
KEN

2023-2027

DOCTORAL SCHOOL

EDUCATION QUALITY REPORT

Szkoła Doktorska Papieskiego Wydziału Teologicznego w
Warszawie

Akademia Katolicka w Warszawie



Name and seat of the doctoral school

Szkoła Doktorska Akademii Katolickiej w Warszawie

Evaluation period

10/1/19–12/18/24

Name and seat of the entity that is responsible for running the doctoral school

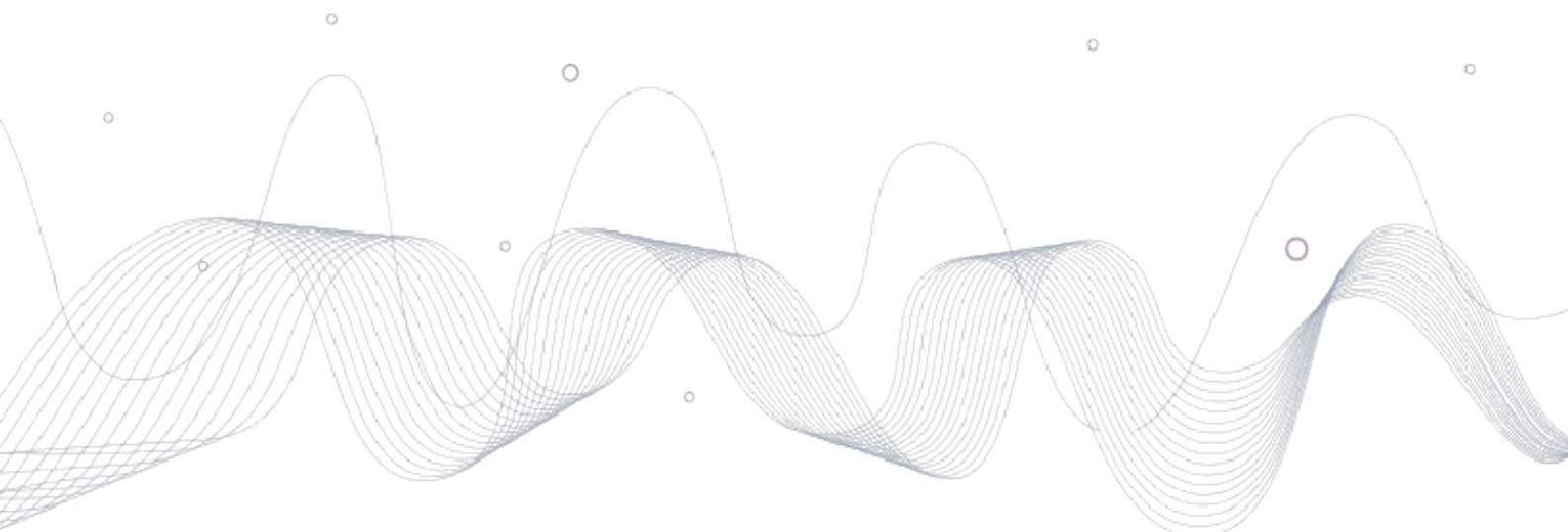
Akademia Katolicka w Warszawie

Entities that jointly run the doctoral school (when conducted jointly)

-

Date of report

3/12/25



Composition of the evaluation team:

Chairman:

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Name of doctoral school	Szkoła Doktorska Akademii Katolickiej w Warszawie
Date of establishment	2019
Date of commencement of education at doctoral school	10/1/19
Entity cooperating in the conduct of education (this does not refer to entities co-founding a doctoral school)	-
Domains of study	Theology (from: 01-01-2018)
Discipline(s) of science or art in which training is provided	theology (from: 01-01-2018)
Name/scope of the education programme	Curriculum
Number of instructors	39
Number of doctoral students undergoing training at the doctoral school (as of 3/12/25)	11
Number of supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 3/12/25)	7
Number of auxiliary supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 3/12/25)	0

II. INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION AND ITS COURSE

The visitation took place on May 8, 2025. All members of the Evaluation Team participated. The visitation schedule was agreed upon in advance with the authorities of the Doctoral School and the authorities of the AKW in Warsaw. The following visitation program was adopted and carried out:

