



**Report
of the Expert Panel
on the Reaccreditation
of the Postgraduate doctoral study programme in
Dental Medicine
University of Zagreb School of Dental Medicine**

**Date of the visit to the
University of Zagreb School of Dental Medicine:
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INTRODUCTION

The Expert Panel appointed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) created this Report on the Re-accreditation of the University Postgraduate doctoral study programme in *Dental Medicine* on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the University of Zagreb School of Dental Medicine.

The Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE), a public body listed in EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education) and a full member of ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), re-accredits higher education institutions (hereinafter: HEIs) and their study programmes in line with the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (Official Gazette 45/09) and the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (OG 24/10). In this procedure parts of activities of higher education institutions and university postgraduate study programmes are re-accredited.

Expert Panel is appointed by the Agency's Accreditation Council, an independent expert body, to carry out independent evaluation of post-graduate university study programme in Dental Medicine.

The Report contains the following elements:

- Short description of the study programme,
- The recommendation of the Expert Panel to the Agency's Accreditation Council,
- Recommendations for institutional improvement and measures to be implemented in the following period (and checked within a follow-up procedure),
- A brief analysis of the institutional advantages and disadvantages,
- A list of good practices found at the institution,
- Conclusions on compliance with the prescribed conditions of delivery of a study programme,
- Conclusions on compliance with the criteria for quality assessment.

Members of the Expert Panel:

- Prof. Michael Drinnen, Newcastle University/ Freeman Hospital, UK (site visit: Faculty of Medicine Zagreb and Split)
- Prof. Albert Selva O'Callaghan, Autonomous University of Barcelona/ Hospital Universitari General Vall d'Hebron, Spain (site visit: Faculty of Medicine Zagreb and Rijeka)
- Prof. Gernot Riedel, Aberdeen University, UK (site visit: Faculty of Medicine Zagreb and Split)
- Arturo Moncada Torres, doctoral student, KU Leuven, Belgium (site visit: Faculty of Medicine Zagreb and Rijeka)
- Dr. sc. Senthil.Kaniyappan, postdoctoral researcher, Max Planck Institute of Metabolism Research and DZNE (German Centre for Neurodegenerative Diseases), Germany (site visit: Faculty of Medicine Zagreb and Split)

- Dr. sc. Patrycja Kozik, Group Leader, MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Cambridge University, UK (site visit: Faculty of Medicine Zagreb and Rijeka)
- Prof. Peter Hylands, King's College London, UK (site visit: Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry, Zagreb)
- Prof. Gonzalo Herradón, University CEU San Pablo, Spain (site visit: Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry, Zagreb)
- Marcin Ciszewski, doctoral student, Medical University of Łódź, Poland (site visit: Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry, Zagreb)
- Prof. Gábor Gerber, Semmelweis University, Hungary (site visit: School of Dental Medicine Zagreb and Faculty of Medicine Rijeka)
- Prof. Robert Allaker, Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London, UK (site visit: School of Dental Medicine, Zagreb)
- Prof. Pedro Sousa Gomes, University of Porto, Portugal (site visit: School of Dental Medicine Zagreb)
- Prof. Daniel W Lambert, University of Sheffield, UK (site visit: School of Dental Medicine Zagreb)
- Prof. Zdenek Broukal, Charles University, Czech Republic (site visit: School of Dental Medicine Zagreb)
- Nemanja Sarić, doctoral student, King's College London, UK (site visit: School of Dental Medicine Zagreb and Faculty of Medicine Split)
- Prof. Suzanne Held, University of Bristol, UK (site visit: Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Zagreb)
- Prof. David Sargan, University of Cambridge, UK (site visit: Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Zagreb)
- Vitalina Drobnyska, doctoral student, University of Greenwich, UK (site visit: Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Zagreb)
- Dr. sc. Prateek Mahalwar, Max Planck Institute for Developmental Biology/ EY, Germany (site visit: Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Zagreb and Faculty of Medicine Split)

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

- Prof. Gábor Gerber, Semmelweis University, Hungary
- Prof. Robert Allaker, Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London, UK
- Prof. Pedro Sousa Gomes, University of Porto, Portugal
- Prof. Daniel W Lambert, University of Sheffield, UK
- Prof. Zdenek Broukal, Charles University, Czech Republic
- Nemanja Sarić, doctoral student, King's College London, UK

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

- dr. sc. Josip Hrgović, coordinator, ASHE,
- Igor Biščan, assistant coordinator, ASHE

- Lida Lamza, interpreter at the site visit, ASHE

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

- Management
- Study programme coordinator
- Doctoral candidates
- Teachers and supervisors
- External stakeholders
- Alumni

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

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: Postgraduate doctoral study programme in Dental Medicine.

