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2023-2027

# DOCTORAL SCHOOL

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## EDUCATION QUALITY REPORT

Szkoła Doktorska Nauk Przyrodniczych i Rolniczych  
Instytut Botaniki im. Władysława Szafera Polskiej Akademii Nauk



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**Name and seat of the doctoral school**

Szkoła Doktorska Nauk Przyrodniczych i Rolniczych

**Evaluation period**

10/1/19–5/11/25

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

Instytut Botaniki im. Władysława Szafera Polskiej Akademii Nauk

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

Instytut Zootechniki - Państwowy Instytut Badawczy

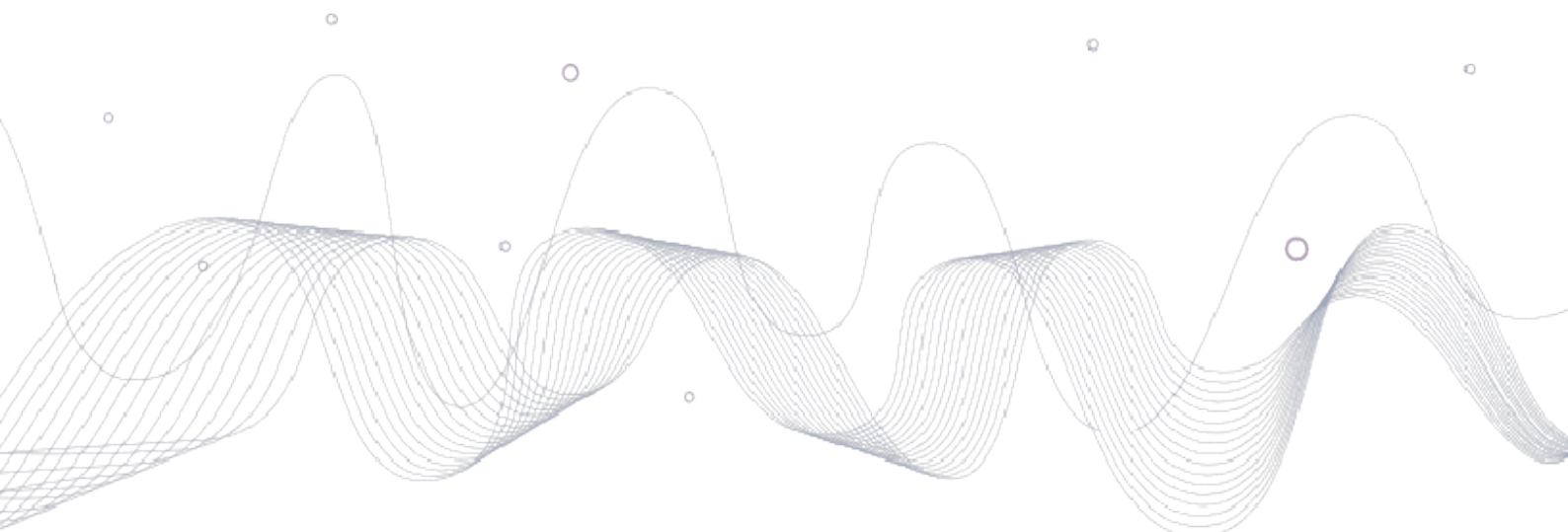
Instytut Fizjologii Roślin im. Franciszka Górskiego Polskiej Akademii Nauk

Instytut Systematyki i Ewolucji Zwierząt Polskiej Akademii Nauk

Instytut Ochrony Przyrody Polskiej Akademii Nauk

**Date of report**

7/29/25



Composition of the evaluation team:

**Chairman:**

Aleksandra Obrępańska Stęplowska

**Secretary:**

Anna Klamerus-Iwan

**Team members:**

Piotr Świątek

Alessio Mengoni

Marta Piksa

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# I. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Name of doctoral school	Szkoła Doktorska Nauk Przyrodniczych i Rolniczych
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)	Instytut Ochrony Przyrody Polskiej Akademii Nauk Instytut Fizjologii Roślin im. Franciszka Górskiego Polskiej Akademii Nauk Instytut Zootechniki - Państwowy Instytut Badawczy Instytut Systematyki i Ewolucji Zwierząt Polskiej Akademii Nauk
Domains of study	Natural sciences (from: 01-01-2018) Agricultural sciences (from: 01-01-2018)
Discipline(s) of science or art in which training is provided	biological sciences (from: 01-01-2018) agriculture and horticulture (from: 01-01-2018) animal science and fisheries (from: 01-01-2018)
Name/scope of the education programme	Programme of study at the Doctoral School of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
Number of instructors	0
Number of doctoral students undergoing training at the doctoral school (as of 7/29/25)	42
Number of supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 7/29/25)	30
Number of auxiliary supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 7/29/25)	19

