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2023-2027

DOCTORAL SCHOOL

EDUCATION QUALITY REPORT

Szkoła Doktorska w Uniwersytecie Przyrodniczym we Wrocławiu

Uniwersytet Przyrodniczy we Wrocławiu



Name and seat of the doctoral school

Szkoła Doktorska w Uniwersytecie Przyrodniczym we Wrocławiu

Evaluation period

2/27/19–5/12/25

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

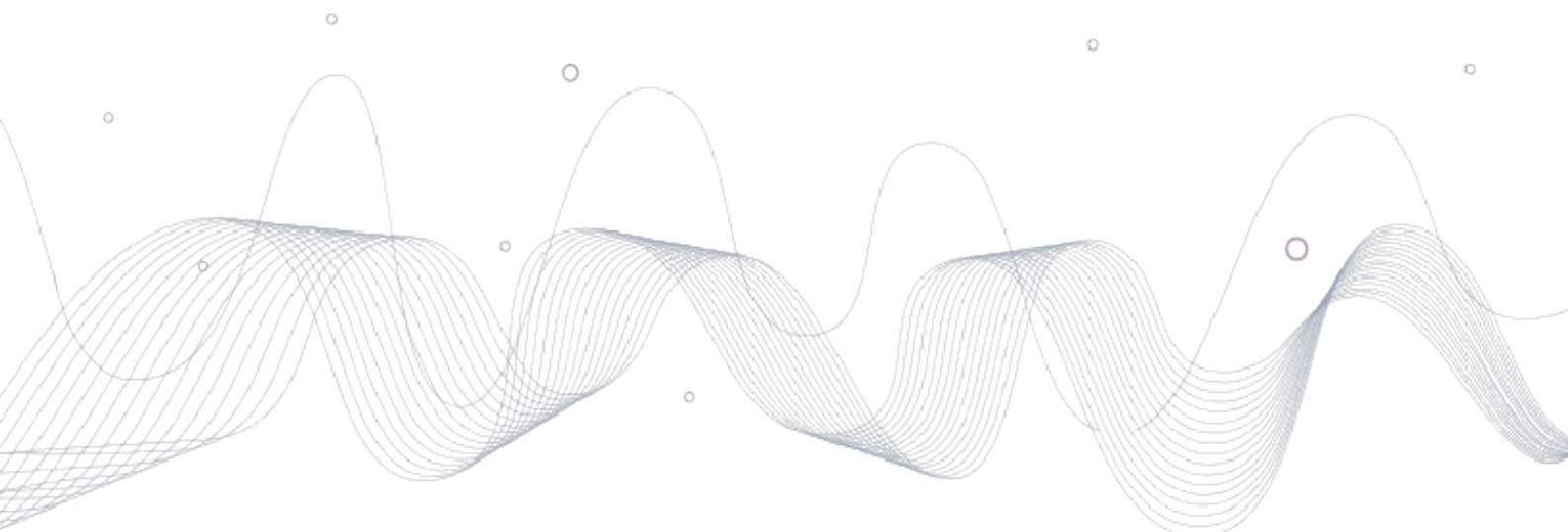
Uniwersytet Przyrodniczy we Wrocławiu

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

-

Date of report

8/1/25



Composition of the evaluation team:

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Name of doctoral school	Szkoła Doktorska w Uniwersytecie Przyrodniczym we Wrocławiu
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) biotechnology (from: 11-11-2022) 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) socio-economic geography and spatial management (from: 01-01-2018) veterinary science (from: 11-11-2022)
Name/scope of the education programme	ProHum Engineering and Technology Sciences Biological Sciences Agricultural Sciences Social Sciences Natural Sciences Veterinary Science
Number of instructors	24
Number of doctoral students undergoing training at the doctoral school (as of 8/1/25)	230
Number of supervisors in terms of	144

guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 8/1/25)	
Number of auxiliary supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 8/1/25)	85

II. INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION AND ITS COURSE

The inspection of the Doctoral School of the Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences (UPWr DS) took place on 7–8 October 2025 and was carried out by the Evaluation Team (ET) appointed by the Science Evaluation Commission. The inspection was conducted according to the schedule provided to the Director of the DS WrULS in advance. The authorities and administration of the DS WrULS ensured full organisational and logistical support to the ET, providing access to the necessary documentation and appropriate conditions for the implementation of the tasks.

The first item of the schedule was a meeting with the authorities of the UPWr DS and the Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, during which the inspection schedule was discussed, and the Director of the DS presented an overview of the objectives of doctoral education, the mission, and the achievements of the UPWr DS (1 hour). This was followed by a meeting with the team responsible for preparing the self-evaluation report, representatives of the administration, and members of the Scientific Council of the UPWr DS. The discussion included persons responsible for the implementation and documentation of the eight evaluation criteria, including, among others, the compliance of the curriculum with level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework (PRK), verification of learning outcomes, the recruitment process, support for doctoral students, and the internationalisation of doctoral education.

The Evaluation Team reviewed documentation including the self-evaluation report, recruitment regulations (previous and current versions), procedures and documentation related to the mid-term evaluation, as well as individual research plans (IRP) of doctoral students and reports of the University Quality Assurance Committee (5 hours). After an internal summarising meeting of the ET (1 hour), the first day of the visitation concluded.

