



**REPORT
OF THE EXPERT PANEL
ON THE REACCREDITATION
OF THE UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE (DOCTORAL)
PROGRAMME**

SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL POLICY
FACULTY OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB

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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) Programme **Social Work and Social Policy** on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the **Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb**.

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:

- Prof. Tamás Hoffmann, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary, president of the Expert Panel;
- Dr. Gerhard van der Schyff, Tilburg Law School, Department for Public Law, Jurisprudence and Legal History, Tilburg University, Netherlands;
- Dr. Dagmar Simon, The WZB Berlin Social Science Center, Germany;
- Prof. Dibyesh Anand, University of Westminster, United Kingdom;
- Dr. Igor Štiks, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom;
- Prof. Mare Leino, Tallinn University, Estonia;
- Max Lügert, doctoral candidate, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Germany;
- Marko Radenović, doctoral candidate, Princeton University/McKinsey & Company, Croatia;

- Katja Simončič, doctoral candidate, Inštitut za kriminologijo pri Pravni fakulteti v Ljubljani, Slovenia.

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

- Prof. Dibyesh Anand, University of Westminster, United Kingdom, moderator;
- Prof. Mare Leino, Tallinn University, Estonia;
- Dr. Dagmar Simon, The WZB Berlin Social Science Center, Germany;
- Dr. Igor Štiks, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom;
- Max Lügert, doctoral candidate, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Germany.

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

- Ivana Borošić, coordinator, ASHE,
- Ivana Rončević, interpreter at the site visit and translator of the Report, ASHE.

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

- Management,
- Meeting with the heads of programmes and specializations,
- Doctoral candidates,
- Supervisors,
- External stakeholders,
- Alumni.

The Expert Panel also had a tour of the library.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: Postgraduate university study in Social Work and Social Policy (hereinafter: Doctoral study in Social Work and Social Policy)

Institution delivering the programme: University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law

Institution providing the programme: University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law

Place of delivery: Zagreb

Scientific area and field: Social Sciences, Social Activities

Number of doctoral candidates: 105 (35 in 2006 – pre-Bologna; since 2009 - 70 doctoral candidates)

Number of funded doctoral candidates: 17

Number of self-funded doctoral candidates and those funded by employer: 88

Number of inactive doctoral candidates (did not enrol to the next year of study, but still have the right to study): 22 (information provided in self-analysis document) (page 3)

Number of teachers: 33

Number of supervisors: 14 supervisors, 5 co-supervisors

Number of doctoral candidates whose official supervisor has been appointed: 19

Learning outcomes of the study programme: Not defined.

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:

Issue a confirmation on compliance for performing parts of activities (renew the licence)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Clarify the role of advisor, mentor and supervisor. The Expert Panel suggests that every PhD researcher should have a mentor from the very beginning, based on the preliminary ideas for research. By the end of year one at the latest, a supervisor should be appointed. This supervisor may be the mentor or may be a different person, depending on the evolution of the proposal.
2. A more comprehensive and strategic investment needs to be made by the Institution to support this programme, which has the potential to become a regional leader in the niche area of social work and social policy. The investment should include allocation of funds to support participation of doctoral students in conferences, training of mentors, and doctoral schools/workshops. The funds can be managed through a competitive process, but this is essential to make this interesting programme sustainable.
3. Monitoring mechanisms need to be improved, for both the student and supervisor. The review should be conducted every year (both for part-time and full-time students). Both the PhD researcher and mentor (in case of first-year students) or supervisor (in case of those in the second or higher years of study) should report on the progress, and this should be overseen by the Head of Programme.
4. A community of PhD students should be fostered. This can be done through a dedicated space for their work, a gathering/workshop/seminar once a semester, with all students attending and interacting, and/or a yearly doctoral conference/school. A thriving PhD community would imply enhancement of peer support and less burden on the supervisors.
5. Less emphasis on theme-based courses, which can sometimes give the experience of reiteration of previous level of study, and more focus on methodology courses.

