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2023-2027

EVALUATION REPORT

QUALITY OF EDUCATION AT A DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Szkoła Doktorska Uniwersytetu Medycznego w Lublinie

Uniwersytet Medyczny w Lublinie

Name of the doctoral school

Szkoła Doktorska Uniwersytetu Medycznego w Lublinie

Evaluation period

10/1/19–9/10/25

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

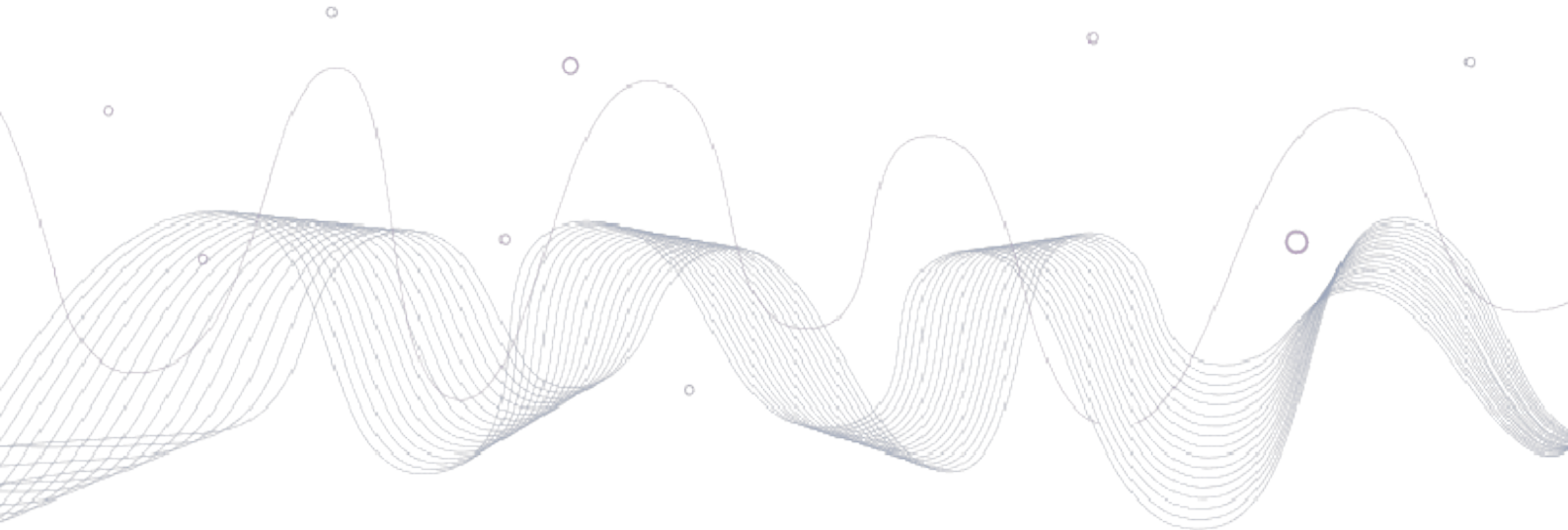
Uniwersytet Medyczny w Lublinie

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

-

Date of submission of the self-assessment report by the Entity: DD.MM.YYYY

12/1/25



Composition of the evaluation team:

Chairman:
Beata Giergielewicz

Secretary:
Paweł Zalewski

Team members:
Alicja Dębska-Ślizień
Karl Morten
Małgorzata Grochocka

Developed: 5/20/26

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Name of doctoral school	Szkoła Doktorska Uniwersytetu Medycznego w Lublinie
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	Medical and health sciences (from: 01-01-2018)
Discipline(s) of science or art in which training is provided	pharmacology and pharmacy (from: 01-01-2018) health sciences (from: 01-01-2018) medical sciences (from: 01-01-2018)
Name/scope of the education programme	The Curriculum of the Doctoral School
Number of instructors	270
Number of doctoral students undergoing training at the doctoral school (as of 11/28/25)	341
Number of supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 11/28/25)	215
Number of auxiliary supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 11/28/25)	109

II. INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION AND ITS COURSE

On 17 February 2026, a site visit to the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin was conducted by an evaluation panel appointed by the Commission for the Evaluation of Science. The purpose of the visit was to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the quality of education provided by the Doctoral School and to evaluate the extent to which the requirements for qualifications at Level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework are met.
The evaluation panel operated in the following composition: Dr hab. n. med. Beata Giergielewicz – Chair of the Panel; Prof. dr hab. Paweł Zalewski – Secretary; Prof. dr hab. n. med. Alicja Dębska-Ślizień – Expert; Karl Morten – International Expert; and Małgorzata Grochocka – Expert.
The visit was conducted over the course of a single day, in accordance with a previously agreed schedule, and included both substantive meetings and a review of documentation provided by the Doctoral School.
At 9:00 a.m., the visit commenced with a meeting between the evaluation panel and the authorities of the Doctoral School, as well as representatives of the University authorities. During this meeting, the detailed agenda of the visit was presented, and key issues related to the functioning of the Doctoral School were discussed, including its role in the implementation of the University's strategic objectives and the significance of the represented scientific disciplines. The School's authorities outlined the principal areas of activity, highlighting both achievements and current developmental challenges.
Subsequently, between 9:45 a.m. and 11:45 a.m., a meeting was held with the team responsible for preparing the self-evaluation report, along with representatives of the Doctoral School's administrative staff. The discussion was comprehensive in scope and covered all major areas subject to evaluation, including the alignment of the educational programme and individual research plans with the learning outcomes for Level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework, methods of their verification, qualifications of the academic staff, the quality of the recruitment process, the standard of academic supervision, the integrity of mid-term evaluations, internationalisation, and the effectiveness of doctoral training. The evaluation panel was provided with access to an extensive body of documentation, including the self-evaluation report, internal regulations, documents relating to mid-term evaluations, data on staff and doctoral candidates, and materials confirming the achievement of learning outcomes.
Following this session, a break for the evaluation panel was scheduled.
The next stage of the visit, beginning at 11:45 a.m., consisted of a meeting with academic staff involved in teaching within the Doctoral School, supervisors, and representatives of the Scientific Councils of the disciplines represented in the School. This meeting enabled the panel to gather information regarding the organisation of the educational process, the level of staff engagement, and the quality of academic support provided to doctoral candidates.
After the break, the evaluation panel proceeded to analyse documentation related to individual research plans and mid-term evaluations. The review included randomly selected files, allowing for an assessment of both the formal compliance and the substantive quality of the documentation, as well as the mechanisms used to monitor doctoral candidates' progress.
At 1:45 p.m., a meeting was held with doctoral candidates and representatives of the doctoral student government. In line with established principles, this meeting took place without the

presence of the School’s authorities, thereby ensuring freedom of expression. The discussion focused primarily on the quality of education, the availability of academic and administrative support, research conditions, and opportunities for scientific development, including international mobility.

This was followed, between 2:30 p.m. and 3:15 p.m., by an internal summary meeting of the evaluation panel. During this session, panel members reviewed the information gathered throughout the day, exchanged observations, and formulated preliminary conclusions regarding the functioning of the Doctoral School.

The visit concluded with a final meeting with the authorities of the Doctoral School and representatives of the University, during which a general summary of the visit was presented and the subsequent stages of the evaluation procedure were outlined.

Throughout the visit, the evaluation panel was granted full access to all required documentation and had the opportunity to engage directly with representatives of all key stakeholder groups.

The visit was conducted in accordance with the schedule and in an atmosphere of substantive cooperation, which enabled a reliable and comprehensive assessment of the quality of education provided by the Doctoral School.

The outcome of the visit will be a final report prepared by the evaluation panel which, upon approval by the Commission for the Evaluation of Science, will constitute the basis for issuing a formal assessment of the quality of education in the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin.

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

The cooperation between the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin and the Doctoral Students' Self-Government should be assessed very positively and may be regarded as one of the School's clear strengths. The evidence collected during the site visit demonstrates that this cooperation is not merely formal, but has a genuine, structured, and multi-dimensional character. The Self-Government plays not only a representative role but is actively involved in decision-making processes and contributes to shaping key organisational and educational solutions.

