



**Report
of the Expert Panel
on the Reaccreditation
of the University Postgraduate (Doctoral) Programme
Prevention science and disability study
Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of
Zagreb**

**Date of the visit:
December 4th, 2017**

March, 2018



The project was co-financed by the European Union within the European Social Fund.
The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the Agency for Science and Higher Education.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....3

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME5

RECOMMENDATION BY THE EXPERT PANEL TO THE ASHE'S ACCREDITATION COUNCIL.....6

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME.....6

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME.....6

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME7

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE.....7

**COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRESCRIBED CONDITIONS FOR THE DELIVERY OF A STUDY
PROGRAMME.....8**

QUALITY ASSESSMENT 10

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 Prevention science and disability study on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Report of the Programme, other documentation submitted and a visit to the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, 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:

1. President of the Expert Panel, Prof. Nihad Bunar, Stockholm University, Sweden
2. Dr. Rachel Shanks, University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom,
3. Prof. Juana M Sancho Gil, University of Barcelona, Spain
4. Prof. Rachel Msetfi, University of Limerick, Ireland
5. Dr. Matthew Schuelka, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom,
6. Prof. Bosse Bergstedt, Lund University, Sweden,
7. Justīne Vīķe, Rīga Stradiņš University, Latvia,
8. Ieva Bloma, European University Institute, Italy,
9. Prof. Annkathrin Schacht, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany,
10. Prof. Cathy Craig, Queen's University Belfast, United Kingdom,
11. Dr. Michel Denis, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, France,
12. Prof. Thomas Morton, University of Exeter, United Kingdom,
13. Dr. Hrvoje Stojić, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom.

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

1. Prof. Nihad Bunar, Stockholm University, Sweden
2. Dr. Rachel Shanks, University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom (moderator)
3. Prof. Juana M Sancho Gil, University of Barcelona, Spain
4. Prof. Rachel Msetfi, University of Limerick, Ireland
5. Dr. Matthew Schuelka, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom,
6. Prof. Bosse Bergstedt, Lund University, Sweden,
7. Justīne Vīke, Rīga Stradiņš University, Latvia,
8. Ieva Bloma, European University Institute, Italy,

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

- Dr. Josip Hrgović, coordinator, ASHE,
- Marko Hrvatin, interpreter at the site visit,
- translator of the Report, 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,
- External stakeholders,
- Alumni.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme contained in the licence: Postgraduate university (doctoral) study; Prevention science and disability study

Institution delivering the programme: University of Zagreb, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences

Institution providing the programme: University of Zagreb, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences

Place of delivery: Zagreb

Scientific area and field: Social Sciences, Education and Rehabilitation Sciences

Number of doctoral candidates: 42

Number of funded doctoral candidates: 1

Number of self-funded and those funded by employer: 41

Number of inactive doctoral candidates (still entitled to graduate): 0

Number of supervisors: 22

Number of teachers: 44

Ratio of officially appointed supervisors and their doctoral candidates: 1,7:1

Ratio of potential supervisors to total No. of doctoral students: 1:1,9

Taught / research ratio: 1:4

Taught component: 20% (38 ECTS) Research component: 80% (142 ECTS) Learning outcomes of the study programme:

LO 1 Extract relevant scientific facts from existing sources from data bases containing recent publications.

LO 3 Apply critical thinking to issues regarding problems and needs of children, youth and persons with disabilities and behavioural disorders (epidemiology studies) and analyse phenomena and problems through multi-annual research (longitudinal studies).

LO 4 Propose scientific hypotheses and establish appropriate methodology for its verification. Design the study process including the experimental plan for scientific hypothesis' verification.

LO 5 Select and apply appropriate statistical tools and methods for data processing and hypotheses evaluation as well as to appropriately describe and interpret acquired results.

LO 6 Evaluate scientifically and continuously update and upgrade existing prevention interventions (evaluation studies and cost-effectiveness studies).

LO 7 Elaborate scientifically and apply comprehensive strategies for the promotion of health and quality of living of children, youth and adults.

LO 8 Elaborate scientifically and apply comprehensive prevention strategies and early interventions in the area of mental and behavioural disorders of children and youth.

LO 9 Research disability in its full complexity and develop support services which promote full participation of persons with disabilities, their self-determination and social equality.