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Flexibility offered to the students. Some students would need longer than others to complete their studies because they have to balance doctoral research with full-time employment.
2. A good mix of practical and conceptual foci.
3. This is a niche area of specialisation, allowing the programme to be the regional leader.
4. The programme is run by motivated staff, has students who are passionate about their research, and produces enthusiastic alumni.
5. The range of topics covered is impressive.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Over-reliance on self-funded students who have to balance between full-time employment and studies, which leads to a big differences in performance between those funded through projects, self-funded students who are motivated, and self-funded students who get 'lost in the system', contributing to a high rate of non-completion.
2. The course content leaves a lot of room for improvement. It needs to be geared toward student needs rather than staff competencies.
3. The community of PhD scholars is patchy with limited opportunities for them to come together, either through joint workspace or organised events, or both.

4. The line between advisor and mentor/supervisor is blurred, leading to different level of access, satisfaction and performance of PhD students.
5. Insufficient monitoring of progress of PhD students over the years.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Strong component of practice-based research.
2. Flexibility is maintained to suit the workload of the students.

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

Minimal legal conditions:	YES/NO notes
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.	According to the Self-evaluation Report/SER and the site visit, there is no Internet access to full texts through national or any other repository; paper copy is available only in library and only some parts can be copied. However, the Panel was assured that all the theses would be available online from the end of the year.
7. HEI launches the procedure of revoking the academic title if it is determined that it has	YES (Zagreb University is in charge of this procedure, and HEI also prescribes its part of

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.	the procedure).
Additional/ recommended conditions of the ASHE Accreditation Council for passing a positive opinion	YES/NO notes
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. (Self-Evaluation Report/SER, page 11: "7 doctoral candidates whose theses topic has been approved and for whom 4 supervisors were appointed. None of the supervisors has more than three doctoral candidates. ")
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 etc.);	a) SER: YES b) SER: YES c) NO (Motivational essay and interviews are used to assess the applicants; however, this does not necessarily require feasibility of PhD proposal) d) YES, for doctoral candidates employed in scientific-research projects (primarily HRZZ projects), NO for others. e) YES f) YES

f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory work.	
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 (table 1, Teachers).	YES
7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment committees.	NO
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.	YES
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.	NA

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

	Quality assessment (“high level of quality” or “improvements are necessary”) 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.	<p>High Level of Quality</p> <p>The programme has a high level of active researchers involved. They are prolific. From the website, it seems that almost all the mentors/supervisors are research active.</p> <p>Suggestions for sustaining this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Faculty should encourage and support a further internationalisation of research results, primarily through publishing in English; investment in translation and editing is needed. • Staff should be encouraged to participate in international research teams funded through Horizon 2020, ERC and similar bodies and funding schemes.
1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.	<p>High Level of Quality</p> <p>More than 50% of teaching is delivered by the Faculty staff and a wide range of topics is covered.</p> <p>Suggestions for sustaining this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching workload seems quite high for individual teachers and mentors when seen in context of their responsibilities at various levels. • No expansion of the programme is feasible with the current workload.
1.3. The teachers are highly qualified researchers who actively engage with the topics they teach, providing a quality doctoral programme.	<p>High Level of Quality</p> <p>From the table provided, and information on the website, it is clear that teachers are suitably qualified. The site visit and interviews conducted with the students confirmed this.</p>
1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.	<p>High Level of Quality</p> <p>The Expert Panel is satisfied with the quality of</p>