Particular emphasis should be placed on the high level of doctoral candidates' satisfaction with their cooperation with the School's management and administrative staff. This relationship is characterised by openness, accessibility, and responsiveness. Doctoral candidates indicate that their opinions and proposals are taken seriously, and that the School's leadership responds appropriately to their needs and concerns. Such a climate of cooperation constitutes an important factor in fostering a supportive academic environment conducive to both scientific and professional development.

The participation of representatives of the Doctoral Students' Self-Government in the Doctoral School Council and in various working groups should be regarded as fully appropriate and consistent with good academic practice. Their presence in broader university bodies, including the Senate and disciplinary councils, further strengthens their influence on institutional governance. The practice of consulting key documents with the Self-Government prior to their adoption contributes to transparency and reinforces a sense of shared responsibility for institutional regulations.

Importantly, cooperation extends beyond formal governance structures and is clearly reflected in joint scientific, training, and community-building activities. The co-organisation of conferences, workshops, and initiatives such as Onco PhD, Go!PhD, and Scientific Coffee Meeting demonstrates a high level of engagement in shaping the doctoral research environment. Particularly noteworthy are development-oriented initiatives such as the "Grant Factory," which directly addresses doctoral candidates' needs related to research funding and project preparation.

The administrative and communication support mechanisms in place should also be positively assessed. The availability of consultation hours, the possibility of direct contact with the School's authorities, and regular meetings—including those conducted online—enhance accessibility and facilitate efficient problem-solving. The regular newsletter further supports information dissemination, ensuring that doctoral candidates are well informed about available opportunities, including grants, training, and mobility schemes.

Organisational solutions supporting work–study balance, such as the flexible scheduling of classes and the implementation of e-learning through platforms such as MS Teams, deserve particular recognition. These measures reflect the School's responsiveness to the actual needs of doctoral candidates and its ability to adapt the educational process to diverse individual circumstances.

Despite the overall highly positive assessment, several areas requiring refinement have been identified. In particular, it is recommended that internal regulations be reviewed to ensure a

clearer distinction between the consultative and co-decision-making roles of the Doctoral Students' Self-Government. This is especially relevant in procedures concerning the appointment of individuals to leadership positions affecting doctoral candidates. The absence of explicit provisions regarding the requirement to obtain the Self-Government's formal opinion on the appointment of the Director of the Doctoral School should be addressed. Introducing clear regulations in this respect would strengthen transparency and formalise the role of doctoral candidates in key governance processes.

It is also advisable to further enhance feedback mechanisms. Although a survey system is already in place, additional measures should be considered to increase participation rates. In particular, the introduction of exit surveys for doctoral candidates completing or discontinuing their studies could provide valuable insights into their experiences and help identify areas requiring improvement.

In conclusion, the cooperation between the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin and the Doctoral Students' Self-Government is mature, functional, and well embedded within the institutional framework. It is based on genuine dialogue, active participation in decision-making processes, and joint implementation of scientific and developmental initiatives. The identified recommendations are of an improvement-oriented nature and do not undermine the overall positive assessment. Once addressed, the existing model of cooperation may serve as an example of effective and well-functioning relations between a doctoral school and its doctoral community.

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 Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin conducts its educational and research activities in full compliance with the applicable legal framework and with the learning outcomes defined for Level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF), as specified in the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 14 November 2018 (Journal of Laws 2018, item 2218). Education is delivered across three disciplines—medical sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, and health sciences—on the basis of a unified programme developed by the Doctoral School Council, reviewed by the Doctoral Student Government, and approved by the University Senate. The programme is published on the University's website no later than five months prior to the commencement of recruitment, thereby ensuring transparency and compliance with statutory requirements.
  The adequacy of the learning outcomes defined in the programme with respect to Level 8 PQF descriptors raises no concerns. Analysis of the programme documentation conducted during the site visit confirmed full alignment of the declared outcomes with the requirements specified across the domains of knowledge, skills, and social competences for the highest level of qualifications in the Polish education system. The programme is thus clearly oriented toward the development of transferable skills, including critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem-solving, risk assessment, and decision-making, which are explicitly emphasised in the regulatory framework governing the evaluation of doctoral education quality.
  With regard to Individual Research Plans (IRPs), the expert confirms that these are developed by doctoral candidates in collaboration with their supervisors, ensuring full compliance with Article 202(1) of the Law on Higher Education and Science. The School supports this process through systematic evaluation of IRPs by two independent reviewers appointed by the Doctoral School Council. The procedure for appointing the IRP evaluation committee, the possibility of requesting revisions, and the process of re-evaluation are regulated in §10 of the Doctoral School Regulations (Annex to Resolution No. 37/2025 of the University Senate of 23 April 2025). According to information provided by the School's management, the review process is conducted anonymously and focuses primarily on the feasibility and realism of the proposed research within a four-year timeframe. This practice constitutes an important safeguard against overly ambitious or impracticable research plans and is to be positively assessed.
  However, legal concerns arise in relation to §10(6) of the Regulations, which stipulates that failure to approve the IRP following re-evaluation results in removal from the list of doctoral candidates. This provision introduces a new, autonomous ground for mandatory removal that is not provided for in Article 203(1) of the Act. Statutory provisions link mandatory removal to a negative outcome of the mid-term evaluation, which assesses the implementation of the research plan, rather than to its non-approval. While the institution could potentially interpret insufficient progress in preparing the IRP as "unsatisfactory progress in the preparation of the doctoral dissertation" under Article 203(2)(1), this would constitute a discretionary rather than mandatory basis for removal. It is therefore recommended that the contested provision be amended without delay to ensure full compliance with Articles 202 and 203 of the Act and to eliminate the associated legal risk. The mere non-approval of an IRP, provided it has been duly prepared in consultation with the supervisor, cannot constitute an independent ground for removal. This deficiency is of a formal-legal nature and does not undermine the substantive quality of the IRP development and review process; nevertheless, it requires correction at the level of internal regulation.

The implementation of the curriculum and IRPs in achieving Level 8 PQF learning outcomes is positively evaluated. The modular structure of the programme, comprising compulsory and elective courses, seminars, and research workshops, ensures a balanced attainment of all intended learning outcomes. Doctoral candidates participate in regular seminars during which they present research results and receive feedback from supervisors and the broader academic community. The supervisory support system includes regular meetings, ongoing monitoring of IRP implementation, and annual progress evaluations. Analysis of selected IRPs confirmed that the applied approaches effectively support the attainment of Level 8 PQF outcomes, including the ability to define research objectives, formulate hypotheses, select appropriate methodologies, and plan research activities with clearly defined milestones.
A valuable feature of the programme is the inclusion of a module on artificial intelligence and the opportunity to present micro-credentials. These elements respond well to contemporary demands in research training and enhance the international competitiveness of graduates. At the same time, the evaluation identified a need to standardise the terminology used in programme documentation, particularly to ensure consistency with the Law on Higher Education and Science. While these issues are primarily editorial, addressing them would improve the clarity and coherence of the documentation.
Interdisciplinarity is implemented effectively. It is supported by elective courses open to doctoral candidates from all three disciplines, joint seminars and interdisciplinary conferences, and participation in summer and winter schools as well as cross-disciplinary workshops. Research activities promote interdisciplinary projects conducted through collaboration between research teams, while the involvement of auxiliary supervisors or co-supervisors from different fields enables the integration of diverse scientific perspectives. Doctoral candidates develop transferable skills through courses in creative thinking, problem-solving, coaching, and grant writing. Interdisciplinarity is thus embedded not only at the programme level but also in individual doctoral trajectories.
The process of programme enhancement is assessed as reliable, albeit subject to certain constraints. As noted in the self-assessment report, programme modifications during the evaluation period were selective due to sustainability requirements associated with two EU-funded projects. A comprehensive revision of the curriculum was completed with effect from the 2025/2026 academic year, preceded by the work of a dedicated review team including representatives of all three disciplines and doctoral candidates. Proposed changes were systematically discussed by the Doctoral School Council and reviewed by the Doctoral Student Government prior to approval by the Senate. This procedure can be considered transparent and aligned with good academic practice. It is nevertheless recommended that the institution maintain ongoing programme review processes between major revisions, treating curriculum enhancement as a continuous activity.
In summary, the curriculum of the Doctoral School at the Medical University of Lublin is coherent, appropriately aligned with Level 8 PQF learning outcomes, and implemented in a manner conducive to the development of advanced knowledge, skills, and social competences, including those of an interdisciplinary nature, required for independent research and effective participation in the international academic community. Individual Research Plans are developed in compliance with statutory requirements, and their evaluation —based on anonymous review by two independent experts—ensures both rigour and transparency. Subject to the recommended regulatory adjustments, the programme provides a robust framework for achieving Level 8 PQF learning outcomes.