LO 10 Elaborate scientifically and apply comprehensive support strategies for persons with disabilities.

LO 11 Present their scientific work in written form and orally at congresses, conferences and other scientific meetings.

LO 12 Present and describe their scientific work in form of scientific papers eligible for publishing in scientific journals and other publications.

LO 13 Carry out studies according to ethical principles, and publish results as a contribution to the development of a socially sensitive knowledge based society.

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:

3. issue a letter of expectation for the period up to three (3) years in which period the higher education institution should make the necessary improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. It is recommended that teachers' workloads comply with the laid down norm hours.
2. A supervisor is appointed from the start or a short time after student admission.
3. There should be regular internal reviews of the programme, for example every 5 years, by the Faculty or the University as part of the quality assurance process.
4. When required we recommend that a protocol is drawn up between the HEI, the PhD student and their place of work if their data collection is to take place where they are employed or with their employer elsewhere.
5. It is recommended that students have fewer compulsory courses and a more individualised programme which takes into account the past experience and qualifications of students, thus giving students more time to develop the necessary research skills for their doctoral studies and future career.
6. An external examiner (who is not employed by any part of the University of Zagreb) is a member of the panel at which the final thesis is defended.
7. Learning outcomes should be developed which cover the contribution to knowledge that the PhD study will entail.
8. It is recommended that plagiarism software is used and that training on how to use it is provided for both staff and students.
9. The HEI should provide more support and incentives to its teachers to get their work published in international and peer-reviewed journals and for them to become involved in new research projects.

ADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Supervisors are very committed to the success of their students. There appears to be very good co-operation between students and their supervisors.
2. Teaching delivery is primarily discussion and seminar-based, which is appropriate for PhD level study.

3. The involvement of international lecturers is a benefit to the programme content and quality.
4. There seems to be a clear link between this programme and the European prevention studies society, which is recognized as being very beneficial to the students.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1. Learning outcomes are not clearly linked to the contribution to knowledge that the PhD study will bring about.
2. A supervisor is not appointed at the beginning of the student's studies.
3. Internal teachers' workload is too high.
4. Despite numerous links with well-renowned international researchers and participation at conferences with abstracts and poster, the output in international peer-reviewed journals is modest.
5. There have been very few full-time students as there have not been research grants which included their recruitment.
6. Too much time at the beginning of the programme is taken up with compulsory courses, which do not take into account students existing expertise and PhD trajectory.
7. Students can take several semesters, sometimes even years, to determine the topic of their research study and have a supervisor for their thesis appointed. This may not provide them with sufficient time to research an area to the necessary doctoral level.
8. There is no requirement for the panel which examines the final thesis to contain at least one member who is not employed by the University of Zagreb.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Defence of the thesis proposal is a very useful exercise for students.
2. External stakeholders were very positive about the PhD programme and how the research and researchers it produces are positively impacting policy in Croatia.
3. There are several international links with academics and universities and this brings about useful opportunities for the PhD students.

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

Minimal legal conditions:	
1. Higher education institution (HEI) is listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations in the scientific area of the programme, and has a positive reaccreditation decision on performing higher education activities and scientific activity.	YES
2. HEI delivers programmes in the two cycles leading to the doctoral programme, i.e., first two cycles in the same area and field/fields (for interdisciplinary programmes), and employs a sufficient number of teachers as defined by Article 6 of the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (OG 24/10).	YES
3. HEI employs a sufficient number of researchers, as defined by Article 7 of the Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing Licence for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organisations and Content of Licence (OG 83/2010).	YES
4. At least 50% of teaching as expressed in norm-hours is delivered by teachers employed at the HEI (full-time, elected into scientific-teaching titles).	YES
5. Student: teacher ratio at the HEI is below 30:1.	YES
6. HEI ensures that doctoral theses are public.	YES. (DABAR: https://repozitorij.erf.unizg.hr/)
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. (Zagreb University is in charge of this procedure, and HEI also details its part of the procedure).
Additional/ recommended conditions of the ASHE Accreditation Council for passing a positive opinion	
1. HEI (or HEIs in joint programmes) has at least five teachers appointed to scientific-teaching titles in the field, or fields relevant for the programme involved in its delivery.	YES.
2. In the most recent reaccreditation, HEI had the standard Scientific and Professional Activity marked as at least "partly implemented" (3).	YES. (The standard was assessed as "mostly implemented").
3. The doctoral programme is aligned with the HEI's research strategy.	YES
4. The candidate : supervisor ratio at the HEI is not above 3:1.	YES.
5. All supervisors meet the following conditions: a) PhD, elected into a scientific title, holds a scientific or a	a) NO. (3 supervisors are retired) b) YES.

