaching / artistic-teaching activities.

According to the available information on equipment, the library has a required number of study sources and materials. According to the final records on income and expenditure of the HEI the Panel concludes that financial sustainability is ensured. The HEI also invests funds and puts effort into developing and improving its activities.

### Recommendations for improvement

- For the purpose of improving the Faculty's activities and achieving the outcomes and goals set, the Panel proposes to the Faculty to systematically invest resources in the development of teaching capacities.
- The Panel proposes strengthening teaching competencies for the high-quality planning of teaching activities through cooperation, planning and peer review and improvement of the educational process and providing adequate support to student learning and studying.
- For the purpose of better positioning and strengthening of the Faculty in the region and gaining recognition, the Panel suggests motivating the teachers to systematically strengthen their competencies and hold lectures in foreign languages, to write scientific papers and to become involved and recognizable in the international scientific community.
- We propose a systematic strengthening of competencies and stimulating teachers to cooperate with similar faculties in Croatia and abroad.
- The Panel also proposes conducting systematic monitoring of human resources and their capacities and to motivate teachers to conduct research, projects and to write scientific papers not only within their own profession but also in relation to the study programme goals and further development of study programmes, having in mind the final goals, the development of competencies of modern teachers and their activities in future work.
- Invest in the development of capacities of the staff employed in the Faculty library to provide better support to students and teachers in the development of computer literacy and finding new, relevant scientific sources for the purpose of studying, learning, writing scientific papers, carrying out research and improving teaching activity.
- The Faculty should keep records of detailed financial plans of income and expenditure, five-year reports on the implementation of the financial plan and the necessary regulations, decisions and final information about the use of income gained in the future sustainable development of the Faculty.

### Quality grade:

Satisfactory level of quality

## V. Scientific/artistic activity

### Analysis

With regard to quality and quantity of scientific research, the Expert Panel's conclusion is that the quantity is fairly satisfactory, as evident from provided tables and other documents. As for the quality, the Expert Panel's findings are that the Faculty's achievements are rather modest, assessed against the backdrop of channels for scientific output. Only a small portion of publications have appeared in recognized international peer-reviewed journals. The Panel takes these publication channels as an ultimate proof of the presented research scientific quality. In that sense, the Panel argues that the Faculty's scientific research, in a rather limited way, has been subject to a more profound quality control.

The Faculty staff attend a fairly large number of conferences, but the majority are national or in the nearby countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, Hungary). The Faculty is an active force in the life of the region, contributing to professional development and training of preschool and school teachers. It is unclear how the needs of the labour market are monitored and considered when research activities are planned. The reaccreditation committee has not been presented with firm evidence that monitoring of the needs of society and labor market and subsequent actions are regular or based in a sustainable research policy.

With a few notable exceptions, the Faculty members have attracted smaller funding from the University, regional bodies, the Ministry, the Faculty itself and, which is particularly laudable, the European Social Fund. Recently established postgraduate program is another positive step towards creating a viable and high-quality research environment. Scientific projects intended to carry out in the period 2020-2024, as listed in the Strategic science program, correspond to strategic aims and visions of the Faculty. However, it is not entirely clear how some of these ambitions research programs will be financed. The lack of funding to support research and artistic activities of high-quality is one of the main threats to its sustainability, also threatening to undermine the overall strategy, visions and mission of the Faculty.

The Faculty members have served as invited speakers at a number of national and some international (although from regional countries) occasions. The Faculty staff are insufficiently involved in editorial boards of recognized international peer-reviewed journals. But it is worrisome that some researchers from the Faculty are members of editorial boards to so-called predatory journals. The Faculty should not offer aura of legitimacy to these obscure journals through its staff's participation in "editorial boards".

Suitable and appropriate space and equipment for scientific/artistic research within the field of education is available. There is evidence of an active transfer of scientific results into teaching. Additionally, as evident from data provided within Self-evaluation report and interviews, the students are involved in scientific/artistic/professional projects.

Finally, in relation to previous reaccreditation cycle findings from 2014, this panel recognizes substantial improvements in the Faculty's organization, operations,

achievements and overall quality in the area of scientific and artistic work. Nevertheless, and even if steps in right direction are distinguished, the same fundamental weaknesses remain: insufficient publications in recognized international peer-reviewed journals, participation in broader international scientific networks, conferences and projects and lack of appropriate research funding.

### Recommendations for improvement

The Faculty should:

- Encourage and provide opportunities for teachers and associates to aim at publishing their work in recognized international peer-reviewed journals.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for teachers and associates to participate in international research groups.
- Encourage and support teachers and associates to more participate at conferences outside Croatia and the region.
- Increase and intensify efforts to support research and transfer of research-based knowledge to society.
- Establish a process whereby every new membership of editorial board is evaluated and endorsed by the dean and vice-deans. The Faculty should review the current participation of its staff and make sure those who are members of journals that charges authors “article processing charges” immediately resign from their editorial boards.
- Encourage its staff to get more involved in organizing committees of and participation in the conferences taking place in broader European and international contexts, not just in the closest national and international vicinity.
- Encourage its staff to reach out to colleagues in other European countries, broaden their involvement in international research networks and together apply for funding from EU research funds. In order to make the Faculty researchers attractive for these networks they need to be more internationally visible and recognized as excellent scholars.
- Use its evidently good contacts with local and regional educational institutions and their governing bodies to set up jointly financed research projects, aiming at promoting research on improving the quality of preschools and schools.
- Maintain, further develop and fine-tune its efforts to transfer research insights into teaching and to involve students in research projects.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality



## **DETAILED ANALYSIS OF EACH STANDARD, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND QUALITY GRADE FOR EACH STANDARD**

### **I. Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution**

#### **1.1. The higher education institution has established a functional internal quality assurance system.**

##### **Analysis**

The Faculty has a clear vision and mission and there are basic documents governing the quality system, which are included in the Self-evaluation Report and publicly available on the Faculty's website. The Faculty has a development strategy and the five-year Strategic programme of scientific research, but some of the employees who participated in the meetings with the Expert Panel were not familiar with that. Quality assurance policy is a part of the strategic development plan. A SWOT analysis was conducted at the level of the HEI based on which further procedures and development of the Faculty are planned. There is an Office for Quality Assurance and the Quality Assurance Committee, and a whole section on the Faculty's website is dedicated to quality. Although the internal quality assurance system includes and evaluates the overall activities of the HEI, and it is supported by the documents submitted within the procedure of re-accreditation and published on the website, the Panel found out in the conversations with the participants in the re-accreditation procedure that all HEI stakeholders (internal or external) are not involved in QA activities. External stakeholders and some of employees who were not directly involved in the work on the strategy are not familiar with the HEI Strategy, which was mentioned during the meetings. The Faculty regularly documents quality assurance procedures in the form of various student and teacher questionnaires mentioned in the available documents and by students. However, it is not clear how the gathered data is further used for the development of a functional internal quality assurance system.

There is a lack of communication between different organizational units of the Faculty and the information is not shared among organizational units or by the management board. It is not clear how the current system contributes to the better functioning of the Faculty. The division of responsibilities, duties and criteria for assigning certain areas to certain departments is not completely clear and fit for purpose. In general, the employees have a lot of duties and some of them perform three or four functions at the same time. It is not clear how multiple functions contribute to the internal quality assurance of the HEI.

There is no visible and documented evidence of implementation or examples of improvement of internal quality, which are a result of such a management policy, organization and the practice according to which the dean proposes appointments and assignments, which was stated during the conversations with the stakeholders on several occasions.



## Recommendations for improvement

- The adopted documents and the gathered information should be applied, analysed and used for the purpose of quality improvement, improvement of teaching and science thoroughly and transparently.
- Although a lot of information is analysed, the Panel proposes developing mechanisms and tools of qualitative assessment, such as peer review of students and teachers and feedback from employers.
- The Panel proposes including persons from immediate surroundings of the HEI, such as representatives of employers or other representatives of the community, instead of persons from other HEIs or the Ministry, as representatives of external stakeholders in the working bodies.
- To enable employees as much as possible to propose members and to apply for membership in the bodies of the HEI i.e. avoid the practice where members of such bodies are proposed by the dean.

## Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **1.2. The higher education institution implements recommendations for quality improvement from previous evaluations.**

## Analysis

The HEI has made a step forward in relation to the previous re-accreditation procedure, first of all by strengthening the teaching and administrative staff. Part of the recommendations issued are related to the previous organization of the Faculty, which previously incorporated the Faculty of Kinesiology and a separate organizational unit in Slavonski Brod. The separation of the Faculty from these units has led to the changes in the conditions and the way of functioning of the Faculty.

However, the most significant recommendations which included due diligence, the system of evaluation of functionalities, etc. have this time been identified as areas for improvement and development of the HEI.

For example, although there have been changes in the organization of the Faculty, the duties are still not clear and there are overlaps in the duties of certain bodies. Students are still not sufficiently involved in the creation of teaching activities, and some of the teachers who talked to the Expert Panel believe that they do not even need to be involved because of teachers' autonomy and insufficient competency of students. The HEI still gathers large quantities of data, but it is not clear how they are used in the improvement of teaching activity and quality assurance. In addition to quantitative data, such as the number of the published papers, participation in the projects, etc., it is not clear how the Faculty changed its approach to qualitative assessment of teaching and teaching competencies. It can be assumed that LLP Module B contributes to the quality of teachers appointed to associate titles but, apart from that, there is no systematic monitoring and assessment of teachers appointed to teaching grades. In the Statement to the previous report (from 2014) some

changes are mentioned as answers to the recommendations, for which there is no information on what happened in the meantime (study programme Technical education). The part that is related to the improvement of student mobility has not changed significantly since the last re-accreditation.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- The recommendations issued in the last and this evaluation procedure should be prioritised.
- To include teachers with less workload in order to equally distribute work and time and to get fresh ideas for dealing with the priority issues.

#### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **1.3. The higher education institution supports academic integrity and freedom, prevents all types of unethical behaviour, intolerance and discrimination.**

#### Analysis

There are basic documents supporting the academic integrity and freedom, and preventing unethical behaviour, which are common for the constituents of the University of Osijek (Code of Ethics) or at the national level (Code of Ethics for Research with Children).

There is an Ethics Committee and a Student Ombudsman at the HEI. In case of a violation of the Code of Ethics, the Ethics Committee reports it to the Dean of the Faculty with a proposal to initiate disciplinary proceedings. The Ethics Committee has not received any complaints so far, so the Expert Panel could not see a course and the procedure of resolving of such a case. There have also not been any plagiarism attempts.

Although the HEI has a Turnitin software and both employees and students with whom the Panel spoke were familiar with it, while talking to teachers and students, the Panel noted some inconsistencies in understanding who is in charge of checking authenticity (student or mentor) and if there is a protocol completed during the authenticity check during the final/graduation thesis development.

The students were informed about the mentioned topics as part of mandatory and elective courses (Self-evaluation Report; Syllabi).

The Faculty appointed a person authorized for receiving and solving complaints in relation to the protection of employees' dignity, who is elected based on the proposal of the Faculty's dean.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- To inform all students at the beginning of the study about the basic documents, persons in charge of issues related to unethical behaviour, intolerance and freedom and procedures in cases of unethical behaviour.
- To enable students with easier access to documents by publishing them on a visible place on the Faculty's website.

- We propose involving the employees in the process of proposing a person authorized for receiving and solving complaints related to the protection of dignity of employees.
- The HEI should keep records of the defended final and graduation theses by checking them using the Turnitin system and by indicating the similarity score.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## **1.4. The higher education institution ensures the availability of information on important aspects of its activities (teaching, scientific/artistic and social role).**

### Analysis

Information on study programmes and other activities of the higher education institution is available on the Faculty's website in Croatian and English. The website is simple and easy to navigate, and it contains all information on the Faculty's activities, admission requirements, admission quotas, learning outcomes and qualifications. It is regularly updated. Student guide is available to students and it comprises all the necessary information about teaching, support, rights, obligations and other issues related to studying (food, accommodation, etc.). The official website of the Faculty contains the information on projects, publishing activity, analyses related to students and teachers, information about mobility opportunities and all other necessary information for students and the interested public.

The Faculty regularly appears in the local newspapers, Glas Slavonije and University Gazette, and participates in the events such as the Science Festival, the Brain Week and other events. Although the Faculty's website contains a lot of information, the information is mainly general, for example basic information about projects, without achievements, results, use for the community, etc.

### Recommendations for improvement

- We propose updating the website of the Faculty by introducing the section on the social role, social activity or similar, in order to enable easier access to sources and indicators of cooperation with the community and contribution to the development of society, as well as the section regarding media presence. The Faculty has a lot to be proud of, but only a part of information can be found on the website by browsing through old notices, which takes a lot of time. Also, information on some activities aimed at the fulfilment of the Faculty's social role that are mentioned in the Self-evaluation Report cannot even be found on the website of the higher education institution.
- To bring artistic and scientific activities of teachers, and their professional activities closer to the general public, by publishing interesting information, texts, photographs and videos on the official website of the Faculty.
- To work on cooperation with secondary schools in order to broaden the pool of prospective students that would involve students other than those who are already intrinsically motivated for enrolling in the study programmes delivered by the higher education institution.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## **1.5. The higher education institution understands and encourages the development of its social role.**

### Analysis

The higher education institution is present in many social spheres and it has been recognized as an important entity in the development and improvement of the community, especially the local community. The importance of contributing to society is part of the mission and vision of the HEI. The Faculty cooperates with many institutions such as the Institute for the Development of Education, the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, Osijek Clinical Hospital Centre, etc. It is also actively involved in the activities of various associations, such as the Association of Roma Friendship Luna from Beli Manastir, the Association Palčiči Osijek and the Centre for Missing and Abused Children Osijek. All stakeholders recognized this activity as an important part of professional contribution of the Faculty to the community.

The HEI places special emphasis on volunteering work, and all employees and students who talked to the Expert Panel stress this as a special characteristic and value of the HEI. The Faculty has a long-standing volunteering tradition.

Alumni also stress the contribution to the community and many of them remain in contact with the HEI through the mentioned activities, which they proudly mentioned at the meeting with the Expert Panel.

The Faculty is engaged in marking many important days and events for the community, organizes lectures, round tables, exhibitions, concerts, etc., which was evident during the conversation with employees and the management board of the HEI, the evidence submitted in the Self-evaluation Report and the notices on the Faculty's website.

### Recommendations for improvement

- The HEI should continue with the activities contributing to the development of the local community.
- The Faculty could allow the local community to use its premises and equipment.

### Quality grade

High level of quality

## **1.6. Lifelong learning programmes delivered by the higher education institution are aligned with the strategic goals and the mission of the higher education institution, and social needs.**

### Analysis

The HEI offers several different lifelong learning programmes. The Expert Panel especially commends Module B for Pedagogical-Psychological and Didactic-Methodical Training (PPDMI) of associates with associate grades at the University of Osijek, which is part of additional criteria for teacher advancement according to the Regulations on the

implementation of the appointment/re-appointment procedure to the titles and corresponding positions at the University of Osijek. The Faculty also has a Programme for Training Assistants for Work with Children with Developmental Difficulties and the Disabled and the Programme for Training Assistants for Work with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. According to the Management Board, the HEI has the intention to open a new programme in speech therapy, which arose from the need of the community mentioned at informal meetings with external stakeholders.

The Faculty has appointed a contact person to provide all the necessary information on enrolment and lifelong learning programmes, and the programmes are available on the Faculty's website. However, according to the information subsequently provided to the Expert Panel, both programmes have not been delivered for years, which brings into question the carrying out of systematic and regular revisions of these programmes, and the actual demand for such LLPs.

### Recommendations for improvement

- The Faculty should plan a systematic and regular revision of actual social needs for LLP and adjust their offer accordingly.
- The programmes which have not been delivered for several years and which are no longer in demand should no longer be offered.
- The HEI should plan more frequent advertising and informing of external stakeholders about the lifelong learning programmes, in order to attract more prospective attendees.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## II. Study programmes

**2.1. The general objectives of all study programmes are in line with the mission and strategic goals of the higher education institution and the needs of the society.**

### Analysis

The HEI has a vision and strategic objectives, while the general goals of study programmes are aligned with them.

Justification for conducting the study programmes is explained in relation to social needs. The HEI delivers three study programmes: Integrated Class Teacher Studies with three modules, undergraduate and graduate study of Early and preschool education with two modules. At the postgraduate level, the Faculty has a license for the Postgraduate specialist studies Inclusive education, and it enrolls first students this academic year as well as the Postgraduate specialist studies Managing educational institutions. The postgraduate university (doctoral) study in Educational sciences and perspectives of education also enrol the first students. These programmes represent a significant enhancement in the quality of studies in the past five years. It is mentioned in the Self-evaluation Report that the HEI

educates professionals on the national and international labour market, while only occasional evidence from the media is provided to support that.

### Recommendations for improvement

- Clear evidence or statistical indicators are needed to confirm that the Faculty educates professionals recognized at the national and international labour market, which was stated in the Strategy, but which cannot be established based on the evidence submitted.

### Quality grade

High level of quality

## **2.2. The intended learning outcomes at the level of study programmes delivered by the higher education institution are aligned with the level and profile of qualifications gained.**

### Analysis

The higher education institution has defined the learning outcomes of the study programmes, and they are aligned with the mission and goals of the higher education institution.

In Chapter 2.2 of the Self-Evaluation Report it is stated that the intended learning outcomes clearly reflect the competencies required for employment, continuing education or other individual/society needs, but there is no feedback.

The list of study programmes shows inconsistency with the National Curriculum for Early and Preschool Education (Official Gazette, 5/15), principles, values and necessary competencies of education professionals for independent educational work according to the names of individual study programmes.

It is not clear whether students are familiar with the learning outcomes at the level of the study programmes because we found out in the conversation with teachers that they introduce learning outcomes to students at course level. There are not any analyses of alignment of learning outcomes at the course and the study programme level. The examination of the final papers showed that some of them require proofreading (although one of the outcomes at the programme level is "apply all mother tongue skills in the function of correct speaking and writing in theory and practice", Table 2.1. Learning outcomes - legend, Annex to the Self-Evaluation Report: Study Programmes), and their structure is also unclear. The students enrol in the graduate study programmes where they will write graduation theses so the quality of the final papers is lower. There is no evidence that the final and graduation theses are checked in Turnitin programme, only certain professors mentioned that students do that.

Likewise, it is stated in the syllabi of most of the courses that knowledge is checked orally, while students mainly take written, and to a lesser extent, oral exams. We believe it is important to check verbal, language and professional competencies of students during oral presentations in order to strengthen the presentation competencies of students, future education professionals and teachers.

In accordance with the National Curriculum for Early and Preschool Education (Official Gazette 5/15), the stated goals, principles and key competencies for lifelong learning and modern roles of educators of early-age and preschool children, study programmes lack some courses, for example those focusing on curriculum design, high-quality documentation and assessment of educational work, professional development of education professionals, creating a learning environment and the context for communication of children in a mother tongue and in a foreign language, citizenship education, artistic area - movement and dance, etc.

