



**REPORT  
of the Expert Panel  
on the  
RE-ACCREDITATION OF  
THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENTS  
(SOCIAL SCIENCE PART) OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ZADAR**

**Date of the site visit:  
18-21 May 2014**

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## INTRODUCTION

This report on the re-accreditation of the of the social sciences and humanities departments (social sciences part) of the University of Zadar was written by the Expert Panel appointed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education, on the basis of the self-evaluation of the institution and supporting documentation and a visit to the institution.

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

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

The report contains:

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

The members of the Expert Panel were:

- Professor James Wickham, Trinity College Dublin, University of Dublin, Ireland
- Professor Ninetta Santoro, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Strathclyde, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- Professor Robert Logie, The University of Edinburgh, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- Professor Maja Jokić, Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Republic of Croatia
- Katja Bilić, student, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Rijeka, Republic of Croatia

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

- Marina Grubišić, coordinator, ASHE
- Vlatka Derenčinović, translator, ASHE

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

- University Management;
- Committee for quality assurance;
- heads of departments;
- teachers;
- teaching assistants and junior researchers;
- heads of research projects;
- heads of PhD studies;
- students, i.e., a self-selected set of students present at the interview

The Expert Panel also had a tour of the library, IT rooms, student register desk, and the classrooms at the University of Zadar, where they held a brief question and answer session with the students who were present.

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

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

1. **issue a confirmation** to the higher education institution, which confirms that the higher education institution meets the requirements for performing the higher education activities or parts of activities, in case the Accreditation Recommendation is positive,
2. **deny a license** for performing the higher education activities or parts of activities to the higher education institution, in case the Accreditation Recommendation is negative, or
3. **issue a letter of recommendation** for the period up to three (3) years in which period the higher education institution should remove its deficiencies. For the higher education institution the letter of recommendation may include the suspension of student enrolment for the defined period.

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

## SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATED INSTITUTION

NAME OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION:

University of Zadar (humanities and social science departments)

ADDRESS:

Mihovila Pavlinovića bb, Zadar

NAME OF THE HEAD OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION:

Prof. Ante Uglešić, PhD, rector

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

25 departments (19 of them are humanities and social science departments)

The humanities and social science departments are the following:

- Department of English
- Department of Archaeology
- Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology
- Department of Philosophy
- Department of French and Ibero-Romance Studies
- Department of German Studies
- Department of Information Sciences
- Department of Teacher and Preschool Teacher Education
- Department of Classical Philology
- Department of Croatian and Slavic Studies
- Department of Linguistics
- Department of Teacher Training in Gospić
- Department of Pedagogy
- Department of History
- Department of Art History
- Department of Psychology
- Department of Sociology
- Department of Italian Studies
- Department of Tourism and Communication Studies

## LIST OF STUDY PROGRAMMES

- Undergraduate university study program English language and Literature (double major)
- Graduate university study program English language and Literature (double major)
- Undergraduate university study program German language and Literature (double major)
- Graduate university study program German language and Literature (double major)
- Undergraduate university study program Italian language and Literature (double major)
- Graduate university study program Contemporary Italian Philology (double major)
- Graduate university study program Contemporary Italian Philology (single major)
- Graduate university study program Italian language Translation studies (double major)
- Graduate university study program Italian language Translation studies (single major)
- Undergraduate university study program French language and Literature (double major)
- Undergraduate university study program Spanish language and Literature (double major)
- Graduate university study program French language and Literature (double major)
- Graduate university study program Hispanic studies (double major)
- Graduate university study program Romans language (single major)
- Undergraduate university study program Croatian language and Literature (double major)
- Graduate university study program Croatian language and Literature
- Undergraduate university study program Croatian language and South Slavic Philology
- Graduate university study program Croatian language and South Slavic Philology
- Undergraduate university study program Russian language and Literature (double major)
- Graduate university study program Russian language and Literature (double major)
- Undergraduate university study program Greek language and Literature (double major)
- Graduate university study program Greek language and Literature (double major)
- Undergraduate university study program Latin language and Roman Literature (double major)
- Graduate university study program Latin language and Roman Literature (double major)
- Graduate university study program Linguistics (double major)
- Graduate university study program Linguistics (single major)
- Undergraduate university study program Archaeology (single major)
- Undergraduate university study program Archaeology (double major)
- Graduate university study program Archaeology (single major)
- Graduate university study program Archaeology (double major)
- Undergraduate university study program Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology (double major)
- Graduate university study program Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology (double major)
- Undergraduate university study program Philosophy (double major)
- Graduate university study program Philosophy (double major)
- Graduate university study program Philosophy (single major)
- Undergraduate university study program History (double major)
- Undergraduate university study program History (single major)

