

KEN

2023-2027

# DOCTORAL SCHOOL

## EDUCATION QUALITY REPORT

Szkoła Doktorska Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczego w Poznaniu

Uniwersytet Przyrodniczy w Poznaniu

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**Name and seat of the doctoral school**

Szkoła Doktorska Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczego w Poznaniu

**Evaluation period**

5/15/19–9/10/25

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

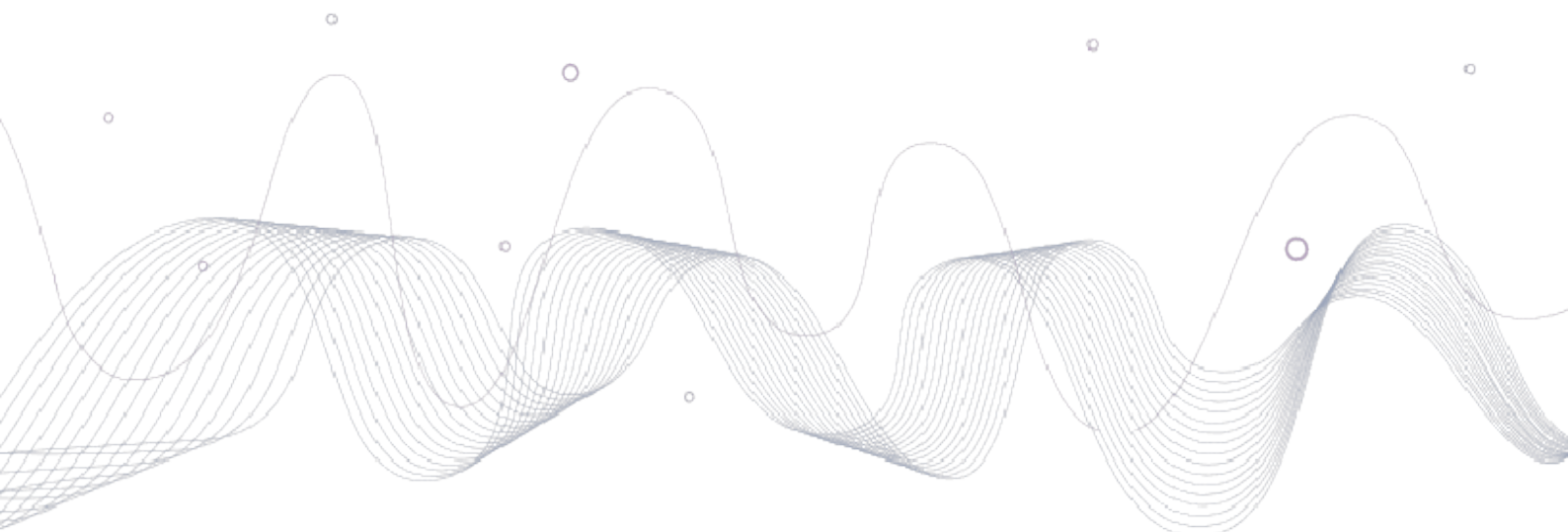
Uniwersytet Przyrodniczy w Poznaniu

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

-

**Date of report**

12/2/25



Composition of the evaluation team:

**Chairman:**

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# I. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Name of doctoral school	Szkoła Doktorska Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczego w Poznaniu
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) mechanical engineering (from: 01-01-2018) environmental engineering, mining and energy (from: 01-01-2018) agriculture and horticulture (from: 01-01-2018) food and nutrition technology (from: 01-01-2018) animal science and fisheries (from: 01-01-2018) forestry (from: 01-01-2018) economics and finance (from: 01-01-2018) veterinary science (from: 11-11-2022)
Name/scope of the education programme	PULS Doctoral School Programme PULS Doctoral School Education Programme
Number of instructors	96
Number of doctoral students undergoing training at the doctoral school (as of 12/2/25)	159
Number of supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 12/2/25)	120
Number of auxiliary supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of	64

12/2/25)