## II. INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION AND ITS COURSE

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The visit of the Evaluation Team (ET) to the Doctoral School of Natural and Agricultural Sciences at the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, Polish Academy of Sciences, took place on 23 October 2025, with all ET members in attendance. The schedule of the visit had been provided to the Doctoral School (DS) in advance and was executed without modification.

The programme included the following elements:

1. Meeting with the Authorities of the DS (chaired by the ET Chair);
2. Meeting with bodies responsible for quality assurance, the self-evaluation report team, and the DS administrative staff (lead by Piotr Świątek and Alessio Mengoni);
3. Review of the Individual Research Plans (IRP) and mid-term evaluation documentation;
4. Meeting with academic teachers, supervisors, and representatives of the Scientific Councils of the evaluated disciplines (lead by Anna Klamerus-Iwan);
5. Meeting with doctoral candidates and the Doctoral Students' Council (lead by Marta Piksa);
6. Final summarizing meeting between the ET and the DS Authorities.

Meetings were held in a large conference room, with a designated section prepared for the ET to examine the documentation. The Head of the DS, the Deputy Head, and a representative of the DS Administration were continuously available to the ET. All meetings were conducted in English, with the option to switch to Polish if needed.

At the meeting with DS Authorities (agenda point 1), participants included the Head and Deputy Head of the DS, as well as Directors of the Managing Units responsible for running the DS: the Institute of Botany PAS, the Institute of Plant Physiology PAS, and the Institute of Systematics and Evolution of Animals PAS, while the Director IZ PIB joined the closing session.

The meeting opened with a presentation by the Deputy Head of the DS, who outlined the School's recent achievements and key operational developments. The Authorities emphasized the importance of strengthening the institutional identity of the DS, including consistent use of its official logo in communications. They recalled the 2022 PROPAN for the Władysław Szafer Institute of Botany of the PAN for the most pro-doctoral Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences and for the Doctoral Students' Self-Government for the most active self-government of doctoral students from the PAN, and attention was paid to the implementation of the "DOSTEP" document, providing support mechanisms for persons with special needs.

The Authorities discussed the financial model of doctoral education, highlighting that a substantial proportion of scholarships originates from external sources, such as Horizon Europe and the National Science Centre, which significantly enhances research capacity. The DS currently educates several international doctoral candidates (from India, Spain, Ukraine, Italy, and the USA), reflecting the School's growing international profile. Data concerning mobility and study progress were presented (on the day of the visit): 8 candidates were removed from the register (6 voluntarily), while 7 submitted their dissertations, 6 of which were successfully defended, including one with distinction. The majority of dissertations are carried out in the discipline of biological sciences.

The Authorities concluded by outlining the structure of the four-year curriculum, which comprises

both the Educational Program (EP) and the IRP. Both components undergo periodic evaluation, ensuring continuous monitoring of doctoral candidates' progress and maintaining the quality of the educational process.

2. Twelve participants attended the meeting with quality assurance bodies, the self-evaluation report team, and DS administration, including head and deputy head of SD, director of ISEZ PAN, director of IFR PAN, director of IB PAN, director of IOP PAN, representative of RN ISEZ PAN, representative of RN IB PAN, representative of RN IFR PAN, representative of IZ PIB, legal counsel of SD, doctoral student.

During this meeting, the ET examined the implementation of evaluation criteria in detail. Experts focused on practical aspects of delivering the EP, the quality of research supervision, and the functioning of internal procedures. DS representatives provided clarifications regarding existing practices and acknowledged areas where further improvements would be beneficial.

3. The subsequent part of the visit involved a thorough review of IRPs and mid-term evaluation documentation. The ET was given time for an in-depth analysis of research plans, evaluation forms, committee protocols, and doctoral progress reports.

