



**REPORT
OF THE EXPERT PANEL
ON THE RE-ACCREDITATION
OF THE UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE (DOCTORAL)
PROGRAMME
Communication Studies
UNIVERSITY JOSIP JURAJ STROSSMAYER IN OSIJEK**

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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 *Communication Studies* on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the University Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek.

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 programmes.

The Report contains the following elements:

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

Members of the Expert Panel:

Dr Igor Štiks, University in Edinburgh and Faculty for Media and Communication

Professor Dibyesh Anand, University of Westminster

Professor Ciarán Burke, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena

Dr Daniela Angelina Jelinčić, Institute for Development and International Relations

Assoc. professor Peter W. Zuidhof, University of Amsterdam

Dr Teresa Murjas, School Director of Academic Tutoring for Theatre & Television and the School of Arts & Communication Design, Reading University, UK

Marko Radenović, Princeton University and McKinsey & Company,

Katja Simončič, Faculty of Law, University of Ljubljana

Matteo Tracchi, Human Rights Centre of the University of Padova, Italy

Professor Robert Wallace Vaagan, OsloMet - Oslo Metropolitan University

Professor Dejan Jontes, University of Ljubljana

Professor Monika Metykova, University of Sussex

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

- Dr Igor Štiks, University in Edinburg and Faculty for Media and Communication
- Professor Dibyesh Anand, University of Westminster
- Professor Ciarán Burke, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena
- Dr Daniela Angelina Jelinčić, Institute for Development and International Relations
- Assoc. professor Peter W. Zuidhof, University of Amsterdam
- Dr Teresa Murjas, School Director of Academic Tutoring for Theatre & Television and the School of Arts & Communication Design, Reading University, UK
- Marko Radenović, Princeton University and McKinsey & Company
- Katja Simončič, Faculty of Law, University of Ljubljana
- Matteo Tracchi, Human Rights Centre of the University of Padova, Italy
- Professor Robert Wallace Vaagan, OsloMet - Oslo Metropolitan University
- Professor Dejan Jontes, University of Ljubljana
- Professor Monika Metykova, University of Sussex

Members of the Panel that participated in the report writing:

- Professor Robert Wallace Vaagan, OsloMet - Oslo Metropolitan University (moderator)
- Professor Dejan Jontes, University of Ljubljana
- Professor Monika Metykova, University of Sussex

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

- Marina Matešić, coordinator, ASHE.

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

- Management,
- Study programme coordinators,
- Doctoral candidates,
- Teachers and supervisors,
- Alumni.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: Communication Studies postgraduate interdisciplinary university study programme

Institution delivering the programme: Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek

Institution providing the programme: Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek, University of Dubrovnik

Place of delivery: Zagreb

Scientific area and field: Social Sciences (Information and Communication Sciences)

Number of doctoral candidates: 97

Number of funded doctoral candidates: 1

Number of self-funded doctoral candidates and those funded by employer: 96

Number of inactive doctoral candidates: 36

Number of doctoral candidates with officially appointed supervisors: 20

Number of teachers: 32

Number of supervisors: 33 potential supervisors listed of which 13 were officially appointed to 20 candidates.

Learning outcomes of the study programme:

Upon fulfilment of all study obligations, and completion and public defence of their doctoral theses, candidates will be able to:

LO.1. Demonstrate a systematic understanding in the field of information and communication sciences, especially communication studies, public relations and mass media.

LO.2. Establish, formulate and operationalize research problems in the field of information and communication sciences, especially communication studies, public relations and mass media.

LO.3. Critically analyse, evaluate and synthesize new and complex research ideas on communication phenomena.

LO.4. Demonstrate possession of research skills and methods related to the field of information and communication sciences, especially communication studies, public relations and mass media.

LO.5. Demonstrate an interpretation of new knowledge through original research and publication of results of own research.

LO.6. Present own conclusions and results of original research, to both the professional and general public in a clear and effective way.

Structure of programme: 104 in courses : 76 research (ECTS)

SER states: "During each semester in the first and second years of study, students enrol in compulsory courses of the joint programme module, compulsory courses of the study program, and elective courses of the study programme, including courses offered in the programme of other postgraduate university studies of the Doctoral School." The total taught component is no less than 104 ECTS distributed across four semesters in the first two years of the programme.