It is hard to recognize the defined outcomes in different courses, i.e. it is not clear how they are achieved in practice because they involve a higher level of cooperation among teachers in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the teaching process.

Titles of some courses are confusing and it is difficult to understand what they refer to exactly, for example, Internet in early and preschool education (which basically refer to the strengthening of professional competencies of educators in the area of IT and computer literacy).

It is not clear how learning outcomes at Student practice are checked (for example, Table 2.1.a Learning outcomes PRP9 (Topic 2 Study programmes, Annex to the Self-evaluation Report) “develop abilities of a reflective practitioner who continuously evaluates the effects of own achievements”.

Likewise, there is no course Inclusive education which is definitely necessary. There is a course Pedagogy of children with special needs, but only one semester in the Class teacher study programme and two semesters in the Early and preschool education study with a small number of hours (1 + 1).

### Recommendations for improvement

- It is necessary to conduct graduate employability analyses in the field of their studies, at least for the past five years.
- For the purpose of increasing the quality of the final papers of students the process of preparation for the writing of the final papers and the evaluation criteria should be improved. Supervisors should be more engaged in the process of development of the final theses and a different type of assessment is needed.
- It is necessary to define more clearly and align learning outcomes at the study programme and course level in order to obtain feedback. It is especially necessary to clearly define learning outcomes at Student practice.
- Modify or change the titles of some courses which are unclear, such as Protection and communication of visual art heritage in school and kindergarten (the document submitted in the re-accreditation process mentioned that the course was removed in the second revision of the study programme of 17 July 2019, but it remained on the list), Internet resources in education, Computers in education and leisure. Introduce a course Inclusive education or to increase the number of hours of the course Pedagogy of children with special needs.
- Carry out exams as defined in course syllabi.



## Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **2.3. The higher education institution provides evidence of the achievement of intended learning outcomes of the study programmes it delivers.**

#### Analysis

In the Faculty documents submitted in the re-accreditation process it is stated that the HEI ensures the achievement of the planned learning outcomes of the study programmes it delivers at a higher level, but there is no evidence for that. It is not clear how the quality of implementation is checked and how the alignment of learning outcomes at the course and study programme level is checked. There are no systematic indicators on the impact of feedback from students and external stakeholders. The Expert Panel talked to student representatives and established they are satisfied and that they agree with the Management Board on many issues. However, there are indications that many of them are not familiar with or involved in these processes. These are part-time students of early and preschool education. They had not been informed about mobility opportunities up to 2019, which they mentioned during the meeting with the Expert Panel.

There is a lot of room for improvement and establishing systematic procedures in order to obtain feedback for the purpose of confirming, improving and/or revising the intended learning outcomes at the study programme level. Some final and graduation theses the Panel examined during the site visit indicate there is a need for better supervision and setting higher grading criteria.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- Changing the way of monitoring and assessment of the final papers of students of early and preschool education. These are one of the criteria for evaluating learning outcomes, and it has been observed that they are not of high quality.
- Clearly state the opportunities, frequency and obligation to educate teachers about learning outcomes and feedback on that.
- The Faculty has to equally treat full-time and part-time students, especially because the coordinators of part-time studies have been appointed. Their role needs to be clearly defined.

## Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **2.4. The HEI uses feedback from students, employers, professional organisations and alumni in the procedures of planning, proposing and approving new programmes, and revising or closing the existing programmes.**

#### Analysis

During the conversation with heads of departments and teachers the Panel did not get a clear answer regarding their inclusion and impact on study programme revisions. The answer



regarding the knowledge of learning outcomes and communication and coordination of teachers for the purpose of achieving of final qualifications of teachers and educators after the study and involvement on the labour market was also not clear. There is no feedback on improvements of study programmes. It is not clear how the departments and sub-departments participate in study programme revisions.

There is a link *Published up-to-date versions of the study programmes* in the list of annexes, but it couldn't be examined.

The revisions made so far mainly refer to elective courses (Self-evaluation Report, II Study Programmes) which include 20% study programme revisions for which the University Senate is authorized. It is necessary to make revisions exceeding 20% due to the need for modern practice in educational institutions, all the more because the Faculty obtained the licence for the integrated university Class teacher study programme as early as in 2005, while revisions were mainly minor and related to elective courses or English language courses. The Panel noticed that the information on this on the website of the higher education institution is not aligned with the information stated in the Self-evaluation Report. The Self-evaluation Report contains a link to a license issued in 2005, and the study programme from 2014/2015 is available on the website and it is not clear when this programme got a license. The programme for which the Faculty has a license is not revised, and all the changes are stated in the syllabi.

It is evident in the syllabi available on the Faculty's website that a large number of teachers are using outdated literature.

### Recommendations for improvement

- Greater involvement of students as well as members of the ALUMNI club in the revisions of the study programmes.
- Involvement of external stakeholders, especially kindergartens and schools in the revision of organization of student practice.
- Clear definition of the roles of departments and offices in study programme revisions and improvement of teaching.
- Revision of the study programmes is needed, especially of the Class teacher studies, which includes the introduction of new courses that would train students, future teachers and educators and give them competencies required for working in the contemporary inclusive schools and kindergartens. For such a major revision of the study programmes a commission needs to be established consisting of professors from all fields (social studies, humanities, artistic, interdisciplinary) who follow trends in education. In such a way a better programme would be designed which would be aligned with the needs of modern society.
- We propose conducting a thorough analysis, change and revision of the programmes that need to be made in cooperation with other stakeholders.
- We propose changing the holder and provider of the training programmes of assistants or removing programmes which are not delivered.

- The literature stated in the syllabi needs to be updated.

### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

## **2.5. The higher education institution ensures that ECTS allocation is adequate.**

### Analysis

The Panel found out while talking to professors and students that the points are defined based on the number of hours of lectures, seminars and practicals. Likewise, this criterion is evident in the course schedules and course syllabi. The linking of the courses and the conditions for enrolment in a higher year of study are also stated, which we estimate to be at a satisfactory level of quality.

### Recommendations for improvement

- Regulate the options for the selection of elective courses by internal regulations. It is not clear how students elect them and what is the minimum number of students who should elect a course so it would be delivered.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## **2.6. Student practice is an integral part of study programmes (where applicable).**

### Analysis

Student (teaching) practice is a mandatory part of the teaching process. It is organized outside of the HEI in cooperation with external stakeholders, early and preschool education institutions and schools. Every study programme has a coordinator for teaching practice, which is visible in the course syllabus. The syllabi also contain the goals and organization of teaching practice, student obligations, contents of practice, mentorship, coordinator's role and other issues related to student practice. In the class timetable professional practice carries 2 ECTS credits. However, there are no Regulations on student practice, and practice log books are evaluated, which are mainly an overview of chronological events, without any extensive analysis.

There are no documents related to the student evaluation of their mentors. There is no practice evaluation questionnaire. The practice is generally not systematic and there is no feedback on whether the institutions where the practice is carried out are licensed by the Ministry, and whether the mentors are appointed into teaching grades. It is only evident from the interview with students that they choose mentors in the schools closest to them. It also applies to students of early and preschool education which is not a good selection, all the more because the mentors are their former teachers, according to students. The question is how such practice can be objectively assessed. There is no systematic organization which would enable achievement of the planned learning outcomes connected to student practice as well as the evaluation based on clear learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

We have also noticed that students mentioned that they miss more practice, more practical teaching, before they enrol in teaching methodology courses and start with trial and exam lectures as part of the teaching methodology course.

The procedure of checking the achievement of ECTS credits for practice is unclear.

### Recommendations for improvement

- We propose a systematic organization of student practice, providing mentor's feedback on the student's work, adopting the abovementioned documents. If possible, we propose a higher number of hours of practice, in which it is mandatory to include the practice coordinator, not only in the grading of the practice log book, but in the direct practical assessment in the school and kindergarten.
- We propose defining clear criteria for the evaluation of student practice.
- We propose organizing meetings at the Faculty with mentors in kindergartens and schools for the purpose of better preparation and to align expectations and the outcomes of student practice.
- We propose equal conditions for, and treatment of full-time and part-time students with regard to the acquisition of practical experience. It is necessary to select the best possible conditions, kindergartens, schools and mentors for acquiring practical experience because of the period of practice is very short.
- We propose defining detailed plans and instructions for students for performing student practice and providing them with assistance in the writing of student practice log books.
- Given the geographical location of the Faculty and possible advantages, we propose direct cooperation with the neighbouring countries where Croats live, i.e. the organization of student practice in Croatian schools and kindergartens (e.g. in Hungary), which would improve cooperation with foreign institutions, which is possible through Erasmus and similar programs.
- We propose organizing student practice in the English and IT modules.

### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

## III. Teaching process and student support

**3.1. Admission criteria or criteria for the continuation of studies are in line with the requirements of the study programme, clearly defined, published and consistently applied.**

### Analysis

Students are clearly informed about the criteria for enrolment or continuation of studies, which are published on the Faculty's website (evaluation of high school performance, State

Matura level, other special achievements and direct enrolment) and in the Ordinance of studies and studying of Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. Criteria for the continuation of studies are also defined in the Decision on enrolment requirements for students in the academic year 2019/2020. According to the Self-evaluation Report, the criteria for admission or continuation of studies are appropriately applied and ensure the selection of candidates with appropriate prior knowledge, which is aligned with the requirements of the study programme.