The ET evaluated the IRPs and the mid-term assessment procedures very positively. The IRP template used by the DS was praised for its clarity, logical structure, and alignment with statutory requirements. Documentation confirmed the reliability and consistency of the assessment process. Experts noted, however, that the level of detail within IRPs varied considerably and that overly precise activity timelines might require frequent updates. This observation was presented as a recommendation to streamline the document, without affecting the overall very positive evaluation.

4. Sixteen participants took part in the meeting with academic teachers, supervisors, auxiliary supervisors, course coordinators, and representatives of Scientific Councils.

The participants emphasized the high academic quality of the DS and highlighted the strong research activity of doctoral candidates, evidenced by publications. The small size and interdisciplinary profile of the DS were described as strengths fostering close cooperation and knowledge exchange among candidates.

A key challenge identified was the need to further strengthen doctoral candidates' independence. Supervisors confirmed frequent and regular contact, often weekly or even daily, reflecting the collaborative nature of research teams in the institutes. No difficulties were reported regarding cooperation with administrative staff. Withdrawals from the programme were noted to arise mainly from difficulties implementing IRPs or challenges in laboratory work. It was pointed out that supervisors cannot formally resign from their supervisory role, which could be problematic, but is largely mitigated by rigorous recruitment procedures.

Auxiliary supervisors were described as valuable contributors to supervisory teams. Participants welcomed recent legislative amendments that increased oversight of supervision quality and introduced doctoral scholarships, though they acknowledged the accompanying rise in administrative workload.

5. Ten doctoral candidates attended the meeting with the ET, representing all cohorts and disciplines, including international students.

They described communication with the DS as efficient and accessible. Relationships with supervisors were assessed as positive, with regular and constructive contact. No serious conflicts were reported, and minor misunderstandings were said to be effectively resolved with support from DS Authorities and administrative staff. Doctoral candidates expressed

appreciation for opportunities to mentor students, although such engagement is optional. Doctoral candidates noted the absence of dedicated anti-discrimination mechanisms and psychological support services. Concerns were expressed about the limited confidentiality of supervisor evaluations during the mid-term assessment. Access to workspace and infrastructure was confirmed, and doctoral candidates reported having their own budget for organisational needs. No cases of limiting political activity were identified. Grant activity is encouraged but not mandatory. International activity was reported to depend primarily on the Managing Units rather than the DS itself. No concerns were raised regarding authorship or intellectual property.

6. The closing meeting, conducted with the DS Authorities, summarised the main issues discussed during the evaluation. The ET Chair presented preliminary observations concerning the EP, supervision standards, recruitment processes, and support mechanisms for doctoral candidates.

The case of one candidate's removal from the register was discussed, including the circumstances and interactions between the doctoral candidate, supervisor, DS Authorities, and the legal office.

The ET Chair concluded by outlining the next procedural steps in the evaluation process.

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

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The evaluation of cooperation between the doctoral school (DS) and the Doctoral Students' Council indicates that it is reliable and characterized by a high level of doctoral participation in the School's governance. The Council is treated as an active and fully legitimate partner in the key bodies of the DS and the Managing Units (MUs).

Strengths and participation in governance:

Cooperation between the DS and the Council goes beyond statutory obligations, focusing on concrete support for doctoral candidates' initiatives and implementing changes based on their feedback.

Voting rights in DS bodies

Two representatives of the Council are members of the DS Council with full voting rights. The Council reports that it is treated as a fully entitled member of the DS Council, with full voting power on all matters concerning the Doctoral School. In the DS Council, the Council participates in agreeing on the rules of education and organization, provides opinions on doctoral candidates' work, and monitors the DS financial management.

2.Participation in decision-making processes

Representatives of the Council take part in adopting the regulations, the curriculum, and the recruitment rules. They also sit on the Scientific Councils of the MUs, which supervise the activities of the DS.

3.Observational and recruitment roles

Doctoral representatives serve on recruitment committees and act as observers during mid-term evaluation committee meetings.

4.Financial and organizational support

The DS fulfils its obligation to provide the conditions necessary for the Council's functioning, including financial resources at the Council's disposal. The costs of the Council's activities (e.g., awards in competitions, integration meetings) are included in the DS annual financial plans and reported to the DS Council.