<p>scientific-teaching position and/or has at least two years of postdoctoral research experience;</p> <p>b) active researcher in the scientific area of the programme, as evidenced by publications, participation in scientific conferences and/or projects in the past five years (table 2, Supervisors and candidates);</p> <p>c) confirms feasibility of the draft research plan upon admission of the candidate (or submission of the proposal);</p> <p>d) ensures the conditions (and funding) necessary to implement the candidate's research (in line with the draft research plan) as a research project leader, co-leader, participant, collaborator or in other ways;</p> <p>e) trained for the role before assuming it (through workshops, co-supervisions etc.);</p> <p>f) received a positive opinion of the HEI on previous supervisory work.</p>	<p>c) NO. There is no draft research plan at time of admission, only a letter on motivation.</p> <p>d) NO. Currently only one student has funding.</p> <p>e) NO. There is not adequate supervisor training.</p> <p>f) YES.</p>
<p>6. All teachers meet the following conditions:</p> <p>a) holds a scientific or a scientific-teaching position;</p> <p>b) active researcher, recognized in the field relevant for the course (table 1, Teachers).</p>	<p>NO. (3 are retired).</p>
<p>7. The supervisor normally does not participate in the assessment committees.</p>	<p>NO. According to the Ordinance, a supervisor can be a member of the topic assessment committee, doctoral dissertation and defence assessment Board of Referees, but cannot preside over these committees.</p>
<p>8. The programme ensures that all candidates spend at least three years doing independent research (while studying, individually, within or outside courses), which includes writing the thesis, publishing, participating in international conferences, field work, attending courses relevant for research etc.</p>	<p>NO. The candidates do not spend all their time on independent research as the first 3 semesters at least are mainly devoted to taught courses.</p>
<p>9. For joint programmes and doctoral schools</p>	<p>N/A</p>

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

<p>1. RESOURCES: TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, RESEARCH CAPACITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE</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>The Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences (HEI), University of Zagreb has presented a list (Table 1, Self- Evaluation Report) which comprises 44 people involved, to various degrees, in the PhD programme Prevention science and disability study. Twenty-five of these people are not employed by HEI, but either by other faculties at the University of Zagreb (for example the Faculty of Law, Faculty of Political Science) or by universities abroad.</p> <p>According to information provided in Hrvatska znanstvena bibliografija (Croatian scientific bibliography), Google Scholar and Scopus, for each of the 19 internally employed teachers (including the two retired), the output is in the form of a relatively large number of books, book chapters, manuals, and articles. The majority of articles have been published in in- house or other national journals in the Croatian language, especially in <i>Kriminologija i socijalna integracija</i>. Roughly between 25 and 30 (some papers have been accounted for twice by the co-authors employed at HEI) have been published in international peer-reviewed journals in the last five years. Teachers at HEI are active participants at international conferences and a large number of summaries and posters are provided.</p> <p>The expert panel concludes that with regard to scientific achievement in the discipline, the HEI is positively distinguished in Croatia and in the wider region. There is a relatively large number of publications in in-house and national journals and books/book chapters with good quality. Also, a relatively large number of scientific projects have been set up and conducted up to year 2015. Furthermore, the HEI has established a number of research centres for further promotion of research and cooperation with practitioners within the field. Internationally, the HEI teachers have a rather modest but satisfactory contribution to the discipline. The HEI should provide more support and incentives to its staff for currently getting involved in research projects. Nevertheless, the expert panel finds that, generally, HEI is</p>