The remaining 76 ECTS is unclear.

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 (SER, 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 to *issue a letter of recommendation for the period up to 1 year in which period the higher education institution should make the necessary improvements. The letter of recommendation should include suspension of student enrolment.*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The expert panel recommends ASHE to issue a letter of recommendation for the period of 1 year in which the HEI should make the necessary improvements. This recommendation includes suspension of new student enrolment.

The expert panel has identified some advantages of the study programme but these are by far outweighed by its many shortcomings, primarily linked with many discrepancies between the strategy of The University of Osijek and the self-analysis which has apparently been made mostly by The University of Dubrovnik, the insufficient quality of the 9 available doctoral dissertations, the lack of coherence and integration of theory and methodology required from an interdisciplinary programme, too much time devoted to coursework at the expense of research, too few published student papers, shortcomings in the mentoring system, far too little international exposure and involvement with key international associations such as ICA and IAMCR, all of which affect the research reputation of the institution.

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. The official name is "Communication Studies postgraduate interdisciplinary university study programme" in social sciences, information and communication science with input also from the humanities (e.g. PR, mass media).
2. The programme is an ambitious cooperation attempt between The University of Osijek and The University of Dubrovnik, and most of the programme activity takes place in the capital Zagreb.
3. The programme is modelled on international (US/European) standards with 180 ECTS over 3 years.
4. The programme asserts compliance with ESG 2015 (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area) and ISO9601 QMF (Quality Management Framework).
5. Interdisciplinarity can be an advantage provided this entails an integration and synthesis of theory, methods and analytical framework into a coherent whole.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Based on the many discrepancies between the strategy of The University of Osijek and the self-analysis apparently made mostly by the University of Dubrovnik, the co-operation between the two universities is not optimal and reorganization should be considered. Also,

the cooperation agreement between the two universities was not made available to the expert team.

2. Regarding "Compliance with proscribed conditions for the delivery of a study programme" (see below) ASHE estimates that only 5 conditions are met, while 11 are not met. This alone is enough to terminate the programme.
3. The asserted interdisciplinarity of the programme has many shortcomings and lacks internal coherence and synthesis.
4. Course work generates 104 ECTS, but the remaining 76 ECTS from research is unclear. Courses to research ratio is inadequate (57-43%), candidates have to take 20 compulsory and elective courses in the first four semesters
5. Only 9 successful doctoral candidates 2015-2018, and the quality of the dissertations is questionable (see also point 12 below).
6. Although the HEI allows article-based dissertations in English, which would encourage and improve international publishing and networking, all available 9 dissertations are monographs in Croatian. Part of the problem seems to be that L0.5 does not encourage international publishing in major international languages.
7. Large number of inactive doctoral candidates (36 of 96 are inactive).
8. Of 33 potential supervisors only 13 have been officially appointed to 20 candidates.
9. Challenging situation with material resources, insufficient financing and above average tuition fees.
10. Lack of interaction with important international disciplinary network organizations such as the International Communication Association (ICA), the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR).
11. Number of students accepted for enrolment seems too high.
12. Some of the defended dissertations are not on a PhD level by international comparisons.
13. Supervisors should not be part of assessment and defence committees and at least one outside member should be appointed to the committee, which is currently not the case.
14. Some supervisors do not seem to be active researchers in the scientific area of the programme, as evidenced by publications.
15. Mentor load planning appears inadequate as the number of enrolled students is high and the number of potential mentors limited, European Universities Association recommends 4-6 full-time PhD candidates per supervisor. Advisors have very high loads.
16. Unclear how students are supported in professional career development, e.g. teaching opportunities.
17. Unclear how institutional regulations on terms and obligations of doctoral students, supervisors and the institution are implemented and monitored.
18. Not clear that all courses are PhD level according to learning outcomes for individual courses. For example, a core module in Year 1 is on Public Relations Theories - degree is in communication.
19. It is unclear what the monitoring/progression route entails - annual reports are in place but the expert panel was not provided with details on what these entail.
20. It is unclear which activities of the mentors are associated with this particular doctoral programme, and which are located elsewhere/unrelated (conferences, papers, networks etc.).
21. Training for mentors is only very recent (September 2018), and although this seems to be a move in the right direction, future plans are far from clear.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Regarding “Compliance with proscribed conditions for the delivery of a study programme” (see below) ASHE estimates that 5 conditions are met, which can be seen as some evidence of some good practices.
2. Training for mentors was introduced in September 2018, and seems to be a move in the right direction, although future plans are not detailed.
3. Based on its Code of Ethics, the HEI assures academic integrity and freedom (point 2.5).
4. Based on the HEI “Ordinance on postgraduate studies at Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek”, Article 32, there is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.