	<p>supervisors and their research profile.</p> <p>Suggestions for sustaining this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to make this sustainable through reasonable adjustments to the workload, strategic investment in supporting staff research, and recognition by the Institution that the research area of social work and social policy is a niche and a unique one, where it can more easily become the leader in the region. The further internationalisation of the programme through attracting international students (from the countries where such programmes do not exist or are not of comparable quality) would be a huge asset for this programme and the Faculty.
<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 Expert Panel identified the following problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinction between advisor/mentor and thesis supervisor is not clear. Different stakeholders had different notions about this (for instance, while the supervisors/mentors, as well as the Director of Programme DOP assured us about the availability of advisor before a thesis supervisor is defined, students did not seem to be aware of this). • Qualifications for advisors are not clear. <p>Suggestions for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamline the process in line with most European universities. The Expert Panel suggests that every PhD researcher should have an advisor from the very beginning based on the preliminary ideas for research. By the start of second year at the latest, a thesis supervisor should be appointed. This supervisor may be the mentor or may be a different person depending on the evolution of the proposal. • For the inexperienced member of staff, joint supervision should be practiced. While such a staff can mentor at the start, to be a thesis supervisor, they should be teamed with another, experienced member of staff. • The review from the mentor (year one) and supervisor (from year two) should be made an annual and not a biennial exercise. This should be

	<p>carried out regardless of whether the student is enrolled full-time or part-time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a formal process to assess progression; this should involve both the student and mentor. This may be in a brief format, where both record the brief details of the progress made. It should also have a section where both answer a question “Do you foresee any problem in the timely completion of the PhD programme?” • Mentor is someone who has a broad expert interest, while supervisor will be the person who will see through the process of writing up the thesis, and should be appointed by the start of year two. • Ensure that there are fixed standards for mentorship (rather than informal control) to improve accountability. • Capacity building of inexperienced mentors, so that they can be supervisors in the future, can be done through a) training workshops, and b) pairing with experienced staff.
<p>1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.</p>	<p>Improvements are Necessary</p> <p>While the library seemed fit for purpose, based on the feedback from students, the Panel felt that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IT is generally weak and students are dissatisfied. • Library working hours do not suit students who are also in full-time employment. <p>Suggestions for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A better, dedicated workspace should be defined for PhD students, in the Faculty library or an equivalent area. This will help with cohort and community building. • Library’s IT system should be more stable so that students can access it easily and with minimal interruptions. • Consider having at least one section of the Library open late/at weekends, for doctoral researchers.
<p>2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME</p>	
<p>2.1. The HEI has established and accepted effective procedures for proposing,</p>	<p>High Level of Quality</p>

<p>approving and delivering doctoral education. The procedures include identification of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The doctoral study programme is recognized by several ministries in Croatia. • The doctoral study programme consists of a common general part, and specific separate courses on social work and social policy. • The programme fits with the Global Quality Standards for Social Work Education and Training. • The content of Social Policy's line is related to actual trends in the society. • The focus of the doctoral study programme comes from the stakeholders, who are co-producers of the curriculum.
<p>2.2. The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.</p>	<p>Improvements are Necessary</p> <p>The HEI has a well-thought and clear research strategy. However, at places the Strategy seems more like a vision than a strategy because there are no concrete plans on how the vision will be translated into reality. Moreover, the documentation does not reflect fully the achievements so far, as far as the evaluation of activities is concerned. Activities that are presented as “mainly implemented” are actually “partly implemented”, while those presented as “partly implemented” are actually “not implemented” (for example, the aim to rise the active involvement of the students in scientific projects).</p> <p>Suggestions for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HEI should provide specific, assessable goals to meet the vision provided in the Strategy Document. • The Annual Review (there is already a good example of this from early 2017) should monitor this Strategy closely. • A number of strategic aims, that are mentioned as mainly or partly implemented, should be re-assessed, and the achievement of these aims should be made a matter of priority.
<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>There are sporadic, not periodic reviews. There is no explanation for why the University evaluation did not take place.</p> <p>Suggestions for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic reviews are essential – courses should be reviewed annually; the programme should be