Institution providing the programme: School of Dental Medicine

Education provider(s): University of Zagreb

Place of delivery: Zagreb

Scientific area and field: Biomedicine and Health

Learning outcomes of the study programme: The learning outcomes are listed in SER and are assessed as compliant with the Croatian Qualifications Framework

Number of doctoral candidates: 183

Number of teachers: 74 (according to the approved study programme)

Number of supervisors: 95 (with formal appointment by the Senate)

RECOMMENDATION BY THE EXPERT PANEL TO THE ASHE'S ACCREDITATION COUNCIL

Upon the completion of the re-accreditation procedure and the examination of the materials submitted (Self-Evaluation Report etc.), the visit to the higher education institution and interviews with HEI members in accordance with the visit protocol, the Expert Panel renders its opinion in which it recommends to the Accreditation Council of the Agency the following: (leave what is recommended, delete the rest):

1. **issue a confirmation on compliance** for performing parts of activities (renew the licence).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. The Expert Panel suggests the establishment of additional methods to assess faculty involvement and capabilities within the mentoring process – particularly centred on student evaluation – with concrete interventions.
2. Resources are frequently severely limited by a lack of funding. Students and mentors are resourceful to overcome this, but often rely on goodwill allowing access to facilities and materials in other departments / institutions. The Expert Panel's view is that this is an unsustainable model for doctoral research and that they should explore using some of the tuition fee to ease financial pressures on projects.
3. There was no evidence presented to the Panel that the programme is adequately subjected to periodic reviews. We recommend that at the very least, feedback from those who withdraw from the programme should be sought to identify areas in which improvements can be made.
4. Students complete a mentor assessment form each year, but it was not clear how this was acted upon. The only example of evidence in support of a process for dealing with poor feedback was that a mentor had been changed due to ill-health; it appeared mechanisms weren't fully formulated to deal with a breakdown in student : supervisor relationship. The Panel recommends clear and robust procedures are put in place to ensure any problems raised on the mentor assessment form, however rare, are acted upon.
5. Majority of theses written in Croatian hampers attempts at systematic detection of plagiarism. More evidence required of efforts to bring this to international standards. The Panel recommends that the implementation of English language thesis submission as given high priority.

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Overall satisfaction of students.
2. The taught programme in particular is a strength.
3. Robust procedures for proposing projects and recruiting students.
4. High levels of interdisciplinary research.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Lack of mechanisms to detect plagiarism.
2. Lack of opportunities for international mobility.
3. Lack of funding for research projects.

4. Lack of clear procedures for responding to feedback.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. The robust mechanisms for proposing projects and accepting students.
2. The research skills and specific taught elements were recognised by the Panel as a strength of the course.

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

Minimal legal conditions:	
1. Higher education institution (HEI) is listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations in the scientific area of the programme, and has a positive reaccreditation decision on performing higher education activities and scientific activity.	YES
2. HEI delivers programmes in the two cycles leading to the doctoral programme, i.e., first two cycles in the same area and field/fields (for interdisciplinary programmes), and employs a sufficient number of teachers as defined by Article 6 of the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (OG 24/10).	YES
3. HEI employs a sufficient number of researchers, as defined by Article 7 of the Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing Licence for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organisations and Content of Licence (OG 83/2010).	YES
4. At least 50% of teaching as expressed in norm-hours is delivered by teachers employed at the HEI (full-time, elected into scientific-teaching titles).	YES
5. Student: teacher ratio at the HEI is below 30:1.	YES
6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public.	YES
7. HEI launches the procedure of revoking the academic title if it is determined that it has been attained contrary to the conditions stipulated for its attainment, by severe violation of the studying rules or based on a doctoral thesis (dissertation) that has proved to be a plagiarism or a forgery according to provisions of the statute or other enactments.	YES
Additional/ recommended conditions of the ASHE Accreditation Council for passing a positive opinion	
1. HEI (or HEIs in joint programmes) has at least five teachers appointed to scientific-teaching titles in the field, or fields relevant for the programme involved in its delivery.	YES
2. In the most recent reaccreditation, HEI had the standard Scientific and Professional Activity marked as at least "partly implemented" (3).	YES
3. The doctoral programme is aligned with the HEI's research strategy.	YES
4. The candidate : supervisor ratio at the HEI is not above 3:1.	YES
5. All supervisors meet the following conditions:	YES

