
KEN

2023-2027

DOCTORAL SCHOOL

EDUCATION QUALITY REPORT

Szkoła Doktorska

Uniwersytet Rolniczy im. Hugona Kołłątaja w Krakowie



Name and seat of the doctoral school

Szkoła Doktorska

Evaluation period

10/1/19–9/10/25

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

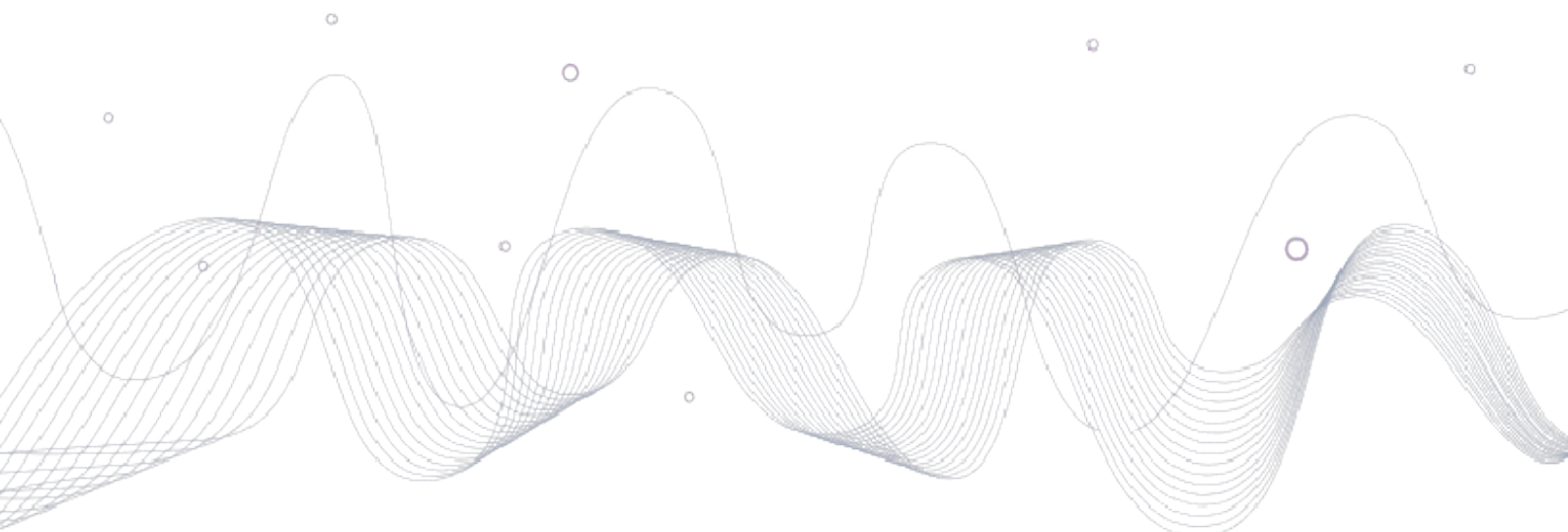
Uniwersytet Rolniczy im. Hugona Kołłątaja w Krakowie

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

-

Date of report

12/1/25



Composition of the evaluation team:

Chairman:

Wojciech Nizański

Secretary:

Agnieszka Ludwików

Team members:

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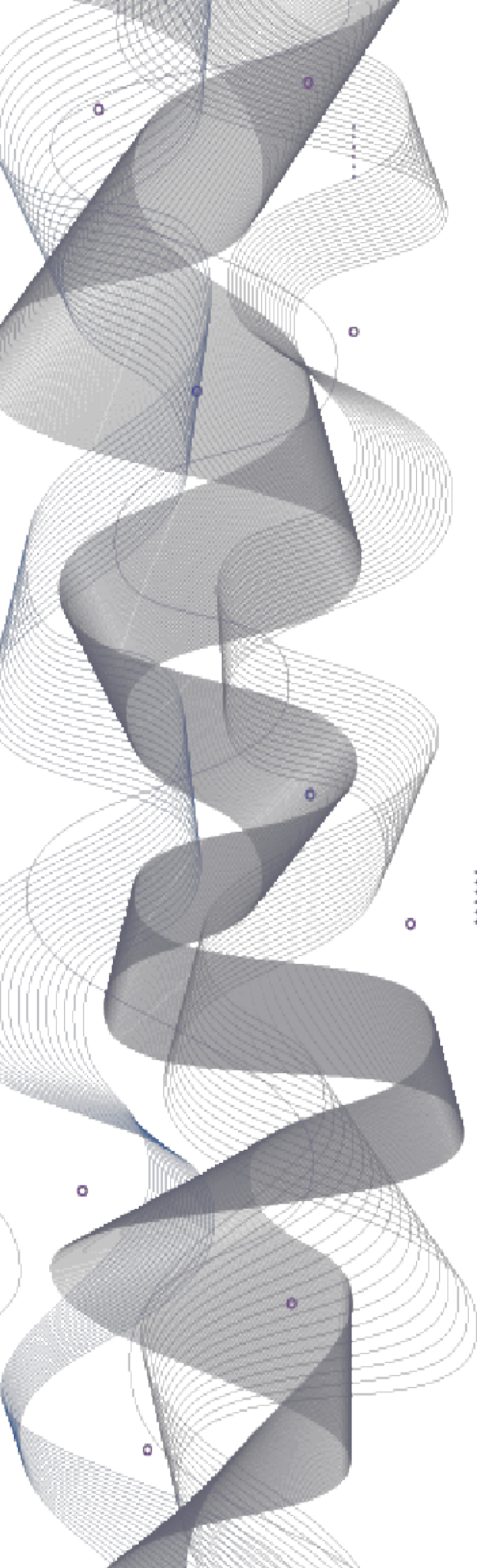


TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. General information on the doctoral school	5
II. Information on the inspection and its course	7
III. Collaboration between the entity and the doctoral student self-government	8
IV. Information on the doctoral school to which the statutory criteria apply	9
V. Final opinion and recommendations	25
VI. Assessment and reason	28

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	Natural sciences (from: 01-01-2018) Engineering and technology (from: 01-01-2018) Agricultural sciences (from: 01-01-2018) Social sciences (from: 01-01-2018) Veterinary science (from: 11-11-2022)
Discipline(s) of science or art in which training is provided	biological sciences (from: 01-01-2018) civil engineering and transport (from: 01-01-2018 to: 10-11-2022) mechanical engineering (from: 01-01-2018) environmental engineering, mining and energy (from: 01-01-2018) civil engineering, geodesy and transport (from: 11-11-2022) agriculture and horticulture (from: 01-01-2018) food and nutrition technology (from: 01-01-2018) animal science and fisheries (from: 01-01-2018) forestry (from: 01-01-2018) economics and finance (from: 01-01-2018) veterinary science (from: 11-11-2022)
Name/scope of the education programme	plan zajęć obowiązkowych (2019-10-01) plan zajęć obowiązkowych (2021-10-01) plan zajęć obowiązkowych (2023-10-01)
Number of instructors	39
Number of doctoral students undergoing training at the doctoral school (as of 11/20/25)	159
Number of supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 11/20/25)	86

Number of auxiliary supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 11/20/25)

42

II. INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION AND ITS COURSE

The evaluation in site visit was conducted on 26–27 February 2026. All members of the Evaluation Committee participated in the visit. The schedule of the site visit was agreed in advance with the authorities of the Doctoral School.

The visit was carried out in accordance with the following programme:

Day I – 26 February 2026

9:00–10:00 Meeting with the Director of the Doctoral School and the Rector's authorities

10:00–12:00 Meeting with the team responsible for preparing the self-evaluation report

12:30–13:30 Meeting with the administrative staff and the Doctoral School Council

14:30–16:30 Analysis of documentation related to the Doctoral School, including the evaluation of individual research plan, mid-term assessment documentation, and other relevant materials

16:30–17:00 Concluding meeting of the Evaluation Panel

Day II – 27 February 2026

9:00–10:30 Meeting with teaching staff of the Doctoral School, academic supervisors, and representatives of the Scientific Councils of the disciplines represented in the Doctoral School

10:30–12:00 Meeting with doctoral candidates and the Doctoral Students' Self-Government Council

12:00–13:00 Concluding meeting of the Evaluation Panel

13:00 Final meeting with the Director of the Doctoral School and the Rector supervising the Doctoral School, including the presentation of further stages of the evaluation procedure.

The authorities and administrative staff of the Doctoral School remained at the disposal of the Evaluation Committee. The scheduled meetings were held in conference-type rooms. The requested documentation was made available in a separate room. The meetings involved a representative group of supervisors, doctoral candidates enrolled in the Doctoral School, representatives of the Doctoral School Council and the Discipline Councils, academic supervisors, as well as representatives of the doctoral candidates' self-government and a staff member of the Doctoral School office.

Prior to the conclusion of the site visit, the Evaluation Committee assessed the level of fulfilment of the evaluation criteria and formulated preliminary conclusions, which were presented to the University authorities and the Director of the Doctoral School during the concluding meeting. The authorities of the Doctoral School, the University, as well as the faculty-level authorities, provided very good working conditions for the Evaluation Committee appointed to conduct the evaluation of the Doctoral School of the Hugo Kołłątaj University of Agriculture in Kraków.

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

The cooperation between between the entity operating the Doctoral School and the Doctoral candidates' Self-Government is transparent, systematic, and partnership-based. The Doctoral School submitted documentation confirming active cooperation with the the Doctoral Self-Government, including the participation of its representatives in providing opinions on key aspects of the Doctoral School's operation, such as internal regulations, recruitment rules, and the education programme.

Doctoral candidates have representation in the bodies and Councils of the University and the Doctoral School, and these arrangements operate in accordance with statutory requirements. Doctoral candidates establish the Doctoral Self-Government and are represented in the relevant bodies and Councils of the University and the Doctoral School. This is in compliance with Article 110(2–9) and Article 215(1–2) of the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science. The University and the Doctoral School ensure the participation of doctoral candidates' representatives in collegial and consultative bodies, which demonstrates the proper functioning of the governance structure and the inclusion of the doctoral candidates' perspective in decision-making processes. The submitted documentation confirms that cooperation between the Doctoral Self-Government, the Doctoral School, and the University is both consultative and has a real impact on decisions taken.