## II. INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION AND ITS COURSE

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The site visit to the Doctoral School of the Poznań University of Life Sciences (PULS DS) took place on February 3-4, 2026, and was conducted in accordance with a previously prepared schedule shared with the DS authorities. On the first day of the visit, the Evaluation team first met with the authorities of the Doctoral School and the Entity - Poznań University of Life Sciences in order to present a detailed schedule of the visit and to familiarize themselves with information on the functioning of the PULS DS, including the educational profile, the most important problems, prospects and the role/function of the DS in the Entity. The next item on the agenda was a meeting with the team preparing the self-assessment report, the Administration, and the PULS DS Council, including those responsible for the reviewed assessment criteria. The Chair of the Education Quality Team, the Rector's Representative for Evaluation, and the Chair of the PhD Doctoral Students' Council also participated in the meeting. Among the topics discussed were issues related to individual evaluation criteria that required additional clarification or supplementation. After a one-hour break, the Evaluation team reviewed documentation related to education at the PULS DS, including: recruitment, appointment of a supervisor and assistant supervisor, supervisor change, and opinions of the PhD Doctoral Students' Council regarding the periodic evaluation of teaching staff, as well as the curricula.

The second day of the site visit began with a meeting with the teaching staff, including supervisors and assistant supervisors, as well as representatives of the Scientific Councils of the represented disciplines at PULS DS. The Evaluation team then met with the doctoral students and the PhD Doctoral Students' Council. It should be emphasized that both meetings were performed without attendance of PULS DS authorities, while among the doctoral students there were also international doctoral students who actively participated in the discussion. The meeting allowed for the verification of the information contained in the self-assessment report and the insights of staff and doctoral students into numerous important aspects of the evaluation, such as educational programs, supervisory support, the preparation of Individual Research Plans, their implementation, and the possibility of implementing changes. Both groups emphasized the enormous support provided by the SD administration, including solving various problems. Furthermore, the teaching staff highlighted the PULS DS's support in improving competencies through the opportunity to participate in various courses and mobility programs. The doctoral students, on the other hand, expressed satisfaction with the opportunity to conduct classes in a modular system, which allows for more effective organization of activities related to the implementation of Individual Research Plans. Subsequently, the members of the Evaluation team jointly discussed the information obtained during the visit and prepared recommendations, which they presented, along with the progress of the subsequent stages of the evaluation process, to the PULS DS authorities and the Entity during the final meeting.

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

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Based on the evaluation report and the findings from the site visit, the entity's cooperation with the PhD Doctoral Students' Council should be assessed as very well developed institutionally and effectively implemented in practice. The cooperation is systemic in nature and is grounded in a set of governing documents, including the University Statute, the doctoral school regulations, and the council's own regulations. PhD Candidate representatives participate in the university's collegial bodies and in committees important for the functioning of the doctoral school, including with an advisory vote in recruitment procedures, on the School Council, and on the Quality assurance team. The PhD Doctoral Students' Council is involved in key educational processes: it gives opinions on the doctoral school curriculum, agrees the school regulations, and gives opinions on recruitment rules and criteria as well as mid-term evaluation procedures. The Council also issues opinions on draft decisions and resolutions concerning doctoral students. The PhD Doctoral Students' Council has twice agreed with the entity on the candidacy for Head of the PULS DS.

The partnership model of day-to-day cooperation with the PULS DS management and administration, regular working meetings, and joint community-building, integration, and scientific activities should be assessed positively, as should the Council's effectiveness in social matters, including securing increases in doctoral scholarships. During the site visit, doctoral students confirmed the good quality of working relations and the effective role of doctoral representation; the school's scale and the diversity of its community further confirm the importance of this cooperation. In the financial area, it was noted that in the year preceding the visit the PhD Doctoral Student Council had funds amounting to 16,000 PLN at its disposal and had ensured access to premises and facilities.

An area requiring improvement remains the transparency of financial communication regarding funds allocated to the PhD Doctoral Students' Council. The lack of appropriate documentation provided to the Chair of the PhD Doctoral Students' Council weakens the standards of transparency and predictability. In the team's view, it is justified to streamline administrative procedures by introducing an annual written statement of the financial plan for activities, in order to maintain the partnership model of cooperation while increasing the auditability of financial decisions.

