

academic year...2020/2021.....

Total number of doctoral students:...**1 October 2020 – 16 people; 30 September 2021 – 15 people**

Education Quality Team (EQT) at the Doctoral School of Humanities at the
University of Białystok:

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1. MONITORING THE QUALIFICATIONS OF ACADEMIC TEACHERS OR RESEARCHERS CONDUCTING CLASSES WITH DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Monitoring the qualifications and competences of academic teachers and of other persons conducting classes with doctoral students at Doctoral School of Humanities (DSH) is based on the principles resulting from Resolution No. 2614 of the Senate of the University of Białystok of November 27, 2019 on the internal system of ensuring the quality of education at the University of Białystok (§ 4). Therefore, the deans of both Faculties, the director of the Institute of Philosophy, as well as the central administration were systematically consulted on:

- staffing of didactic classes by research and teaching staff and other persons conducting classes with doctoral students; great importance was attached to the compatibility of competences and experience and professional qualifications of academic teachers with the conducted classes (including title or degree, scientific achievements, scientific specialization, interdisciplinary skills, professional experience);

- attention was paid to the academic development of research and teaching staff, as well as raising professional qualifications by academic teachers and pursuing subsequent stages of their professional careers.

In accordance with the DSH Regulations, the principle that core courses are conducted only by senior academic staff (full professors, university professors and teachers with post-doctoral degrees) specializing in a given discipline was observed. The School refused - despite receiving a clear, substantive recommendation from the Dean of the Faculty - to assign classes to a person with a doctoral degree and extensive teaching and research experience.

At the DSH, even language courses (foreign language for specific purposes) are, with one exception (a junior academic employee with a doctoral degree) conducted by senior academic teachers (two professors and one full professor) specializing in the following disciplines: philosophy, history, linguistics and literary studies, respectively.

A junior academic employee, but with extensive academic and teaching experience, conducted classes titled

tertiray education didactics. Among the classes conducted by junior academic staff, two other courses from the group of soft courses, *time management*, *communication and building relationships with the group*, as well as a non-core course: *work and health and safety* should be mentioned.

In total, in 2020/2021, 39 academic employees conducted classes at the DSH, including: 13 full professors, 20 university professors and teachers with post-doctoral degrees, as well as 6 junior academic employees.

Conclusions (recommendations for the EQT):

The staffing of courses at the Doctoral School of Humanities of University of Białystok – according to the Commission – is based on the right principles. In order to improve the quality of teaching at the school, the Team recommends the following actions:

- continue cooperation with the deans and the director of the institute regarding the staffing of courses
- monitor the staffing of courses, especially while suggesting academic staff members with a doctoral degree to conduct core courses, strictly related to an academic discipline.

Implementation of the recommendations of the EQT and UEQT from the previous academic year:
The conclusions from the previous year were partially implemented.

2. MONITORING AND IMPROVING THE TEACHING PROCESS

The basis for the operation of the Doctoral School of Humanities at the University of Białystok are documents approved by the Senate of the University of Białystok, based on the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science (Dz.U. z 2018 r., poz. 1668 z późn. zm.). These are the following legal acts:

- Ordinance No. 8 of the Rector of the University of Białystok of 27.03.2019 on the establishment of doctoral schools at the University of Białystok:
<http://docs.uwb.edu.pl/pliki/2019-8-2.pdf>
<https://szkolydoktorskie.uwb.edu.pl/nh/akty-prawne/>
- DSH Regulations – Resolution No. 2357 of the Senate of the University of Białystok of 27 March 2019 on the Regulations of the Doctoral School of Humanities of the University of Białystok: <https://bip.uwb.edu.pl/download/64/31532/2019-2357-1.pdf>
<https://szkolydoktorskie.uwb.edu.pl/nh/akty-prawne/>
- School curriculum – Resolution No. 2425 of the Senate of the University of Białystok on establishing a curriculum for the Doctoral School of Humanities:
<http://docs.uwb.edu.pl/pliki/2019-pdf>;
<https://szkolydoktorskie.uwb.edu.pl/nh/akty-prawne/>

The above documents are supplemented by the following documents approved by the Rector of UwB: • Communique No. 1 of the Director of the Doctoral School of Humanities of September 20, 2019 regarding the elements of the Individual Research Plan applicable in the Doctoral School of Humanities at the University of Białystok
<https://szkolydoktorskie.uwb.edu.pl/nh/akty-prawne/>

and

- Communique No. 2 of the Director of the Doctoral School of Humanities of September 25, 2019 on the annual report and the mid-term report used at the Doctoral School of Humanities of the University of Białystok
<https://szkolydoktorskie.uwb.edu.pl/nh/akty-prawne/>.

Monitoring and improving the teaching process at the DSH is done in accordance with the provisions contained in Resolution No. 2614 of the Senate of the University of Białystok of November 27, 2019 on the internal system of ensuring the quality of education at the University of Białystok (§ 5). As part of the assessment of the teaching process, the following areas were analysed and evaluated:

- 1) the adequacy of the curriculum and individual research plans to the learning outcomes for qualifications at PQF level 8
- 2) method of verifying learning outcomes for qualifications at PQF level 8

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- 3) quality of academic supervision and support in conducting academic activities, 4) reliability of the mid-term evaluation
- 5) effectiveness of doctoral education

Ad. 1) *the adequacy of the curriculum and individual research plans to the learning outcomes for qualifications at PQF level 8*

The curriculum and the classes are adapted to the scope of knowledge, competences and skills necessary to achieve learning outcomes at PQF level 8. The curriculum was developed to include a common learning module for all doctoral students from all the university doctoral schools (so-called soft skills) and a module for 4 learning paths within the academic disciplines included at the DSH (philosophy, history, linguistics and literary studies).