The second day of the inspection began with a meeting with academic teachers conducting courses within the UPWr DS, supervisors, assistant supervisors, and representatives of the Scientific Councils of the disciplines in which doctoral education is carried out (1 hour). The next point on the programme was a meeting with representatives of doctoral students and the Doctoral Student Council, during which topics including the quality of doctoral education, cooperation with supervisors and the DS authorities, student representation, and opportunities for scientific development were discussed (1.5 hours). During the closing internal meeting, the ET formulated a synthetic summary of the findings and conclusions of the visitation (1 hour). The inspection ended with a final meeting with the authorities of the UPWr DS and the Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, during which the Evaluation Team presented its preliminary conclusions and recommendations and informed the authorities about the subsequent stages of the evaluation procedure (30 minutes).

The inspection took place in a constructive atmosphere of dialogue and exchange of perspectives concerning the functioning of the UPWr DS. The University authorities and administration ensured full accessibility of documentation, openness, and support for the work of the ET.

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

Cooperation between the UPWr DS and the doctoral student council of UPWr is close, transparent, and participatory. Its aim is to ensure that doctoral students have a real influence on shaping the doctoral education process and the functioning of the UPWr DS.

A representative of the doctoral student council is a full member of the Scientific Council of the UPWr DS and participates in its monthly meetings, presenting matters relevant from the perspective of the doctoral student community. The council is actively involved in shaping the doctoral education process by reviewing and proposing amendments to documents regulating the functioning of the UPWr DS, including the regulations and the curriculum. It also participates in procedures related to the appointment of persons to managerial functions, including by providing opinions on candidates for the position of Director of the UPWr DS and the Vice-Rector for Science.

A representative of the doctoral student council participates as an observer in the work of the Recruitment Committee and the Committee for the Mid-Term Evaluation of Doctoral Students and is also a member of disciplinary committees (first-instance and appeals committees). The doctoral student council does not have its representative in the Quality Assurance Committee of the Doctoral School, although it is considered good practice to ensure the participation of a doctoral student representative in the work of such a committee.

The UPWr DS has implemented mechanisms to address conflict situations between doctoral students and supervisors. The doctoral student council supports the mediation process in cooperation with the Doctoral Student Ombudsperson. In collaboration with the doctoral student council, Good Practices in the Doctoral Student–Supervisor Relationship were developed and made available, containing practical recommendations for effective cooperation aimed at supporting the scientific development of the doctoral student. In cases where conflicts were reported, the UPWr DS undertook corrective actions, involving the doctoral student council in the mediation process and providing support to doctoral students. These actions were confirmed during the meeting with doctoral student representatives.

Doctoral students have the opportunity to evaluate academic teachers through the university survey system. However, the doctoral student council reported difficulties in the survey process, particularly the lack of timely information on survey availability or activation of surveys only at the end of the semester, which limits doctoral student participation in academic teacher evaluation.

With regard to the evaluation of supervisors, the doctoral student council does not have a formal tool for this purpose; however, on its own initiative, it conducted a survey regarding the quality of supervision and the supervisor–doctoral student relationship.

The doctoral student council has its own budget and financial resources enabling its ongoing operation. The UPWr DS provides the doctoral student council with the necessary infrastructure, including office space and supplies, ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities.

The UPWr DS actively supports initiatives undertaken by doctoral students and their council, including scientific clubs (e.g., the interdisciplinary doctoral student society “Fusion”), career development meetings (“What after PhD?”), and sports activities (rowing section training). Support also includes the organisation and co-financing of external events, such as the Open

Meeting of the Executive Board of the National Representation of Doctoral Students (KRD). During the visitation, doctoral student representatives reported difficulties regarding the extension of the deadline for submitting a doctoral dissertation. The main justification for refusal was concern that an extension could reduce doctoral student motivation to complete research. In cooperation with the UPWr DS, the doctoral student council developed a solution introduced into the Regulations of the UPWr DS, allowing for the extension of the deadline for submitting the doctoral dissertation by one year, although the Law on Higher Education and Science provides for the possibility of extending it by up to two years. Concerns were also raised regarding differences in the amount of the doctoral scholarship awarded before the mid-term evaluation to domestic and international doctoral students, as well as obligations related to participation in the work of organisational units, as specified in the Regulations of the UPWr DS. It was noted that access to research resources, including laboratory equipment necessary for conducting research, varies significantly and largely depends on the scientific unit. The UPWr DS does not have formal tools to verify this access; during the meeting with supervisors, it was confirmed that UPWr does not have a unified regulation on the use of research infrastructure. However, it was emphasised that the UPWr DS provides wide support to doctoral students in mediation processes and has implemented a solution enabling the commencement of research through its own financial support programme (Doctoral Student Grant). In summary, the UPWr DS and the doctoral student council of UPWr maintain a high level of cooperation and communication (direct, email, and telephone), which contributes to improving the conditions of doctoral education, including through amendments to internal regulations and the development of the Good Practices in the Doctoral Student–Supervisor Relationship. The doctoral student council of UPWr is regarded and treated as a full partner in the management of the UPWr DS.