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

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- **The adequacy of the education programmes and individual research plans with respect to the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the PQF and their implementation:**  
The programme is very well prepared and consists of a general programme (GP) and a disciplinary programme (DP). The general programme deserves special recognition, as it is based on thematic blocks that take into account the needs of all doctoral students: Research tools (at the end, doctoral students prepare their own projects), Methodology, organization and financing of scientific research (each doctoral student must prepare a draft application for a scientific project in order to pass), Global environmental issues (ends with a test exam), Interdisciplinary seminar (doctoral students present the progress of their doctoral dissertations, which allows for an interdisciplinary view of the research issues they are addressing). This general programme format perfectly meets the requirements of interdisciplinarity. Additionally, a major advantage of the education program at PULS DS is the modular system. Unfortunately, there are several aspects that require improvement. One of these is the introduction of only compulsory subjects into the curricula - there are no optional courses, although Resolution No. 392/2020 of the Senate of the University of Life Sciences in Poznań of 29 January 2020 on the framework programme of education at the PULS DS. refers to compulsory and optional classes (paragraph 10, point 1). Several oversights are also noteworthy regarding the resolutions concerning both the GP and DP. The latest PULS Senate Resolution of January 29, 2020, introduces information from the framework curriculum regarding the GP, but the GP currently used differs from the one presented in the Resolution, which requires an update (a new Senate Resolution). In turn, with regard to DP, it was indicated (supplements to the self-assessment report) that the Resolution of the PULS DS Council regarding DP was adopted on November 6, 2023, which is not in line with the applicable regulations (Journal of Laws 2018, item 1668, art. 200 item 3), according to which: "the education program referred to in art. 201, paragraph 3, shall be made available by the entity running the doctoral school no later than 5 months before the start of recruitment." Furthermore, according to the opinion of PhD students at PULS DS, both the GP and DP are too extensive, resulting in a heavy course load and limited time available for research work as part of their doctoral dissertations. On the other hand, during the visit to PULS DS, the PhD students requested the possibility of introducing classes that would develop specific English language skills. Therefore, the Evaluation Team suggests that PULS DS reorganize both programs to simultaneously reduce the number of hours and ensure the implementation of updated learning outcomes appropriate for qualifications at level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF), in accordance with PULS policy. It is important to note that PULS DS bases education on outdated learning outcomes, i.e., those described in the Regulation of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of 22 December 2015 (Journal of Laws 2016, item 64) and additionally incorrectly referred to as "education outcomes" in the PULS DS Regulations (paragraph 10, item 2). These outdated learning outcomes were used to prepare the syllabi for classes conducted at PULS DS, as well as elements of Individual Research Plans (IRPs). Therefore, the Evaluation Team recommends PULS DS to update the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF), aligned with applicable legal acts, in this case the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 14 November 2018 (Journal of Laws, item 2218), taking into account detailed (second-level) descriptors covering learning outcomes in the areas of general knowledge (WG), specific/field-specific knowledge, general skills, communication skills, organizational skills, learning skills, social competences, organizational competences, competences related to responsibility and a social role, divided into individual learning outcomes within each of the

indicated areas, e.g. P8S\_WG\_3 – knows and understands scientific research methodology. Evaluation Team also recommends that Education Quality Team at PULS DS creates a table (matrix) with the applicable learning outcomes for each discipline. Subsequently, the Evaluation Team recommends that course coordinators identify and record the appropriate learning outcomes in the syllabi for all GP and DP courses, as well as in the IRP. Furthermore, according to the requests of stakeholders during the site visit, the Evaluation Team recommends introducing training for teaching staff at PULS DS in the preparation of syllabi, as well as training for supervisors and doctoral students in the preparation of IRP. Several issues regarding the IRP also require improvement. For example, the IRP does not function as a document in the PULS DS Regulations, despite the clear legal framework created for it. Therefore, Evaluation Team recommends that the PULS DS includes the IRP template (created within the PULS DS) as an annex to the Regulations. The inability to amend the submitted IRP also raises concerns, including doctoral students and supervisors. PULS DS conducts a lot of experimental work, which is prone to various unforeseen problems and, on the other hand, requires schedule modifications, for example, to achieve better results. These issues, in turn, may result in extending the deadline for completing the IRP. Therefore, the Evaluation Team suggests that, in justified cases, the PULS DS allow for changes or modifications to the IRP, for example, through the annexation. The fact that the IRP is reviewed by the Disciplinary Committee (DC), which can impose changes on the doctoral student and supervisor (who are responsible for implementing the IRP), is also incomprehensible. For this reason, the Evaluation Team believes that the IRP prepared by the doctoral student in consultation with the supervisor should not be reviewed by the DC but only accepted by the DS Director.