- Graduate university study program History (double major)
- Graduate university study program History (single major)
- Undergraduate university study program Art History (double major)
- Undergraduate university study program Art History (single major)
- Graduate university study program Art History (double major)
- Graduate university study program Art History (single major)
- Undergraduate university study program Information Sciences-Librarianship
- Graduate university study program Information Sciences-Librarianship
- Undergraduate university study program Pedagogy (double major)
- Graduate university study program Pedagogy (double major)
- Undergraduate university study program Psychology
- Graduate university study program Psychology
- Undergraduate university study program Sociology (double major)
- Graduate university study program Sociology (double major)
- Graduate university study program Cultural Sociology (single major)
- Undergraduate university study program Culture and Tourism
- Graduate university study program Ecology in Tourism
- Graduate university study program Cultural Heritage and Tourism
- Graduate university study program Journalism and Public Relations
- Graduate university study program Entrepreneurship in Culture and Tourism
- Integrated university undergraduate and graduate study program Teacher Education
- Undergraduate professional study program Preschool Teacher education
- Postgraduate university study program Archaeology of Eastern Adriatic
- Postgraduate university study program Humanities
- Postgraduate university study program The Adriatic-a link between continents
- Postgraduate university study program The society of knowledge and the transfer of information
- Joint postgraduate university study program Sociology of Regional and Local Development

#### NUMBER OF STUDENTS

5 550 students (4 400 students at humanities and social science departments)

#### NUMBER OF TEACHERS

143 employed teachers elected to scientific-teaching grades and 55 employed teachers elected to teaching grades (humanities and social science departments)

#### NUMBER OF SCIENTISTS

143 employed teachers elected to scientific-teaching grades (humanities and social science departments)

TOTAL BUDGET: 162.094.487,00

MSES FUNDING: 70%

OWN FUNDING: 30%

#### SHORT DESCRIPTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION:

The University of Zadar was established in 2002 but originally it was founded in 1396 and it is the first Croatian university. The modern development of higher education in Zadar started in 1955 with the Faculty of Philosophy in Zadar – University of Zagreb (from 1975 as part of the University of Split) and later establishment of the Teacher Training College in 1998. These two institutions formed the basis for the founding of the University of Zadar in 2002.

The University of Zadar is legally and functionally integrated university with 25 departments and 5 550 students. During its history the work of the University of Zadar was dedicated to humanities and social science study programs but in recent period it started to perform study programs from other fields.



## **CONCLUSIONS OF THE EXPERT PANEL**

The re-accreditation of 19 humanities and social sciences departments of the University of Zadar was done by three international expert panels:

- expert panel for the re-accreditation of 7 humanities departments (philological part)
- expert panel for the re-accreditation of 5 humanities departments (non-philological part)
- expert panel for the re- accreditation of 7 social science departments

Three international expert panels visited the University of Zadar on May 19-21, 2014 after a preliminary briefing session by Agency staff on May 18. Prior to the visit, panel members were provided with a self-evaluation report for the University, written in English. Self-evaluation reports for individual departments were prepared in Croatian only, and so could not be read by most of the panel members. During the visit, the panels had meetings with management, senior and junior teaching staff, PhD students, undergraduate students, and technical staff, during which those attending each meeting responded to questions raised by panel members. In the final session, the University management presented the University strategic plan and vision. The panel members wish to record their appreciation for the University's hospitality and for the full and frank discussions we were able to hold with all groups of staff and students. We also wish to commend the Agency for the efficiency with which our visit was organised.

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

1. The University of Zadar has a clear vision and strategic plan which involves the establishment of the University as a key player in the Adriatic region, both as a teaching and research institution, and having a particular focus on maritime studies across multiple disciplines. This is inclusive of social sciences and the humanities so avoids compromising the breadth of disciplines in the University.
2. The finances of the University are well managed within the limited budget constraints.
3. There is a strong community of younger academic staff that are very enthusiastic to ensure the success of the University.
4. The staff have confidence in the University management.

5. Some individual departments are implementing excellent discipline-specific initiatives for enhancement within existing resources.

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

1. There is a lack of consistency between, on the one hand the University strategic plan and quality assurance processes for teaching and research, and on the other hand the practice and implementation across the University. It is not clear what contingencies there are in the strategic plan to accommodate funding reductions that have occurred since the plan was first formulated or that might occur in the future.
2. There appears to be limited or no feedback to students regarding how their concerns are being addressed and students feel that their concerns are not being taken seriously. Students feel that systems for monitoring and enhancing teaching quality are not effective. At least one notable exception is the Sociology Department, which implements student feedback procedures that could serve as a model for the rest of the University.
3. Laboratory provision is very poor where this is required in the social sciences, most notably in Psychology and in the Language and Linguistics Departments.
4. There appear to be no procedures in place to ensure common marking standards for student assessments across the University or to ensure that assessments are appropriate for any given course. There is not clear evidence of a process of curriculum review and development to minimise duplication of teaching across courses, to ensure that there is progression of learning across the years of a given degree programme, or to ensure that course contents are regularly updated.
5. There are very few publications in international peer-reviewed journals or with international publishers, there is very little involvement in international level research grant applications, and only limited support for staff development. Staff appear to be overburdened with administration, leaving very limited time to undertake the high quality research that would be required to be internationally competitive. Some staff appear to have very high teaching loads

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

1. Procedures in Sociology for responding to student concerns
2. Initiatives in Information Science and in Sociology for raising the international profile of staff
3. Management of finances
4. Focus on regional issues including multidisciplinary approaches to maritime studies.