The learning modules enable the achievement of the assumed learning outcomes, in the area of: knowledge, competences and skills. The possibility of choosing a course outside the discipline, including the soft skills development courses, addressed to doctoral students of all university doctoral schools, gives doctoral students a chance to develop their individual research interests.

Detailed information on the assumed learning outcomes is indicated in the curriculum.

The structure of the curriculum consists of:

- a general education module

- separate modules of education in disciplines (philosophy, history, linguistics, literary studies); within this module there are courses common to all DSH doctoral students (university didactics and forms of financing humanities),
- module for the preparation of a doctoral dissertation,
- internship module.

The DSH Regulations impose on doctoral students of the first year the obligation to submit the following documents by the end of the 12th month from the beginning of education at the school: • individual research plans approved and signed by supervisors and assistant supervisors (along with the concept of the doctoral dissertation), • annual report with attached documentation confirming the activity of the doctoral student.

IRP and the annual report are not only an important element of education, but also an important aspect of monitoring and improving the education process at the DSH.

Based on the documentation provided, in September 2021 the director of the DSH approved the graduation of 7 first-year doctoral students. One person quit even before the end of the first semester.

The DSH Regulations require second-year doctoral students to submit by the end of the summer re-sit session:

- an annual report with attached documentation confirming the activity of the doctoral student;
- and 30 days before the designated date for the mid-term evaluation, a mid-term report with accompanying documentation confirming the activity of the doctoral student.

Based on the documentation provided, in September 2021 the director of the DSH approved 7 doctoral students to graduate from their second year of studies, thus allowing them to undergo the mid-term evaluation.

One doctoral student did not graduate the second year because:

- he did not attend all seminars and did not maintain contact with the supervisor, consequently failing the seminar due to unsatisfactory progress in preparing the doctoral dissertation;
- he did not submit his annual report;
- he did not submit a mid-term report;

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- he did not submit the documents indicated in the DSH Regulations, confirming academic activity.

In addition, he did not fulfil other obligations arising from the recommendations of the director of the DSH and the duties of an academic:

- he did not fill in the slots;
- he did not submit his publications to the Polish Scientific Bibliography (PSB), and when it was necessary, he did not link PSB, ORCID and POLON accounts;
- he did not make a statement on the choice of the academic field and discipline.

In that situation, the director of the DSH could not allow the doctoral student to undergo mid-term evaluation. At the same time, she requested that the Rector of the University of Białystok remove the doctoral student from the list of doctoral students at the DSH due to unsatisfactory progress in academic development. On September 22, 2021, the Rector of the University of Białystok removed the doctoral student from the list of doctoral students; on October 5, 2021, the doctoral student submitted a request for reconsideration of the case. Within the legally prescribed period, His Magnificence issued a ruling upholding the earlier decision. A representative of the doctoral student received the document regarding this matter on November 8, 2021.

Ad. 2) *method of verifying learning outcomes for qualifications at PQF level 8* Course syllabuses and the information contained in them about the learning outcomes and criteria for completing the course were made available to doctoral students by placing the documents in the USOS system. Some employees were reminded during the academic year about the lack of syllabuses in the USOS system as well as about formal and substantive deficiencies, which led to

a radical improvement of the situation.

Analysis of syllabuses and reports on the implementation of on-line courses allowed to conclude that the verification of assumed learning outcomes at the level of knowledge, skills, and social competences at the DSH proceeds correctly. The adequacy of the scope of requirements and forms of assessment in relation to the assumed learning outcomes in all implemented courses was positively assessed.

In the academic year 2020/2021 conducting the courses resulting from the program and verification of learning outcomes achieved by doctoral students should be characterized taking into account the conditions for conducting classes. In the past academic year, due to restrictions in the functioning of the university, all classes were done on-line. It was a big challenge for academic staff, doctoral students and the administration of the School. Doctoral students were informed by the academic staff and the school director about the method of conducting classes (remotely) and the assessment form adapted to the conditions. Despite this extraordinary situation, problems with conducting classes, mainly technical ones, were only incidentally reported by doctoral students and academic staff during the semester. All complications were resolved with the intervention of the director and/or an administrative employee. Despite difficulties related to running courses on-line and the method of verifying learning outcomes - also on-line - the set goals were achieved in the 2020/2021 academic year, and doctoral students (with one exception) completed all courses.

The verification of the final learning outcomes was fully adequate to the initial assumptions indicated in the syllabuses by academic staff teaching the courses at the school. No difficulties with the implementation of the courses provided for in the curriculum were reported.

Ad. 3.) quality of academic supervision and support in conducting academic activities The main task of the doctoral school is to support the academic development of a doctoral student. Starting cooperation with the supervisor, the doctoral student becomes a member of the research team and carries out his/her work on the dissertation in the academic community. This gives him/her the opportunity to establish academic contacts and get acquainted with the research from in the academic area that is of interest to him/her. The school creates an environment of support for doctoral students, thanks to which their research will be crowned with success i.e. the submission of a doctoral dissertation by the end of the fourth year of study. The school supports the research conducted by doctoral students in several ways: substantively, organizationally, and financially, (e.g. each doctoral student may receive approx. PLN 1,000 for conference expenses after submitting an application).