The Doctoral Self-Government actively supports the continuous improvement and functioning of the Doctoral School. The Doctoral Self-Government carries out activities of a genuinely quality-enhancing nature, oriented towards the needs of the entire doctoral community, including international doctoral candidates. Its activity goes beyond the formal provision of opinions on documents: the Self-Government identifies problems and needs of doctoral candidates, submits comments regarding the organisation of education and applicable procedures, and initiates changes to internal regulations. The involvement of the Self-Government in the development of quality assurance tools is outstanding, particularly in the area of evaluating supervisory support. The Doctoral Self-Government contributes an important perspective and supports the systematic improvement of the functioning of the Doctoral School.

Cooperation between the Doctoral School and the Doctoral candidates' Self-Government is substantive and supports the functioning of the internal quality assurance system. Cooperation between the authorities of the Doctoral School and the Doctoral Self-Government includes both consultative processes and ongoing communication regarding issues raised by doctoral candidates. An important component of this cooperation is also joint activities and initiatives addressed to the doctoral community. This model of cooperation facilitates effective communication, strengthens the sense of representation of doctoral candidates' interests, and allows for better identification of the needs of this group. At the same time, it provides valuable support for the functioning of the internal quality assurance system by enabling the doctoral candidates' perspective to be taken into account in processes aimed at improving the organisation of doctoral education.

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 learning outcomes defined in the education programme are adequate for the qualifications corresponding to Level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF) only with regard to the compulsory part of the programme. The entity submitted the active doctoral programmes and a template of the individual research plan, as well as defined the principles for their preparation. The approved programmes, are delivered in Polish or English, and are based on an extensive coursework component. The doctoral programme comprises a total of 512 hours of coursework, corresponding to 38 ECTS credits, of which 21 ECTS credits relate to compulsory courses implemented within six modules. The programme also includes teaching activity for the doctoral candidates. In the approved programme, learning outcomes have not been assigned to elective courses. Elective courses—approved by the supervisor—are delivered as part of courses intended for masters and bachelor students. This solution does not meet the requirements of Level 8 of the PQF, which states that learning outcomes must be precisely defined for all elements of a doctoral programme. Table 1, prepared at the request of the Evaluation Committee, indicates which learning outcomes are implemented through the programme modules. However, this table does not constitute a component of the approved education programmes. The programme enables the achievement of the required number of ECTS credits and ensures the possibility of individualisation of the educational pathway.

The scientific activity of doctoral candidates, as defined in their individual research plans, as well as the methods for disseminating research results, are at a high level; however, the lack of formally assigned learning outcomes to individual research plan prevents their alignment with the requirements of Level 8 of the PQF. The individual research plan is not an integral component of the doctoral programme and does not have learning outcomes assigned to it; consequently, these learning outcomes are not subject to monitoring. The Doctoral School submitted the individual research plan template and specified the principles governing its development. The individual research plan template complies with the requirements of the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science. At the request of the Evaluation Committee, the Doctoral School assigned learning outcomes to the individual research plan as indicated in Table 1. The individual research plan is reviewed several times by a Review Committee appointed for this purpose before the end of the first year of education. The Review Committee primarily assesses the feasibility of the dissertation timeline, the substantive quality of the planned research activities, and research project implementation. The Doctoral School Regulations impose an obligation on doctoral candidates to undertake quality-oriented activities; in accordance with the regulations, a doctoral candidate is required to publish at least two scientific articles or chapters in a monograph. The individual development pathway of doctoral candidates within the individual research plan is implemented through the obligation to prepare and submit at least one research grant application, as well as through participation in at least two international scientific conferences (as indicated in the programme). The internationalisation of research and the strengthening of doctoral candidates' academic mobility, as included in the individual research plan; are implemented through a recommendation to complete at least a one-month research internship abroad related to the conducted research, as well as participation in at least two international scientific conferences, including at least one organised abroad (as indicated in the programme). The scientific activity of doctoral candidates and the doctoral programme meet the requirements of academic procedures for awarding the doctoral degree.

Interdisciplinarity is ensured and implemented in an appropriate manner. The structure of the

Doctoral School, the doctoral programme, and the individual research plan are clearly interdisciplinary. Interdisciplinarity is achieved through the implementation of compulsory modules as well as courses extending beyond the leading discipline. Doctoral candidates are given the opportunity to prepare an interdisciplinary doctoral dissertation under the supervision of one or two supervisors when the scope of the research addresses more than one scientific discipline. Additional factors strengthening interdisciplinarity include inter-university cooperation (within the Eurohort programme) as well as academic mobility implemented through research internships.

The process of improving the doctoral programme is systemic and is based on regular monitoring of the quality. The reliability of this process is ensured by the activities of the Doctoral School Quality Assurance Committee, which systematically analyses doctoral program and identifies areas requiring improvement. Evidence of the continuity and effectiveness of quality-enhancement measures is provided by annual self-evaluation reports, which form the basis for implementing preventive actions and measures aimed at optimising the functioning of the doctoral programme.

Mandatory recommendations:

1. Incorporate the individual research plan into the doctoral programme as an integral component.
2. Develop and assign learning outcomes at Level 8 of the PQF to elective courses.
3. Develop and assign learning outcomes at Level 8 of the PQF to the activities specified in the individual research plan.
4. Introduce a formal mechanism to monitor the achievement of learning outcomes for both the coursework component and the implementation of the individual research plan.
5. Integrate Table 1, presenting the assignment of learning outcomes to individual elements of the programme, into the official documentation of the doctoral programme.