	<p>reviewed every three years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The result of the review and the changes implemented should be made public, including informing of students. • To implement an annual student survey, the Faculty should have information on the (in)active students and create realistic plans for addressing problems.
<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>From discussions during the site-visit, the Panel got the impression that an <i>ad hoc</i> approach and reliance on the goodwill of individual mentors and supervisors is a crucial factor for the success of the programme.</p> <p>There are no written/fixed rules about supervision - students don't know exactly what to expect from the university.</p> <p>Suggestions for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisors must keep regular contact with students, including those who are struggling with the progress. • There should be an annual overview of the entire cohort by the Doctoral Study Council, consisting of the Director of Programme, a couple of other mentors and supervisors, and Ph.D. students. • At the beginning of their study Ph.D. students should receive the practical information on supervision: what and when to expect it, with regard to their work on dissertation. • There could be a general co-ordinator who would take care of all doctoral students (a consultant of a sort to the programme).
<p>2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.</p>	<p>Improvements are Necessary</p> <p>There is no plagiarism detection software yet in use.</p> <p>Suggestions for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain plagiarism detection software as soon as possible. • Design and implement policy with regard to preventing/penalizing plagiarism. • Train staff and students on the issue of plagiarism. • Lower the threshold for plagiarism.

<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</p> <p>There is a detailed procedure at the Faculty on thesis defence. There are written rules on thesis proposal. There is a Committee at the Faculty for approving the topic of theses. The defence of the dissertation topic is public. There is a prescribed protocol for the defence of doctoral dissertation.</p>
<p>2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.</p>	<p>High Level of Quality</p> <p>The Faculty has developed the procedure for preparing and defending the thesis.</p> <p>Suggestion for Improvement:</p> <p>More effort to secure at least one person on the committee that is not employed at the University.</p> <p>At this moment, there is a member of committee that is not employed at the Faculty, but a member from outside of the university, or even better, an international member, would be ideal.</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</p> <p>The relevant information can be found on the Faculty website.</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>Discussions during the site visit did not provide much information on funding: how the tuition fees are spent. There are no statistics. The Expert Panel has expected more concrete evidence.</p> <p>Suggestions for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinvest the surplus in doctoral programme, including courses for mentors and supervisors, workshops and conferences for students, held at the university; provide support to students to attend conferences outside of the University - with clear criteria for competition. • Support for international conferences: both for

	<p>supervisors and doctoral students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for joint articles of supervisor and doctoral student (translation, editing, et al).
2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).	<p>High Level of Quality</p> <p>SER provides information on the amount of tuition fees. We are not in a position to assess the real costs of studying in Croatia.</p>
3. SUPPORT TO DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR PROGRESSION	
3.1. The HEI establishes admission quotas with respect to its teaching and supervision capacities.	<p>High Level of Quality</p> <p>The number of enrolled students appears to be in line with the teaching and supervision capacities, especially with the overall requirement to have less than three candidates per supervisor. The information provided in the SER (p. 32-33) was mostly confirmed during the site visit. It was remarked that enrolment to full capacity could lead to problems for supervisors, when being assigned three or more candidates each.</p>
3.2. The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.	<p>Improvements are Necessary</p> <p>The public sector (inside or outside of higher education) still represents the main area of employment for prospective alumni. However, due to a restrictive hiring policy in this regard, there is reason to believe that not all current and future candidates will be able to find employment. This development is not reflected in the admission quotas.</p> <p>Furthermore, admissions in general appear to be very lenient. The pre-selection is based on essays and interviews, after which – according to information gathered during the site visit – between one third and one fourth of applicants drops out of the application procedure. After that, however, no further criteria are applied to this pool of applicants and apparently almost all of them get accepted.</p> <p>Excluding the selections based on essays and interviews, academic performance of the applicants are de facto not taken into account.</p>

	<p>Suggestions for Improvement: There is no evidence that an applicant was rejected based on the quota set by the Faculty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to establish quota based on defensible criteria. • The labour market developments should be taken into account more seriously. Otherwise, there is a risk that the number of alumni may exceed the specific demands on the labour market; while this may not necessarily push alumni into unemployment, it may still carry those alumni away from their area of specialisation.
<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>Roughly half of the current students are self-funded and do not enjoy financial support e.g. by being a part of a research project – this figure was mentioned in the SER (p. 33-34) and was confirmed during the site visit.</p> <p>While many students are already working in the field of social work alongside their study – which gives them a valuable exposure to practice – any income from these sources cannot be regarded as funding, since it stems from a regular employment and not the research work conducted as a PhD student.</p> <p>Furthermore, during the site visit it was mentioned that current HRZZ guidelines for funding include provisions, which impede a flexible inclusion of PhD students into research projects.</p> <p>While the SER mentions the ambition of including as many candidates as possible into research projects (p. 34), a significant number of candidates does not make it this far. There were several remarks during the site visit that in these cases, students find it more difficult to provide the (financial) resources necessary for their studies, and drop out of the programme consequently.</p> <p>Suggestions for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-reliance on self-funded students should be reduced; this poses a challenge to full integration into the programme. • HRZZ practices should be reviewed in order to facilitate access to this source of funding for self-