- **The method of assessing the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the PQF:**
  The approach to verifying learning outcomes for Level 8 qualifications of the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF) at the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin should be assessed as coherent, transparent, and consistent with standards applicable to the highest level of education within the Polish system. The educational process encompasses compulsory courses, developmental activities, elective modules, and professional placements, with the verification of learning outcomes for each course systematically described in the syllabus. Each syllabus specifies the assigned learning outcomes, methods of their verification, and assessment criteria across the domains of knowledge, skills, and social competences. As such, syllabi constitute the primary source of information for both doctoral students and academic staff, significantly enhancing the transparency of the verification process.
  The principles of verification are uniform across all programmes and cycles of education implemented at the University, ensuring consistency and comparability across the three scientific disciplines represented within the Doctoral School. Syllabi for cohorts commencing in 2019–2024 are available in paper form at the Dean's Office, while those for the 2025–2029 cycle are accessible via the e-syllabus platform. The introduction of electronic access constitutes a positive development, facilitating the use of programme documentation and aligning with broader technological advancement. An additional practice reinforcing clarity is the discussion of syllabus content during the first class session.
  Particular recognition should be given to the School's readiness to verify learning outcomes acquired through activities beyond traditional coursework. Doctoral students may obtain credits for participation in conferences, summer and winter schools, lectures, specialised training, and research visits to domestic or international institutions. This flexible approach reflects contemporary models of doctoral training and supports the individualisation of learning pathways.
  Professional placements are implemented in two stages: initially as 20 hours of observation or assisted participation, followed by 60 hours of independent teaching. The School recommends that placements be conducted under the supervision of the doctoral supervisor, which ensures coherence of substantive support. Completion is documented through a formal placement record approved by the supervisor and course coordinator, while teaching quality is evaluated through student surveys and teaching observations. The establishment, from the 2025/2026 academic year, of a Coordinator for Professional/Teaching Placements represents a well-justified and positively assessed enhancement of this process.
  The experts evaluates the range of verification tools as diverse and appropriately aligned with the specific characteristics of Level 8 PQF learning outcomes. In particular, the verification of social competences is conducted in a manner consistent with their nature. Readiness for critical evaluation of disciplinary achievements, self-reflection on one's contribution, and recognition of the role of knowledge in problem-solving (P8S-KK) is typically assessed through extended observation by supervisors or through the completion of assigned tasks. While this system functions effectively in practice, it is recommended that consideration be given to formalising the assessment of social competences as a component of the annual evaluation, with clearly defined criteria and structured feedback mechanisms. Such formalisation would enhance comparability and support evaluation processes.
  The Individual Research Plan (IRP) is developed by the doctoral student in consultation with the supervisor and subsequently evaluated by two independent anonymous reviewers and the Doctoral School Council. The evaluation model, inspired by peer review of scientific

publications, strengthens the reliability of the process. Assessment focuses on feasibility and methodological coherence rather than imposing substantive direction, which remains within the academic autonomy of the doctoral student and supervisor. The anonymous review process and emphasis on feasibility within the four-year cycle provide effective safeguards against unrealistic research designs.
Systemic solutions supporting the monitoring of doctoral progress and the development of research and communication competences deserve particular recognition. The Doctoral Symposium constitutes a mandatory stage of presenting research progress and serves as a key tool for verifying competences in scientific communication and dissemination. Additionally, annual progress evaluations conducted by the Doctoral School Council ensure continuous monitoring of IRP implementation and enable timely identification of both achievements and areas requiring support.
Several institutional bodies contribute to the systematic evaluation and enhancement of the educational process, including the Committee for Curriculum Revision and Doctoral Progress Evaluation, the Committee for Internationalisation, the Committee for Grant Applications, and the Committee for Micro-credentials. Oversight is further ensured by the Doctoral School Council and the University System for Quality Enhancement in Education, including the Quality Coordinator for the Doctoral School. This multi-level governance model enables continuous identification of areas requiring improvement.
The School demonstrates responsiveness to evolving socio-economic conditions and technological advancement. Verification processes, particularly in the domain of skills, utilise e-learning platforms, knowledge management systems, and the Polish Medical Platform. Doctoral students evaluate teaching quality and verification methods through annual surveys conducted via the Student Platform. While response rates remain suboptimal, the School has implemented corrective measures, including reminders, system notifications, immediate post-course survey access, and assurances of anonymity. These measures are appropriate; however, increasing participation should remain a priority.
In conclusion, the system for verifying learning outcomes at Level 8 PQF in the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin meets the requirements set out in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of 27 September 2021 on the evaluation of the quality of doctoral education. Verification principles are clear, transparent, and publicly accessible, while methods are diverse and appropriate. Notable strengths include the implementation of electronic syllabi, recognition of external learning activities, the Doctoral Symposium, annual progress evaluation, the appointment of a placement coordinator, and the operation of specialised committees. Recommendations include formalising the assessment of social competences, maintaining the non-intrusive character of IRP approval, and further efforts to improve survey participation. Subject to these recommendations, the system ensures high-quality and reliable verification of learning outcomes, thereby fulfilling Criterion 2.

- **Qualification of academic teachers and academic staff employed at the doctoral school:**
  The teaching and research staff of the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin comprises 270 individuals performing diverse roles, including lecturers, supervisors, and auxiliary supervisors. The staff includes full professors, visiting professors, habilitated doctors, and experienced researchers actively engaged in national and international research networks. Staff qualifications are grounded in substantive criteria that ensure the proper delivery of the curriculum and the achievement by doctoral students of the required learning outcomes for Level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF). The size and diversity of the academic staff are well aligned with the specificity of education conducted across three disciplines—medical sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, and health sciences—and enable flexible allocation of teaching responsibilities in accordance with programme needs.
  The experts assess the School's activities in this area very positively. In accordance with the Regulations of the Doctoral School, courses may be delivered by individuals holding at least a doctoral degree, as well as by specialists with a minimum of four years of professional experience, including foreign language instructors and experts delivering courses in research funding, grant management, and scientific information. Following approval of the curriculum, the Doctoral School Council appoints course coordinators and instructors in line with established criteria. This model ensures, in accordance with the Regulation, that teaching is conducted by individuals with recognised scientific achievements and appropriate supervisory competences.
  The process of selecting supervisors involves several stages of evaluation: an initial assessment at the recruitment stage, including analysis of academic output and the exclusion of conflicts of interest, followed by a formal evaluation at the stage of official appointment. This process is supported by a detailed Academic Profile Questionnaire for candidates for supervisor, second supervisor, or auxiliary supervisor. The questionnaire captures data on publication output (including Scopus-indexed publications and the Hirsch index), experience in academic supervision (number of master's theses and doctoral dissertations supervised, number of completed doctorates), as well as activities related to mobility, research management, applied research, collaboration with industry, and science communication. Final decisions are taken by the Doctoral School Council. This procedure is consistent with the Regulation, which emphasises both publication output and relevant professional achievements, including experience in obtaining and managing research funding. The questionnaire provides a structured and transparent tool that enhances objectivity in the evaluation of candidates.
  The implementation of teaching and research processes is based on staff employed in research, research-and-teaching, and teaching positions at the University, further strengthened by visiting professors from at least twelve countries. A notable example of sustained international collaboration is the delivery of research methodology courses by Prof. A. Palese from the University of Udine, addressed to both supervisors and doctoral students. Engagement with international experts and the presence of visiting professors contribute significantly to enhancing the quality of education, strengthening internationalisation, and providing doctoral students with access to diverse research perspectives.
  The University consistently supports the professional development of academic staff involved in the Doctoral School through systemic measures aimed at enhancing both research and teaching competences. Supervisors and auxiliary supervisors are encouraged to participate in national and international scientific events, specialised training, and professional development programmes. Regular meetings and training sessions are organised to familiarise supervisors