- **The method of assessing the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the PQF:** The principles for verifying learning outcomes at level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework require clarification and formalisation. The availability and clarity of the rules for verifying learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the PQF are limited, both for the coursework component and for the individual research plan. The current doctoral programme includes a set of learning outcomes corresponding to level 8 of the PQF; however, these outcomes are assigned exclusively to compulsory courses. The syllabi for these courses clearly link the course content with the intended learning outcomes, and the methods for verifying their achievement are accessible and clear.

Learning outcomes for elective courses correspond to level 7 of the PQF and are not subject to monitoring. Learning outcomes related to the implementation of the individual research plan have not been formally approved through the applicable legal procedure and are likewise not monitored. With regard to the individual research plan, Annex No. 4 to the Doctoral School Regulations specifies the principles for verifying progress in its implementation. Annex No. 3 to the Doctoral School Regulations defines the rules governing the mid-term evaluation, within which progress in the implementation of the individual research plan is assessed.

The Doctoral School operates a multi-level system for verifying doctoral candidates' learning progress; however, this system is not fully formalised. It includes the assessment of learning progress achieved within compulsory courses; a clearly defined procedure for planning and approving individual education paths (in cooperation with the supervisor and with the approval of the Director of the Doctoral School); semester reports submitted by doctoral candidates and confirmed by the academic supervisor; and formalised procedures for evaluating the implementation of the individual research plan and conducting the mid-term evaluation. The verification principles are applied in a systematic and repeatable manner, and their clarity is confirmed by the fact that doctoral candidates complete their education within the prescribed timeframe, while cases of difficulties with course completion are incidental. This indicates the transparency of expectations and criteria for verifying progress in doctoral education.

The system for verification of learning outcomes requires improvement. In accordance with the Doctoral School Regulations, the verification of doctoral candidates' learning progress is based on the allocation of ECTS credits. The process is transparent and multi-dimensional and is based on documented procedures; however, it does not fully correspond to the assumptions applicable to doctoral programmes. Moreover, the process is not systematically improved. Verification of progress within the compulsory coursework component is linked to the learning outcomes defined for level 8 of the PQF and is monitored through ECTS credits, as is the case for other elements of the doctoral programme. The monitoring of ECTS credits is conducted on a systematic basis. The assessment of progress in the implementation of the individual research is confirmed through a multi-stage process, including the evaluation of doctoral candidates' scientific activity (individual research plan assessment, mid-term evaluation, and subsequent semester evaluations). Analyses cover research progress, publication output, conference participation, and project activity; however, they do not include learning outcomes. The authorities of the Doctoral School respond to risks related to the timely completion of doctoral education and undertake corrective actions where necessary.

The process of improving the excellence in doctoral education requires strengthening. Responsibility for improving the doctoral education process lies with the Quality Assurance Committee, which has presented a comprehensive description of the methods used to verify learning outcomes assigned to the compulsory modules included in the doctoral programme. A significant role of the teaching staff and doctoral candidates themselves in this process was

also highlighted. Doctoral candidates are given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with assessment results and to respond to the Committee's recommendations. Improvement the process is based on an annual statistical analysis of doctoral candidates' assessment results conducted by the Doctoral School Quality Assurance Committee; anonymous surveys in the USOS system enabling doctoral candidates to evaluate the quality of courses and submit proposals for change; as well as ongoing corrective actions undertaken by the authorities of the Doctoral School. The results of assessments are used to modify individual research plans and the individual education pathways of doctoral candidates. However, the School has not presented formalised procedures regulating the improvement of methods used to verify learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the PQF. This deficiency limits the coherence and systematic nature of the quality-enhancement measures undertaken and constitutes an area requiring urgent attention.

Required remedial actions:

1. Develop and implement a procedure for verifying learning outcomes at level 8 of the PQF for both compulsory and elective elements of the doctoral programme, as well as for the implementation of the individual research plan.
2. Extend the individual research plan monitoring system to include the assessment of learning outcomes achieved.
3. Integrate all existing procedures and documents into a single, coherent quality assurance system for the verification of learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the PQF.

- **Qualification of academic teachers and academic staff employed at the doctoral school:**
The scientific and professional achievements, as well as the research activity of the academic staff, are outstanding and adequate to the scope of doctoral education provided. The staff involved, including doctoral supervisors, demonstrate a high and appropriate level of scholarly output and research activity, fully aligned with the disciplines in which doctoral education is conducted.

The academic staff are recruited from among the university's research staff affiliated with the disciplines represented in the Doctoral School, all of which received grades of A or A+ in the most recent evaluation, confirming the high scientific standing of the academic environment. The scientific achievements of the teaching and research staff include publications in prestigious, highly ranked journals, patents and implementations, participation in and leadership of national and international research projects, as well as numerous awards and distinctions. The staff's achievements fall within the scope of the disciplines in which doctoral education is provided and are consistent with the objectives and learning outcomes at level 8 of the PQF. The selection of supervisors is conducted in accordance with the Doctoral School Regulations and is based on documented scholarly achievements and recognised standing within the academic community.