8:30–9:30	Meeting with the authorities of AKW and the Doctoral School
9:30–10:30	Meeting with the team preparing the self-assessment report
10:30–11:15	Meeting with the administration of the SDAKW
11:15–12:00	Meeting with the teaching and research staff of the SDAKW
12:30–13:30	Review of IPB documentation / Mid-term evaluations
13:30–14:30	Meeting with the doctoral candidates of the SDAKW
14:30–15:00	Summary meeting of the Evaluation Team
15:00–15:30	Final meeting with the authorities of AKW and SDAKW

III. COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE ENTITY AND THE DOCTORAL STUDENT SELF-GOVERNMENT

SDAKW declares its openness to doctoral students and dialogue with them. Currently, six doctoral students are being trained at the school, which fosters direct contact between the doctoral students and the academic staff. During the evaluation, it was determined that the doctoral students had an influence on shaping the educational offer of AKW. However, no formal procedures for the participation of the doctoral students' council in making strategic decisions were indicated. During the evaluation, neither the regulations of the AKW doctoral students' council nor documents confirming the consultation or approval of the doctoral school's regulations and the educational program by the relevant body of the doctoral students' council were presented. According to the institution's explanations, such consultation or approval was provided orally. There are also some concerns regarding the lack of participation of a doctoral student representative in the university senate's work. The institution pointed out that there is no such obligation in the case of ecclesiastical universities. Nevertheless, the Evaluation Team recommends considering the inclusion of a doctoral student representative in the work of the Senate as it adopts key documents from the perspective of education (educational program, school regulations, admission rules), and in this context, the ability to directly present the doctoral students' perspective is of crucial importance. During the evaluation, no documents or information were provided indicating that the doctoral students' council is involved in decisions regarding the allocation of funds for doctoral student affairs. Furthermore, no relevant report in this regard is available on the university's Public Information Bulletin (BIP) website (pursuant to Art. 110 (5) in connection with Art. 215 (2) of the Law on Higher Education and Science), although during the visitation, doctoral students provided information about the possibility of obtaining such funding.

IV. INFORMATION ON THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL TO WHICH THE STATUTORY CRITERIA APPLY

- **The adequacy of the education programmes and individual research plans with respect to the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the PQF and their implementation:**
The education program at SDAKW is aligned with the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework (PRK). It has been designed to ensure the systematic achievement of the intended learning outcomes, consistent with the requirements specified in the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 14 November 2018 (Dz.U. 2018, poz. 2218). The program addresses the areas of knowledge, skills, and social competences that participants of SDAKW acquire during their education. These outcomes have been appropriately assigned to specific didactic activities (lectures, seminars). Their achievement is verified at various stages of the educational process at SDAKW, for example: after the completion of a course via oral examination, participation in discussions, activity during classes, group work on assigned topics, or engagement in conversations. In the Individual Research Plan (IPB), learning outcomes are also assigned to specific research tasks. In some cases, these assignments require clarification or correction to ensure the proper alignment of learning outcomes with the planned tasks in the IPB, as well as with additional activities (e.g., pastoral internships). Noteworthy is the optional opportunity to develop skills related to applying for research funding. However, concerns arise regarding the organization of teaching internships. According to the explanations provided, such internships are organized, but the requirement to complete them is not explicitly included in the education program. Elements of interdisciplinarity are present in the education at SDAKW, as evidenced by the range of subjects offered at the doctoral school. Nonetheless, this remains an area for further development. SDAKW did not provide detailed explanations regarding the process of continuous improvement of the education program. A quality-enhancing element of SDAKW's operations is the possibility for doctoral students to request courses that align with their research plans. The Evaluation Team noted that the education plan at SDAKW was approved by the university senate only in 2022. Moreover, no documents were presented confirming that it had been reviewed or endorsed by the appropriate body of the doctoral students' council.