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

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| 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. | NO.* |
| * The University of Osijek is not listed in the Register (at all) in the area of Social Sciences, field of Information and Communication Sciences. YES for University of Dubrovnik. | |
| 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). | NO.* |
| * The University of Osijek does not deliver programmes in the necessary area and field nor does it employ a number of staff sufficient for delivering the programme in said area and field. University of Dubrovnik provides programmes in the first two cycles in the area of Social Science, field of Information and Communication Sciences. | |
| 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). | NO.* |
| * There is no proof in the SER that the University of Osijek employs researchers in the area of Social Sciences. | |
| 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). | NO* |
| * University of Osijek employs none of the teachers delivering the programme: all of the Osijek teachers work at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Law, Economics (17 of them) and 5 teachers are employed by the University of Dubrovnik. 10 are external associates. | |
| 5. Student: teacher ratio at the HEI is below 30:1. | YES |
| 6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public. | YES* |
| * All defended doctoral theses are uploaded, listed on DABAR repository and readily available on open access. | |
| 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 for passing a positive opinion | |
| 1. HEI has at least five teachers appointed to scientific-teaching titles in the field, or fields relevant for the programme involved in its delivery. | NO* |
| *For the University of Osijek this is NO. For the University of Dubrovnik: only one UNIDU teacher listed in Table 1 is from the field of Information and Communication Sciences and the remaining 4 are from the fields of Economics (3) and area of Humanities, field of Philosophy (1). | |
| 2. In the most recent reaccreditation, HEI had the standard Scientific and Professional Activity marked as at least "partly implemented" (3). | NO.* |

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| * There was no accreditation of the University of Osijek as it does not deliver undergrad. Programmes in the area, while in the reaccreditation of the Department of Mass Communication at the University of Dubrovnik in 2014 this standard was marked lower than the required grade (“initial phase of implementation”). | |
| 3. The doctoral programme is aligned with the HEI's research strategy. | NO.* |
| * There is no specific research strategy at the university level for University of Osijek or University of Dubrovnik (or none was submitted). | |
| 4. The candidate : supervisor ratio at the HEI is not above 3:1. | YES. |
| 5. All supervisors meet the following conditions: a) PhD, elected into a scientific title, holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position and/or has at least two years of postdoctoral research experience; b) active researcher in the scientific area of the programme, as evidenced by publications, participation in scientific conferences and/or projects in the past five years (table 2, Supervisors and candidates); c) confirms feasibility of the draft research plan upon admission of the candidate (or submission of the proposal); d) ensures the conditions (and funding) necessary to implement the candidate's research (in line with the draft research plan) as a research project leader, co-leader, participant, collaborator or in other ways; e) trained for the role before assuming it (through workshops, co-supervisions); f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory work. | NO.* |
| *Only 8 out of 13 appointed supervisors are listed in table 2 (missing supervisors: Tanta, Vinković, Labaš, Cvrtila, Vilović). Also no data for the remaining 20 potential supervisors. Only 9 out of expected 20 doctoral candidates was presented in the tables. a) NO (at least two do not work at the scientific or academic institution, Cvrtila, Tanta work at professional colleges) b) NO (out of 8 appointed supervisors listed in table, 2 are from the area of Humanities / Philology, 3 have no research activity listed in the last 5 years); c) NO; d) NO; e) according to SER there was one workshop in September 2018; f) n/a. | |
| 6. All teachers meet the following conditions: a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position; b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the course. | a) YES. b) NO.* |
| *According to SER and the links provided, there are teachers with no activity in the last 5 years, as well as teachers with works that could only in theory and on a strictly case by case basis be considered as relevant for the course, e.g. researchers in Philology and Literary Theory (Kramarić, Žužul, Vuković), Philosophy/Theory (Kramarić, Senković, Ljubimir, Radić), Law (Vinković, Lulić), Psychology (Ručević), Theology (Radić), IT (Žagar), Arts (Bobić). | |
| 7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment committees. | NO.* |
| *Supervisor is a member of the assessment committee. In one case, supervisor was also the president of the defence committee. | |
| 8. The programme ensures that all candidates spend at least three years doing independent research (while studying, individually, within or outside courses), which | NO.* |