The quality of activities supporting the professional development of staff involved in doctoral education, particularly with regard to performing the role of supervisor, is adequate and appropriately aligned with the needs of doctoral education. The entity operating the Doctoral School has undertaken systematic and multi-dimensional actions aimed at the professional development of academic staff. Academic staff actively participate in national and international scientific conferences, research stays abroad, and academic exchange programmes (including ERASMUS+, CEEPUS, Fulbright, and TOP 500 Innovators), which contributes to the enhancement of their scientific, methodological, and teaching competencies. Staff members develop competencies necessary for performing the roles of supervisor and auxiliary supervisor, including in the areas of research methodology, acquisition and management of research projects, modern teaching methods, communication, and working with doctoral candidates with diverse needs. The entity supports staff development through the organisation and funding of teaching-related training, participation in educational projects, and the creation of conditions conducive to the development of supervisory competencies, which translates into a high quality of academic supervision. The Doctoral School does not conduct systematic monitoring of training undertaken by academic staff.

The reliability of the measures undertaken by the Doctoral School to verify the qualifications of the academic staff is high. The Doctoral School applies a reliable and systematic process for verifying the qualifications of academic staff involved in teaching and providing academic supervision. The selection of individuals assigned to conduct courses is preceded by an analysis of their scientific achievements, teaching experience, and the results of student surveys. Candidates are discussed by the Director of the Doctoral School and Discipline Coordinators and are consulted with the Discipline Councils. The selection process is based on internal practices. However, the Doctoral School has not presented formal procedures or criteria for the selection of teaching staff, including minimum requirements regarding scientific and teaching achievements. The quality of teaching and academic supervision is subject to continuous evaluation through course observations (in accordance with a plan approved by the Doctoral School Council), anonymous doctoral candidate surveys conducted in the USOS system, and the mandatory evaluation of academic supervision (OON). The

results of these evaluations are analysed by the Doctoral School authorities and the Doctoral School Council, and any reported issues are addressed on an ongoing basis. Conclusions drawn from the evaluation process are used in the activities of the Doctoral School, which confirms the reliability and transparency of the staff qualification verification process. However, the School has not presented a formal procedure ensuring support for staff members requiring improvement in the quality of teaching or academic supervision.

Enhancement-oriented recommendation:

1. Develop and implement criteria for the selection of teaching staff, including minimum requirements concerning scientific achievements, teaching experience, and the competencies of academic supervisors.
2. Prepare and implement a professional development support programme for both teaching staff and administrative staff involved in doctoral education.
3. Increase the transparency of the process by publishing the criteria and procedures on the Doctoral School's website and informing doctoral candidates about the methods used to monitor the quality of education.

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

The quality and accessibility of information and internal regulatory acts governing the functioning of the Doctoral School are reliable and sufficient. The recruitment rules, the Doctoral School Regulations, and the doctoral programs are adopted by the competent bodies (the Senate) and are publicly available on the Doctoral School's website. The composition of the recruitment committees is transparent and published. Candidates are provided with full access to information concerning the functioning of the Doctoral School and the recruitment process.

The recruitment process is transparent, and its rules are publicly available, clear, take into account the needs of persons with disabilities, and are published within the time limits required by law. Recruitment is open and competitive and is accessible to candidates from Poland and abroad, as confirmed by the significant number of admitted international doctoral candidates. Recruitment rules are published well in advance, and any amendments are announced no later than five months prior to the commencement of the recruitment process. Recruitment results are publicly available, and candidates are guaranteed the right to access documentation and to appeal against decisions. All doctoral candidates are admitted through a competitive selection procedure. The procedure is multistage, clearly described, and implemented in accordance with statutory regulations. It includes the publication of research topics, the appointment of qualification teams and the recruitment committee, the preparation of ranking lists, and the adoption of admission decisions. Consistency of procedures is ensured both in general admission competitions and in recruitment to research projects and external programmes. A representative of doctoral candidates is also a member of the Recruitment Committee. The recruitment process takes into account the needs of persons with disabilities and individuals with special needs, in accordance with the recruitment rules and university regulations. Appropriate accommodations are provided to candidates, and the Doctoral School cooperates with the university office for persons with disabilities. Information concerning risk factors and special recruitment procedures is published on the Doctoral School's website.

The method for verifying candidates' to conduct scientific research is reliable and transparent. Candidates' predispositions for pursuing research activities are assessed in a multifaceted and objective manner. The evaluation covers the research proposal, previous scientific activity, and academic achievements, based on clearly defined scoring criteria. Admission interviews enable the assessment of candidates' knowledge, analytical skills, and motivation for scientific work, including in English in the case of international candidates. The available documentation indicates that the Doctoral School has a clearly defined profile of the candidate.

The measures undertaken by the entity to improve the recruitment process are reliable. After the completion of each recruitment cycle, the course of the procedure is analysed by the Recruitment Committee. The findings from these analyses are used to revise recruitment rules and to improve the Internet Recruitment System. The recruitment process is also subject to ongoing consultations with the Discipline Councils, which confirms the systematic improvement of recruitment procedures.

Enhancement-oriented recommendation:

1. Regularly develop and publish statistical summaries of recruitment results for benchmarking purposes, supporting the comparison of the effectiveness and attractiveness of recruitment in

relation to other doctoral schools.

2. Implement periodic internal monitoring of recruitment procedures in order to verify the consistency between the adopted criteria and their practical application.