## ***RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT***

Specific recommendations for improvement of quality that HEI should implement in accordance with the Criteria for the assessment of quality of higher education institutions within universities which are based on the ESG:

### **1. Management of the Higher Education Institution and Quality Assurance**

- Ensure that agreed procedures for addressing ethical issues, student complaints, and for rolling out the university strategic plan are being implemented and are effective at Department level. Such procedures should be maximally efficient to avoid a substantial administrative burden on staff.
- Develop contingency plans for sustainability and development of the University to accommodate reductions in funding from the Croatian Government and lack of availability of new academic positions. This could include plans and effective support mechanisms to diversify income streams.
- Put in place effective staff development programmes, particularly for junior academic staff, and procedures for recognizing and rewarding academic staff success in teaching and in research. The term ‘academic staff’ and its equivalent in Croatian could be used to reflect the expectation that staff should undertake both research and teaching, and that they are not only teachers.
- Develop administrative support for staff preparing major research grant proposals for international level competitive funding, for example within Horizon 20/20. The university should create a Research Office actively engaged in providing help to facilitate large project applications and share good practice. From the self-evaluation document there is no office currently in the university that explicitly deals with research in any shape or form. Additional research support might be provided at the level of a Croatian Government Agency and that is shared across several universities and research institutes. The University of Zadar would benefit from more autonomy with regard to staff appointments and spending decisions within

their available budget to allow more active pursuit of their strategic plan and goals.

## **2. Study Programmes**

- There should be the introduction of some form of independent assessment of marking standards and procedures for validation of assessments against stated learning outcomes. This should be coupled with procedures to address the very high failure rate on some courses, for example by having stricter entry criteria for those courses or adjusting assessments so that they accurately reflect learning outcomes.
- Students should be allowed a higher proportion of their learning time for self-directed study, based on reading lists or other study materials, or in project work. This would help achieve a better balance between teaching and learning. There were some examples of over-teaching with limited scope for consolidation for learning.
- There should be procedures in place for regular curriculum and programme review to ensure that course materials are updated, involve progression through the degree programme, avoid duplication of teaching, and are relevant for students after graduation. Perhaps a curriculum review could occur every five years and this could be supplemented by a light touch review every year to ensure materials are updated.

## **3. Students**

- The University should consider supplementing the STATE Matura with assessments that can better guide students towards the courses that best fit their talents and interests.

- There should be implementation of procedures across the university to provide students with regular feedback regarding how their concerns are being addressed.
- Further development of contact with alumni should be pursued.
- The university should consider the introduction of a formal appeals process for students that examines the grounds for appeal. The current system of allowing students to re-sit an examination on demand is not common internationally and might undermine the value of the final qualification obtained if multiple resits do not give an accurate measure of achieving learning outcomes.

#### **4. Teachers**

- The Ministry should consider allowing universities more autonomy in decisions about staffing within their overall allocated budgets. This will be necessary if universities are to ensure an adequate balance of professionally qualified academic staff relative to the number of students and the range of programmes that they offer. This would also allow the University of Zadar to expand in its areas of strategic priority and further develop doctoral programmes.
- The university should implement some form of staff development to enhance both teaching and research skills and capacity.
- There should be a review of current administrative procedures to identify ways in which they could become more efficient and reduce the administrative burden on academic staff.

## 5. Scientific and Professional Activity

- There should be procedures in place to assess research quality as well as quantity, and to reward staff for research achievements.
- There could be more proactive approaches to increasing international co-operation, and involvement in larger scale international projects or with a larger share of the research work and associated funding.
- There is an urgent need to provide staff with additional support to undertake the high quality preparation work required to be successful in attracting large international research grants. Establishing a University Research Office would be an important first step in providing such support. It would also be important to seek ways to reduce administrative burdens on staff who have the highest chances of success in attracting such grants.
- Consider referring to full time staff involved in teaching undergraduates, as 'academic staff', and its Croatian equivalent, rather than teachers or teaching staff. This should be coupled with systems for assessing research quality and not only research quantity, together with systems to reward staff for high quality research as well as for high quality teaching. Some staff seem to have the impression that research is viewed as a hobby rather than a professional activity. These changes should help emphasise that staff are expected to undertake professional level research as well as professional level teaching. There would also have to be development of more efficient administrative procedures or provision of additional administrative support to monitor and reduce the administrative burden on academic staff.