<p>a) PhD, elected into a scientific title, holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position and/or has at least two years of postdoctoral research experience;</p> <p>b) active researcher in the scientific area of the programme, as evidenced by publications, participation in scientific conferences and/or projects in the past five years (table 2, Supervisors and candidates);</p> <p>c) confirms feasibility of the draft research plan upon admission of the candidate (or submission of the proposal);</p> <p>d) ensures the conditions (and funding) necessary to implement the candidate's research (in line with the draft research plan) as a research project leader, co-leader, participant, collaborator or in other ways;</p> <p>e) trained for the role before assuming it (through workshops, co-supervisions etc.);</p> <p>f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory work.</p>	
<p>6. All teachers meet the following conditions:</p> <p>a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position;</p> <p>b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the course (table 1, Teachers).</p>	YES
<p>7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment committees.</p>	YES
<p>8. The programme ensures that all candidates spend at least three years doing independent research (while studying, individually, within or outside courses), which includes writing the thesis, publishing, participating in international conferences, field work, attending courses relevant for research etc.</p>	YES
<p>9. For joint programmes and doctoral schools (at the university level): cooperation between HEIs is based on adequate contracts; joint programmes are delivered in cooperation with accredited HEIs; the HEI delivers the programme within a doctoral school in line with the regulations and ensures good coordination aimed at supporting the candidates; at least 80% of courses are delivered by teachers employed at HEIs within the consortium.</p>	N/A

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

	Quality assessment and the explanation of the Expert Panel
1. RESOURCES: TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, RESEARCH CAPACITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
1.1. HEI is distinguished by its scientific/ artistic achievements in the discipline in which the doctoral study programme is delivered.	High level of quality Given financial constraints and current infrastructure Robust procedures Adequate supervision (very positive comments from students, but students also appear to be very resourceful).
1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.	High level of quality (given relatively high number of both dental undergraduates and postgraduate researchers.) Students publish regularly in field-specific journals. More than 50% of the programme is delivered by its own faculty, with care on workload distribution between departments and staff. The program offers a wide range of optional courses, taught by distinct faculty and within their domain of specialization, allowing the students to build up on their own research interests, and allowing for a wide distribution of the workload.
1.3. The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.	High level of quality Teachers are very actively engaged with the whole PhD process. There are established pre-requisites for mentoring, and faculty enrolled into the program must be active researchers in the field – within the assayed period, a ratio of around 3 manuscripts/year/researcher was verified. Many of the attained publications are the result of established international cooperation with recognized peer organizations.
1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.	High level of quality Metrics related to number of papers published, citations and h-indices for mentors (supervisors) demonstrates sufficient quality. The program has an adequate number of mentors, with the mentor-to-student ratio below 3. Mentors are actively engaged into research within the topic of the program with a high publication output.
1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and	Improvements needed