with current procedures and regulatory requirements, thereby ensuring consistency in supervisory practice.
In 2021, pursuant to Rector's Order No. 166/2021, the Team for Continuous Development of Academic Competence (URSA) was established. URSA is responsible for developing frameworks for the enhancement of teaching competences, defining professional standards, and designing methods of individual academic support based on evaluation outcomes. Training programmes tailored to staff needs have been developed, including those focused on working with doctoral students. Staff benefit from URSA activities as well as from teaching and training mobility opportunities within Erasmus+ KA103 and KA107 programmes, both within Europe and beyond. The establishment of URSA represents a model initiative, directly addressing the requirement that academic staff, including experienced supervisors, continuously develop their competences, including transversal skills.
The Doctoral School treats staff development not as an incidental activity but as a permanent component of quality management, in line with the expectations set out in the Regulation. With regard to the reliability of staff qualification verification, the experts' assessment is positive. Within the University Quality Assurance System, annual evaluations of teaching quality are conducted in the Doctoral School, including assessment of courses and instructors. These evaluations take the form of anonymous electronic surveys conducted via the Student Platform. Results are analysed in terms of participation and reliability, with average ratings consistently exceeding 4.5 on a five-point scale. These outcomes confirm the high level of engagement and professionalism of academic staff and provide a basis for further quality enhancement measures.
Complementary to surveys are peer-based teaching observations, which support verification of both substantive and pedagogical competences. The integrity of staff selection is further ensured by the rule that only individuals employed at the Medical University of Lublin may deliver courses in the Doctoral School, and only in the absence of disqualifying circumstances. Academic staff are expected to uphold high standards not only in their professional activities but also in their public conduct, reflecting a broad understanding of the academic ethos. Doctoral students' feedback is also incorporated into quality enhancement processes, including preferences regarding instructors and supervisors. Concerns raised by doctoral students, including those related to supervisory relationships, are addressed by the Chair of the Doctoral School Council and form the basis for further analysis and decision-making. A formal framework for addressing conflict situations was introduced by Rector's Order No. 197/2024, providing doctoral students with a clear and secure mechanism for reporting issues. This solution constitutes an important component of the internal quality assurance system.
In conclusion, the qualifications and experience of the teaching staff and supervisors at the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin meet all substantive and formal requirements set out in Article 261(3) of the Act – Law on Higher Education and Science and in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of 27 September 2021 on the evaluation of the quality of doctoral education. The staff of 270 individuals is appropriately structured and aligned with the needs of education in three disciplines. Supervisor selection procedures are transparent and based on a structured academic profile assessment, while the staff development system—particularly through URSA, Erasmus+ programmes, and international collaboration—reflects the highest standards of doctoral education. Verification mechanisms, including anonymous surveys, teaching observations, and formal conflict resolution procedures, ensure continuous quality control. The primary recommendation

concerns increasing participation in survey processes to further strengthen the reliability of feedback mechanisms.

- **The quality of the admission process:**
  Recruitment to the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin is structured, multi-stage, and oriented towards selecting candidates with strong research potential and a realistic capacity to implement planned research projects. Education is provided in three disciplines: medical sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, and health sciences. Eligible applicants include holders of a Master's degree, Master of Engineering degree, or equivalent qualification, as well as beneficiaries of the "Pearls of Science" or "Diamond Grant" programmes. In particularly justified cases, graduates of first-cycle studies or students who have completed the third year of long-cycle Master's studies may also apply. Foreign nationals undertake doctoral education under the rules set out in Articles 323–328 of the Act – Law on Higher Education and Science. The quality and accessibility of information and internal legal acts should be assessed positively. Detailed recruitment rules are determined by the Senate of the Medical University of Lublin, while annual admission limits are established by orders of the University authorities. All documents are public and published on the Doctoral School website and in the Public Information Bulletin no later than five months before recruitment begins. The website is available in Polish and English, and communication, including newsletters and social media, is also provided in English. To ensure equal access for candidates from outside the University, a list of organisational units declaring readiness to host doctoral students is published, together with research topics and proposed supervisors.
  Recruitment is conducted in two modes: the main procedure, held annually at the turn of August and September, and continuous recruitment for externally funded projects, particularly those financed by the National Science Centre. In continuous recruitment, the project leader announces the competition both on the University website and, mandatorily, on the website of the funding agency. The School also admits doctoral students pursuing projects under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Doctoral Networks programme, strengthening its position within international research networks. The recruitment schedule, application deadlines, and results are publicly announced, and documentation is available in Polish and English.
  The School also offers implementation doctorates, which require cooperation with an external entity and the involvement of an auxiliary supervisor, namely a technical supervisor from a company or institution. Although this pathway has considerable application-oriented potential, its implementation encounters organisational and procedural challenges, including cost settlement, procurement of materials, research scheduling, and coordination of external partners' expectations. More active promotion of this pathway and a more in-depth analysis of previous difficulties are recommended.
  The recruitment procedure itself is assessed positively. The main recruitment process comprises several stages: submission of application documents, assessment of the research project, qualification examination, confirmation of English proficiency at B2+ level, evaluation of academic achievements, assessment of research aptitude and predisposition, and either entry onto the list of doctoral students or issuance of an administrative decision refusing admission. Since the 2024/2025 academic year, candidates have submitted an academic achievement assessment form verified by the University's Main Library, as well as a project description prepared according to a standardised template. In the section on the data management plan, candidates provide information on the type of research data, principles of data sharing, and archiving, in line with open science principles. Assessment criteria are public, and the process documentation, including justifications of decisions, was assessed as transparent and supportive of procedural clarity.
  The Recruitment Committee is appointed by the head of the Doctoral School in accordance

with the Statute of the Medical University of Lublin. It comprises the Chair of the Doctoral School Council, heads of doctoral studies, and academic teachers representing the three disciplines taught at the School, holding the title of professor or the degree of habilitated doctor; a representative of the Dean's Office also participates in meetings. This composition ensures appropriate qualifications and representation of all disciplines. Research projects are assessed by two independent reviewers, and in the event of substantial discrepancies, a third reviewer is appointed. During the interview, the Committee assesses the candidate's level of knowledge, ability to engage in substantive scientific discussion, motivation, and the feasibility of completing the project within the four-year cycle. A ranking list is prepared on the basis of total points awarded. A candidate refused admission may submit a request for reconsideration to the Rector within 14 days. Since most doctoral students originate from the Medical University of Lublin, often as former members of student research societies, more active measures are recommended to increase the number of external candidates, both domestic and international.

The manner in which the needs of persons with disabilities are addressed is assessed positively. The University has established support pathways coordinated by the Rector's Representative for Persons with Disabilities. Candidates are entitled to a range of accommodations, including adjustment of the examination format while preserving equivalence and objectivity of assessment, architectural accessibility of the examination venue, appropriate sound and lighting conditions, extended examination time, digital accessibility of remote examinations, teaching assistance, and access to a sign language interpreter or lipspeaker. Support measures for international candidates are also assessed positively, including dedicated organisational and administrative assistance, support in residence-related matters, and help in contacts with University administration.

The verification of candidates' predisposition for scientific activity is assessed positively. Predispositions are evaluated on the basis of academic achievements, the quality of the research project, and the qualification interview, while the project itself is reviewed by two independent reviewers from the three disciplines represented at the School. The introduction of a standardised project description template and the requirement for academic achievements to be verified by the University's Main Library enhance the objectivity and comparability of the procedure. The Director of the Doctoral School carefully assesses whether admission limits are properly aligned with the School's actual resources, including supervisor availability, laboratory facilities, and research infrastructure.