- **The method of assessing the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the PQF:**  
As already mentioned in the assessment of the quality of education under Criterion 1, education at PULS DS is based on learning outcomes that are inconsistent with applicable regulations, i.e., the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of November 14, 2018, on the characteristics of second-level learning outcomes for qualifications at levels 6-8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF). In this regard, Evaluation Team recommends remedial action, consisting of preparing appropriate learning outcomes, preferably in the form of matrices for each discipline, which clearly demonstrate that all learning outcomes assigned to a discipline are fulfilled by subjects included in the curriculum and the Individual Research Plan.

In terms of the systemic solutions adopted by PULS DS, the two modular curricula mentioned earlier should be appreciated, i.e. the General Program (GP) and the Disciplinary Program (DP), which enable doctoral students to tailor their study plan to their own needs and interests. Furthermore, the PULS provides access to research infrastructure, laboratories, databases, and training in various software within the module "Research Tools".

Based on the provided syllabi (with the exception of the biotechnology syllabi, which were not included in either the self-assessment report or the report supplements), it is clear that PULS DS offers a variety of innovative teaching methods. These include panel discussions, lectures with invited experts, case studies, lectures combined with workshops, presentations on how to use online information sources and scientific IT platforms, industry videos, and simulation games. Assessment of learning outcomes takes into account the PhD students' theoretical knowledge, skills, and social competencies and appears to be achieved transparently through various methods. For example, in addition to standard methods such as oral and written examinations and final assessments, these include preparing a project or its draft, successfully completing an experiment, assessing engagement in discussion or teamwork, evaluating the performance of a measuring device, analyzing data collected during individual work, writing an essay, preparing a structured interview, debating, brainstorming, preparing a report or protocol, and so on. The only concern about the transparency of the verification process was raised by foreign doctoral students studying at PULS DS during the site visit. They pointed to inequalities in the assessment process, including the ability of Polish doctoral students to receive teaching aids and take exams in Polish, despite the entirety of their education being conducted in English. However, in the opinion of the Evaluation Team, this is consistent with the DS Regulations, which state that "For Polish citizens, education shall be conducted in Polish or English" (the DS Regulations are also available in English on the PULS DS website).

Similarly to the methods of verifying learning outcomes, the form and criteria of assessment are also varied and include, among others, active participation in classes, presentation of the results of teamwork, oral or written examination, multimedia presentation, preparation of a series of graphics, scientific discussion, written test, paper, final report or minutes.

PULS DS Doctoral students are regularly assessed, submit semester reports, and are subject to mid-term and final evaluations. They complete anonymous surveys to evaluate and subsequently improve the doctoral school's programs. They integrate with the academic and industrial communities, collaborating with other universities and the industry, including research internships, publications, and participation in projects with foreign research centers, which is linked to the PREIDUB program. They also apply for various external mobility funding opportunities (NAWA, NCN, Erasmus+ Actions KA131 and KA171, COST Actions, CEEPUS, the Polish-American Fulbright Commission, the DAAD Foundation, the Dekabana Foundation, and

EU funds).

It is worth emphasizing that PULS DS conducts a very extensive survey, both in terms of the classes conducted and the evaluation of lecturers and supervisors; all comments entered in the surveys are considered and discussed and serve to take action to solve problems.

