
KEN


2023-2027

DOCTORAL SCHOOL

EDUCATION QUALITY REPORT

Szkoła Nauk Społecznych

Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk



Name and seat of the doctoral school

Szkoła Nauk Społecznych

Evaluation period

10/1/19–5/11/25

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

Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk

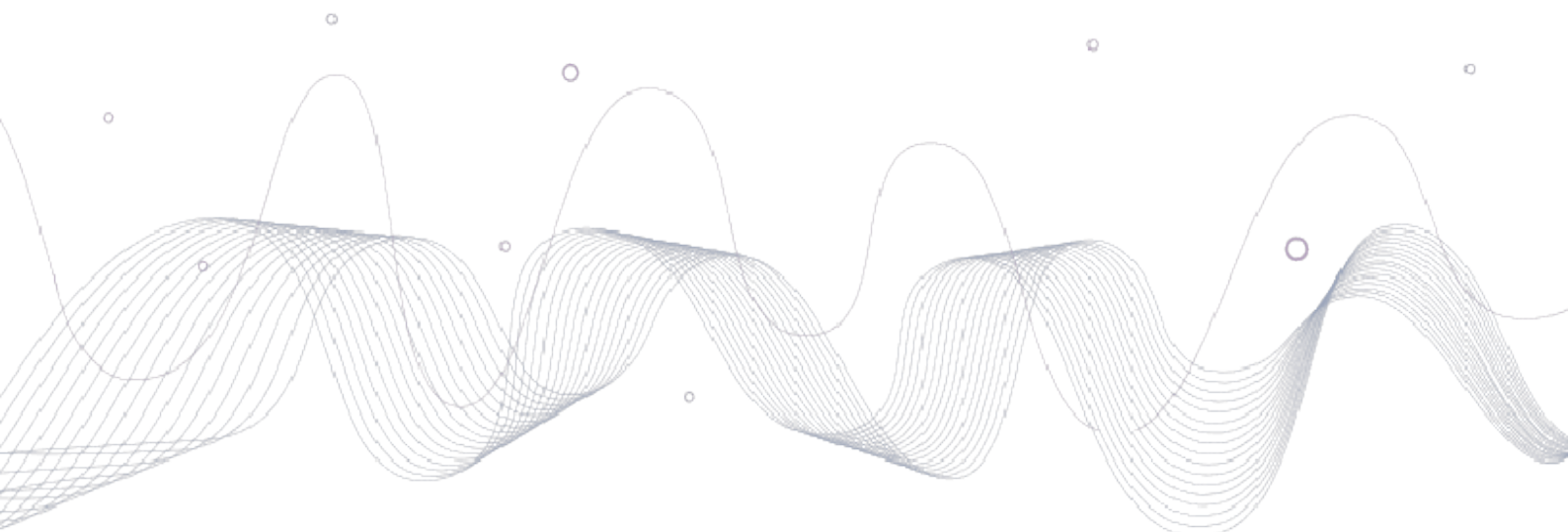
Entities that jointly run the doctoral school (when conducted jointly)

Instytut Psychologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk

Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk

Date of report

8/4/25



Composition of the evaluation team:

Chairman:

Adam Czabański

Secretary:

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Name of doctoral school	Szkoła Nauk Społecznych
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	Humanities (from: 01-01-2018) Social sciences (from: 01-01-2018)
Discipline(s) of science or art in which training is provided	philosophy (from: 01-01-2018) political and administrative sciences (from: 01-01-2018) sociology (from: 01-01-2018) psychology (from: 01-01-2018)
Name/scope of the education programme	Education program at the doctoral school
Number of instructors	26
Number of doctoral students undergoing training at the doctoral school (as of 7/29/25)	92
Number of supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 7/29/25)	55
Number of auxiliary supervisors in terms of guidance in preparing doctoral dissertations (as of 7/29/25)	7

II. INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION AND ITS COURSE

The evaluation of the Doctoral School – the Doctoral School of Social Sciences at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences – was conducted at the initiative of the Science Evaluation Committee (KEN) as part of the work schedule for 2025.

The site visit was preceded by two meetings of the evaluation panel held on 12 August and 29 August 2025. At the initiative of the Chair of the evaluation panel, the meetings were conducted online and concerned the division of work within the panel, substantive issues related to individual evaluation criteria for the functioning of the Doctoral School, the site visit schedule, and other organisational matters related to the visit.

The GSSR self-assessment report was available in the SED-ok system as of 4 August 2025; therefore, the panel was able to share comments and preliminary assessments of the facts described in the document submitted by the Doctoral School.