5.Corrective actions initiated by the council

Feedback submitted by the Council is reviewed by the DS Council and has resulted in specific corrective actions. For example, at the request of doctoral candidates, the instructor of the

“Statistics” course was replaced and the course format was modified. The DS also financially supports community integration and Council initiatives such as competitions for the best scientific presentations.

#### 6.High external activity

The high quality of the conditions created for doctoral candidates and the Council’s activity is confirmed by the 2022 PRODOK Award for being the most active doctoral students’ council of the Polish Academy of Sciences and “PROPAN” award granted by the National Representation of Doctoral Candidates.

#### Areas requiring improvement

Despite the high degree of participation in governance, the experts identified several areas directly connected to the Council and doctoral candidates where improvements are advisable. The evaluation panel emphasises the importance of formal tools enabling anonymous and reliable assessment of supervisors and the quality of academic supervision. The introduction of anonymity in semester reports will reduce potential conflict situations and promote greater objectivity in evaluations, as well as more open expression of opinions by doctoral candidates.

##### Forms of teaching-quality surveys:

Although the DS has anonymous course evaluation surveys, the Council notes a low participation rate. Additionally, surveys are sometimes activated late in the semester, limiting their usefulness as a corrective tool and hindering the improvement process.

#### Conclusions and suggestions

Cooperation between the DS and the Doctoral Students’ Council is exemplary in terms of participation, financial support, and corrective activity. The most urgent area for improvement is the introduction of secure and confidential mechanisms for evaluating supervisors, ensuring that doctoral candidates can objectively assess the quality of scientific supervision without fear of potential conflict.

## **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 Educational Program (EP) was evaluated positively. Its structure was found to be adequate and enables the achievement of learning outcomes corresponding to level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF). The experts emphasize that the Doctoral School, despite cooperating with five Managing Units (MUs), succeeded in developing one coherent and interdisciplinary EP, which is a significant advantage as it allows doctoral candidates to expand their knowledge beyond narrow disciplinary specialization and effectively utilizes the potential of the academic staff.

The structure of the EP is effective and doctoral-candidate-oriented: it includes a compulsory block implemented during the first four semesters, ensuring a smooth transition from general to specialized courses, while allowing more senior doctoral candidates to focus on elective courses and the implementation of the Individual Research Plan (IRP). The DS demonstrates notable flexibility, e.g., by allowing courses within individual study plans and by promoting mobility and internships. The annual Scientific Reporting Session, conducted in the form of a seminar, is a distinctive strength, fostering the development of presentation and soft skills among doctoral candidates.

The IRP is a detailed document that appropriately outlines the plan for completing the doctoral dissertation. The presence of a “Risk and Risk Management” section was evaluated positively, as it contributes to effective research planning. The experts also note the evolution of the PK towards internationalization, highlighting that most courses are currently conducted in English (except the “Philosophy” course, which - at the request of doctoral candidates - may be taken in Polish or English language, reflecting the DS’s openness to doctoral-candidate-driven needs).

Strengths:

- High adequacy of the EP and IRP relative to qualification requirements at level 8 PQF.
- An interdisciplinary and coherent EP that utilizes the expertise of staff from different units.
- A flexible structure that supports doctoral mobility.
- Inclusion of a risk analysis and risk management section within the IRP.

Areas for improvement:

- The experts unanimously pointed to the absence of courses on intellectual property and protection rights, as well as the lack of courses strengthening grant-application competencies.
- At the time of the evaluation, most syllabi were not publicly accessible. In line with good practices and transparency in education, syllabi should be made available.

- It was observed that some Individual Research Plans contain an excessively high level of detail regarding requirements and planned activities. It is worth considering whether such precise specification of, for example, presentation schedules or outreach activities at an early stage of education is necessary, as these may be difficult to realistically plan over a 3–4-year period. At the same time, it is emphasized that this observation does not affect the overall high evaluation of the analysed IRPs.

- **The method of assessing the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the PQF:**  
The experts unanimously conclude that the methods for assessing learning outcomes are clearly defined and consistent with level 8 PQF. Verification is determined by the curriculum, the syllabi (for compulsory courses), or by the Head of the DS (for elective courses). Doctoral candidates are required to submit a semester report, which includes, among other elements, a positive written evaluation from the supervisor. This semester-based reporting cycle enables continuous monitoring of progress in education and in the implementation of the IRP, although it carries a risk of bureaucratic burden (which is not that big due to the small size of the School). The system is generally well regarded by students, and poor survey results for one lecturer led to their replacement, which constitutes a positive practice.