However, it should be noted with some concern that at the DSH only eight doctoral students applied for funding from the school. All of them received the support they requested, i.e.: financing for conference fees (5 people), financing the costs of post-conference publication (1 person), accommodation related to the conference (1 person) and a language course (1 person). The total amount of funds is PLN 3042.04

Academic supervision of doctoral students begins from the very beginning of their enrolment in the doctoral program. All first-year doctoral students submitted their supervisor appointment applications within 30 days of beginning their education. The Academic Council positively reviewed these applications. It was determined that the research areas of the doctoral students are aligned with the areas of expertise of the supervisor candidates. The School Director appointed supervisors and assistant supervisors in December 2020, i.e. within statutory time. After this deadline (in April 2021) - based on a doctoral student's application, the main supervisor's justification, and a positive opinion of the Academic Council, in accordance with the DSH Regulations - the director of the school approved the appointment of an assistant supervisor for another doctoral student.

From the moment supervisors were appointed, doctoral seminars began (30 teaching hours per year), initiating systematic collaboration with the doctoral students. Already in October 2020 (also in March and April 2021) the director organized a meeting with doctoral students, and in November 2020 – with supervisors, to discuss, among others, the principles of developing an individual research plan, to present the main duties of an academic supervisor and a young aspiring academic, as well as to characterize the most important aspects of teaching and learning at a

doctoral school. The director also repeatedly answered detailed questions, both from doctoral students and supervisors (by e-mail or telephone). All information was also provided by the DSH school office, which - despite the pandemic - operated on-site.

The first versions of IRPs, developed with supervisors and assistant supervisors, were submitted by doctoral students in mid-June 2021. After the comments from the school director and the opinion of the Academic Council, the amended documents – together with the annual reports – were approved in September 2021.

Analysis of the annual reports of doctoral students shows that for the most part they fulfilled their obligations, responsibly presented preliminary research concepts and successfully – despite unfavourable epidemiological conditions – implemented a significant part of the research plans planned for the first year.

In the second year - in one of the disciplines - there was a need for a temporary change of supervisor due to the academic leave of the original supervisor of the doctoral dissertation started a year earlier. At the request of the doctoral student, another professor representing the same discipline and a research area similar in scope undertook this obligation. In the document addressed to the director of the DSH, the person replacing the colleague on leave clearly stated that they would only accept the doctoral student in their seminar for one year, from October 1, 2020, to September 30, 2021.

In November 2020 and then in April 2021 the director of the DSH organized an on-line meeting with second-year doctoral students, during which the principles and conditions of the mid-term evaluation were explained. On 5 July 2021 the DSH secretary sent an email to all doctoral students informing them about the date of the mid-term evaluation (6-15 October 2021). The e-mail contained two links, which are crucial for the proper course of the mid-term evaluation: The DSH regulations and University of Białystok Rector's Directive No. 52 dated June 8, 2021, regarding the principles of organizing the work of the commission for conducting mid-term evaluations of doctoral students of doctoral schools at the University of Białystok.

The meeting regarding this matter with the supervisors responsible for overseeing second-year doctoral students took place in November 2020. In the following months, the director of DSH also repeatedly answered detailed questions, both from doctoral students and supervisors (by e-mail or telephone).

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Various information was also provided by the DSH school office, which - despite the pandemic - operated on-site.

The quality of academic supervision of doctoral students should be assessed positively. An indication of this is the completion of all obligations by doctoral students and the positive assessment of their annual reports (although it may seem surprising that only 6 doctoral students from both years completed surveys evaluating seminars).

Ad. 4) reliability of the mid-term evaluation

In the academic year 2020/2021 the mid-term evaluation was carried out for the first time. All doctoral students who graduated from the second year and submitted the required documentation underwent this assessment without major issues. One person who did not obtain credit for the seminar and did not submit documentation entitling them to participate in the entire procedure did not participate in the mid-term evaluation.

The doctoral students who underwent the mid-term evaluation passed it successfully, meaning that all of them received a positive assessment (no one received a negative grade, although in two cases it was concluded that *the positive assessment is conditional due to delays in the implementation of the Individual Research Plan ; positive assessment despite minor reservations*).

It should be emphasized that in relation to individual students, the detailed recommendations of the mid-term commissions were very diverse, which clearly indicates a varied level of expertise and commitment of doctoral students. This assessment can be considered at various levels and from different perspectives, taking into account elements such as:

- *Research idea and concept of doctoral dissertation*

Most of the research ideas and concepts of doctoral dissertations were unambiguously

positively assessed. These were some of the comments concerning this aspect:

- a cognitively interesting research project;
- thoughtful dissertation concept
- the doctoral student presented a mature concept of a dissertation;
- the doctoral student proved that she had the academic and methodological skills,

skilfully selecting research tools;

- the doctoral student presented a clever and coherent concept of his dissertation;
- the doctoral student demonstrated academic activity in the area of the undertaken topic,

etc. It was suggested to some students that their research should be more detailed or that more attention should be paid to the specific character of these studies, including regional aspects.

- *Progress of doctoral dissertations*

The advancement of doctoral dissertations was evaluated by the committees as:

- medium
- sometimes low;

In two cases, the degree of advancement of the dissertation was assessed as high or satisfactory; the intensity of research work related to the dissertation topic was emphasized;

- *Bibliographic work*

The bibliography was usually assessed as very advanced, advanced to a large extent or at a good level.

In two cases, attention was drawn to the insufficient level of the conducted bibliographic query.

- *Conference and publication activity*

This type of activity of doctoral students was assessed mainly using positive expressions:

- high academic and conference activity, including foreign conferences and publications; - publication and conference involvement at a good level;

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- popularization of research in an open system;
- publications in well-ranked journals.

There was also a comment of a stimulating nature, e.g.:

- a large number of publications, although a significant portion of them do not relate to the dissertation.

Only in a few cases, attention was paid to the weaker activity of doctoral students in this area, which should be explained by difficult epidemiological conditions.