## **6. International Cooperation and Mobility**

- Develop procedures to recognise courses completed by students at other universities as part of their programme in order to allocate ECTS on their return to the University of Zadar.
- Implement systems to encourage greater staff mobility, allowing for extended periods working in universities in other countries, and seek to recruit native speakers of foreign languages to permanent academic positions within the University of Zadar. Put in place further mechanisms to encourage non-academic experts from other countries to teach in guest lectures, or to teach guest courses. For example, in some countries there are foreign experts appointed on a part-time basis - e.g. 10% or 20% as adjunct professors for repeated visits over several years to provide this kind of external input. This might help increase the provision of courses in non-Croatian languages to encourage more visiting students from countries nearby (e.g. Italian and German) as well as from more distant countries (primarily in English).



## **7. Resources, Administration, Space, Equipment and Finance**

- There is a requirement to find means to reduce the administrative burden on academic staff, by provision of more administrative staff and by seeking to develop more efficient administrative procedures. The administrative load on staff should be monitored to ensure that it does not negatively impact on the quality of their teaching and research.
- There is a clear requirement to consolidate and organise the fragmented library facilities and to have a single and complete digitized catalogue. There should be a substantial increase in the number of student study spaces provided and student access to on-line search facilities.
- Look to co-operate with other Croatian Universities or with a Government agency in providing administrative support and financial advice (e.g. costing salaries and overheads) to help academic staff to prepare applications for very much larger competitive research grants, for example from the European Research Council or other Horizon 20/20 funding schemes. Some existing internal research support grants and national grants could be viewed as supporting pilot work as preparation for such larger grants. Support is required in the preparation of individual grants as well as in provision of workshops and training of staff to help raise their ambitions as well as their capacity for seeking external research grants. As a first step, it would be very important for the University to establish a Research Office with administrative resources that are wholly focused on supporting research grant preparation and the administrative and financial aspects of managing grants that are awarded, as well as managing internal funds to support pilot research and small scale projects.
- Laboratory provision and laboratory equipment for Psychology and for Language Learning urgently require modernising and expansion to meet international standard for these academic disciplines, and to give them the infrastructure required to be internationally competitive. Specifically, for both teaching and research, Psychology requires several more laboratory rooms

that allow individual interviews and experimental projects in settings that are comfortable and reasonably free of distractions, and modern electrophysiological equipment to support one of their main areas of strength. With appropriate infrastructure, the department would then be in a position to seek external grant funding to further develop their research facilities. Language teaching requires a language laboratory to support foreign language learning, and there should be serious consideration given to providing recording studio facilities for teaching and research both for Languages and for Linguistics.

- The University should seek to increase its financial reserves to ensure long-term sustainability and allow for future investment in major new initiatives.

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

**For Section 1 evaluations refer to the departments covered by all three panels**

### **1. Institutional management and quality assurance**

1.1 The University of Zadar has a clear vision which involves its establishment as a key regional player both as a teaching and research institution, and of being nationally leading in some areas, e.g. related to the Adriatic Sea and to marine studies, drawing on a range of disciplines, including the Social Sciences. This has been achieved thus far without compromising the Humanities. Staff are aware of the strategic goals and appear committed to them. However, the strategic goals are broad, and there is not a clear operational plan with monitoring mechanisms to ensure progress towards those goals. The University has established links to a number of universities outside Croatia, many of which are comparable in being also small or medium size institutions with a strong regional profile. There is a lack of clarity as to how the university is modifying its strategic planning in response to the recent worsening of the financial situation. The financial limitations are frequently mentioned in the self-evaluation report as a cause of revision and downsizing of various projects and objectives.

The panel was also surprised to see that the strategic plan and goals of the University were not clearly presented in the University webpages or during the initial meeting of the panels with the institutional managers. It was presented only at the request of the panels during a final session at the end of the evaluation visit. These are weaknesses for a university which aims to project itself as an international institution with a clear vision of its present and future role as a teaching and research centre.

1.2 The panel was satisfied that the institution has developed adequate structures and processes. However, there were repeated complaints from staff that these structures were not efficient and overly burdensome, there were complaints from students that monitoring and quality assurance structures did not function effectively to ensure that underperforming staff or processes were corrected, and that student complaints were often not addressed.

1.3 N/A

1.4 Most study programs are in line with the mission of the university, but some have not been updated for some considerable time and there appears to be no regular process for curriculum review. More could be done in order to engage with the university's aim to integrate its institutions and students within the context of the demands of the labour market at regional and national level.

1.5 The panel appreciated the adoption of policies and procedures concerning the university governance and teaching. However, there is a lack of an equivalent procedure for monitoring research quality. Moreover, external private or public stakeholders are seldom involved in these procedures, and students complained that they were only nominally and not actively included.

1.6 The main instrument for monitoring teaching is student evaluation, which is implemented across the University. However, there was general consensus among students and some staff that most of these evaluations did not lead to any changes, or if changes occurred these were not communicated to the groups who had raised the concerns. A notable exception was in the Department of Sociology which organises staff-student meetings to discuss concerns and to inform students about any changes that had been made in response to those concerns. This could be a model for the rest of the University. It is also important to inform students when changes have not been made and why. For example, a course or process might be required within a degree programme even if students find it very challenging or would prefer to avoid it. If this is explained to students then they are more likely to accept that cases in which there is a lack of change are based on a justified decision rather than a lack of response.