The students who wish to enrol in the graduate university studies in Early and preschool education without having previously completed the Undergraduate study in Early and preschool education, enrol in bridge course exams or bridge year, depending on what level of previous study they have, which is evident in the publicly available documents. The Faculty has an efficient mechanism for recognizing prior learning in cooperation with the Centre for improvement and quality assurance of higher education, Office for academic recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, University of Osijek, and the Section for academic recognition, and the Self-evaluation Report contains the decisions on conducting bridge exams/decisions on conducting the bridge year for enrolment in the university graduate study programme in Early and preschool education as examples of that practice.

In the conversation with students and teachers they stated that a student's performance on the studies is monitored even after the end of the academic year, where teachers hold conversations with students to establish the reasons for poor performance. The management board, students and teachers also stated that a leadership monitoring system is implemented and each student year has its own study year coordinator and deputy coordinators, which is also mentioned in the Self-evaluation Report. Their role is to inform students about their rights and obligations, and if necessary, to facilitate communication between the students and the management board.

### Recommendations for improvement

- The Faculty of Education could introduce a motivational interview with students as support during the studies to solve students' dissatisfaction with the study, which leads to student inactivity in higher years, who still complete the studies in order to earn a degree.
- The Faculty could develop a more effective mechanism for recognizing prior learning which would include the recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## **3.2. The higher education institution gathers and analyses information on student progress and uses it to ensure the continuity and completion of study.**

### Analysis

It is evident from the available analyses of student performance from the academic year 2014/2015 to 2018/2019 that the Faculty gathers information on student pass rates per

course, analyzes problematic areas at the end of the academic year, and tries to solve the difficulties, where possible. Moreover, examination methods can be found on the Faculty's websites for each course in the syllabi. The Self-evaluation Report also contains the analysis of students enrolled in the first year from 2010 to 2019, which ensured the continuity of monitoring of students and their performance in order to increase the pass rates and completion rates. During the conversations with students the Panel noticed that teachers provide individual support to students as part of the courses which is problematic for them.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- The HEI should provide clearer information on the support to students when they encounter problems during the studies.

#### Quality grade

High level of quality

### 3.3. The higher education institution ensures student-centred learning.

#### Analysis

According to the Self-evaluation Report, the Faculty of Education continuously encourages various methods of teaching in accordance with the planned learning outcomes, although it was not mentioned how the compliance between teaching and learning outcomes was checked. Learning outcomes are also available for students on the website of the Faculty and students are introduced to LOs by their teachers in the introductory class, which was confirmed by students at the meeting with the Expert Panel. They also mentioned fieldwork and study trips as different teaching methods offered by the Faculty. The modes of teaching delivery and teaching methods are continuously evaluated by the University survey conducted by the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (the survey is a requirement for progressing into the following year of study) and the internal survey conducted by the Faculty, but it was not clear how the modes of teaching delivery are adjusted based on student feedback, i.e. it is not clear how the gathered information is used.

The teaching methods are adjusted to part-time students (regarding time table) and students of vulnerable groups, which was mentioned in the Self-evaluation Report and regulated by the Ordinance on studies and studying at the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek. The Faculty for Education has a Committee for students with disabilities that has access to the medical records of students and is a direct coordinator between students, teachers and other staff. As it is stated in the Self-evaluation Report, the Committee cooperates with the University office for students with disabilities. In accordance with the recommendation of the Management board of the University of Osijek, from the academic year 2018/2019, the constituents of the University of Osijek can, should the need arise, independently hire student assistants to work with students with disabilities and finance them through student employment contracts. In relation to other underrepresented groups of students the Faculty made an educational policy recommendation aimed at improving the study conditions for student-parents as part of the EduPolicy Lab project. The recommendation was addressed to the Ministry of Science and Education and the Ministry of Demographics and Social Policy.

Students have e-learning options available, i.e. there are e-courses taught on LMS Loomen platform.

The Expert Panel found out in the conversation with teachers that they motivate students by offering them the possibility to choose the topic of the seminar papers themselves, and according to the Self-evaluation Report, the Faculty encourages students' independence and responsibility in fulfilling their obligations during their studies, the most important obligation being attending classes, and the selection of the topic of the final or graduation thesis with the mentor's assistance. Moreover, students stress that they freely choose where they will perform student practice and the practice mentor, which is also an example of encouraging the student's responsibility.

### Recommendations for improvement

- Completing the University survey must not be a precondition for enrolment in the next study year because students do not complete the survey having in mind the development of the quality of study, so the results obtained are questionable.
- Changes after the completion of the university or internal surveys in the areas where dissatisfaction was expressed and/or changes are proposed should be officially available and visible.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## 3.4. The higher education institution ensures adequate student support.

### Analysis

According to the Self-evaluation Report, the HEI provides students with counselling about the study programme and career opportunities through mentors and study programme coordinators and the Career development centre for students. Study programme coordinators hold meetings with students and help them solve any problem they encounter during their studies, which was confirmed by students during the conversation with the Expert Panel. The reports on such meetings are submitted to the Vice dean for teaching and to the Quality assurance office. The Career development centre for students guides students and monitors their employment. It cooperates with the Quality assurance centre of the University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer, the Centre for information and career counselling in Osijek and employers from the local community.

The Faculty has a Student guide in which it provides an information package on all study programmes for new students, which is published on the website of the HEI. Students have psychological counselling available at the University. The counselling services are free of charge and available to all students. Legal counselling services are provided to students by student ombudsman and the Student Council, if necessary. The Futuri magistri student association operates at the Faculty of Education with the aim of improving the lives of the students, as described on the Faculty's website. One of the main projects of the association is the charity programme Christmas Star. Of all Faculty bodies in which students are involved students most frequently contact the Student Council.

The Vice dean for international cooperation and business and Erasmus and CEEPUS Coordinators are in charge of assisting students interested in mobility, but despite that, outgoing and incoming mobility is not sufficiently popular among the students. During the meeting with the Panel the students said that part-time students are not equally informed about the opportunities involved in Erasmus as the part-time students are.

The Library of the Faculty of Education and the City and University Library in Osijek are available for students. All literature is available in hardcopy, but the Faculty is introducing more online literature, i.e. professors upload it in e-courses by themselves. According to students, Student offices in Osijek and in Slavonski Brod are available to all students and provide them with all the necessary information. Teachers communicate with students during official consultations, and their consultation hours are posted online. Students said they were satisfied with all the support provided to them by the Faculty.

### Recommendations for improvement

- Since there are full-time and part-time students studying at the Early and preschool education, the Faculty's Student Council should have at least one member who is a representative of that study, which could be achieved by promoting student activism across all study programmes.
- With regard to the low incoming and outgoing student mobility, the Faculty should make Erasmus mobility more popular among students by providing them with support in going abroad to more developed countries (such as financial support), and develop the system of recognizing ECTS points so students would not fall behind in their studies when they return to the Faculty.
- The information about the Erasmus opportunities for students should be better disseminated in both part-time and full-time studies.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## **3.5. The higher education institution ensures support to students from vulnerable and under-represented groups.**

### Analysis

Information on enrolment, admission and application procedures are adjusted to students from vulnerable and underrepresented groups. This includes allocating a special quota for students enrolling in Year 1 of study who are over 25 years of age in the Call for enrolment of students in the 1st year of undergraduate university, integrated undergraduate and graduate university studies and undergraduate professional studies in the academic year 2019/2020. According to the Self-evaluation Report the teaching process is adjusted to students older than 25 and students with disability and student parents, but the way of adjustment to students older than 25 has not been described. According to standard 3.3. of the Self-evaluation Report, the Faculty made an educational policy recommendation aimed at improving the conditions of study for student-parents within EduPolicy Lab project. The



recommendation was addressed to the Ministry of Science and Education and the Ministry of Demography and Social Policy.

Although there is a Committee for students with disabilities and there are some students with disabilities studying at the Faculty, according to the Self-evaluation report, the Committee did not receive any applications for the adjustment of study conditions from 2015 to 2019, i.e. until ac. year 2019/2020 when one student asked for more time on exams and mid-term exams, which the Faculty allowed. The Faculty has rooms marked with braille and there is a special access for students to the front door (administration building also has adjusted access), and there is an elevator in the building. The library and the administration office are located on the ground floor to facilitate access.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- The Faculty could develop a plan for attracting underrepresented groups of students, in this case men.
- The Faculty should define more clearly which adjustments were made for students older than 25.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **3.6. The higher education institution allows students to gain international experience.**

#### Analysis

During the interview with students it was noticed that the information on the options of attending part of the studies abroad is not equally accessible to full-time and part-time students, because full-time students claim to have all the information, while part-time don't. The HEI stated in the Self-evaluation Report that they support students in applying for and implementing exchange programmes by helping them to find a higher education institution abroad and connecting them with students who have already been to one of the foreign universities. Despite that, the number of students who apply for mobility is low, i.e. 20 outgoing and 15 incoming students in the period from the academic year 2014/2015 to 2018/2019. It was stressed during the conversation with the Panel that the implementation of the exchange programme and recognition of ECTS credits depends on the agreement with the professor and comparison of the learning outcomes at the Faculty and the learning outcomes at the HEI abroad, which was also mentioned in the Self-evaluation Report.

There are also ECTS and CEEPUS coordinators who provide support to students, but, as students said, the problem regarding the recognition of the ECTS earned abroad still discourages students from attending studies abroad, and the financial support they get is not sufficient to cover the cost of living in some developed countries.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- The Faculty should develop strategies to increase the number of incoming students, as well as strategies to motivate students to complete a part of the studies abroad.