- *Popularizing and other activities*

The committees drew attention to:

- high involvement of some doctoral students in organizational activity;
- participation of some doctoral students in initiatives popularizing science and the humanities (e.g. participation in radio and television programs; organization of meetings with school youth, organization and co-organization of academic conferences, participation in international forums);

- improving qualifications helpful in writing doctoral dissertations (e.g. language courses, including a Hebrew language course).

- *Interviews with doctoral students*

The quality of expression of doctoral students during the conversation with the committee turned out to be diverse. Based on the protocols, which are the result of the mid-term evaluation, positive conclusions can be found, for example:

- the doctoral student's statements are mature in terms of academic skill and methodology; - The doctoral student demonstrates a general knowledge of the subject of research. He is aware of the research gaps he intends to fill, etc.

However, there are assessments that raise concerns, indicating excessive generalization in the statements of some doctoral students or emphasizing the need for DSH students to expand their subject literature, only partially completed by the doctoral students so far.

- Individual research plan and its completion

The evaluation of IRP implementation is also not uniform, which is clearly reflected in the opinions of the evaluation committees.

Two people were evaluated highly, and the committee's minutes included conclusions such as: - timely implementation of the objectives indicated in the IRP; - the doctoral student conducts research in accordance with the assumptions of the IRP and on schedule. More frequently, however, it was emphasized that in the face of the pandemic and lock-down, it was not possible to freely use archival or library resources. Hence, the members of individual committees – with a great deal of understanding – drew attention to certain deficiencies in the implementation of IRPs, often completely independent of the previous plans and intentions of doctoral students, e.g.:

- IRP not fully implemented due to the lock-down;
- objectives set in the IRP not fully completed;
- partial implementation of the IRP due to Covid.

The committees drew attention to the fact that some in-person conferences were cancelled, which could have significantly undermined the implementation of the IRPs. It should be noted, however, that most doctoral students took advantage of the opportunity to participate in on-line conferences. In two cases, planned national internships were also replaced by on-line internships, which was appreciated by the mid-term committees.

- *Commission Recommendations*

Due to the incomplete implementation of the assumptions indicated in the IRP, in several cases the following recommendations of the committee were explicitly formulated:

- work on the doctoral dissertation should be intensified;
- archival query should be intensified;
- research should be intensified;
- It is recommended to accelerate work on subsequent sections of the dissertation.

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- more intensive search of databases is recommended;
- more intensive work on the doctoral dissertation is recommended;
- attention should be paid to regional specificity.

Ad. 5) effectiveness of doctoral education

The academic activity of doctoral students in a general sense can be presented using the following data: 12 published articles (including 3 in English) – a total of 240 points; 11 articles – after reviews – accepted for publication (including 3 in English) – a total of 200 points.; 15 articles submitted for publication (total number of expected points – 410). The fact that some publications are published in an open system should be considered a positive element of doctoral students' education.

Some doctoral students also undertake academic and popularizing activities. We can talk about 22 texts published in various sources, further: lectures popularizing humanities (addressed to both students, teachers and a wider audience), participation in radio and television programs, participation in documentaries, as well as conducting workshops for young people and preparing or co-preparing thematic exhibitions.

One person is a member of the editorial board of a scientific publisher, another participates (as an executor) in a grant coordinated by the supervisor. Two people applied for an independent grant. Two doctoral students completed an on-line research internship.

Due to the pandemic, the conference activity of doctoral students was limited. Not all planned in-person conferences took place in autumn 2020, as well as in spring and summer of 2021. Conferences were cancelled or postponed. Some of them took place on-line. Doctoral students actively participated in 24 academic conferences (in-person or on-line conferences), including foreign and international conferences. Two people informed about passive participation in academic conferences (they did not deliver any papers at these conferences).

Such activity should be considered as evidence of doctoral students treating their responsibilities diligently and caring about the quality of academic research. It should also be emphasized that the academic activity of individual doctoral students varies greatly. It is safe to

say that there are students at the DSH who deserve special distinction and those who met the requirements to a barely minimal extent, which was also reflected in the protocols of the mid-term committee. With concern – once again – it should be emphasized, however, that this was not always properly reflected in the opinions and assessments of supervisors, who often give exemplary grades to doctoral students whose achievements are rather average.

Second-year doctoral students – in accordance with the DSH regulations – were able to prove themselves as academic teachers for the first time. Some of them conducted classes independently (in the presence of the supervisor), while others fulfilled this obligation only by co-teaching. Supervisors who served as teaching internship mentors positively assessed their students.

Assessment of the quality of academic supervision and support in conducting the academic activity of doctoral students was made on the basis of the results of questionnaires assessing the quality of education at the doctoral school (Annex 3b of the Senate Resolution). The questionnaire concerning the doctoral school was completed by 5 people (31.25%).

Along with the questionnaire (3b) regarding the doctoral school, doctoral students should also complete the university evaluation questionnaire (Annex 3a of the Senate Resolution). No one completed this survey at the DSH.

Table 1. Overall assessment of education at the Doctoral School of Humanities

Specification	Strongly agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Strongly disagree
	number of doctoral students				
Considering all aspects of the education process, are you satisfied with your education at the doctoral school?	3	2	0	0	0

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Do you think that the availability and quality of educational resources and specialized equipment is sufficient?	1	3	1	0	0
Do you think that the way of conducting classes and teaching methods are generally appropriate?	3	2	0	0	0
Do you think that the selection of additional courses (extra-curricula courses, etc.) is sufficient?	2	3	0	0	0
Was the substantive support received during the doctoral thesis writing process sufficient?	5	0	0	0	0
Was the substantive support received during the implementation of other elements of your individual research plan sufficient?	3	2	0	0	0

Summary: based on the evaluation questionnaire (Attachment 3b)

The collected surveys clearly show that doctoral students who took part in the survey assess the level of education at the DSH positively. The vast majority of answers *definitely agree* or *mostly agree*, with one *Neither agree nor disagree* can be a reason for optimism. The lack of broader interest of doctoral students in participating in the survey is certainly worrying.