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 curriculum of the UPWr DS are appropriate for qualifications at level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework (PRK). They directly correspond to the level 8 descriptors and meet the requirements in the areas of knowledge, skills, and social competences. The learning outcomes clearly define the objectives that doctoral students are expected to achieve during their doctoral education. The syllabi specify the methods and tools enabling the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Corrective actions include adjustments to the learning outcomes, updates to the syllabi, and the further development of interdisciplinary components within the curriculum.

After reviewing the framework curriculum, course modules, and IRPs, the ET confirms the correctness of the majority of the learning outcomes. The only issue identified concerned the need to supplement the list of operationalised learning outcomes in 2023–2024 with the missing outcomes SDUPWr_W06 and SDUPWr_W07. The analysis of selected IRPs, which outline the scientific development plan of the doctoral student, demonstrated that they include research objectives and methods, hypotheses, timelines, publication plans, and strategies for disseminating research results. The IRPs are oriented toward solving scientific problems and consider multiple possible development pathways for doctoral students. The Evaluation Team notes, however, that it would be advisable to explicitly reference level 8 PRK learning outcomes in the IRPs in order to more fully document their implementation.

The scientific activity of doctoral students (publications, conference presentations, participation in research projects and grants, internships, and implementation initiatives) is appropriate for learning outcomes at level 8 PRK. It has been demonstrated that doctoral students acquire skills in formulating and solving complex research problems, critically analysing research results, and communicating within the international scientific community. The UPWr DS provides doctoral education in nine scientific disciplines, offering shared university-wide courses as well as discipline-specific seminars. Interdisciplinarity within the curriculum is implemented through conversational courses, workshop modules, and teaching activities integrating different fields of knowledge.

Joint classes for different cohorts and disciplines are conducted to a limited extent, mainly within the basic module, which does not negatively affect the achievement of learning outcomes. Interdisciplinarity constitutes a strategic priority of the UPWr DS and is reflected in the structure of the curriculum, as well as in the research activities of doctoral students involved in scientific consortia. The Evaluation Team recommends the further development of interdisciplinarity, in particular through the expansion of interdisciplinary components in a greater number of courses, as well as through the organisation of joint problem-based seminars and summer schools for doctoral students from different disciplines.

The process of curriculum enhancement is systematic and conducive to improving the alignment between the curriculum and the learning outcomes at level 8 PRK. Based on the review of documentation and discussions with teaching staff, it was confirmed that continuous improvement is informed by course evaluation results, recommendations of the Quality Assurance Committee, and consultations with supervisors and doctoral students. However, it is recommended to further refine the learning outcomes in the teaching documentation and to ensure that interdisciplinarity is more clearly reflected not only with respect to specific research problems but also in the development of broader competencies enabling doctoral students to integrate knowledge from different fields for a multidimensional understanding of the researched phenomena.

- **The method of assessing the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the PQF:**
 The rules and procedures for verifying learning outcomes corresponding to qualifications at level 8 of the PRK in the UPWr DS are specified in its Regulations and in the course descriptions available on the UPWr DS website. The syllabi provide a detailed description of learning outcomes and the methods for verifying them, including examinations, graded assessments, presentations, and scientific activity. These rules are available in both Polish and English. The Evaluation Team indicates the need to clarify the procedures for oral examinations, in particular by considering their implementation in the presence of an examination committee or by introducing the requirement to prepare formal examination records, which would increase the transparency of the process.

The verification of learning outcomes also includes the assessment of progress in the implementation of the IRP. Doctoral students submit annual reports on the implementation of their IRP, which are reviewed by supervisors. A negative supervisor's opinion results in clarification procedures initiated by the Scientific Council of the UPWr DS. The assessment of scientific progress is additionally supported by open doctoral seminars and the mid-term evaluation, whose procedure and committee composition ensure objectivity and reliability. The mid-term evaluation committees at the UPWr DS are composed exclusively of external experts, i.e., individuals from outside UPWr, which should be considered good practice. The verification process is supported by the Quality Assurance Committee of the UPWr DS, which monitors the adequacy of the curriculum and assessment methods in relation to the requirements of level 8 PRK and conducts teaching observations. The results of analyses and recommendations of the Committee are discussed at meetings of the UPWr DS, and improvement actions are implemented by the Director of the UPWr DS.

The UPWr DS involves external stakeholders, including international lecturers who conduct selected courses. This contributes to enhancing the quality of learning outcomes verification and supports the internationalisation of the educational process. The Evaluation Team identifies this as a practice that strengthens the attractiveness and diversity of the educational offer.

The Evaluation Team finds that the process of verifying learning outcomes in the UPWr DS is generally transparent and reliable, and the tools used allow for confirming that doctoral students achieve the learning outcomes corresponding to qualifications at level 8 PRK. However, it is recommended to clarify the procedures for oral examinations and to further improve the documentation confirming the verification process, in order to ensure greater objectivity and comparability of assessments.

- **Qualification of academic teachers and academic staff employed at the doctoral school:**

The scientific achievements of the teaching staff involved in doctoral education in the UPWr DS are adequate to the substantive scope of the curriculum and the disciplines in which education is provided. In the academic year 2024/2025, classes were conducted by 25 academic teachers in total, including 15 from UPWr and 10 from outside the university, as well as five language lecturers. Within the course *New Trends*, classes were conducted by 16 lecturers, of whom 14 represented external institutions. The teaching staff includes 14 professors and 10 habilitated doctors.