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| includes writing the thesis, publishing, participating in international conferences, field work, attending courses relevant for research etc. | |
| *The research seems to start in the 3 rd year of the programme, while the first two years are comprised of traditional coursework (104/120 ECTS in the first two years is dedicated to structured coursework). Furthermore, only 20 out of 97 doctoral candidates have supervisors appointed and only 9 out of those 20 have clearly defined their research topics. | |
| 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. | NO* |
| * There is a cooperation agreement signed between University of Osijek and University of Dubrovnik. NO to everything else stated within the requirement (adequacy of agreement, ensures good coordination aimed at supporting the candidates, 80% of courses are delivered by own teachers). | |

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

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| <p>1. RESOURCES:TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS,RESEARCH CAPACITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>The interviews confirmed that the self-analysis and the strategy of the HEI are not well enough integrated.</p> <p>SER III.1 (Teaching, mentoring and research capacities and infrastructure) states, <i>inter alia</i>, that the teachers have published 326 articles in well-reputed international and domestic scientific journals and books over the last 5 years, more than 10 papers per teacher, and been involved in 60 scientific projects. This suggests sufficient resources for adequate scientific activity.</p> <p>STRATEGY 2011-2020 (Material resources, pp.35-37) makes it clear that financing is a major problem. This may explain the relatively small number of successful candidates 2015-2018 (9), the large number of inactive PhD candidates (36 of 96) etc.</p> |
| <p>1.1. HEI is distinguished by its scientific/ artistic achievements in the discipline in which the doctoral study programme is delivered.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>It is generally difficult to find the scientific area (social sciences) and field (information and communication) and discipline (Communication Studies) on the websites of either university.</p> <p>The University of Osijek has a Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, but the website has no/little information in English about subunits on the website. http://www.unios.hr/en/about-university/university-units/</p> <p>The University of Dubrovnik does not list social sciences under postgraduate studies on its website. http://www.unidu.hr/odjeli.php?idizbornik=637</p> |
| <p>1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>Mentor loads are unevenly distributed and appear to be high, European Universities Association recommends 4-6 full-time PhD candidates per supervisor. It is unclear whether mentors also supervise PhDs at other institutions so the total number of supervisees can potentially be even higher.</p> |

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| | <p>Per teacher workload can be found from Table 1. (TABLE 13 in this SER). Maximum teacher workload stipulated by the collective agreement in higher education is 360 (300+20%) norm-hours. In some cases, this maximum is exceeded by a significant number of hours, for example, Professor Maldini's workload is cited as 520 norm hours.</p> |
| <p>1.3. The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>The interviews confirmed that the self-analysis and strategy of the HEI are not well enough integrated.</p> <p>SER III 1.3 (p19) asserts that all teachers in the Communication Studies postgraduate programme are well qualified.</p> <p>STRATEGY 2011-2020 recognizes the importance of ensuring teacher qualifications (p.16) but does not offer updated figures: on p. 34 figures are from 2013. The SWOT analysis (p.61-62) states under weaknesses that "portion of scientific research activity in quality assurance is minimal" which could mean that international, peer-reviewed scientific publishing by teachers is not being monitored.</p> |
| <p>1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>Some supervisors do not seem to be active researchers in the scientific area of the programme, as evidenced by publications.</p> <p>Qualifications are primarily determined by publications related and relevant to the programme and the topic of the doctoral dissertation of the supervisee.</p> |
| <p>1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>The interviews confirmed that the self-analysis and the strategy of the HEI are not well enough integrated.</p> <p>SER III 1.5 (p.21) states that adequate methods of quality assurance and monitoring are in place.</p> <p>STRATEGY 2011-2020 (pp. 51ff) states that quality assurance has been debated since 1999, a system of quality assurance was set up in 2012, and a Centre for Quality Assurance established in 2014. But the expert panel was not shown documentation of regular quality control, monitoring or audits. The SWOT analysis (pp.61-62) states under weaknesses that "documentation about quality</p> |