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

The teaching staff at PULS DS comprises 96 employees who teach in the general curriculum and in the so-called discipline-specific programs. As many as 84% of them also serve as supervisors or assistant supervisors, who, in accordance with the PULS DS Regulations (paragraph 17, point 7), expand the supervisor's scope of competence with their own unique scientific expertise. The teaching staff possess qualifications consistent with the university's mission and teaching objectives, as well as current scientific achievements consistent with the scope of education provided in specific disciplines, which is also supported by information contained in the questionnaires regarding academic teacher/researcher qualifications, attached to the self-assessment report. It is worth emphasizing that eleven of the teaching staff are among the top 2% of most cited scientists worldwide. The teaching staff is also highly active in applying for and securing external funding for research and mobility from various sources (including the National Science Centre, the National Centre for Research and Development, the National Agency for Academic Exchange, EU funds, the Erasmus+ program, COST, the CEEPUS network, the Polish-American Fulbright Commission, and the DAAD Foundation), as well as participating in numerous training courses (e.g., academic tutoring) and programs (e.g., PO WER, FERS, PKD) that enhance qualifications and enable the development of transversal competencies. The PULS provides significant assistance in this regard, both through organizing such training and through support from various university-wide units, such as the Project Department and the Support and Development Center. The selection process for doctoral teachers is based on both current scientific and professional competencies related to the field of study (including publications, experience in project acquisition and grant management, international activity, participation in conferences, and collaboration with businesses), as well as relevant teaching experience, including knowledge and fluency in English and supervision of doctoral students. The qualifications of teaching staff are verified by both the DS administration and the School Council (general program), as well as by individual Disciplinary Committees and Disciplinary Academic Councils (disciplinary programs). However, the verification procedures appear to be based solely on descriptive indicators, i.e., the self-assessment report uses general phrases such as "a group of academic teachers with high qualifications, both in research and teaching." Detailed, measurable criteria for assessing the indicated "high qualifications" are not presented, which raises doubts about the transparency of decisions made in staff selection. For this reason, Evaluation team recommends in this respect to consider introducing quantifiable indicators (e.g., minimum thresholds) or using existing ones (e.g., for staff evaluation), as well as, where possible, standardizing the criteria and procedures for evaluating teaching staff across disciplines.

Doctoral students also assess the qualifications of teaching staff at PULS DS through participation in various surveys, which allow them to express anonymous opinions on competence in teaching a given subject, the way knowledge is delivered, the attractiveness of the classes, the quality of communication in English, and the supervision provided by their supervisor. The results of these surveys are analyzed by the Director of the DS, and in the case of low ratings, they form the basis for taking remedial action. According to the self-assessment report, such situations occurred sporadically, and the results obtained from most surveys indicate high ratings for the teaching staff and doctoral supervisor's support. However, regarding the assessment of the quality of doctoral supervision, the decreasing proportion of completed surveys in subsequent years is noteworthy. For this reason, the Evaluation team recommends that the PLUS DS implement more effective measures to encourage

doctoral students to submit their assessments anonymously.

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

The school welcomes the recruitment of both Polish and international candidates. The scientific level of the candidates is the basis for recruitment. The recruitment process is transparent and easily accessible to candidates. Candidates' admission to the DS is determined by an analysis of their scientific achievements, an evaluation of the prepared research project, the results of an interview with the candidates, an analysis of their previous education and the results of an English language proficiency exam. The few appeals to the recruitment process are handled properly and without any doubt.

The qualifications of the recruitment committee members are based on current scientific and professional competencies related to their field of study (including publications, experience in acquiring projects and managing grants, international activity, participation in conferences, and collaboration with businesses), as well as relevant teaching experience. Verification procedures appear to be based solely on descriptive indicators, which may impact the transparency of staff selection decisions. Therefore, the Evaluation team recommends considering the introduction of quantifiable indicators (e.g., minimum thresholds) in this regard.

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

The Doctoral School of the Poznan University of Life Sciences has developed a multi-component supervisory support system that combines formal solutions with both preventive and intervention tools. Candidates are admitted to recruitment only if they have a university researcher's consent to supervise the doctoral project and secure research funding and infrastructure. However, during the site visit, individual voices emerged in the discussion pointing to the lack of financial support for the doctoral student's participation in the conference, despite the supervisor's prior declaration. Therefore, the PULS DS should ensure that such situations do not occur in the future.

Potential supervisors are open to cooperation with both the University's own graduates and candidates from other academic institutions. For this reason, PULS DS should increase its activity in providing this latter group with the opportunity to establish contact with potential supervisors by publishing research issues on its website, which constitute the topics of future doctoral dissertations.

Supervisors are appointed by a resolution of the discipline committee, with the possibility of appointing an assistant supervisor and changing the supervisor in force majeure situations or other justified circumstances. The principles for appointing assistant supervisors should result in a transparent manner from their competences and be consistent with the provisions of the Act of 20 July 2018 – The Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668, as amended).