<p>competencies of teachers and supervisors.</p>	<p>Methods of assessing performance of teachers and supervisors need to be fully ascertained.</p> <p>Academic progression guidelines e.g. quantity & quality of publications appears to compare well with other European cities.</p> <p>Apart from the requirement to be an active researcher within the field, the establishment and applicability of further measures to assess mentors' competences were unclear. It was reported that students evaluate mentors yearly, in an anonymously form, but the outputs of the evaluation process were not disclosed.</p> <p>The Expert Panel suggests the establishment of additional methods to assess faculty involvement and capabilities within the mentoring process – particularly centred on student evaluation – with concrete interventions.</p>
<p>1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.</p>	<p>Improvements needed</p> <p>Resources are frequently severely limited by a lack of funding. Students and mentors are resourceful to overcome this, but often rely on goodwill allowing access to facilities and materials in other departments / institutions. The Expert Panel's view is that this is an unsustainable model for doctoral research and that they should explore using some of the tuition fee to ease financial pressures on projects.</p>
<p>2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME</p>	
<p>2.1. The HEI has established and accepted effective procedures for proposing, approving and delivering doctoral education. The procedures include identification of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs.</p>	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The Faculty has very robust procedures for proposing projects and accepting students, including an interview. It was not clear to the Panel whether this addressed entirely the needs of stakeholders due to a rather narrow representation of stakeholders available to meet the Panel. Those who were present from hospital settings appeared satisfied.</p>
<p>2.2. The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.</p>	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>Programme strives for academic excellence, encourages innovations and their commercialization (evidence of some patents), and encourages employment of successful junior researchers. It encourages inter-institutional collaboration and some degree of international networking.</p>
<p>2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the success of the programmes through</p>	<p>Improvements needed</p>

<p>periodic reviews, and implements improvements.</p>	<p>There was no evidence presented to the Panel that the programme is adequately subjected to periodic reviews. We recommend that at the very least, feedback from those who withdraw from the programme should be sought to identify areas in which improvements can be made.</p>
<p>2.4. HEI continuously monitors supervisors' performance and has mechanisms for evaluating supervisors, and, if necessary, changing them and mediating between the supervisors and the candidates.</p>	<p>Improvements needed Students complete a mentor assessment form each year, but it was not clear how this was acted upon. The only example of evidence in support of a process for dealing with poor feedback was that a mentor had been changed due to ill-health; it appeared mechanisms weren't fully formulated to deal with a breakdown in student : supervisor relationship. The Panel recommends clear and robust procedures are put in place to ensure any problems raised on the mentor assessment form, however rare, are acted upon.</p>
<p>2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.</p>	<p>Improvements needed Some improvement is needed. Efforts have commenced to detect plagiarism. Majority of theses written in Croatian hampers attempts at systematic detection of plagiarism. More evidence required of efforts to bring this to international standards.</p>
<p>2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation.</p>	<p>High level of quality The process is well structured and transparent.</p>
<p>2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.</p>	<p>High level of quality Scientifically sound assessment process and sufficient independent individuals involved.</p>
<p>2.8. The HEI publishes all necessary information on the study programme, admissions, delivery and conditions for progression and completion, in accessible outlets and media.</p>	<p>High level of quality The website seems to provide details on progression requirements, course structure as well as documents relating to annual progress reports, dissertation topic evaluation and complaints procedures.</p>
<p>2.9. Funds collected for the needs of doctoral education are distributed transparently and in a way that ensures sustainability and further development of doctoral education (ensures that candidates' research is carried out and supported, so that doctoral education can be completed successfully).</p>	<p>Improvements needed Processes were not entirely transparent to the Panel - the amount of money diverted to research projects from tuition fees and other sources was not entirely clear.</p>

2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).	Improvements needed SER did not provide sufficient explanation. Further information required here.
3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION	
3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.	High level of quality Reasonable number of PhD students per mentor / supervisor.
3.2. The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.	High level of quality Appears to be satisfactory consideration of these needs.
3.3. The HEI establishes the admission quotas taking into account the funding available to the candidates, that is, on the basis of the absorption potentials of research projects or other sources of funding.	Improvements needed Not enough evidence of structured establishment of quotas based on funding availability.
3.4. The HEI should pay attention to the number of candidates admitted as to provide each with an advisor (a potential supervisor). From the point of admission to the end of doctoral education, efforts are invested so that each candidate has a sustainable research plan and is able to complete doctoral research successfully.	High level of quality Robust procedures are in place to ensure suitable supervision is in place.
3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.	Improvements needed Some efforts to recruit from overseas and raise profile of the Dental School overseas. Needs to be more ambitious.
3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.	High level of quality Clear and robust processes are in place. This is a strength of the programme.
3.7. The HEI ensures that the selection procedure is transparent and in line with published criteria, and that there is a transparent complaints procedure.	High level of quality The selection procedure is robust and transparent. There is, however, less evidence for transparency of complaints procedures.