All members of the evaluation panel participated in preparatory training sessions prior to the site visit. On 3 September 2025, a training session was conducted by the KEN Team for the Evaluation of Doctoral Schools, and on 4 September 2025 a training session on the use of the SED-ok system for the purposes of Doctoral School evaluation was held.

Members of the evaluation panel prepared questions in advance (by 8 September 2025), which were then submitted in two ways: on 20 September 2025 they were uploaded to the SED-ok system by the Secretary of the evaluation panel, and on 23 September 2025 – in a more extensive version, including general questions concerning the principles of the Doctoral School's functioning – they were sent by email to the Director of the Doctoral School and the Doctoral School Coordinator.

The site visit was scheduled and conducted on 8 October 2025. All members of the evaluation panel participated. The site visit schedule was agreed with the authorities of the Doctoral School well in advance. On 17 September 2025, the Secretary of the evaluation panel sent a proposed schedule to the Doctoral School Coordinator, requesting the designation of representatives of the Doctoral School who would participate in the meetings.

The site visit proceeded according to the following programme:

8:30–9:00 – Meeting with the Director of the Doctoral School and representatives of the Institutes forming part of the Doctoral School, aimed at presenting the detailed site visit schedule and familiarising the evaluation panel with a presentation by the Doctoral School authorities on the most significant issues concerning the role of the evaluated disciplines in implementing the Doctoral School's strategy.

9:00–11:00 – Meeting with the team responsible for preparing the self-assessment report and with the Doctoral School administration.

11:00–12:00 – Meeting with teaching staff at the Doctoral School, academic supervisors, and representatives of the Scientific Councils or their equivalents of the evaluated disciplines represented in the Doctoral School in which education is provided.

12:00–12:45 – Break for the evaluation panel.

12:45–13:30 – Review of Individual Research Plans and documentation of the mid-term evaluation.

13:30–15:00 – Meeting with doctoral candidates and the Doctoral Students' Self-Government

Council.

15:00–16:00 – Internal summarising meeting of the evaluation panel.

16:00–16:30 – Final meeting with the Doctoral School authorities, including presentation of the subsequent stages of the evaluation procedure.

16:30 – Conclusion of the site visit.

In addition to the Director and the Coordinator of the Doctoral School, the meetings were attended by representatives of individual PAS Institutes representing the respective scientific disciplines, including philosophy; a representative group of supervisors; doctoral candidates undertaking education at the Doctoral School; and representatives of the Doctoral Students' Self-Government.

During the site visit, it was agreed that additional questions concerning individual criteria might arise and would be sent by email. A list of requests for documents and questions was sent on October 16, 2025, to the Director of the Doctoral School and the Doctoral School Coordinator. The evaluation report was prepared on the basis of data collected throughout the entire site visit process, including information contained in the self-assessment report; oral and written responses to the panel members' questions; data obtained from the Doctoral School's website and the websites of the Institutes running the School; and documentation reviewed during the site visit (Individual Research Plans and mid-term evaluation documentation).

The site visit took place in a positive atmosphere, with the work focused on analysing the functioning of the Doctoral School, its objectives, problems, and challenges. All scheduled meetings were held, and the individuals designated by the Doctoral School participated in them. The meetings took place in a conference-style room, where the evaluation panel also reviewed the documentation available onsite. The Director and the Coordinator of the Doctoral School remained at the disposal of the evaluation panel throughout the entire duration of the site visit. The site visit concluded with summarising meetings – first among the members of the evaluation panel, and subsequently between the evaluation panel and the Director of the Doctoral School, the Doctoral School Coordinator, and representatives of the PAS Institutes forming part of the Doctoral School. The Chair of the evaluation panel presented preliminary conclusions regarding the evaluation of the Doctoral School and, on behalf of himself and all panel members, expressed thanks for the efficient and courteous cooperation provided by the Doctoral School authorities. The meeting ended with the Chair of the evaluation panel presenting the next steps in the procedure for evaluating the quality of education at the GSSR.

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

At the Graduate School for Social Research (a.k.a. GSSR), operated by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (IFiS) PAS (the Polish Academy of Sciences), a Doctoral Students' Self-Government is in place. As indicated in the submitted self-assessment report and the data obtained during the site visit, cooperation between the Self-Government and the School Management is conducted in a manner that is appropriate. Doctoral candidates are included in co-decision-making processes concerning key issues related to the organisation and course of education, and their voice is genuinely taken into account in decision-making. The Management of the Doctoral School cooperates with the Doctoral Students' Self-Government to integrate the academic community of the Doctoral School and the PAS institutes that co-create it. Such activities support academic development and the establishment of intra-institutional, interdisciplinary research collaborations. The strong and active role of the Self-Government is also confirmed by the content of §8(3) of the Regulations of the Doctoral School, pursuant to which the Self-Government has the right to express opinions on all matters concerning doctoral candidates, and the Management of the Doctoral School is obliged to take these opinions into account when making decisions.