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| | assurance system is non-consistent". The expert panel asked for but was not offered a meeting with the Head of the Centre of Quality Assurance. This apparently violates ESG 2015 1.7 (Information management) and 1.9 (On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes). |
| 1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline. | Improvements are necessary. The resource situation was difficult to verify since the expert team only visited Zagreb. The documentation and interviews confirmed only limited resources in terms of financing, library services and study space. |
| 2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME | |
| 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. | Improvements are necessary. To some extent the HEI has succeeded in establishing a programme for delivering doctoral training and education resulting in 9 defended doctoral dissertations 2015-18. The programme takes into account especially regional needs and cooperation with The University of Dubrovnik. The programme is formally offered by The University of Osijek in cooperation with The University of Dubrovnik and mostly takes place physically in Zagreb. The interviews confirmed that the self-analysis and the strategy of the HEI are not well enough integrated. SER III 2.1 (p. 24) states that all this is in place. STRATEGY 2011-2020 (p. 27-28) lists the 18 doctoral programmes at the HEI, including "Communicology" as one of three interdisciplinary studies in the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities. |
| 2.2. The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy. | Improvements are necessary. The interviews confirmed that the self-analysis and the strategy of the HEI are not well enough integrated. SER III2.2 (p.24-25) claims that the programme complies with various listed EU policy documents and Croatian national priorities, but does not cite its own research mission and vision (research strategy). STRATEGY 2011-2020 (p.4) states: "the basic mission and vision has remained unchanged." Focus on strategic aims |

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| | (p.7-9), scientific research activity (pp. 20-31) and detailed strategic aims and tasks (pp. 66-97) but lacks its own clearly formulated mission, vision and research strategy. |
| <p>2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the success of the programmes through periodic reviews, and implements improvements.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>The interviews confirmed that the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) are not fully adhered to, and that the self-analysis and the strategy of the HEI are not well enough integrated.</p> <p>ESG 2015 1.7 (Information management) and 1.9 (On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes) are partly complied with.</p> <p>SER III 2.3 (p.25) asserts that monitoring is systematic and permanent.</p> <p>STRATEGY 2011-2020 SWOT analysis (pp. 61-62) suggests under weaknesses that improvements are needed.</p> <p>Interviews confirmed that there is generally little monitoring, insufficient data is collected to support decision-making, research excellence is not adequately monitored and rewarded, there is a lack of interaction with relevant international organizations (ICA, IAMCR), the research profile of doctoral candidates is not sufficiently monitored, compilation/retention rates are a concern, with over a third of candidates being inactive.</p> |

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| <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 are necessary.</p> <p>The interviews confirmed that the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) are not fully adhered to, and that the self-analysis and the strategy of the HEI are not well enough integrated.</p> <p>It remains unclear to what extent a functional monitoring takes place of supervisors' research profile before and during their appointment as supervisors, likewise to what extent there is a functional system of mediation between students and supervisors, if necessary.</p> <p>ESG 2015 1.5 (Teaching staff) calls for transparent processes for the recruitment and development of staff. SER III 2.4 (p.26) asserts that adequate monitoring procedures are in place. STRATEGY 2011-2020 (p.16-17) suggests monitoring is not continuous.</p> |
| <p>2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.</p> | <p>High level of quality.</p> <p>Article 4 of the Ethical Code of HEI includes academic freedom; Article 11 addresses academic integrity. SER III.2.5 (pp.26-27) states that HEI provides academic integrity and freedom of scientific research</p> |
| <p>2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>SER III 2.6 (pp. 27-28) asserts that the process of writing and defending the doctoral dissertation topic is clear and objective and encompasses the public presentation of the topic of doctoral research</p> <p>The expert team had some problems in determining how transparent and objective the process is. Documentation only included blank forms (mentor appointment proposal form, the supervisor annual report form, the doctoral dissertation topic application form etc.) Completed mentoring reports were missing.</p> <p>Interviews with PhD candidates confirmed good relations with mentors, but dissatisfaction with too many obligatory courses and otherwise a clear wish for improved content in methodology, e.g. on Big Data, see point 4.7 for details.</p> |