The reliability of activities aimed at improving recruitment is assessed positively. In 2019–2024, the process was refined in response to analyses and conclusions of the Recruitment Committee. The scoring of research projects was modified, criteria for the qualification examination were clarified, the rule for appointing a third reviewer was introduced, and criteria for assessing academic achievements were adjusted. Initially, admission limits in medical sciences were increased; however, analysis of doctoral students' achievements demonstrated that higher limits did not translate into an inflow of better-prepared candidates. Consequently, from the 2024/2025 academic year, limits were reduced by half in order to maintain high educational quality. In 2024, a Team for Recruitment to the Doctoral School was established, comprising representatives of all disciplines and the Doctoral Students' Self-Government. Its work resulted in the adoption of new recruitment rules applicable from the 2025/2026 academic year, including an updated profile of the candidate and graduate. A subsequent planned revision will include, among other elements, the participation of a doctoral student in the Recruitment Committee as an observer.

The experts identifies the need for systematic analysis of the reasons for resignations and removals from the list of doctoral students, covering both candidates who do not commence education after admission and doctoral students who withdraw during the programme. Such analysis should take into account organisational and curricular factors, as well as issues related to supervisory relationships, professional specialisation, mobility, and the academic environment. The conclusions could inform further improvement of the recruitment process. **In conclusion, recruitment to the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin meets the requirements of transparency, accessibility, and reliability set out in the law and in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of 27 September 2021 on the evaluation of the quality of doctoral education. The multi-stage and open nature of the procedure ensures the selection of candidates best prepared for scientific activity, while the criteria applied to academic achievements, research projects, and research predispositions ensure objectivity and comparability of results, further strengthened by the involvement of independent reviewers. The expert's recommendations concern more active recruitment of external candidates, systematic analysis of resignations and removals, stronger promotion of implementation doctorates accompanied by analysis of previous difficulties, and continued rational adjustment of admission limits to the School's actual resources.**

- **The quality of scientific or artistic guidance, and support in research:**
  The assessment of the quality of academic supervision at the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin relates both to the standard of supervision provided to doctoral candidates and to the level of support they receive in addressing the research problem underlying their doctoral dissertation. The evidence gathered during the site visit indicates that the supervision system at the University is structured, formalised, and clearly oriented towards maintaining and enhancing quality.
  With regard to the first specific criterion, concerning the procedures and criteria for the appointment and replacement of supervisors, co-supervisors, or auxiliary supervisors, each doctoral candidate is assigned either a supervisor, multiple supervisors, or a supervisor supported by an auxiliary supervisor. The appointment process is conducted in an orderly manner and completed within three months of the commencement of doctoral education. Detailed provisions are set out in the Doctoral School Regulations. Candidates submit a formal request to the Doctoral School Council for the appointment of a supervisor, accompanied by a statement of the candidate's academic achievements.
  The requirements imposed on supervisors deserve particular recognition. These include at least a habilitated doctoral degree in the relevant or a related discipline, a current publication record from the last five years in journals listed by the Minister of Science and holding an impact factor, as well as demonstrated alignment between the supervisor's research expertise and the topic of the doctoral dissertation. Such criteria ensure an appropriate match between the supervisor and the research problem and provide a sound basis for effective scientific collaboration.
  An important feature of the system is the possibility of appointing supervisors from outside the Medical University of Lublin, including researchers affiliated with foreign universities and scientific institutions who possess significant achievements in the relevant field. This facilitates the implementation of interdisciplinary and international doctoral projects. At the same time, the School has introduced quality safeguards excluding individuals from acting as supervisors if, within the previous five years, they supervised four doctoral candidates who were removed from the programme due to a negative mid-term evaluation or supervised at least two candidates who failed to obtain positive external reviews. The procedures for replacing or dismissing a supervisor are clearly defined, and the Doctoral School Council considers such requests within thirty days, taking into account circumstances such as prolonged illness, change of employment, resignation, or conflict with the doctoral candidate. To ensure appropriate quality of supervision, a supervisor may oversee no more than three doctoral candidates, and only in exceptional cases, with the Dean's consent, up to five.
  In terms of the quality of collaboration between doctoral candidates and supervisors, as well as mechanisms for resolving conflicts, the site visit confirmed that supervision is direct, intensive, and oriented towards both scientific development and the acquisition of transversal competences. Supervisors co-develop the Individual Research Plan with the doctoral candidate, monitor progress, and provide annual evaluations of its implementation. They also support doctoral candidates in securing funding, participating in conferences, attending summer schools, and undertaking research placements. In this way, they play a key role not only in guiding the research process but also in shaping broader academic and professional competences. The auxiliary supervisor complements this model by providing additional substantive input, particularly in interdisciplinary projects.
  The mechanisms for monitoring the quality of supervision are also positively assessed. These include anonymous surveys conducted in both directions ("Supervisor–Doctoral Candidate"

and “Doctoral Candidate–Supervisor”), the results of which indicate a high level of satisfaction among doctoral candidates. Conflicts appear to be rare and are addressed through transparent procedures. Since the 2024/2025 academic year, Rector’s Order No. 197/2024 has introduced a formal framework for resolving conflict situations. The procedure clearly defines points of contact, steps to be taken in resolving disputes, and safeguards ensuring confidentiality, which is consistent with the expectations set out in the Regulation.

With regard to the provision of appropriate conditions and support for doctoral candidates, including those with disabilities and those who are parents, the Medical University of Lublin ensures full access to academic life and infrastructure. Support activities are coordinated by the Office for Persons with Disabilities, and the relevant rules are defined in institutional documents concerning accessibility standards. Doctoral candidates may benefit from an extension of the period of study in cases of prolonged illness or caregiving responsibilities, which allows them to reconcile personal circumstances with the implementation of their Individual Research Plans.

A particularly valuable component of the support system is the availability of continuous psychological and educational assistance, including services offered through Academic Psychological and Educational Support, dedicated crisis-support resources, and designated quiet spaces within University facilities. Access to psychological and psychiatric support without limitations on the number of consultations should be regarded as a model solution. At the same time, access to research infrastructure, including modern laboratory equipment, is organised in a way that supports the effective implementation of research plans, while funding for research is secured through both institutional resources and support in applying for external grants.

The Doctoral School also demonstrates a consistent commitment to interdisciplinarity and internationalisation. Summer and winter schools, involving invited experts from leading academic and research centres, provide doctoral candidates with access to diverse perspectives and advanced methodological training. The School supports research mobility, enabling doctoral candidates to undertake placements in European and international institutions, where they can conduct research, benefit from expert's consultation, and gain experience with advanced technologies. Participation in specialised external training, including in advanced experimental techniques and bioinformatics, is also actively encouraged.

With regard to the fifth specific criterion, concerning the reliability of the evaluation of supervisors’ performance, it should be noted that supervisory work is subject to regular assessment. Anonymous surveys constitute a key tool in this process, allowing for evaluation based also on doctoral candidates’ feedback. The results are used to improve supervisory practices, and, together with the possibility of changing or dismissing a supervisor, form a coherent mechanism for responding to potential shortcomings.

An area for further development is the need to strengthen the monitoring of graduates’ career trajectories in the period of two to three years following the defence of the doctoral dissertation. Such monitoring would provide valuable insight into the long-term effectiveness of the training process and support further refinement of the Doctoral School’s programme.

In conclusion, the system of academic supervision and research support at the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin should be assessed highly. The implemented solutions—from clearly defined criteria for appointing supervisors, through formalised procedures for resolving conflicts, to comprehensive psychological, educational, and infrastructural support, including for doctoral candidates with disabilities and those who are parents.