The doctoral students did not have any additional comments.

Table 2. Overall assessment of the elements of education at the Doctoral School of Humanities

Individual elements of the education process	Very good	Good	Average	Bad	Very bad	Not applicable
	number of doctoral students					
Lectures	4	1	0	0	0	0
Classes	4	1	0	0	0	0
Seminars	5	0	0	0	0	0
Extra curricular courses	2	2	0	0	0	1
Laboratory classes	3	0	0	0	0	2
Internship	2	1				2

Summary: based on the evaluation questionnaire (Attachment 3b)

The didactic process at the DSH was assessed only with the use of the statements *Very good* and *Good*, which seems to confirm the high quality of academic staff, although it is difficult to talk about a fully reliable assessment due to the small number of respondents. The doctoral students did not have any additional comments.

Conclusions (recommendations for the EOT):

Monitoring of education standards at the Doctoral School of Humanities is carried out in accordance with the law and the requirements set by the Rector of the University of Białystok and the Director of the DSH. They should be assessed as correct. In order to improve the quality of education, the Team recommends the following actions:

- systematic verification of the development, updating and uploading of syllabuses to the USOS system,
- further monitoring the correctness of the preparation of syllabuses in the area of achieving the assumed learning outcomes and the methods of their verification,
- greater objectivity of supervisors in assessing the achievements and capabilities of doctoral students they work with,
- the need for greater involvement of supervisors in the academic activities of their doctoral students as well as encouraging inter-university and international integration of their students,
- greater involvement of doctoral students and supervisors in obtaining external funds.

Implementation of the recommendations of the EQT and UEQT from the previous academic year:

Despite the pandemic, the recommendations of EQT and UEQT have been – to a large extent - implemented. Most supervisors approach the care of doctoral students with great responsibility, although not everyone understands that their role in the doctoral school is more complex than the role of supervisor in doctoral studies.

3. EVALUATION OF CLASSES

Assessment of the quality of classes at the DSH at the University of Białystok is carried out according to the criteria in Resolution No. 2614 of the Senate of the University of Białystok of November 27, 2019 on the internal system of ensuring the quality of education at the University of Białystok (§ 6,7,8) and Order No. 45 of the Rector of the University of Białystok of November 27, 2019 on the principles of evaluation of academic teachers by students and doctoral students at the University of Białystok.

Pursuant to §7 of Resolution No. 2614 of the Senate of the University of Białystok of 27.11.2019, the director of the doctoral school has the right to observe classes conducted in doctoral schools. Observations may also be carried out by a person authorized by the director, provided he/she is a member of the Academic Council of the doctoral school. In the 2020/2021 academic year, no classes were observed because education took place on-line.

However, the talks of the director of the DSH with doctoral students show that academic staff are characterized by high professionalism, ease in establishing contact with doctoral students and the ability to activate students during discussions even on controversial and complicated topics.

The high quality of classes is also confirmed by questionnaires completed by doctoral students in the USOS system. A total of 16 opinions were given. Some classes were not evaluated by any doctoral student (this applies almost exclusively to classes in single-person groups, including most doctoral seminars – probably for reasons of anonymity).

16 out of a total of 39 academic teachers conducting classes at the school were assessed. Certainly not all doctoral students took part in the survey, because even classes that were conducted for 8 people, were evaluated by 1 or 2 people, classes conducted in groups of 2- and 4- people – were usually evaluated by 1 respondent, sometimes by nobody.

Despite these reservations and formal limitations, the results presented below can probably be considered representative.

Table 3. Assessment of the quality of classes in the opinion of doctoral students

	Specification Response Mean (grades from 1.0 to 5.0)
Teacher's preparation	5.00
Teacher's punctuality	5.00
Clarity of the material being taught	4.94
Interesting way of conducting classes	4.81
Attitude towards the student (respect)	5.00
Encouraging independent thinking	4.81
Objectivity of evaluation	4.94
Clarity of assessment criteria	5.00
Availability of the teacher during duty hours	4.88

Summary: based on a questionnaire regarding the assessment of classes

The average grade for classes issued by doctoral students in individual categories ranges from 4.81 to 5.00 (workplace health and safety classes were not included in the above list). The assessments are more diverse when it comes to details. There were individual grades of 3 or 4, but many teachers received 5 points in all categories. In the assessment of the quality of classes the highest score was given to the following: *Teacher's preparation*, *Teacher's punctuality*, *Attitude towards the student (respect)* and *Clarity of assessment criteria*

; *while the lowest*: Interesting way of conducting classes *and* inspiring independent thinking.
 There was a positive comment describing one of the classes as interesting and attractive.
 There were no negative comments about academic teachers.

Conclusions (recommendations for the EQT):

The team requests that doctoral students be encouraged to fill in more questionnaires and post comments. This will enable the QET to make an in-depth assessment of the quality of classes at DSH and correct any shortcomings if necessary.

Implementation of the recommendations of the EQT and UEQT from the previous academic year:
 Despite encouragement from the DSH director, doctoral students are not inclined to complete questionnaires.