- In order to motivate students to participate in Erasmus mobility, the Expert Panel recommends the establishment of a sustainable system which includes the recognition of ECTS credits gained at a foreign HEI while students can freely continue to take a seminar at their Faculty.
- The information on Erasmus should equally be available to all students in all study years.
- Greater financial support to students who apply for Erasmus mobility would ease their doubts concerning the cost of living in a foreign country.

### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **3.7. The higher education institution ensures adequate study conditions for foreign students.**

#### Analysis

All the information about enrolment and studying options are available in English and the management enables support to foreign students (vice dean for business relations and international cooperation) and ECTS and CEEPUS coordinators, but the number of students involved in incoming mobility is still unsatisfactory (according to Table 2 Outgoing and incoming mobility of students at the Faculty of Education from the Self-evaluation Report). Incoming students have the opportunity to stay in the dormitory of the Student centre in Osijek, although it is not clear from the Self-evaluation Report who assists incoming students with finding accommodation. The link to the official website of the University of Osijek was provided which leads to international cooperation and Erasmus incoming students. The Faculty of Education is listed on the website, as well as the courses offered in foreign languages, but only for the integrated undergraduate and graduate university Class teacher studies. Although 40 courses are offered, it is not evident whether certain offered courses are automatically those courses linked to the English language module. Early and preschool education is not explicitly mentioned on the website. By opening documents of the offered courses on the integrated undergraduate and graduate Class teacher studies the Panel saw that they contain the courses of the Early and Preschool education studies. According to the information from the Self-evaluation Report, Croatian language courses for incoming students are organised by the University's international and inter-university cooperation service, but there is no other information besides that. According to the information from the Self-evaluation Report it is not clear whom the students from abroad can contact and how.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- The Faculty should try to increase the number of foreign students by advertising its activity in the neighbouring countries and then in other countries as well.
- The Faculty should seek feedback from foreign students on their satisfaction and needs.

- More courses in English in all study programmes would improve the conditions and opportunities for enrolment of foreign students.
- The Faculty should provide clearer information on their website on the procedure of application to Erasmus or other forms of student mobility.
- The Faculty should present the information on the offered courses for foreign students more clearly on the website of the University of Osijek and list courses separately for the Class teacher studies and Early and preschool education studies.

### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

## **3.8. The higher education institution ensures an objective and consistent evaluation and assessment of student achievements.**

### Analysis

Evaluation criteria and methods are published in the Ordinance on Studies and Studying and in the syllabi of all courses. Students stated in the interview that they were satisfied with the methods of evaluation and assessment used and they believe that professors objectively assess and grade them, but it is not evident how the HEI provides support in the development of skills related to the testing and assessment methods to all evaluators. The Expert Panel did not receive any information on whether there is peer review among teachers which would enable constructive feedback from experienced colleagues about the method of teaching and/or on the possibilities of improvement.

According to the Self-evaluation Report, the Faculty switched to e-student books completely in 2019/2020, and in this way the greatest step forward has been made so far in the digitisation of evaluation of student work, the regularity of attending classes and the performance of other student activities.

The procedure of evaluation takes into account the particular circumstances of study for individual student groups (adaptation of examination procedures, e.g. for students with disabilities). The Faculty provided an example of a student with disability who asked for prolonged time for taking mid-term exams and exams. It is not evident from available documents and interviews how objective and consistent evaluation is ensured, what kind of support teachers get in this area and how they are trained for that.

### Recommendations for improvement

- The HEI should occasionally conduct evaluation of assessment and carry out procedures of ensuring objectivity and credibility of grading (for example, double marking).
- The HEI should provide support in the development of testing and assessment methods to the teaching staff.
- The HEI could encourage teachers to carry out peer review to receive constructive comments in order to improve the teaching process.

## Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **3.9. The higher education institution issues diplomas and Diploma Supplements in accordance with the relevant regulations.**

#### Analysis

After the completion of the study students receive a diploma and a diploma supplement issued in accordance with the regulations at the graduation ceremony. The diploma contains information on the holder of the diploma (first and last name, date, place and country of birth), name and module of the completed study programme, number of ECTS credits obtained, academic title or academic degree obtained, number, place and date of issuance of the diploma and is certified by the Dean's signature and the Faculty stamp.

The diploma supplement is issued in Croatian and English and contains information on the holder of the diploma, data on the qualification obtained, data on the level of qualification, data on the content and results of the qualification obtained, data on employment opportunities or inclusion in further study programmes, additional information, and is certified by the signature of the Dean and the Faculty seal.

#### Recommendations for improvement

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## Quality grade

High level of quality

### **3.10. The higher education institution is committed to the employability of graduates.**

#### Analysis

The higher education institution has a system in place and an alumni database within Alumni Centre which helps maintaining contacts with former students. They also have a Facebook page for that purpose. More information about the Alumni Centre can be found on the official website of the Faculty. The Faculty of Education also cooperates with the Centre for career information and counselling and informs prospective students about the options of continuing education or finding employment after the completion of the study. According to the Self-evaluation Report, activities of the Centre include the organization of the career week, roundtables with employers and teachers and educators and career management workshops. Students confirmed the cooperation with the Alumni Centre, and during the conversation with alumni they confirmed they cooperate with the Faculty through joint projects and that they maintain contacts with the Faculty in case of a need for cooperation (for example, students are needed in certain projects). According to Table 3.7 Employment of graduates/alumni in the last 3 calendar years the unemployment rates among graduates of the Class teacher studies are significantly higher than among graduates of Early and preschool education studies at the national level, although the total quota of full-time students (35) and part-time students (55) of undergraduate university studies of Early and Preschool education are higher than the enrolment quota at the Class teacher studies (70).

### Recommendations for improvement

- The Faculty should carry out analyses of data on the employment of graduates and assess based on the analyses whether the quotas are aligned with social and labour market needs.
- The Faculty should make the alumni database more systematic.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## IV. Teaching and institutional capacities

### 4.1. The higher education institution ensures adequate teaching capacities.

#### Analysis

The number and qualifications of teachers are appropriate for the delivery of study programmes and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and performance of scientific activity. The ratio of students and full-time teachers at the higher education institution ensures a high quality of study.

According to the information from the documents delivered in the procedure of reaccreditation, there are 44 full-time teachers appointed in scientific/artistic and teaching grades and 26 associates. There are 881 full-time students and 418 part-time students. The student-teacher ratio in the full-time study is 24,77 and 19,12 in the part-time study, which indicates that there are favourable conditions and opportunities for achieving better communication between students and professors and better teaching process. The ratio of the norma hours of full-time teachers and total norma hours for all study programmes (including the study programmes in Osijek and those that were delivered in Slavonski Brod), except the Kinesiology study programme (which is being transferred to another HEI) is within the prescribed minimum criteria, and it exceeds 0,50.

The information from the licences and lists of full-time teachers is in line with the legal requirements and standards. Having examined the submitted documents, tables and regulations, the Panel concluded that the HEI is systematically investing in teaching staff, development and rewarding of success. In the past five years, the HEI has been trying to ensure conditions for better coverage of the study programmes by their own staff. Although in some cases the teachers' workload was not in line with relevant legislation and bylaws, the workload of teachers is generally aligned with the laws and bylaws, regulations issued by competent bodies, and collective agreements.

### Recommendations for improvement

- Ensure the teaching staff in line with the needs of the modern educational practice in kindergartens and primary schools and up-to-date documents, such as the National curriculum for early and preschool education (Official gazette 5/15).

- It is necessary to improve and make more systematic direct communication between teachers and students and to have equal approach in the communication with part-time and full-time students.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **4.2. Teacher recruitment, advancement and re-appointment is based on objective and transparent procedures, which include the evaluation of excellence.**

#### Analysis

Based on submitted documents it is evident that the HEI is making efforts to systematically plan and develop human resources and to create conditions for advancement for all teachers and associates. Human resources management plan regulates the advancement of teachers and associates. Due to the position of the Faculty and the impact on the future favourable development and maintenance of the quality of life of the population in the area, it is of special importance to invest in the development of high-quality teaching resources. Ensuring high-quality teaching staff directly influences the production and quality of future educational professionals and teachers and their work with children. Special attention is devoted to the appointment into scientific grades and that activity is implemented in cooperation with other authorized institutions. It is evident that adequate methods are used in the selection, appointment and evaluation of teachers in line with the legislative procedure.

It is certain that the HEI invests funds in junior staff and ensures significant support in their advancement. There is a large number of assistants who were appointed into the grade of assistant professors. According to the submitted data and the conversation with teachers the Panel found that they were not all familiar with the procedure, criteria and the excellence indicators. It is evident that the HEI invests effort in meeting of the procedure and criteria in the selection and advancement of teachers.

According to the submitted data it is evident there is a procedure in place and that bodies ensuring the transparency of the selection procedure of the best candidates in the selection and appointment of teachers and in the process of their advancement are appointed.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- We propose continuing the activities of providing support to the development of scientific staff, especially of international research, publishing papers in recent international scientific publications and further strengthening of professional/teaching, scientific/research and language competencies (in mother tongue and in foreign languages).
- We also propose motivating and better informing of teachers on the criteria and procedures for advancement and appointment into grades.

#### Quality grade

High level of quality

#### **4.3. The higher education institution provides support to teachers in their professional development.**

##### **Analysis**

The HEI provides the opportunities and supports teachers in the strengthening of competencies at the level of the Faculty, but it is not evident how and whether it is available for all equally. This part is described in short in the documents submitted in the procedure, and the annex *Dean's report on the work and operations of the Faculty* for certain years is on a Faculty's protected website.