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| <p>2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>There is a clear discrepancy between the self-analysis and practice, which was confirmed during the interviews.</p> <p>SER III 2.7 (pp.28) asserts that the evaluation of the doctoral dissertation is the result of the scientific assessment of an independent committee.</p> <p>In practice, the titles of the 9 listed doctoral dissertations are in English but are all written in Croatian. The assessment is not done by an independent assessment committee with international members but instead relies on mentors, supervisors and teachers, see also point 4.8.</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>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>If this really is the case, it is most likely done only in Croatian. STRATEGY 2011-2020 SWOT analysis (pp.61-62) lists under weaknesses the lack of English-language website material</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 are necessary.</p> <p>The interviews confirmed that the self-analysis and the strategy of the HEI are not well enough integrated.</p> <p>SER III 2.10. (p.29-30) explains the cost structure and the total price of the study of 80,000 HRK per student.</p> <p>STRATEGY 2011-2020 (Material resources, pp. 35-37) documents that government financing is inadequate and that increased funding from the EU, commercialization efforts and other external sources are necessary. This situation must have a negative impact on the doctoral programme.</p> |
| <p>2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>The interviews confirmed that the self-analysis and the strategy of the HEI are not well enough integrated.</p> <p>SER III 2.10. (p.29-30) explains the cost structure and the total price of the study of 80,000 HRK per student.</p> <p>STRATEGY 2011-2020 (Material resources, pp.35-37) does not mention tuition fees.</p> |

| 3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION | |
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| <p>3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>The self-evaluation report states that when recruiting students the capacity of mentors is taken into account in two ways - the availability in terms of workload and in terms of expertise. During the site visit the expert panel had an opportunity to talk to current and former students and we heard of a case when a student could not be allocated their mentor of choice due to workload limitations. The European University Association recommends as good practice a maximum number of six full-time PhD students per supervisor and this seems to be fulfilled in the case of students who have already been appointed a mentor, however, there is a significant number of students who are awaiting the appointment of a mentor. Apart from mentors (supervisors) there are also advisors allocated and the expert panel was puzzled about the evident lack of a limit on the number of advisees allocated per member of staff. For example, according to the self-evaluation report professor Maldini acts as advisor to 35 students. Although the expert panel understand that some of these students are “dormant,” the number is still alarmingly high. In this respect the expert panel should, however, note that in its meeting with current and former students no issues were raised about the availability of advisors for meetings etc. It appears that in planning recruitment, teaching capacities are not considered at all, even for compulsory courses. During the site visit it was suggested that elective courses often run with very small numbers or are not taken up at all and it was interpreted as a sign of a range of choices for students. This, however, is not necessarily a sign of good planning; on the contrary, it can be a sign that the curriculum has been devised poorly.</p> |
| <p>3.2. The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>Recruitment for the doctoral programme appears to be based solely on market indicators, the argument that there is a commercial demand for the programme is expressed in the self-evaluation report and the expert panel also heard it a number of times during the site visit. Consultations with professional industry bodies such as the Public Relations</p> |

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| | <p>Council and the Chamber of Commerce inform recruitment planning. However, a doctoral study programme is normally a route into academic or research careers rather than professional ones in public relations or communications etc. and the expert panel found no evidence that scientific and educational needs are considered when planning.</p> |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>It appears that the PhD programme relies to a large extent on self-funded or funded by employers. The self-evaluation report states that 60% of tuition fees are fully funded or co-funded by employers and similar actors. During the site visit the expert panel had an opportunity to talk to a former student who runs a PR company and his company is funding a current student on the programme. From the self-evaluation report and the site visit it seems that the key issue considered by the programme director is that there is commercial demand for the programme.</p> |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>The expert panel found from the self-evaluation report and had it confirmed during the site visit that students do not necessarily work with an allocated mentor (supervisor) from their enrolment on the programme. The documentation also suggests that at the point of enrolment, students do not have a research proposal ready and they are allocated an advisor who follows their progress throughout their studies. A mentor is allocated later, at the point of submission of a proposal, and is matched to a project based on their expertise. From the self-evaluation report and interviews during the site visit it became clear that students tend to spend at least the first year of their studies without working on a research plan/project and - as already mentioned - without an allocated mentor. This is very problematic as it is crucial that a student works on their research project from early on in order to make a contribution that extends the frontiers of knowledge within the regular period of study. During the site visit the expert panel met with current students who expressed concerns about the large number of exams that they need to take during the first year in particular. As mentioned already, the expert panel had serious concerns about the numbers of candidates that individual staff were assigned in their role of advisors. Of 96 candidates 70 are allocated to three advisors - professor Maldini (35 candidates), associate</p> |