Strengths:

- Clearly defined and coherent methods of verifying learning outcomes.
- A semester reporting cycle that enables continuous monitoring of progress.
- The DS responds to doctoral candidates' feedback and introduces corrective measures.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Lack of an internal quality assurance system: This likely stems from the fact that the MUs are purely research institutions rather than teaching institutions, and quality matters are handled by the Committee of the Council of Curators of the Polish Academy of Sciences. It is recommended to introduce an internal quality system independent of the Managing Units (MUs).
- Doctoral candidates have limited opportunities to practically test their skills and knowledge in the area of teaching competence transfer. The DS is aware of this gap and plans collaboration with the Kraków Forum of Doctoral Schools to address it.
- Doctoral candidates show low engagement in completing course evaluation surveys, and this issue is treated marginally, which hampers improvement of teaching.
- Lack of clear feedback loops – it is not entirely clear how learning-outcome verification results are used to improve the EP or IRP.

- **Qualification of academic teachers and academic staff employed at the doctoral school:**  
The experts unanimously evaluate the staff as one of the greatest strengths of the DS, ensuring research at the highest level. The Doctoral School is composed of MUs that employ exclusively research staff with very high scientific competence. Specialist courses are taught by outstanding or very strong researchers with recognized scientific achievements (publications, grants). General courses are delivered by academic teachers from Kraków universities, who possess both scientific output and teaching experience. The scientific level of supervisors is assessed as very high. The fact that 27 doctoral candidates conduct their research within grants obtained by their supervisors confirms alignment between IRP topics and project agendas and minimizes potential conflicts.

Strengths:

- Exceptionally high research competence of academic staff and supervisors.
- Supervisors are top-level researchers who serve as excellent role models.
- High involvement of doctoral candidates in grant-funded projects led by supervisors.

Areas for improvement:

- Lack of systemic support for teaching development. The DS Authorities are aware of this challenge, yet no systemic support programme has been implemented for staff to develop didactic competencies (e.g., mentoring courses, training).
- The DS has not yet established clear and formalized procedures for resolving conflicts in the teacher–doctoral candidate or supervisor–doctoral candidate relationship. The limited conflicts that have arisen were resolved informally through discussions and mediation. It is recommended to develop and implement such procedures.

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

The recruitment process is assessed by the experts as being of very high quality. It is transparent, fair, and open to candidates from Poland and abroad, and it is adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities (OzN). The admission rules and required documents are clearly specified in the regulations and available online in both Polish and English. Recruitment is carried out for general research topics proposed by supervisors, which is considered a good solution as it verifies the attractiveness of topics and increases candidate–project alignment. The DS operates in a pro-student manner, for example by not requiring original documents during the recruitment period and by allowing interviews to be conducted in a foreign language. During the evaluation period, amendments were made to the regulations to clarify provisions in accordance with the Code of Administrative Procedure (KPA) and to streamline procedures; the experts evaluated these changes as purposeful and effective corrective actions. The high quality of the recruitment process is confirmed by the outcomes: 80% of admitted doctoral candidates continue their education and implement their IRP.

**Strengths:**

- Very high quality, transparency, and effectiveness of recruitment.
- Accurate selection of candidates, confirmed by the high continuation rate (80%).
- Flexibility and a pro-student approach, including adjustments for OzN.
- Rapid corrective measures and alignment of recruitment regulations with KPA requirements.

**Areas for improvement:**

- It is recommended to expand outreach activities and increase international visibility by using specialized platforms and social media.

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

The quality of scientific supervision is generally evaluated positively. Supervisors are scientists with recognized academic achievements, appointed by the Scientific Councils of the MUs within three months of the start of the programme. Supervisor–doctoral candidate contact is continuous, often daily, facilitated by the research-oriented nature of work in the institutes. Supervisors support doctoral candidates both academically and organizationally, with an obligation to secure funding for research and assist in preparing grant applications. The DS is developing functionalities supporting equal access for persons with special needs (the DOSTEP project for OzN) and ensures flexibility for parents (remote work, IRP).