Despite the presence of a number of initiatives aimed at monitoring and improving teaching quality, the panel felt that these developments were still at an initial stage, mainly directed at younger staff. Feedback received from staff and students during our visit tended to confirm this impression. Student evaluations of all courses and the presence of student representatives in various committees are highly commendable initiatives. However, once again, students seemed rather sceptical as to their real efficacy. More should be done in order to reassure the student body of the serious and committed approach of the university towards the improvement and sustainability of teaching quality. Some staff take part in Erasmus exchanges but this is on a very small scale.

1.7 This is the area in which the panel found considerable space for improvement. The current system seems to be mainly based on a quantitative collection of data (e.g. numbers of publications), with little incentive and no clear strategic plan to internationalise research output and improve the overall quality of research.

Sabbaticals are intended to provide concentrated time for research and, in principle are granted to staff if they have a clear research plan accepted by their department. In practise, however, sabbaticals are often only possible if colleagues can be persuaded to take over the teaching. This means that they rarely occur. If teaching and sabbaticals could be planned more than a year in advance at department level, this would ease the process of reorganising teaching and also allow research planning.

The university does not appear to have procedures or administrative staff that specifically support researchers with the administrative and budgetary aspects of preparing research grant applications that are internationally competitive and that attract large amounts of funding. If there are insufficient resources within the University

of Zadar for this kind of support, then perhaps it could be organised at a national level through one of the national agencies and then shared among similar sized universities. It is not sufficient to run voluntary training workshops for staff. There is a need to provide support at the level of preparing individual grant applications. However, this should facilitate staff in the process of preparing applications, and not add to the administrative burdens of doing so.

There appears to be no strategy for concentrating on a limited number of strong research groupings to build research capacity that is competitive on a national level or international level, such as for Horizon 20/20.

There is a range of models for doctoral education across different departments, some with a focused topic and relatively full curriculum, while others are flexible and can be adapted to any topic. The average time for completing a dissertation varies from 4 to around 6 years, and a high percentage of doctoral students never finish. This is a concern for the university and is being discussed on different levels, but no clear, general strategy has been established to make the doctoral study more effective.

1.8 The creation of the Ethics committee is a positive sign of the University's commitment towards monitoring unethical behaviour more thoroughly. However, the committee seems to have a mainly reactive role, with little being done to spread good practice and encourage students to take ownership of the mechanisms which allow them a voice. The panel noticed that the only case in which the Ethics committee took a disciplinary stance was subsequent to a legal case. At the other end of the spectrum, there was widespread scepticism amongst the students consulted concerning the university's capacity to address and solve questions of unethical behaviour amongst its staff.

**For Sections 2, 3, 4 and 5, evaluations in this report refer only to the following Departments: Information Sciences, Pedagogy, Psychology, Sociology, Teachers' and Pre-School Teachers Education, Teachers' Education in Gospić, Tourism and Communication Studies.**

## **2. Study programmes**

2.1. There are procedures for monitoring study programmes, primarily through University-wide student questionnaires. However, most students considered that the views that they express in their questionnaire responses are not considered and they are given no feedback as to any changes that have been made or why a change has not been made. Some students expressed a concern that the questionnaire responses might not be anonymous and are worried that negative comments might affect the marks they are given on assignments. As a result, many students see little value in the questionnaires, and little value in spending time completing the questionnaires. Concerns expressed to the panel that students said had not been addressed ranged from examples of poor and unprofessional teaching, unsatisfactory assessments and poor communication across different sections of the University, through to a lack of air conditioning when the temperature in classrooms exceeds 30 degrees.

There are notable exceptions to this general view. In Sociology there are staff-student meetings during which concerns are discussed and the Department explains to students how they have responded to those concerns. This is excellent practice, although the Department should be careful that they also consider cases for which it is important to explain to students why a change cannot or should not be made, rather than make a change simply because students request it. Making full use of student comments in delivery of teaching and quality monitoring together with providing feedback to the students are the most important aspects of this. In addition, Pedagogy issues its own additional questionnaires to students that are specific to this Department.

2.2 The course contents appear to be relevant for the needs of society, but there appear to be too many graduates and not enough jobs available after they graduate. In areas where student quotas are relatively small, there does appear to be employment available on graduation. There might be need to emphasise transferable skills across all courses, including student self-reliance and self-directed study, assessing evidence, logical and evidence-based argument, fluency in oral presentations and critical writing, in addition to making clear to students how the knowledge and skills they acquire at university can contribute to culture and society after they graduate.