3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.	High level of quality A clear points system is in place.
3.9. Candidates' rights and obligations are defined in relevant HEI regulations and a contract on studying that provides for a high level of supervisory and institutional support to the candidates.	Improvements needed Further clarification required as to the contract used.
3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.	High level of quality Appropriate systems are in place at institutional level to support progression.
4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES	
4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>Reasonable as compared with other European cities (although no clear international standards is laid down in SER.)</p> <p>The program allows for the students to develop at least 3 years of independent research experience, with a minimum requirement of 2 manuscripts - with at least one being published within a journal with impact factor greater than the median impact factor of the area of research, for the submission of the thesis.</p> <p>Regarding teaching, a wide range of optative courses, addressing areas of expertise of faculty are offered, allowing for the students to establish an individual curricular structure, based on his own research interests.</p> <p>The structure of the programme methods and contents, in terms of admission, objectives, teaching/research ratio and outputs is comparable to current international standards for doctoral education within the area of research. Further, comparability also exists on the format of the thesis presentation and on the nomination of thesis assessment committee.</p> <p>A high level of interdisciplinary research is achieved through significant local and international collaborations, despite that these seem to be established ad-hoc, and should further be contractualized.</p>

	Irrespective of the previous assessed points, in order to further increase internationalization and comparability, it is of the utmost relevance that thesis are written in English.
4.2. Programme learning outcomes, as well as the learning outcomes of modules and subject units, are aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF. They clearly describe the competencies the candidates will develop during the doctoral programme, including the ethical requirements of doing research.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The Expert Panel acknowledges that the research competences and learning outcomes, established for the program and for individual modules, are aligned with international recognized standards for doctoral degree programmes.</p> <p>The course has been modified within the recent years in order to focus on the development of independent research. Additional optative courses were made available, as was a set of mandatory courses, further embracing ethical requirements of research.</p>
4.3. Programme learning outcomes are logically and clearly connected with teaching contents, as well as the contents included in supervision and research.	<p>High level of quality (as regards thesis presented and publications expected.)</p> <p>The assessment of the learning outcomes following students and alumni interview allowed the Expert Panel to consider that these are cohesive and aligned with the offered mandatory and optional courses, developed supervision and research.</p>
4.4. The doctoral programme ensures the achievement of learning outcomes and competencies aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF.	<p>High level of quality</p> <p>The programme seems to be structured in a way to allow for the competencies development at the level of a doctoral degree – level 8.2 of the CroQF. Some mechanisms have been established in order to assure the high quality of outputs and learning outcomes, namely the public defence of the theme of the thesis by an evaluation board, and yearly progress reports submitted by the students, afterwards.</p> <p>Major limitations on the evaluation of sample theses were related to language, since the vast majority was written in Croatian. However, the ones presented in English language were found to be of high quality.</p> <p>The samples of the available published articles, related to research work developed within the program, showed the alignment of the binomial learning outcomes/competencies interplay with the effective rationalization, critical thinking, experimental planning, execution, data gathering and validation, discussion and publication of the scientific work within the frame of the thematic research area.</p>
4.5. Teaching methods (and ECTS, if applicable) are appropriate for level 8.2	High level of quality

<p>of the CroQF and assure achievement of clearly defined learning outcomes.</p>	<p>The programme, on the first year, relies on a set of a few mandatory courses (on research methodologies, biostatistics and ethics topics), further complemented by many branch subjects that allow for the construction of an individualized curricular structure. The vast majority of classes are taught by seminars or practical classes, allowing for the development of the aimed learning outcomes according to the 8.2 level of the CroQF. On subsequent years, teaching methodologies rely majorly on the mentoring process, as well as on conference/seminar participations by students – which seem to be effective.</p>
<p>4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.</p>	<p>Improvements needed The programme is set and majorly oriented to develop research-related skills and competences, either through mandatory or optional courses. These are based on research methodologies, ethics and statistics, or specialized areas of research within the main thematic area of knowledge. A further effort should be conducted in order to offer formation, either course-structured, or regarding workshop on soft and transferable skills including entrepreneurship, business and management, funding gathering, project management, among others. This offer could result from established agreements with the University or other institutions.</p>
<p>4.7. Teaching content is adapted to the needs of current and future research and candidates' training (individual course plans, generic skills etc.).</p>	<p>High level of quality Excellent and well-structured methodological subject teaching and branch-subjects programme offered.</p> <p>The very high number of optional courses available, ranging from 3 to 5 ECTS, grants the possibility of the students to build up on their own individual curricular structure. This stands out as a major strength of the programme that allows the specialized formation within the scientific field of the programme.</p>
<p>4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.</p>	<p>High level of quality The programme ensures some measures aiming to enhance quality through internationalization, namely the capacity to attract foreign applicants from neighbouring countries. Further, mentors from congener institutions from Europe and America, were enrolled into mentoring and co-mentoring students from the programme. There are also some evidence on encouraging candidates to participate in international conferences as through the award of ECTS.</p>

