

KEN

2023-2027

# DOCTORAL SCHOOL

## EDUCATION QUALITY REPORT

Szkoła Doktorska

Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny we Wrocławiu

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**Name and seat of the doctoral school**

Szkoła Doktorska

**Evaluation period**

10/1/19–12/18/24

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

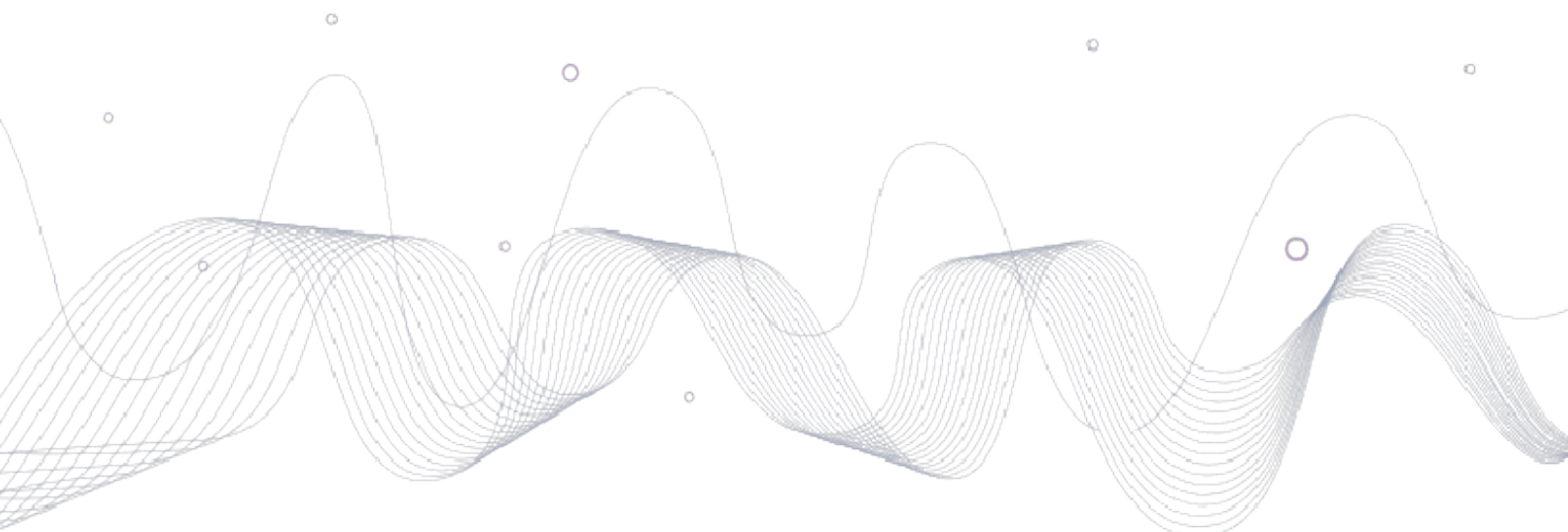
Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny we Wrocławiu

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

-

**Date of report**

3/13/25



Composition of the evaluation team:

**Chairman:**

Aleksandra Obrępańska Stęplowska

**Secretary:**

Przemysław Wewiór

**Team members:**

Urszula Gawlik

Adam Fagan

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# I. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Name of doctoral school	Szkoła Doktorska
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	Agricultural sciences (from: 01-01-2018) Social sciences (from: 01-01-2018)
Discipline(s) of science or art in which training is provided	food and nutrition technology (from: 01-01-2018) economics and finance (from: 01-01-2018) management and quality studies (from: 01-01-2018)
Name/scope of the education programme	Food and Nutrition Technology Management and Quality Science Economics and Finance
Number of instructors	34
Number of doctoral students undergoing training at the doctoral school (as of 3/10/25)	95
Number of supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 3/10/25)	60
Number of auxiliary supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 3/10/25)	29

## II. INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION AND ITS COURSE

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The Evaluation Team's visit to the Doctoral School of the Wrocław University of Economics and Business (SD UEW) took place on 6 May 2025. All members of the Evaluation Team were present, except the international expert, who was unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances.

The visit schedule was sent to the School in advance and was implemented with only minor adjustments. The agenda included the following:

- Meeting with the leadership of the Doctoral School;
- Meeting with the quality assurance bodies, self-assessment report team, and administrative staff;
- Tour of modern teaching facilities;
- Meeting with faculty members, academic supervisors, and representatives of Scientific Councils of the evaluated disciplines;
- Review of Individual Research Plans and mid-term evaluation documentation;
- Meeting with doctoral students and the Doctoral Students' Council;
- Final summary meeting of the Evaluation Team.