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| | <p>professor Skoko (22 candidates) and associate professor Tanta (13 candidates).</p> <p>In order to ensure that students on a doctoral programme receive supervision and support that are necessary for the successful completion of doctoral study, a number of mechanisms need to be introduced. The supervisory relationship needs to be formalized and regular monitoring of students' progress needs to be introduced. Although the expert panel read in the documentation that annual monitoring of progress occurs, we were not able to gather substantial evidence about what it includes. Similarly, the expert panel was not able to get hold of examples of reports of an advisory or supervisory meeting. So the expert panel can confirm that there are formal documents to be filled in for meetings and monitoring purposes but we cannot formulate a judgement on how effective or transparent the process actually is for lack of evidence. It has transpired in the course of the site visit - particularly in the meeting with current students - that the advisory and supervisory arrangements are largely personal and informal and work well from the perspective of the students.</p> |
| <p>3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>The language of tuition on compulsory and elective taught courses is Croatian. International students can enrol on the programme but they need to study in Croatian. The PhD dissertation itself can be written in English. However, under the current conditions the recruitment of international students is non-existent. There are potential plans to introduce an English-language PhD programme in Dubrovnik.</p> |
| <p>3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>Although places on the programme are advertised publicly and entrance criteria and the selection process are published, the expert panel lacked clarity on some of the components, particularly the length of the motivational letter and the staff responsible for implementing the selection process, conducting pre-selection, evaluating the motivation letter and conducting interviews. The website provides information in Croatian about the key components of the motivation letter and the overall number of points that can be achieved, see</p> |

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| | <p>http://www.unios.hr/doktorska/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2016/03/Komunikologija-Vodic.pdf</p> <p>An applicant must get 50% of the points for the motivation letter in order to be invited for an interview. The expert panel was given some very general information about a large number of applicants being turned away mainly due to lack of supervisory capacity but a detailed analysis that would explain how the selection of best candidates is ensured was not provided. For example, it is unclear what the rejection rate is and what the reasons for rejection are, for example quantitative (i.e. grade point average, incomplete documentation etc.) or qualitative (quality of motivation letter, performance at interview and similar).</p> |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>As mentioned above, there are some gaps as far as the transparency of the selection procedure is concerned, particularly around rejection. There is a complaints procedure in place.</p> |
| <p>3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.</p> | <p>High level of quality.</p> <p>Prior learning is recognized by the institution, the conditions and processes are stipulated in "Ordinance on postgraduate studies at Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek".</p> |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>Candidates' rights and obligations are defined in "Ordinance on postgraduate studies at Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek", and Article 32 stipulates that "when enrolling in the postgraduate study students sign a contract with study holder on mutual rights and obligations. The contract contains provisions on contracting parties, financial obligations of the student, the obligations in terms of enrolment and graduation, and other issues relevant to the study." The expert panel was not provided with an example of a contract or student guidelines so we are unable to confirm that there is a high level of supervisory support.</p> |
| <p>3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>The "Ordinance on postgraduate studies at Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek" has stipulations on advisors and mentors. The expert panel found documentary</p> |

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| | <p>evidence and also heard evidence from students about publishing articles with mentors, attending conferences etc. During the site visit the panel met with current students and mentors and while there were no issues raised about support, it appears that the supervisory relationship as well as access to the director of the study programme are somewhat informal, a more formalized arrangement is desirable particularly as the study programme is located in Zagreb, away from the University's seat in Osijek where the institutional support departments are located.</p> |
| <p>4. PROGRAMME AND OUTCOMES</p> | |
| <p>4.1. The content and quality of the doctoral programme are aligned with internationally recognized standards.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>The content and quality is not clearly aligned with international standards. In the SER there are numerous references made to international programmes in terms of similarities although the mentioned programmes follow completely different organizational principles, especially in the area of course to individual research ratio.</p> <p>Especially coursework is not internationally comparable (Salzburg Recommendations II: not more than 20% of programme in courses) as 57% of programme is in courses, some courses take up 15 and 20 hours, which means that candidates listen to 20 compulsory and elective courses in the first four semesters. The number of compulsory courses was also highlighted as a problem by the students during the interviews. International standards are 4 to 6 courses. There is only one year clearly devoted to independent research work (semesters V and VI) although there are 12 ECTS in semesters I-IV for independent research in the form of doctoral seminar.</p> <p>Rigorous research methodology and research problems are not present in each dissertation and defence/ assessment of dissertation does not assure dissertations are comparable in quality internationally. There were only 3 mentors in 9 so far defended dissertations, there is no internationalization in defence committees. Moreover, in the majority of the cases the committee does not include an outside member from Croatian universities not connected to the study programme.</p> <p>Some supervisors and course holders are not recognised as active researchers as in some cases they have no</p> |