3. Formally link recruitment criteria with doctoral-level learning outcomes to ensure full coherence between the requirements imposed on candidates and the competencies expected of doctoral candidates in accordance with the level 8 of the PQF.

4. Conduct benchmarking of recruitment procedures against selected leading national and European doctoral schools in order to identify good practices, potential innovations, and to strengthen international competitiveness.

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

A formalised procedure for appointing supervisors and auxiliary supervisors operates within the Doctoral School and complies with statutory requirements. The procedure for appointing a supervisor is initiated by the doctoral candidate through the submission of an application. The application includes a justification for the choice of supervisor and requires the consent of the proposed supervisor as well as the head of the relevant organisational unit. The application is submitted to the Director of the Doctoral School and is then put to a vote by the relevant Discipline Council within three months of the commencement of doctoral education. The Doctoral School also operates a clear and properly regulated system for changing supervisors. A change of supervisor may occur either at the request of the doctoral candidate or in the event of the supervisor's resignation.

The Doctoral School has implemented a system for the Evaluation of Academic Supervision (OON), which functions at a high level and is conducted in parallel with the mid-term evaluation. Within this system, doctoral candidates assess the level of engagement of their supervisors, indicating areas for improvement, while supervisors assess the engagement of doctoral candidates. The supervision evaluation form enables both doctoral candidates and supervisors to express their views. The Doctoral School Regulations ensure that supervisors are appointed in accordance with the specific research scope of the doctoral dissertation and possess competencies and scientific potential adequate for providing academic supervision. The Doctoral School does not organise its own training activities aimed at developing supervisors' competencies. Moreover, the Doctoral School does not provide information on how conclusions drawn from the evaluation of supervisors are analysed at the institutional level or translated into specific quality-enhancement actions.

The Doctoral School has a limited set of tools for resolving conflict situations. In practice, conflicts are addressed through clarification meetings involving the Director, a Discipline Coordinator, and other representatives of the University authorities, including the Chair of the Disciplinary Committee. The Director holds separate meetings with each party to the conflict in order to clarify the situation and attempt to reach a resolution.

The regulations in force at the Doctoral School clearly and unambiguously define support measures for persons with disabilities and for doctoral candidates who are parents. These regulations include the possibility of adjusting the conditions of doctoral education to individual needs, access to appropriate organisational accommodations, and the application of solutions facilitating the reconciliation of academic responsibilities with childcare.

The level of involvement of outstanding specialists employed outside the institution in activities supporting doctoral candidates' scientific work—needs improvement. While the procedures for selecting supervisors and the mechanisms for evaluating the quality of their work and monitoring the implementation of individual research plan support high-quality academic supervision provided by experienced and recognised researchers from the home institution, external researchers are involved in academic supervision at the evaluated Doctoral School to a very limited extent.

Enhancement-oriented recommendation:

1. Systematically incorporate and further develop supervisors' mentoring competencies.
2. Develop and implement a procedure for resolving intellectual property issues in case of supervisor exchange.
3. Ensure full anonymity of the Evaluation of Academic Supervision process in a manner that

prevents supervisors from accessing doctoral candidates' assessments at the stage of their completion.

4. Develop and implement a comprehensive, formalised procedure for resolving conflicts between doctoral candidates and supervisors.

5. Increase the involvement of outstanding specialists from outside the institution operating the Doctoral School in activities supporting doctoral candidates.

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

The rules governing the conduct of the mid-term evaluation, as well as their accessibility, comply with statutory requirements. The selection of criteria applied in the mid-term evaluation is consistent with the current legal framework. The mid-term evaluation is defined in the Doctoral School Regulations. Responsibility for organising the process rests with the Director of the Doctoral School, while the evaluation itself is conducted by independent committees appointed by the Discipline Councils, which supports the substantive alignment of committee members' expertise with the scope of the individual research plans.

The content of the above-mentioned regulations, as well as the required document templates and instructions, are publicly available to doctoral candidates. The evaluation focuses on the timeliness and quality of the implementation of research tasks, as well as the doctoral candidate's scientific activity. The composition and competencies of the committees conducting the mid-term evaluation meet statutory requirements and are adequate for the doctoral process. The composition of the committees complies with legal provisions. In addition, the Doctoral School has introduced supplementary qualification requirements for committee members: all members must be active researchers with a documented scientific record indexed in the Scopus database.

The timeliness of the mid-term evaluation raises no concerns and complies with statutory requirements. The evaluation is conducted in accordance with the applicable legal framework. The process is two-stage and includes an analysis of the report on the implementation of the individual research plan as well as an interview with the doctoral candidate. During the evaluation period, 88 mid-term evaluations were conducted, all of which resulted in positive outcomes. One appeal was recorded and was resolved in favour of the doctoral candidate. The transparency of decisions is ensured not only by formalised procedures providing for the openness of results and the obligation to prepare written justifications, but is also fully reflected in the Doctoral School's practice. The submitted evaluation reports and committee minutes contain detailed substantive conclusions and specific assessments of doctoral candidates' progress, confirming the reliable implementation of regulatory requirements. The results of the mid-term evaluation are public; both the doctoral candidate and the supervisor have access to them.

Actions undertaken to improve the mid-term evaluation process needs improvement. While the Doctoral School has implemented the required procedural mechanisms—such as the right to appeal, the transparency of minutes, and the linkage between the mid-term evaluation and the evaluation of supervisors—which enable analysis of the process, the collected data are not systematically analysed or used to enhance the standards of the mid-term evaluation process.