Strengths:

- High quality of supervisors with recognized academic achievements.
- Continuous, often daily academic and organizational support from supervisors.
- Supervisors are obliged to ensure funding for doctoral candidates' research.
- Development of functionalities supporting OzN and flexibility for parents (IRP, remote work).

Areas for improvement:

- Although a supervisor evaluation questionnaire exists, the doctoral candidate's opinion on cooperation with the supervisor is written by the committee, which then verifies and signs it. As this may create potential conflict situations, we suggest that the DS applies a more confidential and secure system for supervisor evaluation.
- In cases of removal from the doctoral register (2 removals, 6 resignations), the DS applied simplified internal procedures. We recommend that the DS fully adheres to the formal procedures required by the Code of Administrative Procedure (KPA).
- The DS does not have defined methods for resolving conflicts in the doctoral candidate–supervisor relationship; conflicts are resolved informally.
- The DS should, in every case, provide a detailed academic and legal justification for decisions regarding removal from the register, particularly in discretionary cases (such as failure to implement the IRP), clearly demonstrating that removal was the sole and proportionate solution, in accordance with the requirements of the KPA.

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

The mid-term evaluation (MTE) is assessed very positively as reliable and timely. The rules of the MTE are clearly defined in the DS Regulations, and the schedule is published at least one month in advance. The composition of the committee meets statutory requirements, including the participation of 3 independent researchers (one from outside the Institution) and an observer from the Doctoral Students' Council. Committees are appointed individually for each doctoral candidate, avoiding conflicts of interest. The MTE process is participatory – the DS Council, the Scientific Councils of the MUs, and representatives of doctoral candidates all take part in establishing the rules and criteria. All doctoral candidates who participated in the MTE (24 individuals as of mid-2025) received a positive evaluation. The DS developed a dedicated document to help understand MTE rules and implemented improvement actions, such as creating digital-accessible forms (for OzN).

**Strengths:**

- Reliability, timeliness, and transparency of the MTE procedure.
  - Committee composition compliant with statutory requirements, including independent experts.
  - High success rate: 100% positive MTE evaluations.
  - Introduction of improvement measures (e.g., digitally accessible documents for OzN).
- No further suggestions were made regarding the MTE procedure itself, aside from maintaining ongoing improvement efforts.

- **Internationalisation:**

Internationalization is assessed positively, especially regarding staff activity. Although the DS staff is not highly internationalized in terms of nationality (almost exclusively Polish researchers), they demonstrate high international engagement (collaborations with foreign scientific institutions, publications in reputable journals, participation in international grants: Horizon, COST, BioDiversa+). The educational process is evolving; an increasing number of compulsory courses are offered in English. Doctoral candidates are encouraged to participate in seminars with international experts and to include international activities in their IRP. However, significant challenges arise from financial and administrative barriers in recruiting and supporting foreign doctoral candidates. Although DS documents and communications are available in English, the scholarships, although higher than the statutory minimum, are insufficient to cover living costs for foreign doctoral candidates (especially those with families), which has led to resignations.

Strengths:

- High international activity of staff (grants, publications, participation in COST).
- Ongoing internationalization of the EP (most courses in English).
- The DS supports doctoral mobility through the EP structure and by promoting participation in grant programmes (Erasmus+, NAWA).
- All DS documents are available in English.

Areas for improvement:

- It is suggested to increase promotion of international activities to improve the international visibility of the DS.

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

The experts assess the overall effectiveness of education positively, based on the high quality of recruitment (80% continuation) and the achievements of graduates. All 6 graduates in the evaluation period submitted their dissertations within the legally required timeframe. The scientific achievements of graduates are very strong; dissertations often comprise a series of articles published in high-quality scientific journals. The competencies acquired enable graduates to disseminate scientific knowledge and to submit successful grant applications. The quality of education is assessed through anonymous student surveys.

**Strengths:**

- 100% on-time dissertation submission among graduates.
- High level of scientific and publication achievements, with significant research impact.
- A high continuation rate (80%), indicating accurate candidate selection.

**Areas for improvement:**

- It is suggested to implement a system for monitoring graduate career paths.