	<p>distinguished by its scientific achievements in the discipline.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p>
<p>1.2. The number and workload of teachers involved in the study programme ensure quality doctoral education.</p>	<p>Forty-four teachers (25 external associates and 19 internally employed) are involved in the study programme. A considerable number of hours, at all levels, are delivered by teachers from other faculties at the University of Zagreb (around 4000) and a smaller portion by guest teachers from other countries (around 387 hours). Totally, more than 50% of the program teaching is delivered by faculty members. However, 14 out of 19 internally employed staff have total workload corresponding to more than 360 norm hours (some have more than 700 NH).</p> <p>The expert panel concludes that the number of teaching hours delivered in the study programme is sufficient to ensure quality doctoral education. However, the number of teachers, although a relatively high number is involved, is obviously not sufficient, since the majority of faculty members have total workload of more than 360 norm hours. The panel recommends the Faculty leaders review the current volume, structure and way of delivering courses, excluding and/or merging some of them if necessary, across all cycles, in order to assure the workload is appropriate.</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY (See recommendation 1)</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>Taking account of all 44 teachers involved in delivering the doctoral programme, the number and quality of their publications, it can be concluded that a high number of qualified researchers are actively engaged with the topics they teach.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p>
<p>1.4. The number of supervisors and their qualifications provide for quality in producing the doctoral thesis.</p>	<p>The programme currently has 22 supervisors for 13 doctoral students (Self-Evaluation Report, p. 3). In total, 42 students are enrolled in the doctoral programme. During the interviews, it was clarified that a supervisor is usually appointed after three semesters and after approval of the doctoral thesis topic. While 20 students have been appointed a study advisor this still means that the majority of students enrolled on the programme as PhD students do not have a supervisor. The expert panel has concerns about this policy and recommends that a</p>

	<p>supervisor is appointed a short time after student admission. This will enable a doctoral candidate to be immediately introduced into the scientific community and start working on his/her research. This would also, in our opinion, and based on our experiences, further promote independence and skills for critical reflection of new researchers.</p> <p>The student-supervisor ratio is less than 1:3. Internally employed supervisors have field-relevant research output in Croatian language, have published in in-house and domestic journals, and books/book chapters. Internationally, the HEI supervisors have rather modest but satisfactory contributions to the discipline.</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY (See recommendation 2)</p>
<p>1.5. The HEI has developed methods of assessing the qualifications and competencies of teachers and supervisors.</p>	<p>The HEI has developed the qualifications and competence of supervisors by fulfilling the criteria set by the Zagreb University Rector's Council and the election criteria for the scientific-teaching title. A person can be appointed as supervisor only after gaining the scientific teaching title, ranging from assistant professor to tenured professor. Supervisors' competences are determined by use of the initial OBAS system Form for Registering Doctoral Dissertation Topics and Potential supervisors (DR.SC. - 01). This Form requires a list of up to five relevant research papers published by the supervisor in the past five years. The quality of the supervisors' work is continuously evaluated, by ways of approval (or rejection) of the report by the Faculty Council (internal evaluation) and the competent bodies of the University (external evaluation), from the beginning of the doctoral thesis development to the point of defence of the doctoral dissertation.</p> <p>The HEI has developed internal evaluation of teachers and supervisors, this is carried out at ERF, and is based on the provisions of the Ordinance on ERF Quality Assurance from 2013, which provides for quality assurance procedures, including the two assessments – the teacher evaluation and the researcher's performance.</p> <p>During interviews with students and supervisors, it was confirmed that there is an on-going process evaluation of this Doctoral Degree Programme. The supervision skills</p>

	<p>are evaluated continuously, every two years the supervisor must submit a written supervisee's progress report to the Postgraduate Studies Council. A positive supervisor's report is one of the prerequisites for progressing to the fifth semester of the Doctoral Degree Programme. The obligation to file a written report guarantees regular control of the supervisor's work and resolves potential problems, which may occur during doctoral dissertation development.</p> <p>Overall, the expert panel finds that the HEI have competence and success in the supervision of doctoral students. They have high quality formal mechanisms for assessing and monitoring the qualifications and competence of teachers and supervisors.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p>
<p>1.6. The HEI has access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.</p>	<p>Students have access to all the books and publications of the library and there is on-line access to databases and other library services. Students have access to all significant databases needed for researching the field of education and rehabilitation, social, legal sciences and other social sciences. The Library fund includes scientific and professional publications, referent literature, MA papers, PhD dissertations, foreign and domestic professional and scientific journals.</p> <p>Students have also access to 39 databases through the On-line Data Base Centre. The National University Library provides access to the SAGE collection. Students have also access to data processing software such as SPSS and NVivo.</p> <p>The Library's total space, including the reading area is 128 m². The reading area is a separate room intended for quiet student work. It has 20 sitting positions, 8 computers and Internet access.</p> <p>Overall, the expert panel finds that both students and teachers have access to high-quality resources for research, as required by the programme discipline.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p>
<p>2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE PROGRAMME</p>	
<p>2.1. The HEI has established and accepted effective procedures for</p>	<p>The programme is unique in Croatia and rare in Europe. It brings together several disciplines and is linked to</p>