Representatives delegated by the Doctoral Students' Self-Government have participated in the work of the Doctoral School Council (since 2021), and in the next recruitment process they will – according to the declaration of the Director of GSSR – also be included as observers in the work of the recruitment committees.

One challenge indicated by the Doctoral Students' Self-Government as well as by doctoral candidates concerns the insufficient level of the doctoral scholarship, which is related to nationwide conditions for conducting academic activity. The Doctoral Students' Self-Government pointed out that the lack of progress in this area limits their sense of agency and discourages doctoral candidates from participating in self-government activities.

Currently, the Doctoral Students' Self-Government does not have financial resources at its disposal for its activities. This is related to the financial situation of the Doctoral School. This issue requires attention. Ensuring financial resources for the activities of the self-government is an obligation of the entities running the doctoral school (Article 110(9) in conjunction with Article 215(2) of the Act of 20 July 2018 The Law on Higher Education and Science, a.k.a. AHES), and the amount of these resources should at least allow participation in conventions and other events of the Polish National Association of Doctoral Candidates or the Agreement of Doctoral Candidates of PAS Institutes.

The Doctoral School presented documents confirming the participation of the Doctoral Students' Self-Government in the procedure for amending the provisions of the Regulations of the Doctoral School. Given that agreeing on the content of the regulations or issuing an opinion on the education programme is a statutory requirement, it is advisable to ensure the archiving of documents confirming such agreements or the obtaining of the relevant opinions.

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 set of learning outcomes formulated for the education programme at the Doctoral School of Social Sciences of the PAS is adequate – it includes all learning outcomes specified in the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 14 November 2018 on the characteristics of second-cycle learning outcomes for qualifications at Levels 6 – 8 of the Polish Qualifications Framework. The education programme defines learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, and social competences in a manner that enables their measurability and verifiability. The adopted learning outcomes directly correspond to the scientific disciplines in which a doctoral candidate may obtain a doctoral degree. Individual Research Plans (IRPs) have been developed in accordance with statutory requirements (Article 202 of the AHES) and are consistent with the provisions of the Regulations of the Doctoral School. Nevertheless, a detailed analysis indicates significant variation in the level of detail of the schedules for implementing individual research activities aimed at achieving the learning outcomes. The structure of the IRPs enables the resolution of research problems defined within the doctoral dissertation and guarantees the achievement of learning outcomes planned for Level 8 PQF qualifications. The requirement to include activities related to science communication, entrepreneurship, and societal engagement in the IRPs has also been met. The public outreach activities indicated in the IRPs and the outcomes of cooperation between doctoral candidates and supervisors should be positively assessed. The internationalisation of the conducted research and the academic mobility of doctoral candidates are undoubtedly at a high level. Doctoral candidates' achievements – such as NCN Preludium grants across all disciplines, publications (e.g. Ecological Economics, Social Indicators Research, Social Science & Medicine), conference presentations (e.g. International Political Science Association – IPSA), and awards (e.g. Fulbright Junior Research) – clearly confirm the adequacy of the study programme and IRPs for achieving learning outcomes at Level 8 PQF. The Study Programme and *the PhD Handbook* specify theoretical and methodological courses, optional forms of education (e.g. summer schools), and mandatory four-year participation in research teams, which serves the function of a research internship. The implementation of the education programme and individual research plans is appropriate. The programme and IRPs are implemented over a four-year cycle in stages defined in *the PhD Handbook*. Moreover, the education programme is subject to regular review to assess the effectiveness of the educational activities undertaken and the relevance of the content delivered. Actions are also taken to increase the innovativeness of doctoral education, including the implementation of modern teaching methods. The implementation of initiatives through inter-institutional cooperation within the offered scientific disciplines guarantees the interdisciplinary nature of the functioning of the Doctoral School of Social Sciences of the PAS. Academic support, including well-developed relationships between doctoral students and supervisors, provides tangible assistance in carrying out research projects and enables ongoing monitoring of the achievement of learning outcomes at Level 8 PQF. A weakness identified in the evaluated area is insufficient funding, which may hinder the development of ongoing research, particularly in cooperation with renowned foreign centres. As a positive aspect, the involvement of external and internal stakeholders in the process of improving education, as well as their participation in creating new course offerings and modes of instruction, should be noted. This leads to the conclusion that the process of enhancing the education programme is becoming increasingly advanced and systematic.