- **The method of assessing the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the PQF:**
The Evaluation Team assesses the process of verifying learning outcomes positively. It is characterized by transparency and systematic implementation (cf. syllabi). At SDAKW, each course concludes with a formal assessment of learning outcomes (exam, final paper, etc.), which is an appropriate solution. SDAKW also verifies learning outcomes through requirements such as the publication of at least one article/monograph/book chapter and at least one conference presentation during the course of study. This approach is deemed appropriate. At the end of each academic year, doctoral students are required to prepare a final paper under the supervision of an academic advisor (who may be different from their dissertation supervisor). Although this requirement may appear excessive, no objections to it have been reported. However, the verification process should be specified more clearly in the form of a short, separate document dedicated to quality assurance in education at SDAKW. This document, along with other materials, should be made available on the school's website prior to the start of recruitment. Outlining the verification procedures for learning outcomes in a dedicated document would enhance the transparency of quality assurance activities at SDAKW. Currently, SDAKW lacks mechanisms to verify learning outcomes acquired outside of formal education. It is recommended to consider updating the doctoral school's regulations in this regard.

- **Qualification of academic teachers and academic staff employed at the doctoral school:**
The academic staff conducting education at SDAKW hold high qualifications, aligned with the mission and goals of the AKW. This is largely due to the structure of AKW, which is formed by three academic institutions (Collegium Bobolanum, Collegium Joanneum, and the Thomistic Institute), providing a highly qualified faculty. This includes individuals experienced in international collaboration and recognized in the global academic community, offering development opportunities for doctoral students. This is undoubtedly a major strength of SDAKW. However, certain issues stemming from this structure can be observed—for example, the lack of systematically presented information about all staff members (including their academic achievements) on the AKW website, the limited number of specialists, and the necessity of relying on faculty from external institutions. While the Evaluation Team appreciates the invitation of lecturers from other centers, if the doctoral school is to serve as a showcase for the university, it should primarily promote and support the quantitative and qualitative development of its own academic staff. It should also publish academic biographies with publication lists of all AKW staff members on its website, enabling prospective candidates to make informed choices about the doctoral school and their potential supervisor. In the future, greater attention should be given to the internationalization of the research and teaching activities of SDAKW's academic staff, as this could contribute to improving the quality of doctoral education. SDAKW is taking certain steps toward the professional development of its staff, particularly by supporting their research activities. At the same time, SDAKW stated that it does not see a need to undertake activities related to the development of the so-called “soft skills” of supervisors, given the lack of complaints from doctoral students in this area. However, the development of supervisory competencies should not be limited solely to the absence of complaints. It can also serve as a quality-enhancing measure aimed at improving the academic staff's performance and the overall quality of education in the doctoral school.

- **The quality of the admission process:**

The recruitment process at SDAKW complies with the current legal regulations. SDAKW provides detailed information about the recruitment process on its official website. The information presented there is clear and includes deadlines for document submission, a list of required documents, and the schedule for research project presentations. The admission criteria include academic performance, scientific achievements, and the doctoral dissertation project. However, two criteria currently included in the regulations raise concerns: being a graduate of AKW and involvement in the popularization of theology. The Evaluation Team recommends omitting these in the future. Providing more detailed information on the evaluation criteria for research projects and the structure of the admission interview could further increase the transparency of the process. Increasing the number of available spots at SDAKW could make the program more accessible to interested candidates. Organizing workshops or preparatory seminars for the recruitment process could also support applicants in preparing their applications more effectively. Given the limited number of available places and the lack of detailed information on evaluation criteria, it is worth considering additional measures to enhance the transparency and accessibility of the process for prospective SDAKW candidates. SDAKW should also undertake promotional activities, including publishing information about the academic staff and their scientific achievements, as well as about courses (lectures) organized within the doctoral school in the current or previous years. The recruitment rules for the doctoral school have not been revised since its inception. A review and update of these rules is therefore recommended.