<p>proposing, approving and delivering doctoral education. The procedures include identification of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social and economic needs.</p>	<p>specific societal needs. Its aim is to train future researchers who can influence and devise evidence-based policies for people with disabilities and for vulnerable children and young people.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p>
<p>2.2. The programme is aligned with the HEI research mission and vision, i.e. research strategy.</p>	<p>The programme is clearly aligned with the HEI strategy. The programme has an explicit praxis focus which is consistent with the research area.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p>
<p>2.3. The HEI systematically monitors the success of the programmes through periodic reviews, and implements improvements.</p>	<p>While the panel were not provided of details in relation to changes made as a result of evaluations in 2012 and 2013, the panel were informed of changes that had been made. Students informed us that they evaluate each module at the end; they provide feedback to the programme team; and they have witnessed improvements being implemented.</p> <p>While some changes have been implemented there does not seem to be a regular internal review of the whole programme either at HEI or university level. In other parts of Europe such quality assurance measures would be standard practice.</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY (See recommendation 3)</p>
<p>2.4. HEI continuously monitors supervisors' performance and has mechanisms for evaluating supervisors, and, if necessary, changing them and mediating between the supervisors and the candidates.</p>	<p>No surveys were mentioned but students said they completed module evaluations. The panel noted that there are no external examiners for taught modules or the programme.</p> <p>The success rates of graduates is 30% so far with 9 graduates so far and others still to complete.</p> <p>Students complete a form annually and evaluate supervision; this is done anonymously. If there is an issue, then the senior management will meet with the supervisor. This is a very small faculty and any misunderstandings are sorted out informally. Students can approach senior management at any point in the year if there are issues with their supervision.</p> <p>Students confirm this, and are very comfortable with the idea of bringing issues to supervisor or Dean. They are also members of faculty committee and have voting rights</p>

	<p>on key issues.</p> <p>Supervisors complete 2 yearly review of students, these are control points but it appears that students do not always look at the supervisor's evaluation.</p> <p>There is no official supervisor until after the defence of the thesis proposal; up until this point, there is no evaluation of the student's progression, only the instructional parts of the student's course, i.e. the ECTS that are from direct instruction. The rest of the credits, 80%, are not progression evaluated, unless the student is more than 2 years post proposal defence.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p>
<p>2.5. HEI assures academic integrity and freedom.</p>	<p>Currently there is no plagiarism software available. University may have purchased software but as yet no training has been provided to academics and the software is unused. There is a reliance on trust between the student and their supervisor.</p> <p>Ethics in research – there is a faculty ethical committee. There are national documents defining ethical practice. Research approved must be consistent with national standards.</p> <p>All PhD theses are publicly available on the online portal.</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY (See recommendation 8)</p>
<p>2.6. The process of developing and defending the thesis proposal is transparent and objective, and includes a public presentation.</p>	<p>Senior managers say that developing the thesis proposal can take from 1 to 3 years for the part-time students. This includes a public defence.</p> <p>The panel were concerned that two students had not developed their thesis proposals after 3 and 5 years of part-time study. The thesis proposal should be developed earlier, and there needs to be more structure and support around proposal development.</p> <p>Alumni 1st generation, recommended that students are given more structured support, pushed to start research straight away and ask more from their supervisor.</p> <p>3 years appears to be standard for completing the research proposal for the part-time students. This limits the time available for the research to take place.</p>

	IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY (See recommendations 2 and 5)
2.7. Thesis assessment results from a scientifically sound assessment of an independent committee.	<p>The thesis is not independently examined as there is no requirement for one member of the examination panel to be employed outside the university. Currently at least one examiner must be located outside the HEI. This is important to ensure that the doctoral theses are consistent with generally accepted standards.</p> <p>The public defence of the thesis is similar to practice in other European countries. The thesis is reviewed by the committee and the candidate has to present the thesis and then defend their methods, decisions, findings etc, after which the evaluation is made.</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY (See recommendation 6)</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>There have been two foreign students on the programme so far. Students are able to find all the necessary information online.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</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>The distribution of doctoral fees is documented and the distribution is the same for every student.</p> <p>Students can receive funding from external associations for conferences. There is no internal funding for this, but they do receive discounts.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p>
2.10. Tuition fees are determined on the basis of transparent criteria (and real costs of studying).	<p>The HEI determines costs of delivering the programme and calculates fees on this basis.</p> <p>Fees are comparable to other Croatian institutions.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</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>There is a two-pronged admissions process with an application including a motivation letter and then an interview stage. Of those applicants who are interviewed, not all are admitted on to the programme.</p>

	<p>At the application stage a research proposal is not required to be evaluated by the admissions panel. Without a research proposal it is more difficult for the HEI to assess whether the HEI has the necessary supervision capacity for the cohort in question, having to rely instead on the motivation letter and interview process.</p> <p>A supervisor is not assigned until after the public defence of the thesis proposal once the thesis proposal is approved. If potential supervisors were identified during the application process they could be involved in assessing the application through scrutiny of the research proposal.</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY (See recommendation 2)</p>
<p>3.2. The HEI establishes admission quotas on the basis of scientific/ artistic, cultural, social, economic and other needs.</p>	<p>The HEI's strategy and vision is closely aligned to societal needs in the area of disability studies and the protection of vulnerable of children and young people. Thus, admission quotas are linked to social needs.</p> <p>Applicants must provide a motivation letter indicating why they want to do the PhD programme and their research interests. They may also be interviewed.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</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>It appears that in relation to admission the HEI takes into account their supervisory capacity and so does not over-recruit but we must bear in mind that students do not start with a defined research proposal.</p> <p>There seems to have been plenty of project activity in the last five years (Table: Supervisors – column D and E) but there has been a very small number of funded students.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</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>There are sufficient supervisors with 13 current doctoral students who have defended their thesis proposal and 18 appointed supervisors.</p> <p>An advisor from a relevant area is not appointed at the student's point of admission but instead from the point of the defence of the thesis proposal.</p> <p>There appears to be no written sustainable research plan for every student from the beginning made by the student</p>

	<p>and his/her supervisor.</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY (See recommendation 2)</p>
<p>3.5. The HEI ensures that interested, talented and highly motivated candidates are recruited internationally.</p>	<p>A Master degree is required to apply for the programme. In the 3rd cohort or generation there are students from Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia and there has been interest from an applicant from Sri Lanka.</p> <p>It is planned to schedule additional elective courses in English to help with the recruitment of international students.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p>
<p>3.6. The selection process is public and based on choosing the best applicants.</p>	<p>According to the existing admission criteria the HEI chooses the best applicants from those who have applied. There is usually a 70% acceptance rate for a cohort. There are two parts to the selection process based first on documentation including a letter of motivation and qualifications and then on the basis of an interview.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</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>The application procedure is transparent, for example a Master degree in a corresponding or related field is required.</p> <p>Students are aware of the process including the admission criteria as well as the complaints procedure, if needed.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p>
<p>3.8. There is a possibility to recognize applicants' and candidates' prior learning.</p>	<p>Applicants' previous academic experience is considered in the admission process. An area for improvement, however, relates to the recognition of candidates' prior learning once they have been accepted onto the PhD programme. Currently there is a rigid study plan in place and candidates are required to complete all courses notwithstanding their prior learning. The panel recommend reviewing this policy and developing more flexible and individual programmes of study which align with the learning and training needs of each candidate.</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY (See recommendation 5)</p>
<p>3.9. Candidates' rights and obligations are</p>	<p>The PhD candidates' rights and obligations are clear, for</p>