A separate room was made available to the Team, and meetings were held in a large conference-style room, where a dedicated area allowed the Team to review the submitted documentation. The Dean and members of the SD UEW administration were available to the Team throughout the visit.

The meetings included a representative group of supervisors, administrative staff, doctoral students, and members of the Doctoral Students' Council. Participants from SD UEW included:

- University authorities (Rector, Vice-Rectors, Dean of the Doctoral School, Deans and Vice-Deans – 11 persons);
- Members of the Doctoral School Council, Admissions Committee, Rector's Plenipotentiary for Quality Assurance, representatives responsible for internationalisation, the International Cooperation Centre, Chair of the Mid-Term Evaluation Committee, and representatives of the Research Support Centre, Project Management Centre, Quality Assurance Office, Staff Development Office, InQube, DT Hub, Research Activity Manager, Business Process Simulation Centre, Rector's Plenipotentiary for Persons with Disabilities, and representatives of the Sustainable Development Office, UEW Library, and SD administration (approx. 30 persons);
- Instructors, academic supervisors, and representatives of the Scientific Councils of disciplines represented at the SD (10 persons);
- Doctoral students, the Doctoral Students' Council, and alumni (14 persons).

The Team also reviewed the University's teaching infrastructure, including a modern business process simulation centre equipped with VR tools.

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

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During the meeting between the Evaluation Team and doctoral students—including representatives of the Doctoral Students' Council at UEW—the relationship between doctoral students and the University was presented as well-functioning and based on mutual respect.

The Council operates locally and does not seek membership in the National Representation of Doctoral Students (KRD), but it actively participates in the regional Wrocław–Opole Doctoral Students' Agreement (WrOPD).

Cooperation with the University authorities includes, among other things, consultations regarding the appointment of the Dean of the Doctoral School, determining an annual activity budget of approximately PLN 25,000, organising information meetings for prospective students, and negotiating access to specialised training, such as IBM SPSS Statistics and *Data Science in R*. The University has also been positively evaluated for its flexibility in adjusting the curriculum in response to doctoral student feedback.

Students highlighted the friendly atmosphere, openness of University leadership, and the University's genuine concern for their well-being—for example, through measures that facilitate participation in classes for students who are parents. However, they also pointed to certain systemic challenges arising from national regulations, such as the lack of funding during programme extensions or difficulties in obtaining creditworthiness. Nonetheless, most students are employed outside the University, which helps secure their financial situation.



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

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- **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 doctoral education programme is adequate in relation to the learning outcomes at Polish Qualifications Framework (PRK) Level 8.

The programme is well-conceived. During the first two semesters, doctoral students participate in mandatory courses aimed at developing their research toolkit and cross-disciplinary skills, thus strengthening their capacity to carry out their Individual Research Plan (IPB) during the doctoral programme. In subsequent years, course load is gradually reduced, allowing students to choose their own courses (elective block) and focus on research and collaboration with supervisors.

The School's considerable effort and commitment to improving the programme deserve recognition. The programme is tailored to doctoral students' research needs and developed in consultation with them. The School maintains an open-door policy toward its students.

The quality of education is monitored through periodic reports prepared by the UEW Office for Analyses and Reporting, which incorporate doctoral student evaluations. These evaluations are overall rated as high or very high.

Courses are scheduled in the afternoon, enabling students to combine academic study with professional work. This arrangement is especially important for doctoral students for whom dissertation preparation is a key component of professional development outside academia—many students are already professionally active in business, public administration, or the NGO sector, often holding managerial and leadership roles.

In this context, it is also worth highlighting that doctoral students have the opportunity to participate in the Lower Silesian NGO Forum and the Impakt Lower Silesia think tank. Such engagement helps foster soft skills, strengthen links between academia and society, promote civic responsibility, and encourage the practical application of research outcomes in social processes.

A full evaluation of the programme's adequacy to Level 8 PRK learning outcomes is only possible ex-post, that is, for completed or advanced programmes. An ex-ante assessment is not feasible: the syllabus lacks information on elective courses for the 2024–2025 cohort, and for the 2023–2024 cohort, some individual elective courses are not listed.