The Expert Panel found out about the manner in which the HEI encourages advancement, evaluation and improvement of the teaching competencies in the conversation with heads of departments and teachers: by monitoring teachers' work, recommendations obtained from peer review in teaching delivery and based on the results of student evaluation of teachers. According to the submitted information, the outgoing mobility is higher than the incoming mobility. The Panel found that teachers were motivated to engage in mobility programmes, but it was necessary to explain the criteria for the selection of teachers and try to make options for outgoing mobility equally available for all teachers.

The information about the planning of professional development of teachers and whether they participate and how and what experience they gained was not available. Furthermore, it is not evident how the obtained knowledge is built in the teaching process. The employees advance and publish scientific papers in their profession at the local and national level.

##### **Recommendations for improvement**

- There is a need for strengthening teaching competencies for the high-quality planning of teaching activities through cooperation, planning and peer review and improvement of the education process and providing adequate support to student learning and studying.
- In relation to teacher mobility we propose developing clear criteria and ensuring clarity and equal participation of teachers in the outgoing mobility. We also propose investing additional efforts to encourage teachers and students to participate in incoming mobility.
- We propose making clearer indicators for monitoring the processes of improvement of teaching activity and providing support to students in learning.
- There is also room for publishing individual and/or joint papers in high-ranked international journals and participation in projects and applying to relevant international calls and sources.

##### **Quality grade**

Satisfactory level of quality

**4.4. The space, equipment and the entire infrastructure (laboratories, IT services, work facilities etc.) are appropriate for the delivery of study programmes, ensuring the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and the implementation of scientific/artistic activity.**

### Analysis

Having examined the resources of the HEI during the site visit and the available information on the space, equipment and the overall infrastructure the Panel established that the space and the overall infrastructure are adequate for the performance of scientific, artistic and professional activities. Within a very short period the Faculty invested funds necessary for ensuring high-quality online learning environment: it upgraded the servers, equipped several classrooms with computers with new operating systems, ensured the necessary infrastructure and fast wifi available for everyone at the Faculty. Having examined the submitted documents in the procedure of re-accreditation and during the site visit the Panel established that the space, equipment and the overall infrastructure are appropriate for the delivery of the study programmes and that they ensure the achievement of the planned learning outcomes. The Panel concluded that the higher education institution plans and improves the infrastructural development in line with the strategic goals.

### Recommendations for improvement

- To continue ensuring conditions for the high-quality study and work of teachers.

### Quality grade

High level of quality

## **4.5. The library and library equipment, including the access to additional resources, ensure the availability of literature and other resources necessary for a high-quality study, research and teaching.**

### Analysis

The library and its equipment and additional content ensure high-quality scientific and teaching and artistic and teaching activity due to the availability of up-to-date literature and databases.

During the tour of the premises, the Panel found out that the problem of limited space in the library will soon be solved by expanding the room i.e. by building a large University library very close to the Faculty.

It was stated in the submitted documents of the Faculty that the library employs two graduate librarians and one senior librarian. According to the information from the submitted documents on the equipment in the library, it is evident that it has 361 textbooks of obligatory literature and 1652 copies of textbooks of obligatory literature. There are also 10 foreign and 72 domestic journals. The library has access to 15920 electronic journals with full texts and to 25 bibliographic databases financed by university/institution funds. Based on the examination of the documents submitted within re-accreditation made in cooperation with the Quality assurance committee of the Faculty the Panel established that students expressed satisfaction with library services: 57.6% of Preschool education studies students and 60,9% of Class teacher studies students.



### Recommendations for improvement

- We propose expanding the library and ensuring additional resources for the purpose of ensuring high-quality of study and meeting students' needs.
- We propose acquiring more books and a continued systematic provision of high-quality services to library users.
- It is also necessary to ensure systematic training of students in the field of IT literacy.

### Quality grade

High level of quality

## **4.6. The higher education institution rationally manages its financial resources.**

### Analysis

Based on examination of the submitted documentation it is evident that the financial operations of the Faculty are based on the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, (Article 107). It is evident that the Faculty is trying to ensure additional funding sources, especially by developing lifelong learning problems, by applying to projects financed from the EU funds and by initiating scientific and professional projects.

Financial information about income and expenditures is not completely clear. Some of the submitted documents of the Faculty mention organization of some scientific and professional conferences and participation in international projects for which the information from financial data attached to the Self-evaluation Report cannot be found. It is not possible to gain insight in the way of financing based on this information.

According to the final records on income and expenditure of the HEI the Panel concludes that financial sustainability is ensured. It is also evident that the HEI invests efforts and funds in the creation of professional and material basis for the development, high-quality implementation and improvement of the Faculty's operation.

### Recommendations for improvement

- It is necessary to achieve the clarity and transparency in publishing financial income and expenditures of the Faculty by stating all information including the organization of scientific conferences and participation in domestic, international and other projects.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality



## V. Scientific/artistic activity

### V Scientific/artistic activity

#### 5.1. Teachers and associates employed at the higher education institution are committed to the achievement of high quality and quantity of scientific research

##### Analysis

Teachers and associates are authors and co-authors of a number of publications in the last five years. According to Table 5.1. (Bibliography) in Self-evaluation report, the total number papers in the last five years have been 739, divided into three groups:

- a) Papers of the highest category in accordance with the Regulations on the conditions for appointment to scientific titles = 202
- b) Other papers in accordance with the Regulations on the conditions for appointment to scientific titles = 245
- c) Other (book chapters, book editorship, conference proceedings etc.) = 292

Additionally, artist employed at the Faculty have presented their works of art at events of national and international importance at 32 occasions, including two books published in Croatia (Table 5.2).

Hence, the quantity of publications could be considered as satisfactory.

Assessing the quality is often based on two criteria: channels for publications and citation index (impact). Considering the first criteria and drawing on review of documents provided in Self-evaluation and on the Faculty's website, it is evident that only a small portion of publications in the highest category is in internationally recognized peer-reviewed journals. The major output channel is through the Faculty's own, local and regional journals and books. Without diminishing the importance of those channels, the evaluation committee's standpoint is that recognized peer-reviewed journals is a very solid proof of a paper's, and its underlying research, quality. Considering the latter criteria, about citations and impact, the Faculty uses the h-indexes from WoS and Scopus, ranging between h-8 and h-10. Even if the number of citations is increasing, especially between 2017 and 2019, the impact is still relatively modest, not least considering the channels of publications, as mentioned above.

The Faculty, as evident from section V in Self-evaluation and interviews with stakeholders, has recognized the need for more high-quality publications and has taken certain steps to provide better conditions for research activities, such as funding conference participation. However, it cannot be argued that the Faculty has effective procedures for promoting quality professional and/or scientific publications. It is the reaccreditation committee's understanding that the Faculty rather promotes quantity than quality of scientific publications.

The Faculty records the distribution of publications, which is evident from attached tables and other information.

Teachers and associates have a relatively large number of papers presented at national and international conferences (however most often in neighboring countries). Without diminishing the importance of these conferences and gatherings, the reaccreditation committee's understanding and position is that, generally speaking, they do not significantly contribute to the visibility, promotion and recognition of the research achievement by the Faculty staff in a larger international arena.

### Recommendations for improvement

The Faculty should:

- Encourage and provide opportunities for teachers and associates to aim at publishing their work in recognized international peer-reviewed journals, thereby promoting higher quality and visibility of the research output.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for teachers and associates to participate in international research groups.
- Encourage and support teachers and associates to more participate at conferences outside Croatia and the region.

### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

## **5.2. The higher education institution provides evidence for the social relevance of its scientific / artistic / professional research and transfer of knowledge.**

### Analysis

It could be argued that the Faculty, to a certain extent, monitors the needs of society, and the local community and considers them when planning its professional and/or scientific and research activities. The Faculty has in Self-evaluation accounted for a number of projects launched to address particular needs of the surrounding society, such as professional development of teachers working with children with special educational needs, migrants and minorities. Transfer of knowledge is, in other words, primarily oriented towards training and professional development. The Faculty has not addressed how it monitors the needs of the labor market and considers it when planning its research activities. Instead, the planning of enrolment quota is addressed. The reaccreditation committee has not been presented with firm evidences that the monitoring of the needs of society and labor market and subsequent actions are regular or based in a sustainable research policy.

The Faculty's system to support research and transfer of knowledge and technologies is partial and mostly oriented towards investment in basic infrastructure (classrooms and computers) and administrative support to those who intend to apply for funding from EU-funds. Very little through direct investment in research.

As presented in Tables 5.2.1. and 5.2.3., teachers and associates participate in the activities of a wide range public and private professional associations, bodies and committees. Most often as members, but hold also a number of positions in steering boards. This is a positive contribution to enhancing the Faculty's visibility, relevance and transfer of knowledge.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- The Faculty should increase and intensify efforts to support research and transfer of research-based knowledge to society.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **5.3. Scientific/artistic and professional achievements of the higher education institution are recognized in the regional, national and international context.**

#### Analysis

Nine members of the Faculty staff have been awarded internal acknowledgments and recognition for their achievements in and long-lasting contributions to the areas of scientific research, faculty development and its reputation (Table 5.4.1.). The reaccreditation committee has not identified any evidences of other national or international awards (Table 5.3.1. is not found following the provided link in the Self-assessment, page 90, and neither in Annex 2, Analytical supplement).