- **The method of assessing the learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 of the PQF:** Verification of learning outcomes at Level 8 PQF in the Graduate School for Social Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences occurs at every stage of education, including the subject, classes, semester, year, mid-term assessment, and completion of the educational process. It covers knowledge, skills, and social competence, and the rules of verification are accessible and unambiguous.

After completing the classes provided in the education program, participants are expected to possess the required qualifications in terms of knowledge, skills, and social competence, and ultimately confirm their full 8 PQF qualifications with a doctoral diploma.

The transparency and reliability of the process of verifying learning outcomes for qualifications at level 8 PQF, as well as its continuous improvement, raise no concerns. It is implemented in accordance with the provisions contained in the following documents: *the Rules for the Verification of Learning Outcomes for Level 8 PQF* and *Appendix 1 to the Education Program*. These documents operate within the framework of the Study Regulations and the Education Program, and are supplemented by: the annually updated *the PhD Handbook* and standardized course syllabi.

The verification of learning outcomes at the GSSR is systematic and multifaceted. It covers various aspects of doctoral students' scientific, research, teaching, and social development and has both formal and informal dimensions. As part of the formal assessment, all compulsory elements of education and optional activities are verified in relation to the outcomes in accordance with the 8th PQF. The informal dimension focuses on the ongoing observation of research work in the supervisor-doctoral student relationship.

It is worth noting that there is additional verification of the outcomes of the 8th PQF as part of international mobility programs financed by NAWA PROM. Committees appointed by the GSSR Director assess the knowledge, skills, and social competence of doctoral students through a systematic comparison of documentation before and after mobility. In addition, the increased participation of representatives of the international scientific community in the work of evaluation committees onwards should be appreciated. This has directly translated into improved transparency and credibility of the standards for verifying the achievement of results in line with the 8th PQF and has improved their comparability with recognized international practices.

The key moment for verifying learning outcomes is the mid-term assessment carried out in accordance with statutory requirements halfway through doctoral studies, as well as internal assessments carried out annually for years 1–3 by committees appointed by Institute Directors. Academic staff conducting research and with achievements in the disciplines being assessed, often with the participation of foreign researchers, evaluate the progress in the preparation of the doctoral dissertation and the professional development of the doctoral student based on the draft article, dissertation proposal, course credits, participation in conferences, grant activity, and the supervisor's opinion. Each assessment concludes with a consensus report, which is made available to the doctoral student and supervisor in order to support further development and ensure transparency.

As a result of the adopted verification solutions, doctoral students are guaranteed to acquire theoretical knowledge, including, in particular, concepts and discoveries that are key to the discipline and the doctoral student's research; skills that enable doctoral students to independently design and conduct research, formulate research problems, select appropriate research methods, analyze data, and interpret the results of their research; social competencies in the form of the ability to work in research teams, manage projects, and

communicate research results at conferences and in scientific publications.

- Qualification of academic teachers and academic staff employed at the doctoral school:**
The scientific activities and achievements of the teaching staff are adequate to the scope of education provided. The demonstrated scientific and teaching achievements of those involved in educating and supervising doctoral students indicate that they are individuals with excellent, and in some cases truly outstanding, teaching accomplishments and extensive pedagogical experience. The clear and transparent criteria for selecting teaching staff at the Doctoral School are particularly commendable. Currently, syllabus competitions are being implemented across all institutes that make up the Doctoral School. These initiatives are guided by three goals: excellence, fairness and gender balance, and the professional development of teaching staff. Academic staff teaching at the Doctoral School are selected according to the compatibility of their research profiles with the School's programme.

The Doctoral School draws not only on the staff of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (IFIS PAN), the Institute of Psychology (IP PAN), and the Institute of Political Studies (IPS PAN) of the Polish Academy of Sciences, but also collaborates with distinguished experts, including international scholars. The opportunity for regular collaboration with leading scientists representing renowned research centres worldwide is undoubtedly beneficial for doctoral students. In this way, the Doctoral School demonstrates its awareness of the specific and diverse educational needs of doctoral candidates.