According to the School, elective course offerings are determined in the second semester based on an analysis of each student's IPB for the next two years of study. This approach allows for a personalized educational path aligned with students' interests and research

needs. As a result, doctoral students are not required to take irrelevant courses. Students report high satisfaction with this tailored approach. However, this flexibility carries a risk of misalignment with Level 8 PRK standards. To mitigate this, the School should predefine the learning outcomes to be achieved via the elective course module and use them as key selection criteria. This suggestion is meant as a recommendation to reduce the risk of educational programme inadequacy.

For completed programmes, the Evaluation Team has no doubts about their adequacy to the required standards.

The Team recommends standardizing the IPB templates, at least within each discipline and preferably across the entire Doctoral School, and reconsidering the requirement to include a dissertation structure. The current IPB templates do not indicate which learning outcomes are linked to specific research activities. As a result, the IPBs vary in the degree to which research activities are detailed. The IPB should be treated as a tool complementary to the educational programme and supporting the achievement of learning outcomes.

Despite the School's clarifications, it remains unclear how interdisciplinarity is used to foster learning outcomes. The programme does not explicitly include training in integrating knowledge and methods from different disciplines to address complex research problems. Informally, however, students reported that they were able to take courses from other disciplines and found specialist training (e.g., in data analysis or R language), originally prepared for faculty members, to be equally valuable as formal coursework.

The Doctoral School operates within an institutional framework that supports doctoral student participation in both national and international internships, as well as in applying for and implementing externally funded research projects. Internships are not mandatory. According to the Evaluation Team, enhancing incentives for internships—or even making them compulsory—would strengthen the programme, allowing students to gain research experience in diverse academic and professional environments. Internships could help students integrate into research networks early in their careers, which may be critical for their long-term development.

- **The method of assessing the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the PQF:**  
At the School, learning outcomes are primarily achieved through participation in coursework. Their verification is mainly conducted through exams and course credits, which take various forms such as projects, presentations, and essays. These forms are appropriate in relation to the course content and the expected learning outcomes.

The rules for verifying learning outcomes are made available to doctoral students in advance through the syllabus.

Based on the documentation reviewed, the verification of learning outcomes appears to be reliable and properly documented.

At the same time, the Team recommends that more learning outcomes be assessed through methods beyond the traditional exam-or-credit model—for example, through participation in internships, preparation of academic publications, attendance at conferences, and self-directed learning evidenced by certificates, etc. This approach would require strengthening the role of the Individual Research Plan (IPB) as a tool for planning and documenting learning outcomes achieved by doctoral students (cf. Criterion I).

The Team particularly recommends that learning outcomes acquired through grant proposal training sessions be verified beyond traditional formats. The School introduces doctoral students to grant application procedures at an early stage of their education. However, submitting a grant application is not mandatory. Making submission a formal requirement would allow for assessment of actual competencies under real-world conditions. Such a practice would benefit both the University and the doctoral students. From the University's perspective, it fosters a grant-oriented research culture; from the student's perspective, early success in grant competitions greatly increases the likelihood of securing further project funding.

A valuable practice at the School is the annual Open Doctoral Session, which requires participation from all students. This event offers an opportunity for students to receive feedback from the entire academic community on their ongoing research and to verify learning outcomes in areas such as research communication, dissemination, and argumentative skills.

- **Qualification of academic teachers and academic staff employed at the doctoral school:**  
The academic, teaching, and organizational achievements and activities of staff involved in delivering the programme at the Doctoral School (SD) are fully adequate in terms of the scope and content of the curriculum.

The staffing model adopted by the School is both efficient and effective, combining bottom-up and top-down elements. On one hand, the School is open to initiatives from the teaching staff, who actively participate in curriculum development in cooperation with the Dean of the School, adjusting it to current scientific and labour market needs. On the other hand, the programme and teaching staff are reviewed by the School Council, ensuring effective quality control. In some cases, the Council also actively participates in programme development and recommends instructors.

The consistently high or very high ratings of teaching staff given by doctoral students in surveys attest to the effectiveness of the School's approach and to the personal commitment of the academic staff and those managing the Doctoral School.

At UEW, the WIR Knowledge Base presents the academic achievements of university staff, while the Professional Competence Development Office prepares reports on faculty participation in professional development. The School therefore has the tools to verify whether and to what extent its staff—especially supervisors—develop their scientific and teaching competencies. However, the responses provided by the School and the visit itself did not fully dispel the Evaluation Team's concerns about whether these resources are systematically used. The Team recommends leveraging the available data more systematically to minimise the risk of potential competence gaps among staff.