The staff of the UPWr DS is characterised by a high level of expertise, confirmed by current scientific achievements and strong research activity. Publications in JCR-listed journals, participation in externally funded research projects (including NCN, NCBR, and ministerial grants), as well as involvement in international research initiatives, demonstrate the adequacy of qualifications and the alignment of specialisations with the thematic areas of doctoral education. The Evaluation Team confirms the high standard of academic achievements of the staff and their direct relevance to the research areas developed within the Doctoral School.

The UPWr DS applies a consistent, reliable, and transparent system for verifying staff qualifications, ensuring that their scientific achievements are appropriate for the curriculum implemented. Each academic year, candidates for the role of supervisor are required to submit a scientific profile, which includes information on publications, teaching experience, and professional accomplishments. These documents are reviewed by the relevant Scientific Council of the Discipline and approved through an open vote, ensuring an objective evaluation of competencies and alignment of qualifications with the requirements of the curriculum. Supervisor profiles are publicly available on the UPWr DS website, and since 2023 they have been published exclusively in English, enabling prospective doctoral students to familiarise themselves with potential supervisors' expertise.

The Evaluation Team notes an inconsistency in the Regulations of the UPWr DS regarding the appointment of a second supervisor, an assistant supervisor, or a new supervisor (in cases where the doctoral student changes supervisor). In practice, these roles may be assigned to individuals who have not submitted their scientific profile. This contradicts the Regulations, which state that only individuals who have submitted a profile in the given academic year may serve as supervisors. Furthermore, it should be clarified that only profiles positively reviewed by the relevant Scientific Council of the Discipline may be accepted. The Evaluation Team recommends that these matters be explicitly regulated to ensure coherence and transparency in supervisor appointment procedures.

The UPWr DS undertakes systematic actions to enhance the qualifications of academic teachers and supervisors. As a result, the supervisory and teaching staff demonstrate a high level of scientific and didactic competence and active engagement in mentoring and tutoring activities.

Supervisors participate in the Promoter 2.0 and Design Thinking Moderator programmes, which develop skills in supporting doctoral students, guiding their work in accordance with individual strengths, validating research plans, and solving complex research problems. In 2024, nine supervisors from Poland and abroad participated in the Design Thinking Moderator training. A distinctive practice of the UPWr DS is the academic tutoring programme, implemented for several years, involving 67 academic teachers trained in tutoring and six tutors holding the title of Accredited Tutoring Practitioner. The programme supports the

individualised development of doctoral students in a master–student model and strengthens a culture of mentoring, interdisciplinary cooperation, and the international exchange of good practices. The initiatives undertaken by the UPWr DS create opportunities for experience-sharing among supervisors and doctoral students and support the development of supervisory, communication, and didactic competences. During the visitation, these initiatives received positive evaluations from academic teachers, supervisors, and doctoral students. The Evaluation Team highly assesses the quality and adequacy of the professional development activities undertaken by the UPWr DS.

- The quality of the admission process:

The recruitment process to the UPWr DS is conducted in accordance with the adopted standards and the internal legal acts of UPWr. All documents related to recruitment and doctoral education, including regulations, schedules, curricula, and legal acts, are made available in the Public Information Bulletin (BIP) of UPWr and on the official website of the UPWr DS. The information is available in both Polish and English, and applicants have access to a detailed step-by-step application guide. Information on the academic staff and research teams, including prospective supervisors, is also publicly available in the form of individual scientific profiles.

Recruitment is carried out through three pathways: the standard pathway (open competition), the project-based pathway, and the industrial doctorate pathway. The recruitment rules and procedures are published no later than five months before the start of the procedure. The general admission requirements are the same for Polish and international applicants. The UPWr DS applies a ranking system with disciplinary quotas, admitting three candidates per discipline, including at least one Polish citizen and one foreign citizen. If quotas are not filled, the remaining places are allocated in the general ranking. The Evaluation Team does not raise concerns regarding the intention to ensure equal representation of disciplines.

The recruitment process consists of two stages. In the first stage, candidates are evaluated based on documented academic achievements submitted in the Candidate Card, including publications, patents, participation in research projects, and research internships. In the second stage, a qualification interview is conducted, during which the Committee evaluates the candidate's familiarity with the concept and subject of the planned doctoral dissertation, research potential, and motivation. In exceptional cases, in accordance with applicable legal regulations, candidates without a master's degree may be admitted if they demonstrate outstanding scientific achievements, such as recipients of the *Perły Nauki* programme.

Recruitment committees consist of individuals holding the title of professor or the degree of doktor habilitowany, with at least 50% of members representing the relevant discipline, as well as a representative of the UPWr Doctoral Student Council. Recruitment results are published openly, and candidates have the right to appeal negative decisions. The scale of appeals does not raise concerns. All appeals reviewed to date have resulted in the original decisions of the Recruitment Committee being upheld.

The individual needs of persons with disabilities are taken into account in the recruitment process. The Recruitment Committee may modify recruitment procedures for candidates with disabilities based on a valid disability certificate. The institution also undertakes measures to improve accessibility to the UPWr DS office and infrastructure.