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| | <p>publications from the scientific area of the programme on national or international level. In general, publication record of supervisors on international level is weak.</p> <p>Moreover, the programme lacks internal coherence as the compulsory and elective courses are from so many different areas of communication studies, public relations, political science, law etc. that the internal rationale of the programme is not completely clear.</p> |
| <p>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> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>From the available documents and finished dissertations it cannot be concluded that the programme leads to PhD level of education on an internationally comparable level. Learning outcomes of the programme and individual courses do not meet the criteria for 3rd cycle, such as, for example, that applying knowledge and understanding extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work some of which merits national or international refereed publication. What is more, learning outcomes of subject units are not clearly connected with learning outcomes of the programme.</p> |
| <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> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>As already mentioned, the course to research ratio is not appropriate and aligned with international standards which means that it is nearly impossible to complete the programme within 3 years. Too many compulsory courses were mentioned as a problem during the interviews with the students, also. Programme learning outcomes are not clearly connected with teaching contents.</p> |
| <p>4.4. The doctoral programme ensures the achievement of learning outcomes and competencies aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>The doctoral programme does not ensure the competences are aligned with the level 8.2 of the CroQF, especially that at least 3 years of scientific or artistic research in full-time equivalent, resulting in original articles with a relevant international peer review is accomplished. There are 9 publicly available doctoral dissertations and not all are written on an internationally comparable PhD level, especially the criteria of rigorous methods and research questions and the extension of the frontier of knowledge is questionable. More importantly, basic conditions for the assurance of quality of thesis are not met (see 4.1 and 4.8).</p> |

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| <p>4.5. Teaching methods (and ECTS, if applicable) are appropriate for level 8.2 of the CroQF and assure achievement of clearly defined learning outcomes.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>Teaching methods in the majority of the courses and research activities are not appropriate for level 8.2. For example, passive attendance at lectures, which is listed as one of the teaching methods by many courses, is not appropriate for this level. Moreover, in the course Communication management in politics 50 points can be gained for passive attendance out of 55 for passing and in the course Information in Law 35 points out of a 100 are required for passing. Anomalies aside, teaching methods do not assure that competences for level 8.2 of the CroQF are achieved.</p> |
| <p>4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.</p> | <p>'High' (Appropriate) level of quality.</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>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>Teaching content is not enough adapted to the needs of current and future research, especially two compulsory methodological courses are problematic in terms of their individual course plans, references of course holders and were also highlighted as problematic by the students during the interviews. For example, Methodology of Scientific Research is taught by a law professor with no methodological references, and the Methodology of Research in information and communication sciences has no clear learning outcomes. More importantly, there is a clear lack of courses, aimed at understanding and researching new media and digital environments which is especially problematic in terms of candidate's training for future research.</p> |
| <p>4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.</p> | <p>Improvements are necessary.</p> <p>The internationalization of the programme is probably one of the weakest points of the assessed programme as the programme seems predominantly local in its reach. For example, there is no evidence of internationalisation of the dissertation defence committee; what is more, in some cases there is no evidence, that a member from a non-participating university has been appointed to the committee. Better quality would also be assured if the supervisors were not part of the assessment and defence committees.</p> |

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| | <p>There were no dissertations written in English so far and there are no courses or guest lectures in English. In SER and other documents there is scarce evidence of papers published in papers in internationally recognized journals, international conference participation and international project cooperation.</p> <p>There is scarce evidence about the mobility of students, the SER only mentions numbers of signed agreements but there is no data regarding the actual mobility of students. Mobility of supervisors and their international exposure is also hardly mentioned in SER.</p> |
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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.