- **The reliability of the midterm evaluation:**
  The reliability of the mid-term evaluation process at the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin should be assessed positively. The organisational and procedural solutions adopted by the School constitute a coherent system for monitoring doctoral candidates' progress in the implementation of their Individual Research Plans. The mid-term evaluation is not treated merely as a formal statutory obligation, but as an important element of quality assurance in doctoral education, enabling verification of actual research progress, timeliness in the implementation of planned tasks, and the justification for continuing the doctoral project in its adopted form.
  The rules governing the mid-term evaluation are set out in the Doctoral School Regulations and in Annex No. 14 to the Regulations of the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin of 23 April 2025. These documents describe the basic elements of the procedure, including the scope of assessment, required documentation, composition of the committee, and course of proceedings. The fact that these rules are available to doctoral candidates should be assessed positively, as should the School's organisation of information meetings devoted to explaining the procedure. In the case of English-speaking doctoral candidates, information is also provided in English, which enhances the transparency of the process and reduces the risk of unequal access to information.
  The mid-term evaluation is conducted in two stages. It comprises an analysis of documentation and an interview between the doctoral candidate and the committee. The doctoral candidate submits a mid-term report on the implementation of the Individual Research Plan, documents confirming scientific achievements, and a presentation on the current status of IRP implementation. This body of material enables the committee to assess not only the formal completion of planned activities, but also actual scientific progress, methodological coherence of the project, and the feasibility of completing it within the prescribed timeframe.
  It is particularly appropriate that the committee primarily assesses the degree of implementation of the Individual Research Plan, rather than the quality of the public presentation itself. This approach is consistent with the essential purpose of the mid-term evaluation. Its aim should not be to test the doctoral candidate's presentation skills, but to determine whether the adopted research plan is genuinely being implemented, whether the project remains feasible, and whether any delays or modifications are scientifically and organisationally justified.
  The requirement for committee members to sign a confidentiality statement before reviewing the documentation should also be assessed positively.
  The composition of the mid-term evaluation committee has been structured in a generally appropriate manner. Committees are appointed by the Doctoral School Council and consist of three members, at least one of whom must hold a habilitated doctoral degree or the title of professor in the discipline in which the doctoral dissertation is being prepared and must be employed outside the entity operating the doctoral school.
  The method of selecting committee members also deserves a positive assessment. Scientific, methodological, academic, and professional competences are taken into account, including publication record, experience in obtaining research funding, knowledge of research ethics, and activity in disseminating research findings. Verification of University employees is carried out using bibliometric data from the UML Library, while external experts are verified using publicly available sources on scientific achievements. This approach helps ensure an appropriate substantive standard of assessment. An important element of the procedure is

the review form, which enables the doctoral candidate to respond to the comments raised. According to the self-evaluation materials, by 10 September 2025 the School had conducted mid-term evaluations for four complete cohorts and had begun the evaluation process for the 2023/2024 cohort. The vast majority of evaluations were conducted within the statutory timeframe, except for cases related to suspension of education. All evaluations for the four complete cohorts were positive, while in the 2023/2024 cohort, as of the indicated date, one negative evaluation had been issued. These data indicate the stability of the procedure and show that most doctoral candidates implemented their research plans in a manner accepted by the committees.

Despite the generally positive assessment, several issues require clarification. The procedure for appointing mid-term evaluation committees should be described in greater detail in the Regulations. It would be advisable to specify the method of selecting candidates, the criteria for their appointment, the manner of documenting the absence of obstacles to participation in the committee, and the rules to be followed if the committee's composition needs to be changed.

Annex No. 14 should also be supplemented with an explicitly described appeal procedure against a negative mid-term evaluation. The information presented in the self-evaluation indicates that doctoral candidates have the right to appeal, and that the appeal must be submitted within seven days from the date on which the results are made available. From the perspective of procedural standards, however, all elements of this pathway should be expressly included in the regulation governing the mid-term evaluation. This applies in particular to the body competent to examine the appeal, the form and deadline for submission, the scope of review, possible outcomes, and the method of informing the doctoral candidate of the decision. This is especially important because a negative mid-term evaluation has serious consequences for the doctoral candidate's further status.

Mechanisms for preventing conflicts of interest should also be strengthened. The current verification of committee members' competences and formal affiliations is necessary, but it does not fully address the issue. It does not cover private relationships, informal professional dependencies, previous conflicts, or other circumstances that may affect the impartiality of the assessment. It is therefore justified to introduce formal declarations of absence of conflict of interest, to be signed by reviewers and committee members before each mid-term evaluation. This solution is consistent with good practices applied in the peer review of scientific publications and grant proposals.

The practice of archiving mid-term evaluation documentation should also be further developed, and access to such documentation should be ensured for subsequent evaluation committees, with due regard for confidentiality. Documentation comprising reports, presentations, review forms, minutes, recommendations, and committee comments should create a continuous record of the doctoral candidate's progress. This may be particularly relevant for subsequent annual evaluations, a change of supervisor, analysis of problems in IRP implementation, or an appeal procedure.

The planned surveys among doctoral candidates and supervisors concerning the quality of the mid-term evaluation process should be assessed positively. Involving both groups in the evaluation of the procedure may provide the School with useful information on whether the rules are understandable, whether communication is sufficient, whether feedback has practical value, and whether doctoral candidates perceive the procedure as fair. It is important, however, that such surveys be conducted regularly and that their results be genuinely used to improve the process.

Inviting the supervisor to attend the committee meeting as an observer, excluding the confidential part, should be regarded as a generally positive solution requiring further observation. It may facilitate better understanding of the committee's comments and their subsequent implementation in work with the doctoral candidate. However, a clear separation must be consistently maintained between the supervisor's role as a person supporting the doctoral candidate and the independence of the committee making the assessment decision.
In conclusion, the mid-term evaluation at the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin is conducted in a reliable, transparent, and substantively justified manner. The procedure includes analysis of documents, an interview with the doctoral candidate, participation of a properly composed committee, involvement of an external experts, exclusion of the supervisor and auxiliary supervisor from committee membership, preparation of minutes, and the possibility of formulating recommendations. Particular recognition should be given to the focus on implementation of the Individual Research Plan and to the use of the review form as a tool supporting the doctoral candidate's development.
The reservations identified are improvement-oriented and do not undermine the positive assessment of the criterion. They mainly concern the need for a more detailed description of the committee appointment procedure, supplementation of the regulations with an appeal pathway, introduction of formal declarations of absence of conflict of interest, and better use of archived documentation in further monitoring of doctoral candidates' progress. Once these recommendations are taken into account, the mid-term evaluation system will provide even stronger safeguards for the impartiality, transparency, and reliability of the process, thereby fully meeting the standards expected of a doctoral school providing education at the highest level.

- **Internationalisation:**
  The internationalisation of the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin should be assessed positively. The material collected during the site visit indicates that the School undertakes substantive and multi-faceted actions aimed at integrating both doctoral candidates and academic staff into the international scientific environment. These include the mobility of doctoral candidates and academic teachers, participation in international programmes, organisation of summer and winter schools involving foreign experts, support for international doctoral candidates, delivery of selected activities in English, and the development of cooperation with foreign research institutions. Internationalisation is therefore not merely declarative in nature, but is reflected in concrete educational, organisational, and financial instruments.
  With regard to the internationalisation of the academic staff, it should be emphasised that the School draws on the potential of academic teachers and supervisors with experience in international research projects, scientific collaboration networks, conferences, fellowships, and international research stays. The staff also includes visiting professors and individuals actively engaged in international research initiatives. An important component is the organisation of summer and winter schools, which constitute a mandatory element of the curriculum. During the period under evaluation, these schools involved 12 experts from foreign institutions representing the disciplines of medical sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, and health sciences. This provides doctoral candidates with exposure to diverse research traditions, methodological standards, and academic practices.
  Particular attention should be given to the School's openness to involving international partners in doctoral supervision. An example is the agreement on joint international supervision of a doctoral dissertation conducted in cooperation with Université Paris-Saclay. The designation of supervisors on both the foreign institution's side and UML as jointly responsible for the scientific management of the doctoral project constitutes a valuable example of internationalised supervision. Joint supervision or arrangements akin to co-tutelle create a framework for exchange of expertise and for building sustained inter-institutional relationships.
  In terms of the internationalisation of the educational process and doctoral research activity, the School has implemented a number of solutions deserving positive evaluation. The curriculum includes a mandatory course in specialist English, complemented by elective classes. International activities—such as participation in scientific conferences, specialist lectures, and training events, including those held abroad—are also compulsory. Importantly, the School provides financial support for participation in these activities, recognising them as an integral component of doctoral development.
  A particularly valuable initiative is the mandatory Doctoral Symposium, during which third-year doctoral candidates present the progress of their research in English to members of the Doctoral School Council and the broader academic community within the discipline. This symposium strengthens scientific communication skills, prepares doctoral candidates for participation in international conferences, and fosters the use of English in presenting research outcomes.
  Academic mobility remains a key dimension of internationalisation. Between 2019 and 2024, 23 doctoral candidates participated in research placements, including those funded through the NAWA programme and other international initiatives. Doctoral candidates may also take advantage of the Erasmus+ Traineeships scheme, which enables placements at partner universities, other higher education institutions holding the ECHE accreditation, and public or

private organisations. During the period under review, 12 doctoral candidates participated in such mobility schemes, undertaking placements at recognised research centres across Europe.