A clear strength is the set of measures supporting cooperation between doctoral students and supervisors, including inaugural meetings and annual meetings with supervisors, a declaration of cooperation principles, named surveys assessing the quality of supervision with the possibility of intervention by the Head of Doctoral School in cases of low ratings, and semi-annual reports that include the supervisor's opinion on cooperation with the doctoral student. The report also confirms organizational support from the DS office and access to the Support and Development Centre, including psychological, pedagogical, and mentoring assistance, as well as support for persons with disabilities. This is additionally anchored in the regulations, which provide for an individualized organization of education and adapted forms of assessment. Particular merit should be attributed to the School's "Declaration of Principles of Cooperation between the Supervisor and the PhD Candidate," which serves as a preventive and structuring tool from the very beginning of the training process. The document sets out key rules of cooperation, including mutual expectations, the supervisor's availability hours, preferred communication channels and frequency, feedback arrangements, and the organization of work across subsequent stages of the dissertation. Importantly, the declaration also addresses authorship, co-authorship, and intellectual property issues, thereby reducing the risk of misunderstandings related to the publication of research outcomes. In the evaluation team's view, this solution constitutes good practice that strengthens transparency, safeguards cooperation quality, and effectively prevents supervisor - doctoral student conflicts. Regardless, it seems that PULS DS should define clear procedures to be followed in the event of such situations, i.e. a conflict between a doctoral student and a supervisor or an assistant supervisor, especially since such an event occurred several times during the evaluation period.

Findings from the site visit confirmed the practical functioning of the declaration of cooperation between supervisors and doctoral students, the use of semi-annual reports, and the availability of psychological support.



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

The rules for conducting mid-term evaluations (MTE) at the PULS DS are very precisely set out in the appendix to Order No. 15/2025 of the Rector of the PULS of 25 February 2025. At the PULS DS, the MTE is conducted in accordance with the applicable Act, i.e. the implementation of the Individual Research Plan (IRP) is subject to a mid-term evaluation halfway through the education period, at the end of the fourth semester, most often in September. An interesting solution is the two-stage evaluation. No later than by the end of July (at least 30 days before the MTE), the doctoral student shall personally submit to the relevant Discipline Committee a mid-term report on the implementation of the individual research plan, reviewed by the supervisor or supervisors, including: information on the progress of the research tasks comprising the doctoral dissertation and information on compliance with the schedule presented in the individual research plan. This stage allows for better preparation for the actual mid-term evaluation. In September, the Evaluation committee conducts an interview with the doctoral student and the supervisor(s) regarding the submitted report. The adopted rules seem appropriate. Doctoral students are informed in a proper manner and in a timely manner about the way in which the mid-term evaluation will be conducted. The possibility of participation by impartial witnesses – representatives of the doctoral student council – guarantees the transparency and impartiality of the evaluation.

The only doubt during the assessment of Criterion 6 concerns the presence of the supervisor during the mid-term assessment. Although the supervisor is not a member of the Evaluation committee and cannot vote on the doctoral student's assessment, the Evaluation committee also conducts an interview with the supervisor, which, in the opinion of the Evaluation Team, should not take place. The supervisor should not participate in meetings during the mid-term evaluation and should not comment on the submitted report.

- **Internationalisation:**

Although classes at the PULS DS are conducted entirely in English, according to the self-assessment report and supplements, the proportion of foreign academic staff in the curriculum is small, at approximately 3%. According to the Evaluation team increasing this proportion would undoubtedly aid the internationalization of PULS DS. The composition of this foreign academic staff is also questionable. While the teachers listed in the syllabi include several individuals with foreign-sounding surnames, the Evaluation team believes these are employed at the PULS DS, but not under "visiting scholar" contracts, and therefore should not be considered foreign academic staff. On the other hand, they contribute to the internationalization of the PULS DS, for example, by maintaining scientific collaboration in research and internships, for example, with India. The PULS DS also has a small proportion of supervisors or assistant supervisors employed outside Poland – during the period under evaluation, this involved the education of only three doctoral students. The Evaluation team therefore also suggests increasing the importance on the declared participation in internationalization by expanding the number of supervisors, co-supervisors and auxiliary supervisors from foreign research centers. It should be emphasized, however, that the quality of education from an international perspective is largely influenced by visitors from abroad, invited to lectures (for short or long stays) as part of the General Program – they constitute approximately 25% of the teaching staff.