- **The quality of scientific or artistic guidance, and support in research:**

SDAKW offers individualized academic supervision, whereby each doctoral student works with a supervisor employed at the university. It is particularly commendable that no more than two doctoral students are assigned to any one supervisor at a time. SDAKW provides doctoral students with the opportunity to participate in academic conferences and scientific seminars, which supports the development of research competencies in accordance with legal and ecclesiastical requirements. The individual approach to doctoral students, opportunities for conference participation, and international collaboration are strong points of the academic supervision quality at SDAKW. Both doctoral students and supervisors express satisfaction with the quality of their cooperation, as evidenced by the successful completion of doctoral degrees by both graduates of SDAKW to date. No other criteria for appointing supervisors have been defined beyond mutual agreement between the supervisor and the doctoral student. No issues have been identified in this regard. According to SDAKW, the school's small-scale character fosters direct communication and effective resolution of problems. However, there is no formal procedure for handling difficult or conflictual situations. Therefore, it is recommended to adopt clear procedures that guarantee confidentiality and safety for those reporting such situations. Doctoral students can apply for funding from the university's resources, but the lack of transparent funding rules discourages them from seeking financial support for research. It is therefore recommended to establish a clear funding mechanism and to allocate a specific pool of funds for research purposes, which could be increased when resources allow. It is also recommended to involve the doctoral students' council in the allocation of these funds (pursuant to Art. 110 (5) in connection with Art. 215 (2) of the Law on Higher Education and Science). SDAKW currently lacks a structured system for evaluating supervisors; the implementation of such a system is worth considering. Didactic classes are subject to student surveys, which is an appropriate practice. In the future, research activities carried out by doctoral students in collaboration with their academic supervisors should be further specified and enriched by a broader range of interdisciplinary research, conducted within the framework of systematic international cooperation.

- **The reliability of the midterm evaluation:**

The mid-term evaluation at SDAKW is generally conducted in accordance with the law: at the end of the fourth semester of study, and it is primarily aimed at verifying progress in the implementation of the Individual Research Plan (IPB). During the site visit, the Evaluation Team noted that the assessment of the IPB includes elements of substantive evaluation of the doctoral students, which may be included only if they serve to confirm the actual implementation of the IPB by the student. A commission of three members is appointed to assess each IPB, including at least one person employed outside AKW, holding a postdoctoral degree (doktor habilitowany) or the title of professor in the relevant discipline. The supervisor and any assistant supervisor are not members of the commission. However, there is a discrepancy between the SDAKW Regulations and the law, as the Regulations require the appointment of four persons. In practice - correctly, and in line with the law - the commission consists of three members. The result of the mid-term evaluation, along with its justification, is made public through the publication of the evaluation outcomes on the website. It is recommended that SDAKW publish detailed procedures for conducting the mid-term evaluation on its website, including the required documents, assessment criteria, and the evaluation process itself. Regular updates of this information are also encouraged, as this would enhance the transparency of the process.

- **Internationalisation:**

By its very nature, AKW is an institution open to both national and international collaboration. Responsibility for the functioning of the SDAKW lies with three distinct entities – the Archdiocese of Warsaw, the Jesuits, and the Dominicans – which is undoubtedly a very positive and rather unique characteristic within the Polish academic landscape. This tripartite structure has an impact on a diversity of the academic staff, increased mobility, and internationalization, offering students additional opportunities for conducting research also at foreign institutions. Many AKW professors actively participate in both national and international conferences, deliver periodic lectures at universities abroad, and publish scholarly works in high-impact academic journals. All of this contributes to a high degree of internationalization in the education process within the doctoral school and in the research activities of its doctoral students. This international dimension is reflected both in the origin of the doctoral students (some of whom come from outside Poland), their research plans, and their mobility when collecting sources. The SDAKW supports the mobility of its students, encourages the writing of doctoral theses in other languages, and strives to accommodate the specific needs of international doctoral candidates during their educational journey. A dedicated office exists to assist them in their academic "acclimatization" and to help ensure a successful completion of their doctoral education. AKW aims to increase the international visibility of its doctoral school. This goal is supported by agreements signed with several foreign universities that share a similar research profile. It would be beneficial to invite lecturers whose sole place of employment is a foreign academic institution. One significant barrier to internationalizing research is its funding – clear financial frameworks for academic activity would help increase the international mobility of doctoral students. Another obstacle is the lack of a complete English-language website for the SDAKW, including the absence of key documents that regulate the educational process, and the fact that education is currently offered exclusively in Polish. In the future, attention should be paid to PhD candidates mobility, joint projects, and academic events with ecclesiastical institutions and Catholic universities worldwide. According to information provided by the AKW, half of the doctoral students currently benefit from academic mobility opportunities.