4. MONITORING THE CONDITIONS OF EDUCATION AND ITS ORGANIZATION

Monitoring the conditions of education and organization of studies at the DSH at the University of Białystok is carried out according to the criteria contained in Resolution No. 2614 of the Senate of the University of Białystok of November 27, 2019 on the internal system of ensuring quality of education at the University of Białystok (§9). The evaluation covered:

- library resources, in particular updating them taking into account the needs of academic teachers, doctoral students and their access to computer databases,
- the quality of the teaching infrastructure (classrooms, their audio-visual equipment, Internet access) and its adaptation to the number of doctoral students,
- the availability and clarity of information on education, in particular information on curricula, syllabuses, class schedules, certificates granted to the unit, international doctoral cooperation, etc.,
- Organization of classes

- Ad.1) library resources, in particular updating them taking into account the needs of academic teachers, doctoral students and their access to computer databases,

Respondents report that they use the resources of the University Library several times a month, and the resources of another library (including the Podlasie Regional Library) several times a month. Departmental libraries are usually visited several times a year.

Undoubtedly, it is difficult to treat the results of surveys in this area as reliable due to the small number of people who completed the survey (5 people). To sum up, the doctoral students rated the efficiency *and friendliness of service as the best, while the lowest rated was the availability of new items in library collection and the opening hours of both libraries.* However, it should be emphasized that these are high ratings, not lower than 4.2.

Table 4. Evaluation of selected aspects of the use of the University Library and departmental libraries

Selected aspects of using libraries	University Library	departmental libraries
	Rating from 1.0 to 5.0, where 1 is the lowest, and 5 is the highest	
Availability of basic literature	4.6	4.8

General resources of the book collection in the area of study	4.4	4.6
Availability of new items in the library collection	4.2	4.4
Library service efficiency	5.0	5.0
User-friendliness	5.0	5.0
Opening hours	4.4	4.4
Studying conditions (especially in the reading room)	4.6	4.4
Accessing electronic databases	4.8	4.8

Summary: based on the evaluation questionnaire (Attachment 3b)

Ad. 2) the quality of the teaching infrastructure (classrooms, audiovisual equipment, Internet access) and its adaptation to the number of doctoral students

The Doctoral School of Humanities does not have its own educational facilities. The school is located in the building of the Faculty of Philology. These are two rooms, one of which houses the Chair of Stylistics and Linguistic Anthropology, whose head is the director of DSH. This is a small seminar room for approx. 10 people (room 144) and the other room is the school office (room 85). The majority of classes is held at plac NZS 1 in the building of the Faculty of Philology, the Faculty of History and International Relations and in the rooms which are at the disposal of the Institute of Philosophy. Soft skills courses are held at the Campus. Table 5.

Assessment of the quality of didactic infrastructure used in the education process

Infrastructure used in the education process	Very good	Good	Average	Bad	Very bad	Not applicable
	Number of doctoral students					
Lecture halls	2	2	1			
Classrooms	2	2	1 Audiovisual and multimedia equipment			
	1	3	1			
Laboratory equipment		2				3
Internet access	1	2	2			

Summary: based on the evaluation questionnaire (Attachment 3b)

In general, doctoral students rated the quality of the didactic infrastructure positively. The

lack of evaluation in the *Laboratory equipment* category results from the specificity of the school and the lack of classes in such rooms.

Ad. • availability and clarity of information on education, in particular information on curricula, course syllabuses, class schedules, certificates granted to the unit, international doctoral cooperation, etc., Information on education, including legal acts in force at the school, is published, in accordance with statutory obligations, in the Public Information Bulletin and – above all – on the DSH website, where, among others, Ministerial Acts, University Senate Resolutions,

Rector's Orders, Announcements and Decisions of the DSH Director, DSH Regulations, DSH curriculum, admission rules, as well as other current issues can be found.

In addition, e-mails are sent to doctoral students and researchers by the school secretary or directly by the director of DSH, regarding, for example, national and international conferences, information on the possibility of inter-university or even international exchange, e.g. participation in the ERASMUS exchange. Unfortunately, doctoral students do not show any interest in this issue.

The DSH website, which can be accessed from the university homepage, under the tab: Doctoral Schools, is regularly updated. Its clear layout allows for providing doctoral students with the most important information, crucial for the proper functioning of the DSH.

Doctoral students – as can be found in informal conversations – visit the school's website several times a semester, some people visit it several times a month, and the school secretariat several times a month. The ratings for the updated website are definitely better than last year, although a few minor issues still need to be refined.

Table 6. Evaluation of information on education on the website

Availability of the website regarding	Strongly agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Strongly disagree
	Number of doctoral students				
The curriculum	4	1			
Class schedule	3	1	1		
Opportunities to travel to other universities as part of doctoral exchange programs	2	2	1		
Conferences, seminars, trainings addressed to doctoral students	4	1 Opportunity to participate in competitive projects,			
	2	3			

Summary: based on the evaluation questionnaire (Attachment 3b)

It should be emphasized that an important element of the DSH image is the school office, which is perceived very positively. The evaluation of the school office is illustrated in Table 7:

Table 7. Evaluation of the school office

Specification	Strongly agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Strongly disagree
	Number of doctoral students				
Do the working hours of the school office allow for the handling of issues	3	2	0	0	0
- information regarding the course of education	5	0	0	0	0
- information on scholarships	5	0	0	0	0
					0

Summary: based on the evaluation questionnaire (Attachment 3b)

The work of the school office was assessed as good and very good. Doctoral students did not make any comments regarding improvements to the school office's work.

The doctoral students also evaluated the syllabuses. (Table no 8). As a rule, the assessments are positive: *mostly agree* and *definitely agree* (unlike last year's assessments). The director of the DSH discussed the quality of the syllabuses with the lecturers already during the previous academic year, which positively improved their quality.