The teaching staff of PULS DS demonstrates a high degree of research mobility and international activity, in part thanks to successful applications for national and international mobility funds. This mobility is widely supported institutionally and directly translates into the internationalization of research and the doctoral education process. The staff mobility support system includes information, grant advice, flexible teaching planning (modular system), and motivational mechanisms (periodic evaluations, bonuses). Teaching staff from most disciplines are also involved in international research, scientific networks and societies, and participate in international conferences. It is also worth emphasizing that, thanks to their supervisors, PhD students at PULS DS also pursue research in close international collaboration, participating in projects financed by the NAWA, Horizon, and COST programs, and publishing with foreign authors. Furthermore, during the period under review, approximately 42% of PhD students benefited from scholarships or internships abroad. The supplementary materials to the self-assessment report include several examples of IRPs, which include many elements of internationalization, such as publications in international journals, sources of research funding, which often include international projects and programmes, participation in international conferences, and collaboration with foreign research teams.

The PULS DS has an English-language website, a key tool for promoting the School and University internationally. The website provides information on the English-language education offered, recruitment for international candidates, a description of the DS's operating principles, study programs, and information on support for doctoral students. Contact with the PULS DS is available in English, including administrative support and ongoing communication regarding organizational and informational matters. Language support covers, among other things, the recruitment process, educational organization, and residence and integration issues for foreign doctoral students. Unfortunately, the PULS DS does not engage in social media activity in English, which would undoubtedly increase its attractiveness among potential foreign candidates.

The clear strategy of PULS DS for further development of internationalization should be

appreciated, including, among others, acquiring foreign assistant supervisors, developing co-tutelle agreements, increasing participation in international doctoral networks and organizing international conferences.

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

During the period subject to evaluation, many PhD students at PULS DS took advantage of the statutory extension of the deadline for submitting their doctoral dissertations. Although PULS DS has not yet developed a list of reasons, the PhD students' arguments were based on rational grounds, which included random events related to the research (e.g., the need to repeat experiments), documented illness, or other significant and documented circumstances (e.g., a change of employer in the case of an implementation-based PhD, waiting for publication of an article, maternity leave).

Doctoral students who submitted a doctoral dissertation application during the evaluation period constitute 95% of the doctoral students who completed their doctoral studies at the PULS DS during that period. A doctoral degree was awarded to 70% of these students (none were denied a degree), with 39% of them receiving a distinction for their doctoral dissertation. This demonstrates the high quality of the research conducted by the doctoral students, which is further confirmed by the wide diversity and high level of their scientific achievements in each of the disciplines represented at PULS DS. Most of these achievements were directly or indirectly related to the scientific activity defined in the IRP and included, among other things, the dissemination of innovative and applicable research results through publications in renowned and highly indexed scientific journals or award-winning presentations at national and international conferences, winning awards in prestigious competitions for business and implementation studies, obtaining external funding for research, and filing patent applications. During the evaluation period, the Education Quality Assessment Team did not operate at the PULS DS, but doctoral students had the opportunity to assess the quality of their education through several anonymous surveys concerning the general curriculum, disciplinary programs, principles and process of mid-term evaluation, and the quality of their doctoral supervision. Doctoral students expressed positive opinions about the modular learning options. They also rated the general curriculum and interdisciplinary seminars favorably, as well as the attractiveness of the classes and the method of delivering knowledge, the language skills of the teaching staff, and their collaboration with the supervisor. They also rated the mid-term evaluation process and procedures positively. Concerns about the quality of education were raised in the surveys only in single cases, providing grounds for the DS Director to take remedial action (e.g., changing the course teacher, discussing the teacher to improve the excellence of their education). However, the proportion of doctoral students completing the surveys was less than 100%, indicating the need for more effective measures by the PULS DS to encourage the use of this educational evaluation option. Another alternative may be direct meetings with doctoral students, such as those organized by the Director of PULS DS for 3 cohorts (61 people participated), during which it was possible to draw attention to various issues related to improving the quality of education.

During the period under evaluation, PULS DS did not monitor the professional careers of graduates who completed their doctoral studies and who earned a doctoral degree after completing their doctoral studies. Therefore, it is recommended that such monitoring be implemented as soon as possible, as its results can help both assess the quality of education and further develop PULS DS.