Particular significance should be attributed to the international mobility project implemented from the 2025/2026 academic year. According to the information provided, 70 doctoral candidates and 12 members of academic staff are expected to participate in outgoing mobility, while 16 individuals from foreign research institutions will undertake incoming mobility at UML. The scale of this initiative represents a substantial strengthening of internationalisation efforts and has the potential to serve as a foundation for a sustainable culture of academic mobility. It will be important, however, that this initiative is leveraged to establish long-term collaborative mechanisms rather than functioning as a one-off intervention.

The MIND mini-grants (International Scientific Initiative for Doctoral Candidates), implemented in the 2024/2025 academic year under the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme, should also be positively assessed. The allocation of five mini-grants, each amounting to PLN 40,000, to support internationally oriented research activities constitutes an effective instrument for promoting internationalisation at the level of individual doctoral projects.

With respect to international doctoral candidates, it should be emphasised that the School provides comprehensive administrative and organisational support in English. During the evaluation period, 12 international doctoral candidates were enrolled, while between 2019 and 2025 a total of 9 foreign candidates were admitted through grant-based recruitment pathways. These data confirm the existing internationalisation potential, while also indicating the need to further strengthen the recruitment of international candidates through the standard admission track, rather than relying primarily on project-based pathways.

Support for international doctoral candidates includes access to documentation and courses in English, opportunities to learn Polish, assistance with administrative matters, and financial support for mandatory developmental activities on equal terms with domestic doctoral candidates. It is particularly noteworthy that courses in English are offered even for a single participant, demonstrating a genuine commitment to addressing the needs of international candidates and enhancing the credibility of the School’s international offer.

In terms of international visibility, the School undertakes promotional and communication activities, including engagement through social media platforms and participation in international education fairs, such as Student Recruitment Fairs in Norway. An important dimension of international recognition is also the increasing number of publications in journals indexed in Web of Science and the growing number of international conference abstracts.

Despite the overall positive assessment, several areas for further development can be identified. First, it is recommended that a formal internationalisation strategy be developed for the next 4–5 years. Such a strategy should include measurable quantitative and qualitative objectives, encompassing, inter alia, the number of international doctoral candidates, mobility flows, international projects, joint supervision arrangements, courses delivered in English, and the outcomes of mobility activities.

Second, efforts should be made to strengthen the institutional linkages of incoming doctoral candidates with their home institutions. Incoming mobility should not be limited to individual placements but should contribute to building longer-term cooperation between research teams, supervisors, and organisational units. This may be supported by systematically

documenting outcomes such as joint publications, seminars, collaborative projects, or follow-up mobility.
Third, consideration should be given to the introduction of a cultural or adaptation mentoring system for newly admitted international doctoral candidates. This role could be performed by a senior doctoral candidate, an experienced international doctoral candidate, or a designated administrative staff member. Such a solution would facilitate academic and social integration while reducing the risk of isolation.
Finally, it is advisable to develop formal procedures for responding to crisis situations related to the safety and residence of international doctoral candidates, both incoming and outgoing. In conclusion, the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin undertakes substantial and multi-dimensional activities in the field of internationalisation. These include the mobility of doctoral candidates and staff, participation in Erasmus+ and NAWA programmes, organisation of international educational events, support for international doctoral candidates, development of international supervisory arrangements, funding of internationally oriented research activities, and promotion of the School abroad. The recommendations formulated are developmental in nature and do not undermine the positive assessment of the criterion. Their implementation would further enhance the systemic, measurable, and sustainable character of internationalisation efforts.

- **The effectiveness of the doctoral education:**
  The evaluation of the effectiveness of doctoral education at the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin was conducted to assess the efficiency of the educational process. Given the diverse profiles of doctoral schools and the disciplines they represent, the evaluation retained an expert-based character, combining quantitative data with qualitative analysis.
  With regard to the timeliness of completing doctoral education in accordance with the programme, it should be noted that, during the evaluation period, a total of 341 doctoral candidates were enrolled in the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin, of whom 44 completed their education between 2019 and 2025. Over the entire analysed period, 30 removals from the doctoral register were recorded, including 19 voluntary withdrawals. Their distribution across successive cohorts (2019/2020 – 6, 2020/2021 – 3, 2021/2022 – 5, 2022/2023 – 5) does not indicate a systemic pattern; however, it warrants continued monitoring and a more in-depth analysis of the underlying causes. In particular, it is important to distinguish between scientific, organisational, professional, and personal factors, as such differentiation could inform further improvements in both the recruitment process and the system of doctoral support, as well as a more deliberate application of extensions to the deadline for submitting the doctoral dissertation.
  With respect to the proportion of graduates who obtained the doctoral degree following completion of education, out of the 44 graduates of the Doctoral School, 39 initiated doctoral degree proceedings (89%), while 33 were ultimately awarded the degree, corresponding to a success rate of 75%. No cases of refusal to confer the doctoral degree were recorded. These indicators confirm the high effectiveness of the educational process and the School's strong capacity to guide doctoral candidates to the successful completion of the doctoral pathway. In the case of international doctoral candidates, additional challenges related to post-completion procedures were identified; however, the School has undertaken measures to facilitate continuity, including support for remote communication and the possibility of conducting selected stages of the process—such as the defence—in an online format, which should be positively assessed.
  Regarding the level of doctoral candidates' scientific achievements, particularly those related to the implementation of Individual Research Plans, the collected evidence confirms that doctoral candidates at the Medical University of Lublin achieve outcomes consistent with expectations for early-career researchers at Level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework. In the discipline of health sciences, publications have appeared in internationally recognised Q1 and Q2 journals, including *Cancer Letters*, *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, and *BMC Nursing*, alongside the validation of research tools with significant applied value. In medical sciences, doctoral candidates lead projects funded by the National Science Centre (PRELUDIUM), the National Centre for Research and Development (LIDER), and the "Perły Nauki" programme; they also undertake research placements at leading European and American institutions and participate in international clinical trials. In pharmaceutical sciences, notable achievements include grant acquisition, publications, and patent activity, including the granting of a national patent and the commercialisation of an invention in industry. These outcomes demonstrate that doctoral achievements are closely aligned with the implementation of Individual Research Plans and the thematic scope of doctoral dissertations.
  With respect to the evaluation of educational quality by doctoral candidates and the use of its results, it should be positively noted that programme quality is regularly assessed through

anonymous surveys. The results have been characterised as high or moderately high, particularly in relation to supervisory support and the availability of substantive academic guidance. Feedback from doctoral candidates has informed concrete improvements, including modifications to the curriculum, the appointment of coordinators within the Doctoral School (e.g., for quality assurance, including responsibility for teaching observations), and organisational enhancements across different forms of education. Furthermore, from the academic year 2025/2026, a requirement has been introduced for systematic reporting by doctoral candidates and supervisors on the implementation of Individual Research Plans, enabling more efficient monitoring of progress and more timely responses to potential difficulties. To fully close the quality assurance cycle, it would be advisable to complement existing tools with an exit survey conducted upon completion of education, in line with expectations outlined in the justification to the relevant regulation.

The use of graduate career monitoring results constitutes an important component of evaluating the School's effectiveness. Data indicate that nearly 99% of graduates are registered within the national social insurance system (ZUS), confirming their professional activity following completion of education. An additional indicator of educational quality is the employment of 38 doctoral graduates within the institution itself, reflecting their high research and teaching potential. Nevertheless, the use of monitoring results should be further developed to encompass not only employment status but also actual professional and academic career trajectories, thereby providing meaningful feedback for the educational process.