It is also worth noting that the School plans to introduce classroom observations (hospitation), which may further improve the quality of education and help ensure the adequacy of staff selection.

Another important initiative is the plan to establish a doctoral ombudsperson as an institutional mechanism to address potential conflicts between doctoral students and staff, including supervisors. Although no such conflicts have occurred to date, the Evaluation Team fully supports this plan as an example of good practice and a commitment to maintaining sound academic relationships.

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

Information about the functioning of the Doctoral School (SD), recruitment rules and stages, as well as internal legal acts, is published on time by the School on a website that is accessible and clear for applicants. The information provided is comprehensive. Since the School currently does not offer a programme in English, the website is available in Polish only.

A clear example of the School's commitment to transparent communication with applicants is the organization of open workshops and information sessions involving SD staff, which attract a wide audience.

The School actively seeks to retain high-potential graduates from first- and second-cycle programmes at the university. One tool supporting this is the academic journal *Student Debuts*, which highlights promising young scholars.

The recruitment process has been improved from edition to edition in order to increase its quality and transparency. The weight of the grade point average from the diploma has been reduced in favour of the candidate's publication record—particularly rewarding publications in reputable academic journals, such as those ranked in Q1 and Q2 quartiles in the Scopus database or listed in the Academic Journal Guide. Increasing emphasis is also placed on the quality of the initial Individual Research Plan, as an indicator of a candidate's research potential. These changes in recruitment policy clearly reflect a commitment to quality.

Given the School's mission to educate future leaders in business, public administration, and the non-profit sector, the Evaluation Team recommends placing greater emphasis in assessment criteria on the candidates' potential to collaborate with the socio-economic environment, while maintaining the required standards of research competence.

The School is open to candidates from other academic institutions. The recruitment timeline and the availability of information about the School make it possible for such candidates to establish contact with prospective supervisors and prepare adequately for the recruitment process. Due to relatively low academic mobility among doctoral candidates nationwide, the number of applications from outside institutions remains modest. Nonetheless, the successful enrolment of these candidates at the SD reflects the principle of equal treatment.

The School has appropriate infrastructure and technical solutions in place and cooperates with qualified staff to ensure equal treatment of persons with disabilities. Importantly, any requests for adjustments in teaching methods or accessibility are addressed promptly upon notification.

The Evaluation Team notes the absence of internal regulations that would allow the admission of candidates funded by external research agencies. Currently, such solutions exist only for participants in the Industrial Doctorate programme. The Team recommends adopting appropriate regulations to enable the admission of externally funded doctoral candidates.

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

The rules and criteria for appointing supervisors (P) and assistant supervisors (PP) adopted by the School are appropriate. Both P and PP possess the scientific and interpersonal competencies necessary to support doctoral students in preparing and implementing their Individual Research Plans (IPBs). For interdisciplinary research, the School practices the appointment of a PP or a second supervisor. Additionally, the School allows for the creation of a doctoral committee to support interdisciplinary work, although such a case has not occurred so far.

The supervisor–doctoral student relationship is governed by a signed cooperation agreement between both parties. This soft regulatory mechanism represents an example of good institutional practice that promotes mutual accountability through clearly articulated commitments rather than sanctions.

The School has established procedures for supervisor changes and resolving potential conflicts between students and supervisors. The process is two-tiered, allowing appeals from decisions of the Dean of the Doctoral School to the Rector. To date, the School has not had to invoke these procedures; nevertheless, it plans to introduce a doctoral ombudsperson, which the Evaluation Team views as a step in the right direction.

It is important to highlight the School's exceptionally supportive and collegial atmosphere, founded on mutual respect and openness from university authorities, academic staff, administrative personnel, and doctoral students. This atmosphere is a significant added value in the day-to-day functioning of the academic community. The School also provides real support for individuals with special needs.

The university's actions are focused on enhancing the quality of scientific supervision by developing supervisory competencies. These efforts include implementing supervision practices and assistant supervision schemes. Supervisors undertaking this role for the first time undergo expert verification. The university also conducts large-scale mentoring training for academic staff. These training sessions help staff understand how doctoral students perceive academic and career development and aim to foster intergenerational dialogue and communication skills among current and prospective supervisors.

Scientific supervision is evaluated by doctoral students through surveys—not only scientific factors but also the quality of academic relationships (e.g., engagement, availability) are assessed. Reports based on these surveys form part of the School's quality assurance and improvement mechanism.