The Faculty members have participated in 45 projects in the last five years (Table 5.3.). In Self-evaluation (p. 89) it is stated that the Faculty participated in the implementation of 43 projects. As evident from Table 5.3., the projects where the Faculty is a leading institution are: a) generally funded with a fairly small amount of money, and b) mostly funded by either the University of Osijek, the Faculty itself, the local government or the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education. There are some notable exceptions. One is project Tikves sumski ekosustav (180,000 HRK) awarded by European Regional Development Fund. Another one, and this could be considered as a flagship, is the project Unapredjenje položaja djece Roma u odgoju obrazovanju u Baranji, funded by European Social Fund (144,599 EUR). The third exception are two projects (each awarded 1 million HRK) from the Ministry for maintenance of buildings. It is unclear in what way these contributions to building maintenance represent research projects. The Faculty is a partner in 5 projects with no funding at all, which is quite peculiar, not least since the projects were awarded considerable amounts from European Social Fund. There is a number of other projects, with the Faculty as a partner, funded by European Social Fund and two funded by Erasmus +. The Faculty is obviously active in applying for and getting funding from these sources. But there are no projects funded by large EU scientific funds.

In the last five years, the Faculty members have participated in the work of 44 conference organizing committees (Table 3.3.1.). The majority are national conferences and in the nearby countries, Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary and Bulgaria. Furthermore, as presented in Table 5.4. the Faculty was involved in organizing committees

for 44 conferences, also the majority being national. There is some overlapping between the two tables, and differences are not entirely clear. As an answer to criterion 5.2. in Self-assessment it is argued that teachers have participated at 334 conferences over the course of last five years (Table 5.1.1.).

Between 2015 and 2019, 19 members of the Faculty staff gave 63 invited lectures at conferences and gatherings in Croatia (the majority) and abroad (Poland, Austria, Hungary, Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Slovenia and Northern Macedonia). As previously mentioned in this reaccreditation report, the Faculty associates are not sufficiently visible and recognized scholars in a broader European scientific arena, due to limited number of publications in recognized international peer-reviewed journals and due to scarce participation in international networks.

The Faculty associates are members of 21 journals' editorial boards. The majority are national and institutional. There are a few international journals listed in Table 5.5., issued by institutions in Greece, Turkey, Serbia and Bosnia and Hercegovina. Only one, European Journal of Teacher Education, could be considered as having a significant impact.

But it is worrisome that some researchers from the Faculty are members of editorial boards to so-called predatory journals. One example is Education Journal. The editorial board has 143 members (211 editors!), and obviously anybody can become a member. The journal charges the authors 870 USD in "article processing charges". Another example is International Journal for Education, Research and Training, also charging 500-600 USD. What is interesting in this case is that the journal is listed in Table 5.5., but the reaccreditation committee has not been able to identify any faculty member on the journal's website (<http://www.ijlter.org/index.php/ijlter/about/editorialTeam>, retrieved on 04-11-2020). The same is true for another journal, Modern Journal of Language Teaching Method, no editorial member from Faculty of education, University of Osijek is listed (<https://mjltm.org/page/13/Editorial-Board>, retrieved on 04-11-2020). Another journal listed in Table 5.5. The European Education Researcher, also charges "article processing charges" up to 200 Euros. The same Faculty member is involved in this and the previously mentioned Education Journal.

The Faculty should not offer aura of legitimacy to these obscure journals through its staff's participation in "editorial boards". The researchers do not only represent themselves, but also their departments, faculties and universities.

### **Recommendations for improvement**

The Faculty should:

- Have a process whereby every new membership of editorial board is evaluated and endorsed by the dean and vice-deans. The Faculty should review the current participation of its staff and make sure those who are members of journals that charges authors "article processing charges" immediately resign from their editorial boards.
- Encourage and support its staff to get more involved in organizing committees of and participation in the conferences taking place in broader European and international contexts, not just in the closest national and international vicinity.

- Encourage and support its staff to reach out to colleagues in other European countries, broaden their involvement in international research networks and together apply for funding from EU research funds.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## **5.4. The scientific / artistic activity of the higher education institution is both sustainable and developmental.**

### Analysis

The Strategic science program of the Faculty for the period 2020 to 2024 commensurate with the Development strategy and vision of the Faculty. In the vision it is stated that visibility, interdisciplinarity, quality, continuous development, and transfer of knowledge to teaching and community are among main defining principle of the Faculty's activities. The Faculty staff are involved in a wide range of research activities of good quality, although, as previously pointed out, insufficiently with regard to international projects and publications in recognized international peer-reviewed journals. Recently established postgraduate program is another positive step in the direction towards creating a viable and high-quality research environment. Scientific projects intended to carry out in the period 2020-2024, as listed in The Strategic science program, correspond to the above-mentioned strategic aims and visions of the Faculty. However, it is not entirely clear how some of these ambitions research programs will be financed. The Faculty also rewards achievements of the staff. As evident from Table 5.4.1. nine associated have been awarded acknowledgments and recognitions, between 2015 and 2019, for their achievements for good results in scientific research, for successful work in organizing important meetings at the Faculty and for making an exceptional contribution to the activities, reputation and development of the Faculty.

As recurrently pointed out in internal documents (i.e., the Strategic science program), the Faculty suffers from a lack of appropriate resources to adequately support its ambitious research agenda. To a large extent, this is a consequence of inadequate research funding opportunities in Croatia and distribution of national resources to higher education institutions in the country.

The Faculty and the University have allocated some of their internal resources and external revenues to support research activities. The number of employees with research credentials has increased and new equipment has been purchased. But generally, the resources needed and allocated for research from internal sources are very small, and can barely cover participation at national and regional conferences. The Faculty members have not succeeded in securing larger external funding, except in a few cases. As evident from interviews with the Faculty leadership, there are limited resources to attract from local and regional institutions and organizations. Therefore, the teachers should be more committed, even with a support from external stakeholders, in preparing larger project applications, especially from EU funds. Junior researchers (in Croatian *znanstveni novaci*) could also participate in these efforts, thereby increasing human resources in scientific research.

The lack of funding to support research and artistic activities of high-quality is one of the main threats to its sustainability, also threatening to undermine the overall strategy, visions and mission of the Faculty.

#### Recommendations for improvement

The Faculty should:

- Provide opportunities for its employees and encourage them to seek participation in international project groups with the intention to apply for funding from international organizations. In order to make the Faculty researchers attractive for these groups they need to be more internationally visible and recognized as excellent scholars.
- Use its evidently good contacts with local and regional educational institutions and their governing bodies to set up jointly financed research projects, aiming at promoting research on improving the quality of preschools and schools.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **5.5. Scientific/ artistic and professional activities and achievements of the higher education institution improve the teaching process.**

#### Analysis

The Faculty offers suitable and appropriate space and equipment for scientific/artistic research. There are a number of classrooms equipped with modern technology and latest software programs, used in research as well as in teaching. The library subscribes to a vast number of scientific journals and databases, which also can be used in research and teaching. There are evidences of an active transfer of scientific results into teaching. One example is that teachers are active researchers and, according to the interviews, they are using insights gained through their own and others research to further elevate the quality of teaching and content of academic subjects. Some courses have been replaced to better align with latest research. Additionally, as evident from Table 5.5.1., 5.5.2. and 5.5.3. and interviews, the students are involved in scientific/artistic/professional projects of the Faculty. Having students involved in research process with senior colleagues is a valuable contribution to enhancement of students' analytical skills, the quality of their theses, professional knowledge and even relations with educational institutions outside of the Faculty.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- The Faculty should maintain, further develop and fine-tune its efforts to transfer research insights into teaching and to involve students in research projects.

#### Quality grade

High level of quality

## APPENDICES

### 1. Quality assessment summary– tables

<i>Quality grade by assessment area</i>				
<i>Assessment area</i>	Unsatisfactory level of quality	Minimum level of quality	Satisfactory level of quality	High level of quality
<i>I Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution</i>			X	
<i>II Study programmes</i>		X		
<i>III Teaching process and student support</i>			X	
<i>IV Teaching and institutional capacities</i>			X	
<i>V Scientific/artistic activity</i>			X	

<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>I Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
1.1. The higher education institution has established a functional internal quality assurance system.		X		
1.2. The higher education institution implements recommendations for quality improvement from previous evaluations.		X		
1.3. The higher education institution supports academic integrity and freedom, prevents all types of unethical behaviour, intolerance and discrimination.			X	
1.4. The higher education institution ensures the availability of information on important aspects of its activities (teaching, scientific/artistic and social).			X	
1.5. The higher education institution understands and encourages the development of its social role.				X
1.6. Lifelong learning programmes delivered by the higher education institution are aligned with the strategic goals and the mission of the higher education institution, and social needs.			X	



<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>II Study programmes</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
2.1. The general objectives of all study programmes are in line with the mission and strategic goals of the higher education institution and the needs of the society.				X
2.2. The intended learning outcomes at the level of study programmes delivered by the higher education institution are aligned with the level and profile of qualifications gained.		X		
2.3. The higher education institution provides evidence of the achievement of intended learning outcomes of the study programmes it delivers.		X		
2.4. The HEI uses feedback from students, employers, professional organisations and alumni in the procedures of planning, proposing and approving new programmes, and revising or closing the existing programmes.		X		
2.5. The higher education institution ensures that ECTS allocation is adequate.			X	
2.6. Student practice is an integral part of study programmes (where applicable).		X		