The high quality of activities aimed at the professional development of SD staff is noteworthy, particularly in relation to the roles of supervisor or co-supervisor. Professional development in teaching and supervisory competences takes place both through individual initiative (e.g. participation in international consortia, scholarships, grants, civic engagement, co-design and implementation of teaching programmes with foreign universities, and mentoring by experienced academics through co-teaching, co-supervision, and joint publications) and through institutional support for international cooperation, inclusive teaching, and supervisory excellence (e.g. Erasmus+, NAWA PROM). The Doctoral School also strengthens academic relations through grants (such as NAWA STER) that support joint teaching, supervision, and research projects with partners from Europe and the US. The teaching and supervisory competences of the School's academic staff are further enhanced through numerous training programmes, including intercultural training, support for supervisors of international students, and ethics training focused on anti-discrimination and anti-mobbing principles.

The documentation of the Doctoral School does not indicate the presence of any significant conflicts. The few reported cases of supervisor changes during the course of study were due to independent circumstances and were not related to insufficient qualifications of the research staff involved.

In 2025, the Doctoral School introduced a multi-level evaluation system for academic staff (a peer-review system encompassing syllabus review, class observation, discussion of best practices, and student evaluation of all courses since the School's establishment). The assessment of staff qualifications is reliable and as objective as possible. The evaluation process is ongoing and involves the Education Quality Commission with external experts, the Doctoral School's Scientific Council, the Director, reviewers, and doctoral students. This evaluation system ensures compliance with the Polish Qualifications Framework at level 8 and helps identify areas for improvement.

The analysis of the documents provided by the Doctoral School, as well as interviews conducted during the site visit with the authorities, academic staff, and doctoral students, allow for a positive and high assessment of Criterion 3 – Qualifications of academic teachers or research staff providing education at the Doctoral School.

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

Recruitment to the Doctoral School is conducted through an open competition, and the quality and accessibility of information and internal legal acts related to the recruitment process raise no concerns. The competition is conducted by recruitment committees appointed separately for each scientific discipline and the PAS Institute by the Director of the relevant Institute, co-creating the Doctoral School. The Doctoral School Council determines the Rules of Recruitment to the GSSR. The recruitment process is accessible to international candidates and supports the admission of applicants with high research potential. The Council of GSSR also undertakes activities to promote doctoral education with the aim of attracting the best candidates.

The Doctoral School is characterised by the accessibility, clarity, and openness of its recruitment rules, as well as the timely publication of these rules. Recruitment to the Doctoral School is conducted in two stages and is generally carried out remotely. Applications for admission to the Doctoral School are submitted electronically.

The method for verifying candidates' aptitude for conducting research is appropriate and transparent. In the first stage, candidates submit an application for admission, along with an academic CV, a master's thesis or a selected individual scholarly work, a copy of their diploma, and a transcript of grades. Candidates also submit a concise description of the planned research. Additionally, candidates may provide letters of recommendation (up to two) from the supervisor of their master's thesis or another person familiar with the candidate's academic achievements.

In the first stage, the committee evaluates the documents submitted by the candidate and analyses the extent to which the proposed research aligns with the research profile of the relevant PAS Institute. At this stage, candidates may obtain up to 70% of the total points available in the recruitment process.

In the second stage, an interview is conducted – usually remotely via an online communication platform – which enhances the inclusiveness of the process. This enables the recruitment of candidates from abroad, including those from different time zones. The interview accounts for a maximum of 30% of the total points in the recruitment procedure. The number of places offered within individual disciplines is relatively small, primarily due to financial constraints faced by the Institutes co-running the School. Additional places are offered in connection with projects implemented by individual Institutes and financed from external sources, which provide for the involvement of doctoral candidates and include funding for doctoral scholarships. Despite the limited number of places, recruitment to the Doctoral School of Social Sciences attracts considerable interest. For example, in the academic year 2025/2026, 35 candidates applied for admission to the 13 available places across all disciplines.

The Doctoral School sets higher requirements for candidates than those stipulated in the Act on Higher Education and Science (specifically, documented proficiency in English), which should be assessed as conducive to maintaining a high quality of doctoral education. This requirement is also justified, given the School's participation in the international academic community and the fact that education is conducted in English.

In the recruitment process, the Doctoral School takes into account the needs of candidates with disabilities, for example, by allowing for a longer admission interview. This should be assessed unequivocally positively in terms of the evaluation criteria.

A high level of diligence is evident in the actions undertaken by the institution to improve the recruitment process. The Doctoral School carries out internal evaluations of the recruitment

procedure. An example of a change to be implemented as a result of this evaluation's process is the inclusion of a doctoral candidate as an observer in recruitment committees (a change planned to be introduced in the recruitment conducted in 2026).