	<p>funded students as well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general, efforts need to be made to improve the situation of self-funded students, especially with regard to their access to fundamental resources.
<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>High Level of Quality</p> <p>At this time there are sufficient capacities to provide all students with an advisor/mentor and a thesis supervisor (however, there may be a workload problem if the ratio would come close to 3:1, see 3.1). While the SER also stated that only 7 of the new candidates had been appointed a supervisor (p. 3), according to information gathered during the site visit, all new candidates had been appointed a supervisor in the meantime.</p> <p>The mechanisms in place, which have been mentioned in the SER (p. 34), seem to be working, as confirmed by the site visit. It was reported that the allocation of advisors and supervisors appears to work quickly and that the students' particular interests and aims are being accounted for.</p> <p>We would, however, like to make further general suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every PhD researcher should have a mentor / advisor from the very beginning, based on the preliminary ideas for research (as part of the admission process). • By the start of second year at the latest, a supervisor should be appointed. This supervisor may be the mentor or may be a different person, depending on the evolution of the proposal. • The review from the mentor (year one) and supervisor (from year two) should be made an annual exercise. This should be carried out regardless of whether the student is enrolled full-time or part-time. <p>There should be a formal process to assess progression. This should involve both the student and mentor (and later PhD thesis supervisor). This may be in a brief format, where both student and supervisor provide brief details on the progress made. The report should then be verified by the head of the programme, and any necessary actions should be taken immediately (especially at earlier stages).</p>

<p>3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.</p>	<p>High Level of Quality</p> <p>As an additional incentive, applicants with exceptional grades receive a full or partial waiver of their tuition fees (p. 34).</p> <p>While there is no significant presence of international students in a wider sense, the programme has consistently and successfully attracted foreign students from the nearby region e.g. from Bosnia-Herzegovina or Montenegro. Furthermore, a too strict application of the requirement to attract international students appears to be impractical, as the actual requirements for social workers vary significantly between different countries.</p> <p>Nonetheless, it appears that entry requirements are fairly low (see 3.2) so that while the best students are recruited, so are many others. Furthermore, there does not seem to be a uniform trend among candidates that all of them are leaning towards a career in research.</p>
<p>3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.</p>	<p>Improvements are Necessary</p> <p>While the requirements for applicants are public, they do not seem to be very strict.</p> <p>For instance, according to the SER (p. 35), applicants can be accepted if they have a grade point average of 3.5 out of 5. Additionally, this requirement can even be waived if the applicant has published one scientific paper or two expert papers, without further defining any of these terms.</p> <p>Additionally, the interview and the essay may hint towards a general motivation of the applicant. However, it cannot be compared to a (preliminary) research proposal. An analysis of such proposal could improve the overall assessment of the applicant, provide a better insight on whether there may be a suitable research project available for the applicant, and facilitate the selection of supervisor.</p> <p>Suggestions for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary research proposal must be included or at least evaluated during the admission process. • Raising the entry requirements (higher GPA necessary, less or tighter loopholes to circumvent these provisions).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An advisor should be allocated as a matter of priority as soon as possible and, later, a thesis supervisor once the thesis proposal is accepted. • A candidate should not be admitted if there is no available expertise in the Department.
<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>High Level of Quality</p> <p>All necessary criteria for transparency are fulfilled.</p> <p>No additional information on the complaints procedure could be obtained during the site visit, as there were no evidence of any such procedure ever taking place.</p>
<p>3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.</p>	<p>High Level of Quality</p> <p>Formal mechanisms are in place to assess prior academic performance of applicants and candidates alike. Furthermore, there are provisions which allow candidates with extensive and specialised prior knowledge to enrol to a later semester, therefore with a reduced workload up to the completion of their PhD studies.</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>High Level of Quality</p> <p>The rights and obligations of the candidates are defined transparently in Faculty regulations; these rights and obligations are further formalised by way of a study contract, which is signed by all candidates (SER, p. 36).</p> <p>The site visit confirmed that all students have signed such a contract and that they are aware of their rights and obligations.</p>
<p>3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.</p>	<p>Improvements are Necessary</p> <p>Candidates are faced with a multitude of problems. Candidates engaged in teaching activities find that this slows down their progress and deters them from their research. Self-funded candidates that are employed feel a certain detachment from academic life as they have little contact with their supervisors and significant problems in attending conferences or publishing articles. During the site visit there was a consensus between the different groups that this PhD programme could not be finished within the expected timeframe of three years, even with significant support.</p>