Based on the analysis of the available evidence, the following recommendations are proposed: it is advisable to conduct regular and in-depth analyses of the causes of withdrawals and removals, taking into account scientific, organisational, professional, and personal factors, so that the findings can inform improvements in recruitment and support systems; the monitoring of graduate outcomes should be strengthened to include not only immediate employment data but also career trajectories over a 2–3-year period following graduation; consideration should be given to introducing formal financial incentive mechanisms for scientific achievements, particularly publications, grant success, and other significant research outputs; the regulations governing the Doctoral School should be further clarified with respect to procedures for extending the period of study, appeals, special circumstances (e.g., long-term illness, parenthood), and the formal evaluation of Individual Research Plan implementation; transparency and public communication of educational outcomes should be enhanced, for example through the annual publication of reports including data on completions, defences, publications, grants, mobility, and graduate outcomes; alternative educational pathways, including implementation doctorates, should be further developed following an analysis of organisational and financial barriers; and the evaluation framework should incorporate indicators related to science communication, collaboration with the socio-economic environment, and knowledge transfer.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of doctoral education at the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin should be assessed as high. Quantitative indicators—89% of doctoral candidates initiating degree proceedings, 75% successfully obtaining the doctoral degree, no refusals to confer the degree, and near-universal graduate employment—combined with the documented level of scientific achievement across the three represented disciplines, demonstrate the maturity of the educational process. Following the implementation of the recommended improvements—particularly those concerning the analysis of withdrawals, the monitoring of graduate career trajectories, and the refinement of internal regulations—the

School will be even better positioned to meet the requirements set out in the applicable legal framework.

V. FINAL OPINION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin delivers education in three disciplines—medical sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, and health sciences—in a manner consistent with the applicable legal framework, including the Act on Higher Education and Science and the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of 27 September 2021 on the evaluation of the quality of education in doctoral schools. The expert assessment, conducted with reference to all detailed criteria set out in Article 261 of the Act, leads to a clearly positive conclusion: the School operates in a structured, formalised, and explicitly quality-oriented manner, and its achievements in education, academic supervision, internationalisation, and the effectiveness of guiding doctoral candidates to the award of the doctoral degree demonstrate the maturity of its training process.

A major strength of the School lies in a coherent curriculum aligned with the requirements of Level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework, jointly designed for the three disciplines, reviewed by the Doctoral Student Government, and approved by the Senate. Its modular structure ensures a balanced attainment of learning outcomes across knowledge, skills, and social competences, with transversal skills clearly embedded. The introduction of a module dedicated to artificial intelligence and the implementation of micro-credentials merit particular recognition, as does the genuinely interdisciplinary—rather than merely declarative—nature of the programme. Individual Research Plans are developed by doctoral candidates in agreement with their supervisors and are subject to anonymous review by two independent experts, which provides an important safeguard against overly ambitious or unfeasible research designs.

The system for verifying learning outcomes is coherent and transparent. Uniform rules, syllabi accessible to all participants (including via the e-syllabus platform for the 2025–2029 cycle), diversified assessment tools, and the School's readiness to recognise achievements obtained outside traditional coursework—such as through conferences, summer and winter schools, and national and international placements—collectively form a robust model well suited to doctoral education. A distinctive feature is the mandatory Doctoral Symposium, during which third-year doctoral candidates present the progress of their research; presentations in English and the required presence of the supervisor reinforce both the international dimension and supervisory accountability. This mechanism is complemented by annual progress reviews conducted by the Doctoral School Council and the appointment of a Coordinator for Professional/Teaching Practice.

The academic and teaching staff, numbering 270 individuals, are internally diverse and further strengthened by visiting professors from at least twelve countries. Supervisor selection procedures are based on a transparent Scientific Output Assessment Form, while the system of professional development—supported by the Academic Staff Development Unit (URSA) and Erasmus+ KA103 and KA107 programmes—meets high standards expected in doctoral training. Average teaching evaluations consistently exceed 4.5 on a five-point scale, and peer-review-based teaching observations, together with the conflict resolution procedure introduced by Rector's Ordinance No. 197/2024, constitute a comprehensive internal quality assurance framework.

The recruitment process is structured, multi-stage, and oriented towards selecting candidates with genuine research potential. The School operates both a main and a continuous recruitment mode (for grant-funded projects and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Doctoral Networks), employs

bilingual communication, and publishes a list of units prepared to host doctoral candidates. Research proposals are assessed by two independent reviewers, with a third appointed in case of discrepancies. The University consistently aligns admission limits with its actual capacity, demonstrating a conscious approach to quality management. Particularly well-developed are support mechanisms for candidates with disabilities and international applicants.

The system of academic supervision can be regarded as exemplary. Each doctoral candidate is assigned a supervisor within the statutory three-month period, with clearly defined requirements (habilitation degree, publication record in IF-indexed journals within the past five years), quality safeguards, and limits on the number of supervisees. A particularly valuable component is the continuous access to Academic Psychological and Educational Support (APPiE), the "HELP in CRISIS" guide, and designated quiet rooms; unrestricted access to psychological and psychiatric support should be considered a model solution.

Mid-term evaluation is conducted in a reliable, two-stage manner, involving appropriately constituted committees that include an external expert and exclude the supervisor. The committee's focus on the actual implementation of the Individual Research Plan, the requirement for confidentiality declarations, and the use of a structured review form as a developmental tool are all to be commended. All mid-term evaluations for four full cohorts were positive, indicating procedural stability and a high standard of supervision.

Internationalisation has a tangible and multidimensional character. Noteworthy elements include summer and winter schools with international experts, doctoral mobility (23 participants in NAWA and other international placements between 2019–2024 and 12 under Erasmus+ Traineeships), MIND mini-grants (PLN 40,000 each), and the planned mobility project (from 2025/2026) involving 70 outgoing doctoral candidates, 12 staff, and 16 incoming researchers. The co-supervision agreement with Université Paris-Saclay exemplifies international doctoral supervision. Teaching and administrative support are provided in English even for single international doctoral candidates.

Training effectiveness is confirmed by quantitative indicators: of 44 graduates, 89% initiated doctoral proceedings and 75% were awarded the degree, with no refusals recorded. Nearly 99% are registered in the national social security system, and 38 have been employed within the University. Doctoral achievements include Q1/Q2 publications (e.g., *Cancer Letters*, *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*), leadership of NCN PRELUDIUM and NCBiR LIDER projects, international placements, participation in clinical trials, and patents and commercialisation in pharmaceutical sciences.

The recommendations formulated during the evaluation are developmental in nature and do not undermine the positive assessment. They concern, inter alia, alignment of internal regulations with statutory provisions, clarification of the appeal procedure in mid-term evaluation, introduction of formal conflict-of-interest declarations, enhancement of recruitment of external candidates, development of a formal internationalisation strategy, and strengthening graduate tracking systems.

Overall, the Doctoral School of the Medical University of Lublin fully meets the requirements set out in Article 261 of the Act and the Regulation of 27 September 2021. Its operation reflects organisational maturity, a strong commitment to high-quality supervision, openness to internationalisation, and a consistent quality-oriented approach to doctoral training. The proposed recommendations, once implemented, will further consolidate its position as a leading institution for training early-career researchers at the highest international standards.

VI. ASSESSMENT AND REASON

Final assessment

positive

Reason:

The analysis of the self-evaluation report submitted by the Doctoral School of Lublin Medical University and verification with the information obtained during the visit in the evaluated entity lead the experts to formulate the following conclusions:

The education process in the Doctoral School meets the criteria set for level 8 of the Polish Qualification Framework. This applies to the individual criteria, described in detail in the report, along with an assessment of the cooperation with the Doctoral Student Council and the verification during the visit.

The comments made by the Evaluation Team in the Doctoral School's evaluation report concerning the procedures, solutions and practices implemented by the School are only leads offered by the Evaluation Team, aimed at stimulating further development of the School and its young academic staff.

The Evaluation Team unanimously assessed the level of education offered by the School as very high, and the procedures and achievements presented by the School may become a model and a guideline for other doctoral schools in Poland.

We recommend that the next evaluation of the Doctoral School of Lublin Medical University be carried out in 6 years' time, in accordance with Article 259(2) of the act of 20 July 2018 “The Law on Higher Education and Science” (OJ of 2024, item 1571 with subsequent amendments).

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