Enhancement-oriented recommendation:

1. Introduce a provision into the Doctoral School Regulations allowing for the participation of an observer designated by the Doctoral Students' Self-Government in meetings of the mid-term evaluation committee, in order to enhance procedural transparency and strengthen doctoral candidates' sense of security.
2. Strengthen the developmental character of the mid-term evaluation by obliging committees to formulate substantive, written recommendations, the implementation of which should then be verified by committees responsible for assessing progress at subsequent stages of doctoral education.

- **Internationalisation:**

The internationalisation of the Doctoral School is assessed as coherent, strategically embedded, and effectively implemented at both staff and doctoral levels. The activities undertaken demonstrate alignment with the internationalisation objectives of higher education policy and support the development of an international research environment. Supervisors and academic teachers demonstrate a high level of international activity, including participation in international research projects, publishing in internationally recognised scientific journals, participation in international scientific conferences, and undertaking research fellowships at foreign academic institutions. The majority of the academic staff involved in doctoral education have completed research stays abroad and maintain active scientific cooperation with foreign universities and research institutes in numerous countries. The Doctoral School supports international research activity through institutional funding mechanisms, financial incentives for high-quality publications, a scholarship system promoting academic mobility, and encouragement to participate in international programmes, including Erasmus+.

The level of internationalisation of the doctoral program and research activity is outstanding.

The Doctoral School ensures a high degree of internationalisation of the education programme, conducted research, and the dissemination of research results through publications. Doctoral candidates implement their individual research plans in cooperation with foreign research institutions and undertake research internships abroad. International mobility is commonly declared in individual research plans and effectively implemented; additionally, doctoral candidates are encouraged to apply for international research projects. Doctoral candidates receive methodological and technical support, including training in the use of scientific databases and publication strategies provided by the University library. The Doctoral School and supervisors actively stimulate doctoral candidates' participation in international scientific conferences.

The education process adequately addresses the needs of international doctoral candidates.

The Doctoral School applies a comprehensive approach to supporting international doctoral candidates. They are provided with accommodation in student dormitories, which facilitates social integration. The Doctoral School offers continuous support in administrative, organisational, and everyday matters, including assistance with residence permits and emergency situations.

The methods applied to increase the international visibility of the Doctoral School are adequate and consistent with the implemented internationalisation strategy. The Doctoral School undertakes systematic actions aimed at increasing its international visibility. Although institutional cooperation with alumni is at an early stage due to the recent graduation of the first doctoral cohort, planned actions include the establishment of an alumni network with particular attention to international graduates.

Enhancement-oriented recommendation:

1. Increase the involvement of international researchers in the doctoral program, in particular through short-term visiting professorships, co-supervision of doctoral dissertations, and participation in mid-term evaluations and doctoral seminars.
2. Implement a formal system for monitoring international mobility carried out within individual research plans, including information on the duration of mobility, host institutions, and measurable research outcomes, in order to assess the scientific impact of these activities.

3. Develop a comprehensive integration programme for international doctoral candidates, including structured mentoring, intercultural workshops, and academic orientation sessions, supporting effective adaptation to the academic and institutional environment.
4. Enhance the international visibility of the Doctoral School by establishing an alumni network, with particular emphasis on engaging international graduates as ambassadors of the programme and potential partners in research cooperation.

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

The high effectiveness of the doctoral education process is confirmed by the timely submission of doctoral dissertations, in accordance with the schedule specified in the individual research plan. The Doctoral School achieves good results with regard to completion of doctoral education, initiation of proceedings for the award of the doctoral degree, and the scientific activity of doctoral candidates. Doctoral candidates make use of the statutory possibility to extend the period of education by up to two years.

The percentage of doctoral candidates who have been awarded the doctoral degree after completing education at the Doctoral School is high. Among doctoral candidates who completed their education at the Doctoral School, 87% initiated doctoral degree award proceedings, and 57% were awarded the doctoral degree.

The outcomes of doctoral candidates' scientific activity, as defined in the individual research plans, are at a high level. The Doctoral School has quality-enhancing mechanisms in place that translate into a growing number of publications resulting from the implementation of individual research plans. The Doctoral School supports doctoral candidates' participation in scientific conferences and undertakes activities that facilitate applications for research grants and the development of academic mobility.

The evaluation of the quality of education in the Doctoral School by doctoral candidates requires improvement. The Doctoral School has mechanisms for evaluating the quality of education, including surveys assessing supervisory support and surveys evaluating the delivery of courses, completed anonymously through the USOS system. The level of doctoral candidates' participation in survey-based evaluations is not high. In response to feedback provided by doctoral candidates, the School undertakes actions aimed at improving the education process.

The methods for using the results of monitoring doctoral candidates' career paths require further development and coordination. The Doctoral School does not conduct formal monitoring of graduates' career paths after completion of doctoral education.

Enhancement-oriented recommendation:

1. Balance the structure of the doctoral programme in order to increase the proportion of time devoted to research activities.
2. Strengthen the use of quality assurance tools by increasing doctoral candidates' participation in survey-based evaluations.
3. Develop a system for monitoring the career paths of graduates.