The Recruitment Committee submits recommendations to the Scientific Council of the UPWr DS aimed at improving the recruitment process, resulting in systematic evaluation and enhancement. Based on previous recruitment cycles, changes were introduced in the scoring of co-authorship of publications, minimum threshold scores were established, the scoring of grade averages from previous studies was discontinued, and the criteria for recognising research internships were clarified.

The Evaluation Team positively assesses the promotional activities of the UPWr DS, which contribute to increasing the visibility of the educational offer nationally and internationally. Promotion is carried out in cooperation with an external company providing communication services for UPWr, including targeted advertising campaigns, as well as through NAWA

programmes. The UPWr DS organises informational meetings for applicants and supervisors, such as Welcome Day and online consultation sessions, as well as events in companies participating in or interested in industrial doctorates.

The Evaluation Team notes that the introduction of citizenship-based quotas, motivated by the goal of increasing the internationalisation of the UPWr DS, may lead to unequal treatment of EU citizens, who, in accordance with applicable legislation, should enjoy the same rights to access education as Polish citizens. In the opinion of the Evaluation Team, this provision in the Recruitment Regulations requires clarification and alignment with the principles of equal treatment arising from EU and national law. Furthermore, the Evaluation Team notes that, according to the current Recruitment Regulations, a candidate must obtain an opinion on their scientific aptitude prepared by the prospective supervisor, and each supervisor may prepare such an opinion for only one candidate for a given research topic. This provision significantly limits candidates' freedom to apply and may undermine the open nature of the entire recruitment process. In the opinion of the Evaluation Team, it would be advisable to modify this provision while maintaining the principles of transparency and integrity of the recruitment procedure.

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

The procedure and criteria for appointing a supervisor, supervisors, or an assistant supervisor, as well as the circumstances allowing for their change in the UPWr DS, are defined in the Regulations of the UPWr DS and were successively clarified during the period under evaluation. Each person applying to serve as a supervisor is required to submit a scientific profile, including information on scientific publications, teaching experience, and professional achievements. Based on the review of supervisor profiles and IRPs, the Evaluation Team concludes that the process of appointing supervisors ensures an appropriate alignment between the supervisor's research expertise and the subject of the doctoral dissertation. The Evaluation Team assesses the adopted procedures for appointing supervisors as reliable; however, as noted previously, the provision requiring that a supervisor be selected exclusively from among those who have submitted scientific profiles requires clarification in the Regulations. In particular, it is unclear whether assistant supervisors, second supervisors, or newly appointed supervisors following a change are exempt from submitting such a profile. A total of 13 supervisor changes took place in the UPWr DS during the evaluation period.

High-quality cooperation between doctoral students and supervisors is ensured through formal mechanisms and good practices adopted in the UPWr DS. At the initiative of the doctoral student council, valuable documents supporting effective communication in the supervisor–doctoral student relationship were developed, including *Good Practices in the Doctoral Student–Supervisor Relationship*, which outlines recommended cooperation models and ethical standards, and the *Collaboration Agreement between the Doctoral Student and Supervisor*, which establishes the scope of responsibilities, communication procedures, and mutual expectations. The Evaluation Team finds that the procedures for resolving conflicts between doctoral students and supervisors are transparent and effective. In the event of disputes, the Director of the UPWr DS organises mediation meetings with the parties concerned and, if necessary, consults the Chair of the relevant Scientific Council of the Discipline. The involvement of the doctoral student council in mediation processes strengthens support for doctoral students and ensures impartiality in decision-making. Individual Research Plans include both research and general development tasks directly related to the preparation of the doctoral dissertation. The UPWr DS promotes interdisciplinarity by initiating cross-disciplinary cooperation between UPWr units and external research institutions, both domestic and international.

Doctoral students, including persons with disabilities and those with caregiving responsibilities, are provided with access to research and teaching infrastructure necessary for the implementation of their IRP within their respective units. Doctoral students participate in mandatory occupational health and safety training, including workplace-specific training. The UPWr DS does not have formal mechanisms to support doctoral students in securing access to additional research equipment, as UPWr does not have a unified regulation governing the use of research infrastructure.

The University operates a Centre for Support and Accessibility, which coordinates assistance for persons with special needs, including persons with disabilities. The UPWr DS provides the possibility of participating in classes online, individual study arrangements, remote recruitment, and the adaptation of teaching materials and assessments for doctoral students with disabilities or parenting responsibilities. Most classes take place in ground-floor rooms in architecturally accessible buildings; the UPWr DS office was also moved to a ground-floor location to ensure accessibility. Although there is no nursery or kindergarten on campus, dedicated childcare rooms are available. At the same time, in accordance with occupational

safety regulations, children are not permitted to be present in laboratory spaces.

The rules and procedures of research funding in the UPWr DS are transparent and applied consistently to all doctoral students. In addition to the university-wide grant competition for early-career researchers, the UPWr DS has developed its own funding scheme supporting the commencement of planned research (Doctoral Student Grant). This instrument is an important support tool in the initial phase of IRP implementation, as confirmed in discussions with doctoral students and supervisors. The UPWr DS may also subsidise participation in specialised training and international scientific conferences. Although the Regulations do not require doctoral students to apply for external grants, the UPWr DS actively supports them in preparing such applications and organises courses in scientific writing and grant proposal development.