<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>III Teaching process and student support</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
3.1. Admission criteria or criteria for the continuation of studies are in line with the requirements of the study programme, clearly defined, published and consistently applied.			X	
3.2. The higher education institution gathers and analyses information on student progress and uses it to ensure the continuity and completion of study.				X
3.3. The higher education institution ensures student-centred learning.			X	
3.4. The higher education institution ensures adequate student support.			X	
3.5. The higher education institution ensures support to students from vulnerable and under-represented groups.			X	
3.6. The higher education institution allows students to gain international experience.		X		
3.7. The higher education institution ensures adequate study conditions for foreign students.		X		
3.8. The higher education institution ensures an objective and consistent evaluation and assessment of student achievements.		X		
3.9. The higher education institution issues diplomas and Diploma Supplements in accordance with the relevant regulations.				X
3.10. The higher education institution is committed to the employability of graduates.			X	

<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>IV Teaching and institutional capacities</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
4.1. The higher education institution ensures adequate teaching capacities.			X	
4.2. Teacher recruitment, advancement and re-appointment is based on objective and transparent procedures, which include the evaluation of excellence.				X
4.3. The higher education institution provides support to teachers in their professional development.			X	
4.4. The space, equipment and the entire infrastructure (laboratories, IT services, work facilities etc.) are appropriate for the delivery of study programmes, ensuring the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and the implementation of scientific/artistic activity.				X
4.5. The library and library equipment, including the access to additional resources, ensure the availability of literature and other resources necessary for a high-quality study, research and teaching.				X
4.6. The higher education institution rationally manages its financial resources.			X	

<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>V Scientific/artistic activity</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
5.1. Teachers and associates employed at the higher education institution are committed to the achievement of high quality and quantity of scientific research.		X		
5.2. The higher education institution provides evidence for the social relevance of its scientific / artistic / professional research and transfer of knowledge.			X	
5.3. Scientific/artistic and professional achievements of the higher education institution are recognized in the regional, national and international context.			X	
5.4. The scientific / artistic activity of the higher education institution is both sustainable and developmental.			X	
5.5. Scientific/artistic and professional activities and achievements of the higher education institution improve the teaching process.				X

## 2. Protocol of the site visit

### REAKREDITACIJA

*Fakultet za odgojne i obrazovne znanosti  
Sveučilišta J. J. Strossmayera u Osijeku*

**25. – 30. listopada 2020**

#### *Edukacija članova stručnog povjerenstva u virtualnom okruženju*

	<b>Ponedjeljak, 19. listopada 2020.</b>
<b>8:50 – 9:00</b>	Spajanje na poveznicu (link) ZOOM
<b>9:00 – 12:00</b>	Prezentacija/Edukacija <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kratko o AZVO-u i sustavu visokog obrazovanja u RH</li><li>• Postupak reakreditacije</li><li>• Standardi za vrednovanje kvalitete</li><li>• Kako napisati Završno izvješće</li></ul> Priprema povjerenstva za posjet visokom učilištu (rasprava o Samoanalizi i popratnim dokumentima)

#### **PRELIMINARNI POSJET Stručnog povjerenstva visokom učilištu**

	<b>Ponedjeljak, 26. listopada</b>	<b>Ime i prezime sudionika</b>
<b>8:50-9:00</b>	Spajanje na poveznicu (link) ZOOM	
<b>9:00-10:00</b>	Sastanak članova stručnog povjerenstva s dekanom i prodekanima	
<b>10:00-11:00</b>	Sastanak članova stručnog povjerenstva s Povjerenstvom za osiguravanje i unaprjeđivanje kvalitete	
<b>11:00-12:30</b>	<b>Analiza dokumenata</b>	
<b>12:30-14:00</b>	<b>Obilazak fakulteta</b> (predavaonice, informatičke učionice, knjižnica, studentske službe) <b>i prisustvovanje nastavi</b>	Prema rasporedu
<b>14:00-</b>	Radni ručak, povratak domaćih članova povjerenstva u Zagreb	

#### **REAKREDITACIJA U VIRTUALNOM OKRUŽENJU**

	<b>Utorak, 27. listopada</b>	<b>Ime i prezime sudionika</b>
<b>9:20-9:30</b>	Spajanje na poveznicu (link) ZOOM	
<b>9:30-11:30</b>	Interni sastanak članova stručnog povjerenstava	

	Utorak, 27. listopada	Ime i prezime sudionika
11:30-12:15	Sastanak s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prodekanicom za nastavu i</li> <li>• prodekanicom za znanost</li> </ul>	
12:15-13:15	<b>PAUZA</b>	
13:15-13:30	<i>Interni sastanak članova stručnog povjerenstava</i>	
13:30-14:15	Sastanak s voditeljima odsjeka	
14:15-14:30	<b>PAUZA</b>	
14:30-15:15	Sastanak s nastavnicima (u stalnom radnom odnosu, osim onih na rukovodećim mjestima)	
15:15-17:00	Interni sastanak članova stručnog povjerenstva - ocjenjivanje prema standardima kvalitete	

	Srijeda, 28. listopada	Ime i prezime sudionika
9:00-9:30	Spajanje ZOOM i kratki interni sastanak stručnog povjerenstva	
9:30-10:15	Sastanak s voditeljima centara (za karijerni razvoj, za istraživanje talenata i obrazovanje, za Alumnije)	
10:15-10:30	<b>PAUZA</b>	
10:30-11:30	Sastanak sa studentima	
11:30-11:45	<b>PAUZA</b>	
11:45-12:30	Sastanak s alumnijima (bivši studenti koji nisu zaposlenici visokog učilišta)	
12:30-13:30	<b>PAUZA</b>	
13:30-14:15	Organizacija dodatnog sastanka o otvorenim pitanjima – prema potrebi	
14:15-17:00	Interni sastanak članova stručnog povjerenstva - ocjenjivanje prema standardima kvalitete	

	Četvrtak, 29. listopada	Ime i prezime sudionika
9:30-10:00	Spajanje na ZOOM i interni sastanak stručnog povjerenstva	
10:00-10:45	Sastanak s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prodekanicom za razvojno-stručni rad i</li> <li>• prodekanom za poslovne odnose i međunarodnu suradnju</li> </ul>	
10:45-11:00	<b>PAUZA</b>	
11:00-11:40	Sastanak s asistentima i poslijedoktorandima	
11:40-11:50	<b>PAUZA</b>	
11:50-12:30	Sastanak s voditeljima znanstvenih projekata	

<b>12:30-13:00</b>	Sastanak s voditeljima znanstvenih projekata (članovi Uprave fakulteta)	
<b>13:00-13:30</b>	<b>PAUZA</b>	
<b>13:30-14:30</b>	Interni sastanak članova stručnog povjerenstva	
<b>14:30- 15:00</b>	Organizacija dodatnog sastanka o otvorenim pitanjima – prema potrebi	
<b>15:00-18:00</b>	Interni sastanak članova stručnog povjerenstva - ocjenjivanje prema standardima kvalitete	

	<b>Petak, 30. listopada</b>	
<b>9:20-11:30</b>	Spajanje na ZOOM i interni sastanak članova stručnog povjerenstava	
<b>11:30-11:45</b>	<b>Završni sastanak s dekanom i prodekanima</b>	
<b>11:45-16:00</b>	Rad povjerenstva na završnom izvješću i standardima kvalitete	

## SUMMARY

From the last re-accreditation cycle in 2014 the HEI carried out significant improvements in the field of organization of work and teaching and scientific/artistic activity and of achievements and the overall quality of work. The Expert Panel especially wishes to commend the work on further promotion of interdisciplinary character of the HEI, which is evident from the composition of the teaching staff, study programmes and diversity of scientific/artistic activities. The Expert Panel recognized the exceptional role of well-developed support infrastructure in the form of various centres (for quality, student affairs, IT, etc.). Furthermore, it is evident from the number of students applied in relation to the available slots that the student programmes are in demand, which ensures the enrolment of students who will be successful in their studies. It resulted in the successful progress of students through studies and achievement of learning outcomes, as well as a high number of graduates. For students of undergraduate studies wishing to continue their education, the HEI offers graduate and postgraduate study programmes. Finally, concerning international cooperation, the Expert Panel recognized the geographical position of the Faculty which is in the close vicinity of three countries as an advantage in broadening the scope of international mobility and cooperation and for attracting students and teachers.

Regardless of that and the activities taken in the right direction the Panel also detected a series of weaknesses. Regarding scientific/artistic activities, the number of publications in the international peer-reviewed journals is insufficient, participation in broader international research networks, conferences and projects is insufficient, and there is a lack of adequate fund sources for research. Concerning teaching activity, the Panel wishes to stress that the integrated undergraduate and graduate university Class teacher studies, except minor amendments, has not been revised since 2005. It can undermine the alignment of the contents of the study programme with modern theoretically, methodically, methodologically and practically gained knowledge. Moreover, the types and organization of student practice are not sufficiently developed. It is necessary to produce and adopt the Regulations on student practice which would define the role of the coordinator for teaching practice for each study programme. Regarding organizational structure, it is not clear how the current organizational model including departments and sub-departments ensures the overall quality of teaching and scientific/artistic activity. The Expert Panel also identified an unusual feature that the responsibilities for teaching and students are shared by two vice deans.

The Panel recognized some activities and methods of organization as promising and examples of good practice. Particularly noteworthy is the HEI's devotion to investing in junior researchers and providing them with the opportunities for advancement into higher scientific grades. The relatively high number of elective courses enables students to broaden their interests in certain fields. Scientific and student journals issued by the Faculty provide an excellent opportunity for dissemination of results of scientific research, especially for junior researchers, and they are a source of useful information. Finally, the Expert Panel recognized the role the HEI has in the local community through numerous platforms for cooperation, which include awards for the best written seminar paper to high school students and the volunteering aimed at providing support to vulnerable groups.