## V. FINAL OPINION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The evaluation of the Doctoral School was carried out on the basis of the documentation provided by the unit, meetings with the School's Authorities, academic staff and supervisors, doctoral candidates, and an analysis of Individual Research Plans and mid-term evaluation records. The assessment covered cooperation with the Doctoral Students' Council, the quality of the curriculum, methods of verifying learning outcomes, staff qualifications, the recruitment process, the quality of scientific supervision, reliability of mid-term evaluations, the degree of internationalization, and the effectiveness of doctoral education.

The Doctoral School demonstrates a high organizational, educational, and scientific standard. One of its key strengths is the efficient and collaborative relationship with the Doctoral Students' Council, which has a meaningful impact on the functioning of the School, not only through participation in the School Council but also through active involvement in recruitment, mid-term evaluations, and consultation of internal documents. The School ensures stable financial and organizational conditions for the Council, enabling effective integration and scientific activities. Another strong aspect is the high quality of the curriculum and the Individual Research Plans (IRPs). The curriculum is coherent, interdisciplinary, and aligned with learning outcomes at level 8 of the PRK. Its strengths include a flexible structure, a broad range of courses, support for mobility, and the introduction of internationalization elements (with most courses taught in English).

In terms of learning outcome verification, a major asset is the regular monitoring of progress through semester reports and the School's rapid responsiveness to student feedback (e.g., changes in instructors following poor course evaluations).

The academic staff represents another significant strength. Supervisors and instructors are high-level researchers active nationally and internationally. Most doctoral candidates conduct their research within grants led by their supervisors, ensuring high scientific quality and access to adequate infrastructure.

The recruitment process was assessed as transparent, fair, and effective, with a high rate of continuation. Its strengths include openness to international candidates and persons with disabilities.

The mid-term evaluation was distinguished by its high reliability, transparency, and excellent organization. The composition of the evaluation committees meets legal requirements, and the entire procedure is conducted in a timely manner and in compliance with quality standards. Internationalization was also assessed positively, particularly the involvement of the academic staff in European projects, the increasing number of courses taught in English, and the system supporting mobility.

The experts formulated a number of recommendations aimed at further improving the functioning of the Doctoral School:

- Increasing doctoral candidates' participation in anonymous course evaluations and making evaluation forms available earlier to support course improvement.
- Introducing courses on intellectual property and grant application procedures, and ensuring public access to all course syllabi.
- Reducing excessive detail in some IRPs and standardizing their format in terms of length and level of specificity.
- Implementing an internal quality assurance system, as the current quality system relies

primarily on research institutes.

- Developing formalized procedures for resolving conflicts between doctoral candidates and supervisors.
- Enhancing international visibility of the Doctoral School and strengthening administrative support for international doctoral candidates.
- Introducing a graduate tracking system to assess the long-term effectiveness of doctoral education.

The KEN Evaluation Team verified the self-evaluation report submitted by the Doctoral School and carried out an on-site visit. Pursuant to Article 262(1) and (3) of the Law on Higher Education and Science, the Team issues a positive evaluation of the quality of education at the Doctoral School of Natural and Agricultural Sciences operated by the W. Szafer Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

**Final Evaluation: Positive**

## VI. ASSESSMENT AND REASON

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Final assessment  
positive

**Reason:**

The evaluation of the Doctoral School was conducted on the basis of an analysis of the submitted documentation, meetings with the School authorities, academic staff and doctoral candidates, as well as a review of Individual Research Plans and mid-term evaluation reports. The assessment covered key areas of the School's operation, including the quality of education, academic supervision, recruitment procedures, cooperation with the Doctoral Students' Council, internationalisation, and the effectiveness of doctoral training.

Based on the conducted evaluation, it can be concluded that the Doctoral School operates at a high organisational, educational, and scientific level. The training programme is coherent, aligned with the learning outcomes for Level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework, and supported by high-quality Individual Research Plans. Recruitment procedures and mid-term evaluations are transparent, reliable, and compliant with applicable regulations, while academic supervision is provided by an experienced and research-active academic staff.

A significant strength of the Doctoral School is its partnership-based cooperation with the Doctoral Students' Council, as well as a high degree of internationalisation, reflected in the academic staff's involvement in international projects, the availability of courses taught in English, systematic support for doctoral mobility, and effective mechanisms for monitoring the quality of education and responding to the needs of doctoral candidates. The evaluation panel also formulated recommendations that may further enhance and improve the functioning of the evaluated School as well as the education and development of early-career researchers.

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2023-2027



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