Table 8. Evaluation of syllabus content

	Strongly agree	Neither agree	Mostly	Strongly
Do course syllabuses	<u>agree</u>	<u>agree</u>	<u>nor disagree</u>	<u>disagree</u>
ensure the acquisition of knowledge concerning				<u>disagree</u>
	Number of doctoral students			
the content of the courses				
4 1				
Course readings 4 1				
Assessment criteria 4 1				

Summary: based on the evaluation questionnaire of the doctoral school (Attachment 3b).

Ad. 4) Organization of classes:

In 2020/2021 the second year of doctoral education at doctoral schools began. The organization of courses at the school followed the curriculum and the organization of the year in force at the University of Białystok. Class schedules were provided to doctoral students in advance. Doctoral students' enrolments for soft skills development courses were accepted. The implementation of this block of classes in relation to all doctoral schools is coordinated by the DSH school office.

Due to the pandemic, it became necessary to introduce remote teaching and learning. Academic staff, based on internal university regulations, began conducting classes on-line on selected platforms, and upon the completion of classes, submitted reports to the school office detailing the course of these classes, including information on the method of verifying learning outcomes. Major problems with the organization and completion of courses were not reported. In October (6, 8 and 14 October 2021) mid-term evaluations were carried out in the following disciplines

: philosophy, history and linguistics. All persons who underwent evaluation received a positive recommendation (two conditionally, with an opinion: *conditionally approved due to delays in the implementation of the IRP; approved despite minor reservations*). The representative of the discipline of *literary studies* did not undergo evaluation, as he did not obtain credit for the doctoral seminar and did not submit the required documents. Already in September 2021, the Rector of the University of Białystok – at the request of the director of the DSH – removed the doctoral student from the list of doctoral students under chapter III § 12, p. 2 of the Regulations of the Doctoral School of Humanities (Resolution No. 2357 of the Senate of the University of Białystok of March 27, 2019) *due to the failure to implement the assumptions contained in the Individual Research Plan*. The doctoral student challenged this decision and an appeal procedure is currently underway.

Conclusions (recommendations for the QET):

It is necessary to continue – as it has been done so far – monitoring the standards of education at the Doctoral School of Humanities, which should take place in accordance with the law, as well as the requirements set by the Rector of the University of Białystok and the Director of the DSH. They should be assessed as correct. In order to improve the quality of education, the Team recommends the following actions:

- greater objectivity of supervisors in assessing the achievements and capabilities of doctoral students they work with,
- the need for greater involvement of supervisors in academic activities of their doctoral students as well as encouraging inter-university and international integration of their students, • attention should be paid to greater involvement of doctoral students and supervisors in obtaining external funds; it should be reminded to supervisors and doctoral students, who are also academics, that it is their duty to independently seek and obtain financial resources for the continuation of research, rather than just expect such assistance from the school director and university authorities.
- the quality of the DSH website and syllabuses should continue to be improved.

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Implementation of the recommendations of the EQT and UEQT from the previous academic year:

- this year, doctoral students did not make any comments on the assessment of the conditions of education and the organization of studies;
- unfortunately, both the supervisors and doctoral students continue to take minimal measures to obtain external funds for academic research, often showing demanding attitudes and requesting that such funds be provided for the doctoral student by the school director or the university authorities;
- still – despite the suggestions and requests of the director of the DSH – some supervisors overestimate the achievements of their doctoral students. This can be fully seen when one has a general overview of the achievements of individual doctoral students, and therefore also the possibility of an objective comparison of the achievements of all the people studying at the DSH;
- the quality of syllabuses has significantly improved;
- it is worth noting that in the 2020/2021 academic year – thanks to the support of Vice-Rector Krzysztof Korotkich – the DSH website was modernized and completely rebuilt, and is currently well evaluated by doctoral students.

5. MONITORING SUPPORT FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

Monitoring the support for doctoral students in the learning process at the DSH is carried out following the criteria contained in Resolution No. 2614 of the Senate of the University of Białystok of November 27, 2019 on the internal system of ensuring the quality of education at the University of Białystok (§11). The subject of assessment and analysis is:

- didactic support (including appointment of a year mentor, internship mentor, duty hours of academic staff),
- academic support (including activities of research groups and camps, organization of student/doctoral conferences, participation in conferences),
- material support (including scholarships, accommodation in student dormitories), •
- other forms of support (including support for doctoral students with disabilities),
- availability of information on forms of support.

Due to the pandemic, from the summer semester of 2020/2021 it was necessary to launch specific forms of educational support. Pursuant to the Regulation of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education on the temporary limitation of the functioning of certain institutions of higher education in connection with the prevention, counteracting and combating COVID-19 and in connection with the Communique of the Rector of the University of Białystok of 12.11.2020 in all the university units, full-time forms of education were moved on-line. Academic teachers provided the school office with relevant information about selected forms of contact with doctoral students during the period of limited operation of the university. Information on these changes was also provided to doctoral students.

- Duty hours of academic staff - due to the lockdown - were conducted on-line;
- Dates of duty hours of academic teachers are placed in the USOS system. The duty hours took place weekly for at least one teaching hour.

There is a possibility of e-mail contact not only with people conducting classes, but also with the school office and the director, who personally answers detailed questions and doubts of doctoral students via the university mail.

- Meetings of the director with supervisors regarding the support for doctoral students at school and meetings with doctoral students regarding individual research plans were organized.

The director of the DSH organized several separate meetings with second-year students and their supervisors, during which particular attention to the requirements placed on doctoral students within the framework of the mid-term evaluation was paid.

- All doctoral students were appointed supervisors, academic seminars are held to present concepts and research results.
- Financial support consists, among others, in the fact that all doctoral students receive a scholarship in the amount of PLN 2370.70 gross (approx. PLN 2100 net), which is paid monthly without delays (on the 24th of each month).
- As part of the funds allocated by the Rector of the University of Białystok for the functioning of the school, the director allocated a pool of funds for academic activities of doctoral students (approx. PLN 1000 for each doctoral student). They can apply for financing for conference expenses or academic publications in journals and other publications from the ministerial list.