- **The effectiveness of the doctoral education:**

So far, two doctoral candidates have completed their education at SDAKW – both obtained the doctoral degree. The Evaluation Team did not observe any negative aspects regarding the timely completion of the doctoral program in accordance with the study program. The doctoral dissertations they submitted were positively evaluated by qualified reviewers. It should be noted that the doctoral candidates submit individual research plans approved by their supervisors on time and receive positive mid-term evaluation results. The scientific achievements of the doctoral students are at an adequate level, although they tend to have a rather local scope. A positive aspect worth mentioning is the high degree of mobility among doctoral students, both in terms of participation in scientific sessions and – even more importantly – through presenting papers at them. Many doctoral candidates also prepare scientific articles, which are subsequently published in academic journals, including international ones. SDAKW has not conducted an evaluation of the quality of education in the doctoral school by the doctoral candidates themselves. The reason given for this was the small number of doctoral students. The Evaluation Team believes that, regardless of the number of doctoral candidates, assessing the quality of education is important. It influences the improvement of both the doctoral school and the doctoral candidates themselves. However, doctoral candidates have the opportunity to suggest courses essential for the proper conduct of their research work. This solution should be considered good. In this regard, the school should consider enabling a comprehensive evaluation of the quality of education by doctoral students – including the assessment of supervisory cooperation and the support system for conducting scientific research. There is also no monitoring of the professional careers of those who have completed their education at SDAKW or obtained a doctoral degree. However, the report indicates that these individuals are developing their academic careers both in Poland and abroad.

V. FINAL OPINION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Final assessment: **POSITIVE.**

The Evaluation Team does not recommend conducting the next evaluation earlier than scheduled.

Recommendations:

The Evaluation Team recommends that the approval of the doctoral school regulations and the review of the study program by the relevant doctoral student government body be conducted in writing, and that the doctoral school archives related documents (including the student government regulations and corresponding election resolutions);

The team recommends including the development of skills in applying for research funding as a mandatory learning outcome;

The team recommends standardizing the organization of teaching practicums and their requirements for all students;

The team recommends describing the procedures for verifying learning outcomes in a separate document to enhance the transparency of activities related to quality assurance in SDAKW;

It is recommended to provide more detailed information regarding the criteria for assessing research projects and the process of the qualification interview;

It is recommended to adopt clear and unambiguous procedures for handling difficult and conflict situations, ensuring confidentiality and the safety of the reporting person;

It is recommended to introduce clear, permanent, and publicly accessible rules for obtaining internal funding for research conducted by doctoral candidates;

It is recommended to amend the SDAKW regulations regarding the composition of the mid-term evaluation committee;

It is advised to publish detailed procedures for conducting the mid-term evaluation on the SDAKW website, including required documents, evaluation criteria, and the evaluation process itself, to increase transparency and regularly update this information;

The Evaluation Team recommends supplementing the SDAKW website with an English version, including documents regulating education;

It is recommended to implement monitoring of the professional careers of individuals who have completed education at the SDAKW and those who have obtained a doctoral degree.

VI. ASSESSMENT AND REASON

Final assessment
positive

Reason:

Based on the analysis of the AKW Doctoral School's (SDAKW) self-evaluation report and the on-site visit, the Evaluation Team did not identify any serious irregularities in the functioning of the school. SDAKW operates in compliance with applicable laws, and in alignment with the mission and objectives of the Accademy.

All eight evaluation criteria were fulfilled to a very high standard during the assessment period. Minor shortcomings observed do not affect the overall positive evaluation of the school. The recommendations provided are intended to support the continuous improvement of SDAKW's operations, rather than to correct possible deficiencies.

It should be particularly emphasized that SDAKW effectively fulfills its primary role as a place of doctoral education - both students who have completed the program to date have successfully obtained the doctoral degree. The educational process is conducted appropriately by a qualified academic staff, ensuring that doctoral candidates acquire advanced research and teaching competencies.

In view of the above, the Evaluation Team recommends a positive assessment of the AKW Doctoral School and does not propose an earlier re-evaluation of the school.

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