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

The GSSR places strong emphasis on ensuring a high quality of academic supervision. This includes both safeguarding an appropriate standard of supervisory support and integrating doctoral students into the academic life of the Institutes responsible for their education. The procedures and criteria for appointing and changing a supervisor or supervisors are regulated in the Regulations of the Doctoral School. A person performing the role of supervisor is appointed within the timeframe stipulated by the AHES, i.e. within three months from the commencement of education. Supervisors are appointed by the Scientific Councils of the PAS Institutes for doctoral students pursuing education within a specific discipline.

The Doctoral School Council proposes a supervisor or supervisors (including an co-supervisor), taking into account the doctoral student's preferences and the recommendations of the recruitment committee (§11(1) of the Regulations). Approximately 30% of students prepare their doctoral dissertations in cooperation with more than one supervisor. To a large extent, second supervisors or co-supervisors are employed at foreign academic institutions. This practice unquestionably deserves recognition. The GSSR has developed mechanisms to ensure high-quality cooperation between doctoral candidates and their supervisors, including procedures for resolving conflicts and changing supervisors. The School allows for a change of supervisor (§11(6) of the Regulations), and in practice, this option is used – according to the self-assessment report, it has been applied in seven cases. In the supervisory relationship, obligations are imposed on both the supervisor and the doctoral student. The parties are required to meet regularly – no less frequently than once every two months. Moreover, the supervisor's tasks include, inter alia, supporting the doctoral students in applying for external research funding and integrating them into the life of the Institute or research group. The Doctoral School verifies the fulfilment of these obligations during annual evaluations and the mid-term evaluation.

The Doctoral School has developed and implemented principles and methods for verifying and assessing the performance of supervisors and the support provided by the School. In 2025, the GSSR conducted an anonymous survey evaluating supervisors' work. The survey results indicate a high level of satisfaction among doctoral students with their cooperation with their supervisors, while also identifying certain areas for further monitoring and development. Explanations provided during the site visit indicate that the GSSR plans to undertake actions aimed at developing supervisory competence. The implementation of such measures is desirable. The Doctoral School has defined, in the *PhD Handbook*, a procedure for resolving conflict situations relating to the supervisor – student relationship, which should be regarded as good practice in ensuring the quality of supervision. The GSSR provides PhD students with the appropriate conditions and adequate support conducive to learning and development, including support for those with disabilities and parents. Students receive assistance in implementing the education programme, carrying out individual research plans, and preparing doctoral dissertations. The extent to which outstanding specialists from outside the Doctoral School are involved in education is distinctive and worthy of emulation by other doctoral schools. The GSSR has adopted a *Learning-through-Research* model of education. An element of academic supervision is the inclusion of doctoral students in the life of research groups, which constitutes a core component of education. The actions undertaken in this area by the Doctoral School and the Institutes co-creating it should be assessed as being of a very high standard, taking into account the limited resources (especially financial resources) available to the entities jointly running the GSSR.

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

The mid-term evaluation at the GSSR is conducted at the midpoint of the education period. The basis for the evaluation consists of documents submitted by the doctoral student and an opinion prepared by the supervisor. In accordance with the Regulations of the GSSR, no interview is conducted with the doctoral student.

The conditions for conducting the mid-term evaluation are consistent with the current legal framework. The provisions of the Regulations and other documents describing the course of this evaluation at the GSSR (the Order of the Director of the GSSR, *the PhD Handbook*) indicate that only the implementation of the Individual Research Plan (IRP) is subject to evaluation. However, a review of the mid-term evaluation protocols reveals that, in practice, the assessment encompasses not only the level of implementation of the IRP but also other aspects – both those related to the individual study programme and to the content of the IRP itself. A certain difficulty may arise from the fact that, as indicated by the School, the annual evaluation (i.e., concerning the implementation of the Individual Study Programme) is conducted by the same committee as the mid-term evaluation, which may consequently blur the distinction between the mid-term and annual evaluations.

The procedure for the evaluation should be comprehensively regulated in the provisions of the Regulations (see Article 205(1)(3) of the AHES), which are, in turn, subject to agreement with the Doctoral Students' Self-Government (Article 205(3), first sentence, of the Act). Currently, the detailed rules for the mid-term evaluation are outlined in an Order of the Director of the GSSR, which, to a large extent, duplicates the relevant provisions of the Regulations (§13). Nevertheless, this constitutes a significant formal deficiency which – if a decision were issued to remove a doctoral student from the register as a result of a negative mid-term evaluation – could lead to the annulment of such a decision in administrative court proceedings. This issue is also reflected in the GSSR self-assessment report, as the School has declared plans to further specify the content of §13 of the Regulations of GSSR relating to the rules for conducting the mid-term evaluation.