2.3 There appears to be considerable variability across the University, with some staff having very high teaching loads, and others having more manageable teaching loads. There seems to have been capacity in Sociology for some excellent initiatives because their teaching loads have been reasonable compared with other Departments such as Teacher Education which has had high teaching loads. There does seem to be an

extremely high failure rate in some courses, and this raises the questions as to whether their enrolment quotas might be too high, if they should be introducing stricter entry criteria, informing students better when selecting these courses, or if the assessments are not appropriate for the course. It was unclear to the panel why some Departments have such high failure rates, which are wasteful of time and resources, and demotivating for students.

2.4 Most of the relevant materials for this item were available only in Croatian, so could not be read by all panel members. The Croatian speakers on the panel felt that there were descriptions provided but that these were rather general and the specific learning outcomes could have been described much more clearly. Sociology provided examples in English of some module plans including learning outcomes.

2.5 The relationship between assessment and learning outcomes is not at all clear. Most of the relevant information was available only in Croatian, so could not be read by all panel members. However, several of the students commented that assessments were not always closely linked to their expectations of learning outcomes, and there does not appear to be any external or independent validation of the assessments or of the marking standards to ensure comparability with similar courses at other universities in Croatia, or to ensure consistency in the relationship between assessments and learning outcomes across different courses within the university.

2.6 ECTS appear to be in part allocated according to the Bologna process linking learning effort to achievement and credits. However, there was some dissatisfaction among students on this issue. There could be some consideration given to increasing the proportion of time that students spend on self-directed study based on reading lists etc. There appears to be an overly heavy emphasis on student contact time with staff for teaching.

2.7 There is some evidence of the inclusion of recent discoveries in courses, but most of the material describing course contents was available only in Croatian so could not be read by all members of the panel. There appears to be no external validation of the contents of study programmes to ensure comparability with internationally recognised standards.

2.8 From a limited number of observations of teaching, and from discussions with students, it does appear that there is a variety of teaching methods being used in some but not all departments. Although, again relevant information on the range of teaching methods was only available in Croatian that could not be read by all panel members.

2.9. The recent purchase of JSTOR is a major positive addition to the range of electronic databases available. The digitization of the complete library catalogue would be important to implement.

2.10 Students have opportunities for practical training and take advantage of these.

### **3. Students**

3.1 It appears that there is exclusive reliance on the State Matura exam, and entry criteria are not aligned with programmes or future careers.

3.2 Students have a mixture of views, and are concerned about the funds available for student associations, but overall there does appear to be support for sporting and other extra-curricular activities.

3.3 There is a counselling service which students mention is accessible. There are examples of staff providing advice on personal and professional development but this is not in place across the university and does not appear to be formalised in any way

3.4 Students claim they are not always informed, and in some cases do not know anything about assessment until the day before the exam. There were also concerns expressed by students that some teachers do not match the assessment to what is stated in the course syllabus, and do not follow the general guidelines regarding the proportion of final marks that are obtained through continuous assessment relative to marks obtained in final exams. Students can challenge a mark and then be allowed to re-sit an exam. However, there is not a formal appeal process. International standards typically would not allow an appeal against a mark unless there had been an irregularity in the procedures for assessment or if the student had documented illness at the time of the assessment. The grounds for the appeal are then considered through a formal appeal process.

3.5 There have been recent attempts to establish and maintain contact with alumni, but this is at a very early stage of development.

3.6 There are open days and University fairs. There appear to be good relations between the University and the local community. Both Education and Teacher Education provide continuing professional development for teaching professionals in schools.

3.7 Students can express their opinions and offer suggestions for improvement, but many students are not convinced that their opinions or suggestions are considered or taken seriously or that they have any influence on decision making.

3.8 Most students feel that they receive little or no feedback regarding the extent to which their views have been considered. There are notable exceptions to this in Sociology and Pedagogy.

### **4. Teachers**

4.1 The national freeze on new or replacement appointments has resulted in a lack of sufficient academic staff with the appropriate qualifications, most notably in teacher education. In some departments several staff are close to normal retirement age. Unless



these staff choose to continue contributing to teaching, there will be a major problem in the near future both in the overall number of teaching staff and in the number of suitably experienced and senior staff to take on leadership roles in the university. The university is making good use of the staffing resources available, but some staff are carrying excessively high teaching and administrative loads.

4.2 There appears to be no policy or practice for staff development, and the national freeze on appointments allows no scope for growth.

4.3 The university has little control of this ratio given that appointments are determined at a national level. There currently appears to be an imbalance in some departments.

4.4 There appear to be no specific policies for professional staff development. A small number of departments have developed their own initiatives to help with the professional development of younger staff.

4.5 There is broadly equitable assignment of teaching workload, although some staff do appear to have higher workloads than others. There is a heavy burden of administration, particularly on senior staff, and this leaves very limited time for research.

4.6 The panel could not find any evidence that external commitments are having a negative effect on teaching and research activities, although there was very little information provided regarding these external commitments.

## **5. Scientific and professional activity**

5.1 The university has a broad strategic plan to focus research on specific topic areas, but there are not clear policies for implementation and there appear to be no clear targets or monitoring of the quality of research.