	Notwithstanding, an effort should be put in practice to strongly support staff and student mobility and create conditions to attract international faculty for workshops and short-term stays in order to strength some specific aspects of the programme.
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***NOTE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPERT PANEL TO THE ASHE'S ACCREDITATION COUNCIL AND QUALITY LABEL**

The role of the Expert Panel in the re-accreditation of doctoral study programmes is manifold. The Expert Panel or part of the Expert Panel visiting a higher education institution drafts a report on the basis of a self-evaluation report, the accompanying relevant documentation, and a site visit to HEI. The draft report is adopted by all members of the Cluster Expert Panel, while the president of the Cluster Expert Panel is responsible for coordinating the assessment levels.

The report contains an assessment on whether a doctoral study programme delivered at a higher education institution complies with the prescribed laws and by-laws, as well as any additional/recommended requirements defined by the Agency’s Accreditation Council, and whether a higher education institution can obtain a positive, i.e. satisfactory quality assessment according to the criteria set out in this document. Moreover, the Expert Panel must make recommendations for quality improvement.

Based on the assessment of all these elements, the Expert Panel may propose to the Accreditation Council of the Agency to issue either a confirmation on compliance, a letter of expectation for the period up to three (3) years in which period the higher education institution should eliminate the identified deficiencies, or to deny the license.

If the Expert Panel has assessed that a doctoral study programme delivered by a higher education institution does not meet legal and other requirements or that the quality of a study programme is not ensured (i.e. that HEI does not meet additional requirements or recommendations made by the Accreditation Council, or has a very poor quality assessment), they should propose to the Accreditation Council to deny the license.

If the Expert Panel considers that the relevant laws and bylaws have been met by a higher education institution, but that certain elements mentioned above do not meet the quality requirements, while they consider that the identified shortcomings can be corrected within a time frame of three years, they should issue a letter of expectation.

If the Expert Panel considers that all legal and additional/recommended requirements have been met and the quality assessment is satisfactory, i.e. that a study programme fulfils the learning outcomes appropriately defined for that level and scientific area, they may propose the issuance of a certificate and have a HEI commit to quality improvement and reporting to the Agency during the follow-up period.

Finally, if the Expert Panel has, in accordance with the criteria mentioned above, proposed issuing the certificate of compliance and assessed that, in addition to meeting the minimum quality requirements – i.e. the qualification framework level - for a study programme, the programme should

be identified as a doctoral programme of a 'high level of quality', the Expert Panel may propose to the Agency's Accreditation Council that such a doctoral study programme be awarded the 'high quality label'. Thus the Agency, with the consent of the Accreditation Council, grants a higher education institution the right to use the label for their academic and promotional purposes.

The 'high quality label' cannot be proposed or awarded to a programme or a higher education institution that does not comply with the requirements laid down by the laws and bylaws mentioned in this document, and any additional requirements recommended by the Accreditation Council. Moreover, the quality assessment awarded to a study programme should reflect a high level of quality inasmuch that at least half of the sub-criteria in each of the quality assessment criteria are assessed as being of high quality. The Accreditation Council of the Agency issues a final opinion on the label awarded. The content and form of the quality labels shall be prescribed by the Agency in a relevant general act.

The Accreditation Council of the Agency discusses the final report with all recommendations and suggestions, and issues their opinion on the report. Based on a prior opinion of the Accreditation Council, the Agency issues an Accreditation Recommendation to the minister responsible for science and higher education, and upon receipt of the minister's final decision on the outcome of the procedure, awards the 'high quality label' to a higher education institution.