In the evaluation survey, doctoral students drew attention to insufficient funds for academic research that they could receive from the school. These reservations are largely unfounded, as only a few individuals have approached the school director requesting funding for their research plans. The majority of doctoral students did not even utilize the limited funds available to them through the director of DSH.

Doctoral students were also repeatedly informed that the University co-finances only national internships up to two weeks, in the amount of no more than PLN 2000. All internships over 14 days and foreign internships must be financed from funds obtained by the doctoral student. This principle should be understood not only by doctoral students, but also by supervisors whose role is to support the doctoral student in such situations.

It would be desirable for doctoral students to apply for research or teaching grants themselves.

This will enable them to increase the scale of financing for their own research, including foreign visits. • In 2020/2021 the DSH offered doctoral students the opportunity to participate in trainings and workshops, e.g. "Electronic Information Sources", "Effective Scientific Publishing" and NSC.

Conclusions (recommendations for the EQT):

- taking more decisive action to intensify grant-seeking activity of doctoral students,
- drawing the attention of supervisors and doctoral students to the requirement of seeking new sources of funding for doctoral research activities, such as searching for funding sources for internships and foreign visits; as well as participation in the ERASMUS program.

Implementation of the recommendations of the EQT and UEQT from the previous academic year:

Doctoral students still apply for grants and other types of external funds to a minimal extent. They do not take advantage of the ERASMUS program, but instead request funding for foreign visits from the school director or university authorities in a demanding manner.

6. EVALUATION OF THE MOBILITY OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS AND THE DEGREE OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF EDUCATION

Evaluation of the mobility of doctoral students and the degree of internationalization of education at the at the Doctoral School of Humanities is carried out following the criteria contained in Resolution No. 2614 of the Senate of the University of Białystok of November 27, 2019 on the internal system of ensuring the quality of education at the University of Białystok (§10). The subject of assessment and analysis is:

- student/doctoral student exchange under agreements between national and foreign universities regarding student/doctoral student mobility programs,
- the formal system of rules for crediting the achievements of students/doctoral students – points and grades,
- using experience gained by students/doctoral students during education at other universities in terms of improving the quality of education (e.g. making the didactic offer more attractive, changing the way classes are conducted),
- opinions provided by incoming students/doctoral students (Polish and foreign) on the studies carried out at the university in relation to their expectations in this regard (e.g. organizational matters, teaching system, relations between students/doctoral students and academic teachers),

- participation of students/doctoral students in classes conducted by visiting professors or classes conducted in foreign languages.

The implementation of this provision at the DSH in the 2020/2021 academic year was not fully optimized due to the pandemic. There was no exchange of doctoral students under inter-university or international agreements, but it is worth emphasizing that:

- two doctoral students completed on-line internships in other academic institutions;
 - most doctoral students actively participated in academic conferences, most often on-line; including international and foreign conferences, often with English as the conference language;
 - some doctoral students participated in trainings such as: - online workshops "False information in science" – 25.02.2021;
 - 1st edition of the Master's Lectures "Let's make the climate" – January 14, 2021;
 - Webinar Training "Effective Scientific Publishing " – 10.11.2020, 17.11.20"20; - PRELUDIUM 20 course. Methodology for preparing an application to the NSC – March 17, 2021; - training of the National Science Centre: Training for applicants – April 09, 2021;
 - Doctoral students could participate in lectures by visiting professors at the Faculty of Philology and lectures belonging to a series of meetings organized at the Faculty of Philology: "Master's Lectures";
 - one of the doctoral theses at the DSH is written in English;
 - in the winter semester 2020/2021 one of the doctoral students improved competences constituting an important part of her research project during a biblical Hebrew and contemporary Hebrew course (at the Catholic Academy in Warsaw);
 - one of the doctoral students participated in the organization of the 15th Researching and Applying Metaphor (RaAM) conference (as a member of the Organizing Committee);
 - one of the doctoral students is the Secretary of the International Centre for Phraseological and Paremiological Research.

The mobility of doctoral students is also manifested by their organizational activities, both at the level of the University and the city of Białystok, or finally at the national level and abroad, to name only a few:

- participation in the University Teaching Grants Team;
- participation in an educational project – *Money of War and Occupation 1939–1945*; project implemented by the Podlasie Museum in Białystok and the "Denarius" Numismatic Foundation, financed by the National Bank of Poland;
- acting as a secretary to the Organizing Committee of the IDP International Symposium;
- representing the University of Białystok during the 3rd Open Meeting of the Management Board of the National Representation of Doctoral Students in Warsaw;
- participation in the organizing committee and Research Council on the organization of an academic conference devoted to issues of myth in historical research (together with partner institutions such as: the Military Museum, State Archives); conference planned for the summer semester of the 2021/2022 academic year);
- co-organization of "Białystok Historical Meetings" - cyclical online lectures devoted to historical issues.

Conclusions (recommendations for the EQT):

- increase the scale of international activity of doctoral students, under current conditions primarily in the online format,
- the scope of internationalization at school should be further extended, e.g. through greater participation of doctoral students in lectures by visiting professors;
- doctoral students should be encouraged to participate in foreign visits, for example as part of the Erasmus program.

Implementation of the recommendations of the EQT and UEQT from the previous academic year:

The conclusions from the previous year were partially implemented.

However, the activity of doctoral students and their supervisors in obtaining external funding and in utilizing opportunities for trips, even within the framework of the ERASMUS project, remains unsatisfactory.

professor Urszula Sokólska
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