5.2 There are multiple examples of international cooperation with bilateral agreements and staff involvement in international conferences and some international projects. However, the volume of such activity is modest

5.3 There is a large number of staff with research skills and potential, but there is not sufficient capacity across the University for undertaking substantial levels of research that is internationally competitive. A reduction in staff administrative loads, better targeted support with preparing major research grant proposals, and staff development to raise ambitious and capacity to attract large research grants that can cover salary costs for research assistance and better research infrastructure would be needed.

5.4 There are few international publications and most are not in the highest quality peer reviewed international journals or with the most prestigious international publishers. Most publications appear in Croatian only, and are focused on the Croatian context, but without consideration that similar issues might be of relevance in other countries. Sociology is somewhat of an exception, with studies of Croatian society published in international journals.

5.5 There are few rewards for staff, and research quality is not assessed or rewarded. Staff are expected to undertake research because it is part of their contract of employment, but there is no recognition that some staff put additional effort into research or are more successful researchers than others and there is no programme for development of research skills and research capacity.

5.6 There is a good record of peer reviewed publications in national journals. There are relatively few publications in high quality international peer reviewed journals. Some staff, particularly in teacher education have come from a teaching focused background and may require professional development for publication strategy.

5.7 There is involvement in both national and international projects, but involvement in international projects is very modest across the university.

5.8 There is transfer of knowledge regarding Tourism, and medical applications of Psychology, as well as continuing professional development for teachers in schools.

5.9 N/A

5.10 There are doctoral programmes in some, but not all Departments, with PhD students contributing to research. Teacher Education does not have a sufficient number of suitably qualified mentors for a doctoral programme.

**For Sections 6 and 7, evaluations refer to the departments covered by all three panels**

## **6. International cooperation and mobility**

6.1 In recent years, Zadar University has increasingly attracted students from outside as well as within the local and regional area. This is partly due to new, nationally defined admittance criteria so that students do not have to travel to Zadar to complete an entrance exam, and partly due to information about the different areas of study being made widely available, particularly on the university web pages.

There do not appear to be reliable data on how many students have chosen Zadar as first priority, and in which studies. These data would offer a major asset for increasing mobility from other institutions.

Therefore, mobility of students is only partly implemented and there are few data available which allow for a quantification and assessment of the results of university mobility policies. Moreover, there seems to be an expectation that students choosing to carry on to the graduate two-year course will do so in the same university as they completed their undergraduate studies.

6.2 There are examples of students from other countries attending courses at the University of Zadar, and of University of Zadar students undertaking part of their undergraduate study at universities in other countries. However, students commented that they do tend not to obtain ECTS for study completed abroad, and may have to undertake additional courses and assessments on return to the university. This is seen by students as a barrier to mobility, and few students take advantage of the opportunity to complete part of their programme abroad.

6.3 There are clear opportunities for staff to be involved in international cooperation. Academic staff and full time researchers are encouraged to take part in international cooperation through exchange schemes, by participating in international conferences, and by arranging international conferences in Zadar. International mobility relies mainly on informal recognition by fellow staff members and good will. There is no formal structure to reward or recognise participation in international work. From discussions with individual staff, there appears to be more international cooperation in the form of short visits than is evident from the university self-evaluation report. In Sociology there is an International Joint Master's Degree enabling mobility of staff and students organised with several other universities. This could serve as a model for other departments. However, current mobility is still rather limited in both staff numbers and duration of the period spent abroad. The University could be more pro-active in encouragement and support for such activity, coupled with a clear structure for monitoring, evaluating and rewarding international cooperation, but such a structure should not have burdensome reporting requirements for staff.

The national research funding system in Croatia has moved to supporting fewer, larger projects, and access to this funding is more competitive than previously. However, staff have very little experience of writing larger grants that are nationally or internationally competitive, and there are no forms of administrative support at a national or at university level to facilitate researchers writing larger applications, or to manage the administration and finance associated with large external grants that are awarded. A University Research Office should be established to provide this kind of support. The burden of administration on staff, also leaves very limited time to undertake the high quality research and thorough reading, pilot work and preparation that is required for an internationally competitive research grant application.

6.4 The University is making good progress in developing its international associations, particularly within the region of the Adriatic and other neighbouring countries. However, a great deal more could be done to promote and facilitate a higher international profile for research output by publishing more in languages other than Croatian, by having more members of staff represented on the boards of international organisations and learned societies, and by attracting more international research projects.

6.5 Exchange agreements have been established with a number of foreign universities, and relevant information made available internationally for prospective students from abroad. Still, only a limited number of courses are given in languages other than Croatian.

6.6 Exchange agreements have been established with a number of foreign universities, and teachers from abroad do come regularly for short visits to teach or attend conferences at University of Zadar. However, there seems to be no policy or expressed interest in attracting applicants from abroad for permanent positions, and the vast majority of staff seem to be educated almost exclusively in the Croatian educational system. It was also noticed that Foreign Language departments have no mother-tongue speakers amongst their staff. This was specifically mentioned by language students in both their written and oral feedback.