V. FINAL OPINION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Hugo Kołłątaj University of Agriculture in Kraków provides doctoral education within the Doctoral School in five scientific fields and eleven scientific disciplines. Doctoral education is delivered on the basis of an eight-semester coursework-based programme and an individual research plan. The Doctoral School Office has a permanent seat. The operation of the Doctoral School is governed by the Doctoral School Regulations, which are compliant with the provisions of the applicable Act. The Doctoral School is managed in an efficient and effective manner. The Doctoral School is headed by a Director, while overall supervision of doctoral education is exercised by the Vice-Rector responsible for research. The scope of responsibilities of the bodies managing the Doctoral School and supervising the education process is clearly defined in the Statutes of URK and the Doctoral School Regulations. Administrative support for the Doctoral School is provided by one administrative staff member. Within the organisational structure of the Doctoral School, the Doctoral School Scientific Council and the Doctoral Self-Government operate and participate in consultative and decision-making processes related to the functioning of the School. Quality assurance in the Doctoral School is ensured by the Doctoral School Quality Assurance Committee, the Director's Representative for Quality Assurance, and the Discipline Councils together with their Coordinators, which reflects a systematic approach to quality management. Recruitment to the Doctoral School is conducted through competitive calls for selected research projects. The framework programme is based on an extensive coursework component, without a distinct research component, and its implementation involves a significant time workload for doctoral candidates. The doctoral programme requires further alignment with level 8 of the PQF. The structure of the individual research plan complies with statutory requirements, and the operating entity provides doctoral candidates with support in its implementation. The education process is effective, takes into account the diverse needs of doctoral candidates and is individualised, interdisciplinary, and internationalised. The Doctoral School has developed a range of good practices in the area of internationalisation, fostering doctoral candidates' academic mobility, international cooperation, and the publication of research results in reputable journals. The scientific activity and scholarly output of academic staff is high quality and adequate to the scope of doctoral education conducted. The rules governing the appointment and change of supervisors and co-supervisors are regulated in accordance with statutory regulations. Mid-term evaluation is conducted in a timely manner and in compliance with legal requirements. The composition and competencies of the evaluation committees meet statutory standards and are adequate for the implemented doctoral education process. The duties of supervisors and the form of academic supervision are clearly defined in the applicable regulations. The Doctoral School operates a system for the Evaluation of Academic Supervision, which enables the identification of potential problems within the supervisory relationship and constitutes a distinctive and good practice in ensuring the quality of academic supervision. Doctoral candidates actively participate in decision-making processes concerning doctoral education, financing, and other issues related to the functioning of the Doctoral School.

In light of the above findings, the Evaluation Team issues a positive assessment of the Doctoral School of the Hugo Kołłątaj University of Agriculture in Kraków, emphasising its significant

strengths resulting from the quality of the doctoral education provided and its high scientific potential. The Evaluation Team recommends that the next evaluation of the Doctoral School of the University of Agriculture in Kraków be carried out in six years, pursuant to Article 259(2) of the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2024, item 1571, as amended).

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

High quality of scientific output of the academic teaching staff and supervisors
High level of internationalisation of doctoral candidates' scientific activity, including publications in internationally recognised journals
A systemic approach to doctoral education quality management
Well established system for the Evaluation of Academic Supervision
High effectiveness of doctoral education

Weaknesses

Insufficiently formalised and incoherent system for verifying learning outcomes with level 8 of the PQF
Low involvement of researchers employed outside the operating entity in academic supervision of doctoral candidates
Excessive accumulation of coursework, limiting time devoted to research activities
Lack of graduate career tracking and insufficient use of such data for improving the doctoral programme
Single-person administrative staffing of the Doctoral School

Opportunities

Location of the Doctoral School in one of the leading academic and research centres in Poland and Central and Eastern Europe
Utilisation of increasing grant activity of the academic environment to expand the number of implementation-oriented, project-based, and international doctoral degrees

Threats

Risk of losing international competitiveness due to insufficient use of cooperation potential with foreign and external experts
Strong competition from other doctoral schools and highly recognised universities in the region

System-Level Recommendations

1. Strengthen the administrative support of the Doctoral School as a quality-enhancing factor, ensuring organisational stability and effective support for doctoral candidates and academic staff.
2. Develop a clear and recognisable profile of the Doctoral School and strategically leverage its location, enhancing visibility and competitiveness within the regional, national, and international academic environment.
3. Further develop the "research-based Doctoral School" model by explicitly designating the

individual research plan as the main axis of doctoral education, with coursework playing a supportive role in the development of research competencies.

VI. ASSESSMENT AND REASON

Final assessment
positive

Reason:

The Evaluation Team issues a positive assessment of the Doctoral School of the Hugo Kołłątaj University of Agriculture in Kraków. Doctoral school is managed in an efficient and effective manner. Significant strengths of Doctoral School are the quality of the doctoral education and high scientific potential. The education process is effective, takes into account the diverse needs of doctoral candidates and is individualised, interdisciplinary, and internationalised. The Doctoral School has developed a range of good practices in the area of evaluation of supervision as well as on the field of internationalisation, fostering doctoral candidates' academic mobility, international cooperation, and the publication of research results in reputable journals.

The Evaluation Team recommends that the next evaluation of the Doctoral School of the University of Agriculture in Kraków be carried out in six years, pursuant to Article 259(2) of the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2024, item 1571, as amended).

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