The School operates within the institutional ecosystem of the university, which enables doctoral students to engage in diverse initiatives supporting IPB implementation and professional development—for example, via the Research Support Centre, Project Management Centre, Staff Development Office, Business Cooperation Centre, Centre for Business Process Simulation, and the Centre for Designing Innovative Solutions. These units treat doctoral students on equal footing with academic staff. The visit confirmed that students are indeed using the support offered by these institutional units.

An additional form of support is access to internal grant competitions. These are organised by faculties (two out of the three involved in the doctoral programme), and eligibility to apply depends on participation in a research programme aligned with the faculty's focus.

The School also supports doctoral students' engagement in research networks, for example through participation in Open Doctoral Sessions, which are attended by the broader UEW community, as well as the recurring SD International Doctoral Seminars (held four times a year), which are open to participants from around the world.

Despite these initiatives, the School's support for integrating doctoral students into strong research networks at the early stage of their academic careers—critical for long-term development—could be stronger. Some academic staff at UEW expressed concern during the visit that some students remain somewhat isolated from broader university life. The Evaluation Team recommends that the School explore this concern further and, if necessary, take steps to strengthen doctoral student participation in institutional, national, and international research networks.



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

The mid-term evaluation at the Doctoral School is conducted reliably, transparently, and in compliance with the Law on Higher Education and Science (Article 202, paragraphs 1–3). The procedure is implemented within the designated timeframe by committees appointed and approved by the School Council. The composition of these committees meets both formal and substantive requirements and includes at least one member from outside the institution, further reinforcing the objectivity of the process.

Doctoral students are informed of the evaluation criteria and scope in advance. The evaluation covers both academic and research progress as well as the implementation of the Individual Research Plan (IPB). It also assesses the development of Level 8 PRK competencies, including the ability to formulate research problems, apply advanced progress monitoring tools, and support the doctoral student’s research development. In addition, the evaluation includes quality-oriented recommendations and a review of the research context and achievements to date.

The Evaluation Team notes that a reliable assessment of IPB implementation depends on the diligence with which the IPB was initially prepared. Some concerns arose regarding IPBs that lacked precise timelines for research activities—some activities were scheduled only within a range of several semesters, which was deemed insufficiently specific.

The international expert noted that some Western doctoral schools successfully use digital tools to monitor the progress of dissertation preparation. These tools, which log communication between the doctoral student and supervisor and track the completion of successive research stages, could be considered for implementation by the School. Such systems could automatically (or upon request) transmit data to School management and to the committee conducting the mid-term review, including insights into the quality of supervisor–student communication.

- **Internationalisation:**

The University provides conditions for doctoral students to gain international experience, including through academic mobility programmes. Students have access to various forms of both organisational and financial support when applying for international internships, attending international conferences, and engaging in initiatives aimed at establishing research collaboration with foreign institutions. The School actively promotes and facilitates participation in mobility schemes, particularly Erasmus+, which serves as a valuable platform for educational exchange and networking (UEW currently has over 150 Erasmus+ partner universities, with a budget of PLN 10 million for the 2023/2024 academic year).

Doctoral students can also benefit from competitive grant programmes such as LIDER, Nutritech, and Young Researcher Interekon (totalling over PLN 200,000 awarded to 13 individuals from 2019 to 2024), as well as from regional mobility and research support funds and internal faculty-level grant competitions. The Research Support Centre (COBN) assists in organising international research internships. Since 2019, these have included 2 internships lasting 30 days, 6 of 14 days, and 2 of 10 days, held at universities in Germany, the Netherlands, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic.

Some courses at the School are delivered in English. The School plans to significantly increase the number of international students by developing a full doctoral programme in English. The international experience and language competence of the SD faculty, as well as the University's proven administrative capacity (e.g., its experience implementing the NAWA PROM programme), suggest that this plan is highly feasible. The Evaluation Team strongly supports this goal, as its implementation will enhance the School's openness to foreign students and provide Polish students with valuable international exposure.

The Evaluation Team highly values the efforts made by the University and the Doctoral School to build international recognition and strengthen the School's brand. The School regularly organises *International Doctoral Seminars* (online, in English), which facilitate research exchange and integration of early-career researchers from various countries. Fifteen such seminars have been held to date. The University is a member of the European Doctoral Programmes Association in Management and Business Administration (EDAMBA) and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), and it is currently pursuing AACSB accreditation. It also holds several other accreditations (CEEMAN IQA, EUA IEP, AMBA, EFMD Global, ACCA, CIMA).