6.7 The number of international exchange agreements is high, although the implementation of these agreements in actual exchanges could be increased. In addition, there is a well-developed cooperation in teaching and research between departments and local institutions outside the university, for example museums, archives, and academy institutes. There are several European projects in which some departments are involved as partners, although not a project co-ordinators. This is positive in the context of the University's relatively small size and of Croatia's place in European academic networks.

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

7.1 There are satisfactory learning resources for classroom based teaching. However, other learning resources are far from being fully adequate. The laboratory provision in Psychology is very poor, and with the exception of a few modern computers, the equipment is largely of historical interest. There is a lack of individual rooms for research and student projects that require individual interviews or experimental work with human volunteers in a distraction free setting. The focus of Psychology on electrophysiological recording is a potential strength, but the outdated equipment and poor laboratory provision would not allow teaching of leading edge methodology or of staff research that will be recognised internationally. One of the few laboratories was unusable because the ceiling had collapsed. There is also a requirement for technical support to maintain and upgrade specialist equipment and for computer programme development in setting up experiments for student and staff projects. There is a lack of Language laboratories for the learning of foreign languages and this was mentioned by some students during our visit. The provision of study space and the unfinished digitization of the library stock is also in need of substantial improvement. Considerably more study spaces with access to online search facilities are required for students, and both students and staff should have the opportunity to browse books in the library stock rather than request individual items from library staff. The recent purchase of JSTOR is a major advance, but students should be given easier access to this resource. The IT support is under-staffed relative to the high number of students, staff and facilities for which it is responsible. It is hoped that these aspects will be given priority in the creation of new facilities in the new Campus, but also in refurbishment of facilities for Departments that will remain in their current accommodation.

7.2 Senior and junior academic staff reported that their administrative burden had increased substantially in recent years, and this was undermining their capacity to undertake their research and teaching. It was also surprising that, in the calculation of the work load of academic staff in the Self-Evaluation Report, there is a statement of teaching load, but there is no indication of administrative load. The recent freeze on all new posts of any kind has certainly impacted negatively on the situation, with a lack of an adequate number of administrative staff, leading to additional administrative burdens on academic staff. Although formally academic staff are expected to have 50% of their time on teaching and 50% of their time on research, because teaching time is monitored, then it is research time that is dramatically reduced by increased administrative loads. There is a clear requirement to monitor the administrative load on staff, and to seek new and more efficient but effective administrative procedures that reduce loads on both administrative and academic staff.

7.3 The Self-Evaluation Report does not appear to address this topic nor, during our visit, were we invited to discuss it with non-teaching staff at the University.

7.4 The poor and outdated laboratory equipment in Psychology does not comply with international standards. There is also no obvious technical support to ensure training

for students and staff in relevant usage protocols for the equipment that is available. The lack of a Language laboratory is a particularly worrying deficiency in a university which prides itself on the teaching of an impressive range of foreign languages. Some research leaders did not have a realistic impression of the status of their laboratories relative to international standards.

7.5 Within the given economic framework, the available teaching and research facilities are adequate, with the notable exceptions of very poor laboratory provision in Psychology and in Language learning. The computer replacement policy is good and important, but it is not clear that it is implemented throughout the university. There is a requirement to provide more on-line resources, provision of additional databases and computer study areas for supporting teaching and research, as well as substantially enhanced laboratory facilities, and these should be prioritized in the university's future planning. To reduce some costs, the university could also consider use of more open source computer software for applications that are not purchased at a national level. Examples might be use of the R statistical software, Open Office, Mozilla Firefox and Thunderbird, and Linux/Ubuntu operating systems.

7.6 With regard to the library, the panel identified three areas which need substantial improvement: a) Completion of the digital catalogue (currently at 70%); b) A substantial increase of student study space in the central site, including provision of dedicated space for group work; c) Integration of all departmental libraries in a single digitised catalogue system.

7.7 The University appears to have a solid financial plan which allows for a transparent and efficient management of its resources. Its limited autonomy with regard to ministerial funding is compensated by a number of other income-producing initiatives at local level as much as through European sources such as in the case of the refurbishment of existing buildings at the new campus site. The panel noted that the University's reserves are not particularly substantial (700.000 Euros): increasing these should be a goal as a means to secure the University's long-term stability in potential times of national financial difficulties. The University could also seek to further diversify its income streams. Given the university's attractive location and its involvement in cultural history, there would seem to be possibilities for philanthropic funding, in particular in collaboration with Croatian associations abroad, and by developing links with successful alumni.

7.8 The panel is satisfied that the University does use its funds to increase the quality of teaching and research both centrally and at the level of individual departments. This is an issue on which all staff involved in our visit seemed to agree. The student body, however, did not seem entirely convinced that these initiatives are effective in addresses pockets of bad practice in teaching which are still present.