The evaluation notes issues concerning the selection of mid-term evaluation committees. The composition of the committees complies with the requirements of the AHES. However, the composition of committees appointed to conduct mid-term evaluations for successive cohorts of PhD candidates is the same or very similar. Moreover, in the case of committees appointed for the disciplines of philosophy and sociology, two members appointed from among the staff of the IFIS PAN were common to both committees, with the difference in composition being the addition of a person appointed from outside IFIS PAN. Given the small-scale character of the School, it is recommended that the composition of mid-term evaluation committees be shaped in such a way as to correspond, to the greatest possible extent, to the research topics specified in the IRPs. This does not imply an obligation to individualise the composition of the committee for each individual PhD student.

It is worth highlighting that, as good practice, a representative of the Doctoral Students' Self-Government may participate in the mid-term evaluation as an observer.

Another good practice is that the mid-term evaluation committee may, incidentally, in the course of conducting the evaluation, formulate recommendations concerning any necessary changes to the IRP, which serves as a support for the doctoral student's research.

The process of mid-term evaluation is not always conducted in a sufficiently reliable manner. The evaluation draws attention to the need to ensure the transparency of mid-term evaluation results together with their justification, e.g., through publication on the GSSR's website or in the Public Information Bulletin (BIP).

- **Internationalisation:**

The degree of internationalization of academic staff is at an exceptionally high and distinctive level. The activities of the School are a model example of a highly, even exemplary, internationalized Polish academic unit, considering all relevant criteria: the presence of international staff, foreign doctoral candidates, the use of foreign languages in the teaching and communication process, the publication of research results in international venues, as well as internship and conference mobility to leading institutions outside Poland. The effectiveness in increasing international visibility is appropriate. The School cooperates with institutions in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America. It has carried out more than 100 mobilities, including not only formal short-term trips but also long-term research stays that bring tangible results in the form of scientific collaboration and research outcomes. The vast majority of doctoral candidates have completed at least one international trip. This is facilitated by internal mobility grants for summer schools and longer research stays (over one month as well as much longer ones), funded through NAWA and Erasmus+. Evidence of mobility success includes the acquisition of external funding, such as NAWA Bekker grants, direct funding from foreign universities, and prestigious international programmes (e.g., Fulbright), which several doctoral candidates have been awarded. Several candidates have also received NCN Preludium grants, which provide additional support for conference and internship mobility. One potential challenge is the lack of standardization across the disciplines represented in the School with respect to international cooperation (already at the individual research plan level). There is also a shortage of funds for additional support for international travel, despite the numerous successes of doctoral candidates in securing external funding, including from abroad. However, this issue stems not from the specifics of the Doctoral School but from the Polish research funding system. Internal deadlines for submitting travel applications could also be more flexible. The staff is highly internationalized, with more than 30 scholars from abroad having helped shape the programme and served as co-supervisors, advisors, and reviewers. Academic teachers lead or participate in numerous ambitious European projects.

The level of internationalization of the educational process and scientific activity is outstanding. Internationalization is embedded in the structure of the curriculum (full instruction in English, requirements for international cooperation, publication in international journals, mobility – all constituting assessable components). All communication takes place in English. The educational process takes into account the needs of foreign doctoral candidates. However, it is recommended to introduce Polish-as-a-foreign-language classes for international students to further strengthen the inclusiveness of the educational environment.

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

The Doctoral School offers a transparent and ambitious educational programme, whose structure and format enable the timely completion of training in accordance with the curriculum. Internationalisation is embedded in the structure of the programme (full instruction in English, requirements for international cooperation, publication in international journals, and mobility – all as assessable elements).

The Doctoral School conducts education in an effective manner, whereby effectiveness is understood as the percentage of people completing their education with a doctoral degree. During the evaluation period (up to 31 July 2025), 15 doctoral candidates completed their training and submitted applications for the initiation of the doctoral degree conferment procedure at IFiS or IP, with 2 candidates receiving in the POLON system the status of individuals without dissertation reviews. As of July 31, the proportion of individuals who obtained a doctoral degree was 67% (10 out of 15).

The level of scientific or artistic achievements of the doctoral candidates, particularly those related to the research activity outlined in their individual research plans, should be rated very highly. The training is based on internationally recognised models of doctoral education that emphasise scientific excellence and have been translated into concrete institutional practices. It includes not only typical academic courses but also summer schools, intersectoral internships in NGOs or other institutions, and extensive cooperation with foreign centres. Participation in the work of at least one research team at one of the institutes forming the Doctoral School is mandatory, fostering learning through practical experience.