<p>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>instance, students are involved in the development and improvement of the study programme. Candidates give feedback on each taught course they study and the content of several courses has been modified as a result of suggestions from them. On the level of support before the defence of the research proposal please see above.</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY (See recommendation 2)</p>
<p>3.10. There are institutional support mechanisms for candidates' successful progression.</p>	<p>The assessment for 3.10 is related to sections 3.4 and 3.9 above, in particular the lack of a dedicated supervisor from the beginning of the programme. This change should prevent students being in their third or even fifth year part time without having defended their research proposal.</p> <p>There are reviews of students' work every two years but further control points are suggested.</p> <p>As stated previously changes are required so that the focus from the very beginning is on the successful development and completion of an independent research project with a dedicated PhD supervisor from the beginning.</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY (See recommendation 2)</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>It is apparent that measures have been taken to consult other comparable international programmes and align the topics of the courses according to the latest trends and topics in the fields of Prevention and Disability Studies. The involvement of international lecturers is certainly a benefit to the programme content and quality.</p> <p>There are some concerns (echoed elsewhere in this report) that the courses are too many and too prescriptive, when compared to other international programmes in the EU and elsewhere. This will be detailed further in section 4.7.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</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>The Learning Outcomes have been aligned with the CroQF Level 8.2, as evidenced by Table 3 of the Self-Report and understood through consultation with staff during the site visit. Students indicated that they had been made aware of the Learning Outcomes in their coursework.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</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>This is evidenced through Table 4 of the Self-Report, it is clear that much thought has been put into curriculum mapping and in how the Learning Outcomes align with programme activities.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</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>Whilst the Learning Outcomes are aligned with Level 8.2 of the CroQF, and can be clearly seen throughout the coursework of the programme, the Learning Outcomes do not appear to be <i>ensured</i> and checked through the PhD thesis itself. It is suggested that all evaluation and assessment of the thesis be explicitly connected to an evaluation and assessment of the Learning Outcomes. This criteria or rubric needs to be communicated not only to supervisors, but also to external examiners of the PhD thesis. This may indeed be the case in practice, but it was not made apparent during this reaccreditation process.</p> <p>Additionally, there is a missing element to the existing Learning Outcomes that promote the development of innovative, novel, robust methodological consideration, and theoretically rigorous research that should be the hallmark of the PhD thesis. Much of the language of the Learning Outcomes pertain to ‘evaluate’ and ‘elaborate’, and not enough to ensure the development of a student in this programme into an independent researcher and contributor to the international academic and scientific community. Only one Learning Outcome – IU3 – suggests to ‘apply critical thinking’, which itself is quite abstract.</p> <p>It is our recommendation to reconsider the Learning Outcomes to advance the PhD thesis as the summative assessment of all Learning Outcomes, leading to the development of the student as an EU and internationally-recognised independent scholar. The Learning Outcomes should be relevant to every year of the programme, and</p>

	<p>not just the coursework.</p> <p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY (See recommendation 7)</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>It is clear through the Self-Evaluation and in consultation with programme stakeholders at the site visit – particularly students – that teaching delivery is primarily discussion and seminar – based, which is appropriate for the PhD-level. Students were very satisfied with their courses in general.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p>
<p>4.6. The programme enables acquisition of general (transferable) skills.</p>	<p>Coursework, supervision, and extracurricular opportunities all enable the acquisition of appropriate transferable skills.</p> <p>HIGH 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>The number of courses required for the students in this programme is of concern. We suggest that some courses can be combined, as they seem to share a common theme and perspectives. (For example, “Public Policy” and “Public Relations, Media, and Public Campaigns”; or “Social Policy and Disability,” “Disability and Democracy” and “Legislation and Disability.”)</p> <p>We also recommend that students be given more elective choice in determining their courses. There should be core courses, certainly, but students should be allowed to further pursue relevant courses to their interests, topic, and research.</p> <p>It is also recommended that coursework begin to develop the thesis and focus on the research training aspects of the programme. One common element of other international PhD programmes are research seminars that not only feature discussion of research, but specific focus on building concrete elements of the thesis proposal (Concept maps and theoretical frameworks, research questions, literature review, etc.). Students also expressed that they would like more specific training on research methods and data Workshops were offered in this regard, but we suggest that some element of research training – not only an overview of methodology but also of exactly <i>how</i> research is designed and done – could be further embedded in the coursework itself.</p>

	<p>IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY (See recommendation 5)</p>
<p>4.8. The programme ensures quality through international connections and teacher and candidate mobility.</p>	<p>The international connections in this programme are of the highest quality, and this should be especially recognized and commended. The contributing international scholars and institutions are of the utmost quality and world-renown. There is a natural international network of scholars that the students can access. There also seems to be a clear link between this programme and the European prevention studies society, which is recognized as being very beneficial to the students.</p> <p>HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY</p>

*** 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.