The Evaluation Team particularly commends the financial support mechanisms of the UPWr DS and highly assesses the transparent and equitable principles of internal research funding, as well as the efforts to strengthen doctoral students' competencies in obtaining external funding.

The Evaluation Team recognises the degree of involvement of distinguished external experts in the activities of the UPWr DS as noteworthy. These activities include inviting experts from domestic and international institutions to teach within the *New Trends* course, participation in research projects, and serving as second or assistant supervisors. The UPWr DS also enables the implementation of doctoral dissertations in the cotutelle framework, which supports international collaboration and enhances the quality of doctoral education. The Evaluation Team recommends ensuring a more even distribution of external expert involvement across all disciplines represented in the UPWr DS.

The Evaluation Team considers the approach to evaluating supervisory work in the UPWr DS to be appropriate. The quality of supervision is assessed during scientific seminars conducted before the mid-term evaluation and during meetings with the Director of the UPWr DS prior to dissertation submission. During the meeting with doctoral students, the suggestion was raised to introduce systematic, semester-based anonymous evaluation of supervision. The Evaluation Team notes, however, that given the small number of doctoral students per supervisor, disaggregated results could not be provided individually without compromising anonymity. Instead, the Evaluation Team suggests implementing a general evaluation of supervision aggregated at the discipline level.

The UPWr DS undertakes actions to develop supervisors' competencies, including the Promoter 2.0 and Design Thinking Moderator training programmes, which support the development of mentoring and communication skills. In the opinion of the Evaluation Team, consideration should be given to making participation in such training mandatory.

The Evaluation Team notes that the provision in the Regulations requiring doctoral students to participate in the work of an organisational unit for at least 30 hours per week may blur the boundary between education and employment (Article 22 §1 of the Labour Code). In situations where such duties include service, technical, organisational, or research tasks not directly related to the preparation of the doctoral dissertation, it is recommended that UPWr consider establishing an additional agreement to regulate these duties.

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

The principles for conducting the mid-term evaluation are clearly defined in the Regulations of the UPWr DS and have been systematically refined during the evaluation period, which confirms the institution's commitment to ensuring a high level of reliability and transparency of procedures and demonstrates ongoing process improvement. The criteria and rules for the mid-term evaluation, including required documents, schedules, and forms, are publicly available on the UPWr DS website in both Polish and English. The evaluation is carried out by three-member committees appointed for each discipline by the Vice-Rector for Science at the request of the Director of the UPWr DS. In the initial period under evaluation, each committee included one member from outside the institution hosting the UPWr DS. Since 2022, however, all committee members have been external to UPWr and hold at least the degree of *doktor habilitowany*. The competencies and composition of the committee are reviewed by the relevant Scientific Council of the Discipline.

At present, the Director of the UPWr DS, a member of the Scientific Council of the UPWr DS representing the given discipline, the supervisor, and a representative of the doctoral student council may attend committee meetings as observers. Observers do not influence the outcome of the evaluation. In the opinion of the Evaluation Team, the current model for appointing mid-term evaluation committees ensures not only a high level of academic quality but also full impartiality and independence of the evaluation process, and may be regarded as exemplary.

The mid-term evaluation is based on multiple sources of evidence, including the doctoral student's IRP progress report, the supervisor's opinion, and semester reports. During the visitation, the Evaluation Team confirmed that doctoral students submit their documentation before the start of the summer break preceding the September meetings of the evaluation committees, which complies with the regulatory requirements regarding timing and ensures sufficient time for committee members to review documentation and prepare a reliable assessment. However, there is no publicly available information indicating a strictly defined submission deadline. An additional source of evaluation is the opinion of the relevant Scientific Council of the Discipline concerning the doctoral student's presentation of the dissertation theses at an open scientific seminar, which takes place before the mid-term evaluation.

An interview between the evaluation committee and the doctoral student is a mandatory component of the mid-term evaluation procedure. The Evaluation Team confirmed during discussions with the UPWr DS authorities, doctoral students, and supervisors that in recent years, meetings between committees and supervisors have been discontinued to ensure full independence of the doctoral student's statements and to safeguard the objectivity of the evaluation.

The mid-term evaluation results in either a positive or a negative outcome. In the case of a negative outcome, the doctoral student is removed from the register of doctoral students. All doctoral students successfully passed the mid-term evaluation during the assessment period, which was also confirmed during the visitation. The evaluation results, together with justification, are publicly available on the UPWr DS website. In response to expectations, in 2025 amendments to the Regulations were introduced, allowing a doctoral student who receives a negative result to submit an appeal to the Vice-Rector for Science within 14 days of the publication of the results. Based on the appeal, the Vice-Rector may appoint a new appeals committee to conduct a second evaluation, whose decision is final.

The Evaluation Team concludes that the mid-term evaluation process in the UPWr DS is

conducted reliably, transparently, and in accordance with applicable standards. The principles for appointing the evaluation committee and the mechanisms introduced ensure objectivity and high quality of mid-term evaluations. The system is continuously improved, and the changes implemented demonstrate the UPWr DS's commitment to maintaining the highest academic and organisational standards of the mid-term evaluation process.