	<p>The general impression from site visit was that candidate-supervisor relationships generally seem to be working well, but that they can be unstructured at times. A good working relationship is thus in many cases overly dependent on the goodwill of the candidate and especially the supervisor. Formal mechanisms in this regard do not exist, which creates significant gaps concerning accountability.</p> <p>Candidates also do not have to provide progress reports frequently. This raises the risk of possible problems a candidate may encounter during his/her studies going unnoticed for too long, which can then lead to dropping out of study programme.</p> <p>See 3.4. for our suggestions for further general improvements.</p> <p>Suggestions for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher frequency of comprehensive progress reports. • Resources need to be invested, especially for issues such as support for attending conferences. • Introduction of formalised mechanisms.
<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>With regard to structural problems of the Croatian higher education system, the programme cannot be effectively compared with international higher education institutions.</p> <p>Suggestions for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The balancing between theoretical and practical aims of the PhD programme should be better balanced. • More time is needed for the PhD thesis in the context of the doctoral programmes' coursework. Heavy coursework is a problem with regard to the specialised topics of the thesis. • The access to international programmes should be improved.
<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</p>	<p>High Level of Quality</p> <p>Based on the submission and the interaction with different stakeholders, we are confident about this.</p>

<p>describe the competencies the candidates will develop during the doctoral programme, including the ethical requirements of doing research.</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>Suggestions for Improvement: The Programme should be better balanced with regard to the theoretical and more applied-oriented goals; in particular, theoretical and methodological courses should be improved. We have to keep in mind that most of the PhD students will not work in higher education system, so the programme should be more connected to the international state of the art. Many dissertations are data-oriented, therefore the improvement of methodological skills is very important.</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>High Level of Quality</p> <p>The Panel checked the available theses, some candidates' publications and a sample of seminar papers.</p>
<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>Suggestions for Improvement: The committee already mentioned a certain lack in methodology and theoretically-oriented courses but cannot adequately assess the quality of teaching methods.</p>
<p>4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.</p>	<p>High Level of Quality</p> <p>Suggestions for sustaining this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral workshops should become an annual affair, bringing together all PhD students and as many mentors and supervisors as possible. • If funds are available, PhD students should get access to international workshops, especially with regard to theoretical and methodological issues.
<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</p> <p>Both the submitted documents and interviews with different stakeholders reassured us about this.</p>

<p>4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.</p>	<p>Improvements are Necessary</p> <p>Suggestions for Improvement:</p> <p>It is possible for the programme to become a regional powerhouse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate this, the specificities of discipline need to be recognised by the Faculty and the HEI. • Strategic investment should be made by HEI in the doctoral programme and its associated research active academics to promote further international mobility. • Also, in the case of a more practically-oriented programme like “social policy and work” international cooperation and exchange is necessary. Therefore the participation of PhD students of international conferences and workshops should be fostered – keeping in mind the problems of the lack of external funds.
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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.