The University has a system of incentives to improve the quality of academic performance among staff, including Rector's scholarships, awards, quality bonuses, publication rewards, and reduced teaching loads for staff involved in research projects. However, the School did not present an evaluation of the effectiveness of this incentive system in motivating staff to engage in international collaboration.

Despite the good institutional conditions for international cooperation, issues related to internationalisation are only marginally included in the curriculum and in individual research plans. The School has not yet developed systemic solutions to embed internationalisation in doctoral training. Statistics presented by the School indicate that only a minority of students have participated in mobility opportunities. Moreover, there are currently no formal benefits

(e.g., crediting of learning outcomes) for students who actively engage in international activities.

As a minimum recommendation, the Evaluation Team suggests that the School identify specific learning outcomes that may be achieved through international activities such as academic exchanges, research internships, conferences, summer schools, or blended intensive programmes (BIPs).

As a more ambitious recommendation, the Evaluation Team encourages the School to work toward ensuring that every doctoral student gains substantial international experience—ideally in the form of a compulsory short-term research internship abroad. This would ensure equal opportunities for all students to conduct research in international academic environments, regardless of their specific study track. The Team proposes that such international expectations be treated as part of the University's effort to build a research culture in which international collaboration is the norm, not the exception.

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

During the evaluation period, only two cohorts of doctoral students had the opportunity to complete the full training cycle, making it difficult to definitively assess the effectiveness of the programme. This applies in particular to the *Food Technology and Nutrition* programme, which has so far enrolled four doctoral students.

The quality of education at the School is assessed by students through periodic surveys. These survey results are used to prepare internal quality assurance reports. This process is implemented reliably, and both the overall quality of education and the quality of supervision are rated as high or very high.

At the time of the Evaluation Team's visit, no major concerns were raised regarding the School's effectiveness. Nevertheless, the Team presents two recommendations that may help ensure high training effectiveness in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

The first doctoral graduates have already defended their dissertations. However, a significant number of final-year doctoral students are extending their studies, in some cases by up to three semesters. One likely contributing factor is the lack of precision in scheduling research activities in their IPBs—poorly defined deadlines make it difficult to monitor progress and complete dissertations on time. The Team recommends that the School pay close attention to how these deadlines are formulated during IPB submission and verify their precision and feasibility.

The Team also recommends that the School develop a graduate career tracking system based on qualitative research methods. Given the School's mission to educate future leaders in business, public administration, and the non-profit sector, such tracking should include assessments of how well the programme has prepared graduates for leadership roles in these areas. Systematic collection of graduate feedback would enable more informed improvements to programme content and structure, helping the School to fulfil its mission more effectively.

## V. FINAL OPINION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The KEN Evaluation Team reviewed the self-assessment report submitted by the Doctoral School of Wrocław University of Economics and Business (UEW) and conducted an on-site visit. Based on Article 262(1) and (3) of the Law on Higher Education and Science, the Team issues a positive assessment of the quality of education provided by the School.

The Team considers the following educational aspects to be of particular value:

- a coherent and well-considered educational programme,
- a flexible offer of elective courses,
- high qualifications and strong engagement of the academic staff,
- an effective system for evaluating academic teachers,
- strong institutional support for doctoral research,
- opportunities to develop leadership competencies,
- a friendly and supportive environment,
- an open and substantive recruitment process,
- a reliable and developmental mid-term evaluation.

In the evaluation report, the Team presented the following recommendations:

- defining learning outcomes for elective courses,
- unifying and simplifying the templates for Individual Research Plans (IPBs), with clearer timelines,
- broadening the methods for verifying learning outcomes,
- amending internal regulations to allow for recruitment of doctoral candidates funded from external sources,
- developing a graduate career tracking system,
- introducing incentives for participation in domestic and international internships,
- strengthening the interdisciplinary component of education.

The Team hopes that the UEW Doctoral School will consider implementing these recommendations, which, in the Team's view, would further enhance the quality of education.

## VI. ASSESSMENT AND REASON

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Final assessment  
positive

**Reason:**

The KEN Evaluation Team reviewed the self-assessment report submitted by the Doctoral School of Wrocław University of Economics and Business (UEW) and conducted an on-site visit. Based on Article 262(1) and (3) of the Law on Higher Education and Science, the Team issues a positive assessment of the quality of education provided by the School.

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the Ministry of Science.

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