The Doctoral Students' Council is actively involved in implementing the educational process, and doctoral candidates are integrated into research teams as part of their study program. Ongoing assessment of progress is conducted through annual internal evaluations, as well as evaluations of the Doctoral School by candidates. The most compelling evidence of the effectiveness of the education process in the School are the achievements of doctoral candidates, both in terms of publications and mobility. Career monitoring is conducted for individuals who have completed their training as well as for those who have obtained a doctoral degree after completing their education at the School. Career tracking is conducted on an ongoing basis, among other methods, through the platform www.gssr.edu.pl/alumni. As indicated in the self-evaluation report, graduates currently work, among others, at the University Hospital in Heidelberg, University College Dublin, GESIS, the Max Planck Institute, IFiS, and IP, and in international consulting projects (e.g., United Cities and Local Governments). Findings from career monitoring are taken into account when developing the study programme and transferable skills training. Other indicators of educational quality are also monitored, such as the quality of supervision, which is very high. The staff includes leading researchers in their fields, also in the international context, which translates into the very high quality of education.

V. FINAL OPINION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Doctoral School of Social Sciences at the Polish Academy of Sciences has been in operation for 32 years. In 2019, its structure was transformed into the Graduate School of Social Research (GSSR) and, pursuant to an agreement presented to the evaluation panel, it is jointly run by three Institutes: the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Psychology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The Institutes have signed an agreement on the joint operation of the Doctoral School. In the academic year 2025/2026, education is provided in the disciplines of philosophy, sociology, psychology, political science and public administration, leading to the award of the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences.

The seat of the Doctoral School is located at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, which also houses the School's office employing the Doctoral School Coordinator. The GSSR operates in accordance with the Regulations of the Doctoral School, which are compliant with the guidelines set out in the Act on Higher Education and Science. The Doctoral School is headed by a Director, with the Doctoral School Council serving as an advisory body. Substantive oversight of the Doctoral School's functioning is exercised by the Scientific Councils of each of the Institutes co-running the School. In addition to the Council, the Doctoral Students' Self-Government operates within the Doctoral School. Recruitment is conducted through a competitive call based on research projects.

The education process is tailored to the diverse needs of doctoral candidates, is highly internationalised, and has an interdisciplinary character. The educational philosophy of the Doctoral School of Social Sciences is primarily based on learning through conducting or participating in research (*Learning-through-Research, LtR*), with a strong emphasis on internationalisation. This approach is reflected in the structure of the education program, which consists of three components: compulsory courses specific to a given discipline, elective courses, and research work within a research team (e.g., a department or research unit). Education is delivered entirely in English. Additionally, the implementation of initiatives through inter-institutional cooperation within the offered disciplines ensures the interdisciplinary functioning of the Doctoral School of Social Sciences at the PAS. The education programme is improved in a formal and systematic manner, supported by the introduction of new forms of programme evaluation.

The Individual Research Plan complies with the requirements of the Act on Higher Education and Science. The institution supports doctoral candidates throughout the entire educational process, including the implementation phase, by providing appropriate supervisory support. The procedures for appointing and changing a supervisor or supervisors are regulated and compliant with the Act on Higher Education and Science. The timeliness and manner of conducting the mid-term evaluation, in line with the provisions of the Act, raise no major concerns. In addition to the IRP, doctoral candidates also implement annual Individual Study Plans. The composition and competences of the committee conducting the mid-term evaluation meet statutory requirements and are adequate for the education process. It is, however, advisable to further diversify the composition of committees evaluating the IRPs and Individual Study Plans. Particular emphasis should be placed on the School's high academic and staffing potential, its access to research infrastructure, and its strong internationalisation. Education at the Doctoral School has an inclusive character and fosters positive attitudes toward pursuing an academic career.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY CRITERIA

Criterion 1

It is recommended to standardize Individual Research Plans, including the development of a detailed schedule for implementing individual research activities aimed at achieving the intended learning outcomes.

Criterion 5

It is recommended to supplement the Regulations of the Doctoral School with provisions specifying the procedure to be followed in the event of a change of supervisor in cases where a second supervisor or co-supervisor is appointed.

Criterion 6

Criterion 7

It is recommended to introduce courses in Polish as a foreign language for international doctoral candidates in order to strengthen integration, ensure inclusiveness and prevent exclusion, facilitate communication, and enhance a sense of independence and security.

Additional recommendation

VI. ASSESSMENT AND REASON

Final assessment
positive

Reason:

The System of Evaluation of Doctoral Schools is financed by
the Minister of Science and Higher Education.

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2023-2027



Minister of Science and Higher Education
Republic of Poland



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