## V. FINAL OPINION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Doctoral School of the Poznań University of Life Sciences (PULS DS) provides high-quality doctoral education. It has developed and implemented numerous mechanisms to improve the education of PhD students. Some shortcomings identified in the self-assessment report and during the visit are discussed below.

- The Evaluation team recommends the introduction of training for teaching staff at PULS DS in syllabus preparation, as well as training for supervisors and PhD students in preparing Individual Research Plan (IRP). This will allow for the development of appropriate learning outcomes for each discipline, clearly demonstrating that all learning outcomes assigned to a discipline are met by subjects included in the curriculum and the IRP.
- PULS DS is recommended to update the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework, aligned with the applicable legal acts of the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of November 14, 2018 (Journal of Laws, item 2218), taking into account detailed (second-level) characteristics covering learning outcomes in the areas of general knowledge, specific/field-specific knowledge, general skills, communication skills, organizational skills, learning skills, social competences, organizational competences, competences related to responsibility and social role, divided into individual learning outcomes within each of the indicated areas.
- The Evaluation team recommends that PULS DS reorganize the General program and the Discipline-specific program to simultaneously reduce the number of hours and ensure the implementation of updated learning outcomes, appropriate for level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework, in accordance with PULS policy.
- The evaluation team recommends considering the introduction of quantifiable indicators (e.g., minimum thresholds) or the use of existing ones (e.g., for employee evaluation), as well as, where possible, standardizing the criteria and procedures for evaluating teaching staff across disciplines, selecting members of the recruitment committee, and selecting members of the committee for the mid-term evaluation of doctoral candidates.
- It is recommended that the supervisor and assistant supervisor not participate in meetings during the mid-term evaluation.
- The participation of international staff in the educational programs is small, at approximately 3%. According to the evaluation team, increasing this proportion would undoubtedly help to internationalize the PULS DS.

The DS's strengths include a catalog of activities supporting collaboration between doctoral students and their supervisors, including inaugural meetings and annual meetings with supervisors, a declaration of principles of cooperation, personalized surveys of the quality of supervisory support with the director's response to low grades, and semester reports that incorporate the supervisor's opinion on the collaboration with the doctoral candidate. The PULS DS's clear strategy for further internationalization is commendable, including the recruitment of foreign assistant supervisors, the development of co-tutelle agreements, increased participation in international doctoral networks, and the organization of international conferences. Conducting classes at the Doctoral School in a modular system is also a very good solution, enabling doctoral students to better organize activities related to the implementation of their doctoral

dissertation.

The excellent relationships between doctoral students, teachers conducting classes at the Doctoral School, and the Doctoral School administration deserve great recognition. Both the Doctoral School teaching staff and the Doctoral School participants feel strong support from the Doctoral School administration, which allows for the proper implementation of the educational process in a friendly atmosphere. The PULS Doctoral School is a large institution, open to introducing changes that will improve the already well-functioning doctoral education process.

In the opinion of the Evaluation team, the outcome of the evaluation of the Doctoral School of the Poznań University of Life Sciences is positive.

## VI. ASSESSMENT AND REASON

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Final assessment  
positive

**Reason:**

The Doctoral School of the Poznań University of Life Sciences (PULS DS) provides high-quality doctoral education. The PULS DS conducts the education process at a very high level, fully meeting the requirements set for level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework, however it is recommended to update the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework, aligned with the applicable legal acts of the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of November 14, 2018 (Journal of Laws, item 2218).

Teaching processes and methods for monitoring the progress of doctoral students' education are conducted appropriately and ensure the achievement of appropriate learning outcomes.

The teaching staff is well-selected, although increasing the participation of international staff is recommended. The PULS DS's clear strategy for further internationalization is commendable, including the recruitment of foreign assistant supervisors, as well as the development of co-tutelle agreements. Conducting classes at the Doctoral School in a modular system is also a very good solution, enabling doctoral students to better organize activities related to the implementation of their doctoral dissertation.

The recruitment process is conducted transparently and in accordance with internal regulations. All remarks are improvement-oriented and do not undermine the overall high quality of doctoral training offered by the PULS DS. In conclusion, the PULS DS provides education at a high academic, organisational, and didactic level.

The Evaluation Team recommends that the next evaluation of the PULS DS 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).

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