- **Internationalisation:**

The Evaluation Team assesses the internationalisation of the teaching staff and the educational process in the UPWr DS very positively. The staff involved in doctoral education demonstrate a high level of activity in the international scientific community. Most academic teachers have completed numerous research and teaching visits at research institutions in Europe and beyond, including teaching, conducting research, participating in training programmes, and engaging in international networks and projects, including those implemented under NAWA STER, the EU GREEN alliance, and COST. The staff actively participate in international scientific conferences and co-organise international events in their fields. A good practice is the assignment of co-supervisors to international doctoral students; during the visitation, the Evaluation Team was informed that approximately 40 external researchers have participated in such cooperation to date.

In the opinion of the Evaluation Team, the educational process in the UPWr DS demonstrates an equally high level of internationalisation. The UPWr DS is systematically increasing the number of courses conducted in English; for international doctoral students, the entire curriculum has been delivered in English since the establishment of the School. Approximately ten international lecturers, including foreign staff employed at UPWr, participate in teaching. The curriculum includes internationalisation components, such as the Scientific Writing Workshop and *New Trends in Scientific Research*. However, the analysis of IRPs shows that in most cases, internationalisation is limited to conference participation or publishing in international journals. The Evaluation Team recommends extending planned research cooperation to include foreign research centres and systematically involving doctoral students in joint applications for international research projects. The scientific contacts established during mobility programmes such as Erasmus+, in which doctoral students participate, could serve as a basis for such initiatives.

The UPWr DS supports doctoral students in applying for external funding, including European grants. Doctoral students participate in NCN PRELUDIUM BIS grants, which demonstrates that the UPWr DS supports the implementation of doctoral research through external funding and promotes international mobility (a foreign research stay is a mandatory component of these grants). In addition, the UPWr Main Library provides academic support, training, and access to international databases and journals.

The UPWr DS takes into account the needs of international doctoral students to a significant extent. Comprehensive administrative support is provided, including assistance with the legalisation of stay. All essential documents, regulations, and curricula are available on the UPWr DS website in English. The UPWr DS also organises training for supervisors on working with international doctoral students, including communication in English. The Evaluation Team recommends introducing regular intercultural communication courses for supervisors and doctoral students, particularly in view of the significant number of participants from Asia and Africa, as well as developing a motivational system to support the acquisition of Polish language skills by international doctoral students. At the same time, the Evaluation Team emphasises that certain elements of the support system for international candidates, such as international recruitment quotas and the higher initial scholarship for international students, should be clarified to ensure full alignment with the principle of equal treatment under national and EU law.

The Evaluation Team considers the activities undertaken to internationalise and increase the international visibility of the UPWr DS to be effective and clearly noticeable. The School actively promotes its educational offer through social media and targeted information

campaigns (including Google Ads) aimed at prospective international candidates. The image of the UPWr DS is also strengthened by disseminating information about the achievements of doctoral students, supervisors, and graduates. During the visitation, the Evaluation Team learned that maintaining contact with international graduates currently takes place informally, mainly through supervisors. The Evaluation Team recommends the future development of systematic measures in this area, for example by involving international alumni in the educational process as assistant supervisors or mentors.

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

Doctoral education in the UPWr DS is implemented in accordance with the four-year curriculum and the assumptions of the Individual Research Plan (IRP). The vast majority of doctoral students complete successive stages of education on schedule, and any extensions are granted only in justified cases and upon review of submitted requests. Annual progress reports and the mid-term evaluation constitute effective monitoring mechanisms and encourage continuity in research implementation. The first cohort of doctoral students completed their education in 2023, confirming the proper implementation of the curriculum. The proportion of doctoral graduates who have obtained the degree of *doktor* is considered high. The initiative to organise meetings for exchanging experiences between doctoral students who have completed the mid-term evaluation and those preparing for it was also recognised positively. All doctoral procedures in the first cohort were completed successfully (100%), while in the next cohort some procedures were still underway at the time of the visitation (43%). These data indicate the effectiveness of the support system provided by supervisors and the staff of the UPWr DS, as well as the effectiveness of mechanisms monitoring progress, such as meetings of doctoral students and supervisors with the authorities and the Scientific Council of the UPWr DS.

The Evaluation Team assesses the scientific achievements of doctoral students as very high. The review of documentation confirmed that doctoral students regularly publish in JCR-indexed journals ranked Q1/Q2 in their scientific disciplines, participate in national and international conferences, and carry out research grants funded from both national and European sources (NCN, NAWA, NCBR, HORIZON). The UPWr DS supports publication activity through workshops, academic writing courses, and one-time motivational scholarships for publications in leading journals. Awards received by doctoral students in grant and scholarship competitions further confirm the high level of their scientific competencies.

The quality of education is assessed by doctoral students through anonymous semester surveys. The results are analysed by the Doctoral School Council and discussed with course instructors. Feedback from doctoral students serves as a basis for modifying course content; however, a low response rate has been observed, which limits the representativeness of the surveys. The Evaluation Team recommends increasing doctoral student awareness of the purpose, effectiveness, and practical impact of this evaluation tool.

Doctoral students may also provide direct feedback during individual meetings with the Director of the UPWr DS and representatives of the doctoral student council. The Evaluation Team confirms that both doctoral students and staff positively evaluate these forms of communication, noting that they support rapid identification of emerging issues and timely implementation of corrective actions.

Monitoring of the career paths of UPWr DS graduates is carried out; however, due to the relatively short period of the School's operation, it is currently preliminary in nature. Based on data from 2023–2024 obtained during the visitation, most graduates continue academic careers at universities and research institutes, while others are employed in the R&D sector or public administration. It is unclear to what extent these data are representative, as monitoring is mainly based on voluntary online surveys and informal contact between supervisors and graduates. The UPWr DS plans to expand this system and integrate it with the central UPWr graduate database, allowing long-term monitoring of career outcomes.

The Evaluation Team notes that UPWr DS documents indicate that completion of education requires having publications in journals indexed in the JCR database. This requirement is not supported by national legislation, which requires publications listed by the Ministry of Science

and Higher Education (MNiSW). A similar provision appears in the Regulations of the UPWr DS, but the remaining provisions do not impose the obligation to hold JCR-listed publications. Therefore, in the opinion of the Evaluation Team, this requirement should be revised to ensure compliance with applicable regulations and internal rules of the UPWr DS. Additionally, the Evaluation Team notes that the interdisciplinary nature of the UPWr DS requires continuous adaptation of courses to the requirements of all scientific disciplines and fields represented in the School. The content of the curriculum requires ongoing attention, updating, and consideration of the interdisciplinary character of the UPWr DS.

V. FINAL OPINION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The verification of the Self-Evaluation Report submitted by the UPWr Doctoral School (UPWr DS), together with the information obtained during the on-site visitation, leads the Evaluation Team to the following conclusions.

The doctoral education process conducted at the UPWr DS is compliant with the requirements for qualification level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework (PRK). The learning outcomes are clearly defined and adequate for the level of doctoral training, and the procedures for their verification are consistent and transparent. The organisation of the curriculum, the structure of the educational programme, and the mechanisms for monitoring progress (including the mid-term evaluation carried out by external committees) support the development of research competencies and ensure the reliability of the assessment of learning outcomes.

The scientific achievements and professional experience of the academic staff are of a high standard, supported by active participation in international research projects and academic networks. The Evaluation Team particularly highlights the strong commitment of the UPWr DS to the internationalisation of the educational process, the support offered to foreign doctoral students, and the involvement of external experts in teaching and supervision. These practices are aligned with contemporary models of doctoral education and represent examples of good practice.

The cooperation between the UPWr DS and the Doctoral Student Council is assessed as constructive, transparent, and partnership-based. Joint development of procedures - including those regulating the doctoral student-supervisor relationship - and the availability of mediation mechanisms contribute to a supportive research and training environment.

The recruitment process is transparent and compliant with internal regulations. However, the Evaluation Team identifies the need to clarify certain provisions in the Recruitment Regulations, particularly those related to nationality-based admission quotas and the requirement to obtain preliminary consent from a prospective supervisor prior to application. The recommended clarifications aim to ensure full compliance with the principle of equal treatment and to maintain the open and competitive nature of the recruitment process.

Additional refinement is also recommended regarding:

- the procedures for conducting oral examinations (e.g., the use of examination records, composition of examination committees),
- the rules for appointing supervisors and assistant supervisors,
- the alignment of publication requirements for completion with current national regulations.

These remarks are improvement-oriented and do not undermine the overall high quality of doctoral training offered by the UPWr DS.

In conclusion, the UPWr Doctoral School provides education at a high academic, organisational, and didactic level. Strong support mechanisms for doctoral students, effective cooperation among participants of the educational process, and a high degree of internationalisation are recognised as key strengths of the School.

The Evaluation Team recommends that the next evaluation of the UPWr Doctoral School be conducted in 6 years, in accordance with Article 259, point 2 of the Act on Higher Education and Science of 20 July 2018 (Journal of Laws 2024, item 1571, as amended).

VI. ASSESSMENT AND REASON

Final assessment
positive

Reason:

The Doctoral School of UPWr conducts the education process at a very high level, fully meeting the requirements set for level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework. The organization of education, the commitment of the academic staff, and the quality of support offered to doctoral candidates all demonstrate the maturity and high efficiency of the unit's operations. The Doctoral School has clearly defined learning outcomes appropriate for the doctoral level, and the principles used to verify them are coherent and reliable. The curriculum, together with the tools for monitoring progress - including the mid-term evaluation carried out with the participation of external committees - supports the development of doctoral candidates' research competencies. The evaluation team highly values the scientific achievements and the quality of work of the teaching staff. Particular recognition is given to the high level of internationalization of the education process, including systematic support for international doctoral candidates and the active involvement of experts from outside the university in teaching and supervisory activities, which serves as a model of good practice. The School's partnership-based and transparent cooperation with the Doctoral Student Council is also assessed positively, as it contributes to building a high-quality educational environment. The recruitment process is clear and compliant with internal regulations, and the minor areas identified for clarification are of an improving nature and do not affect the overall high assessment of the Doctoral School's functioning. In summary, the Doctoral School of UPWr creates conditions that effectively foster the scientific development of doctoral candidates, operating transparently and in accordance with best standards. The School's strengths include its high academic and organizational quality, effective cooperation, and a broad approach to the internationalization of the education process.

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