Centre monitoring report

Doctoral School

Academic year 2021/2022

2 December 2022

Contents

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022   p. 1 of 25

1. Basic identification details

Director of the Doctoral School (centre)	David Masip Rodó (dmasipr@uoc.edu)
Report authors	David Masip Rodó (dmasipr@uoc.edu) Ruben Nieto Luna (rnietol@uoc.edu) Joan Pujolar Cos (jpujolar@uoc.edu) Marga Franco i Casamitjana (mfrancoca@uoc.edu)
Body and date of approval	Doctoral School Management Committee, 2 December 2022

Programme name	RUCT code	Year implemented	Verification	Modification	Accreditation
Doctoral programme in Health and Psychology	5601428	2020/2021	17/12/2019	-	-
Doctoral programme in Humanities and Communication	5601413	2020/2021	17/12/2019	-	-

2. Preparation of the report

The Doctoral School's centre monitoring report has been drawn up by the director of the Doctoral School, Dr David Masip Rodó, with support from the programme directors involved, who are:

- Dr Rubén Nieto Luna (director of the Health and Psychology programme)
- Dr Joan Pujolar Cos (director of the Humanities and Communication programme)
- Marga Franco i Casamitjana (director of the Doctoral School Office)

This report is based on the doctoral programme monitoring reports for the Health and Psychology and Humanities and Communication programmes (in accordance with the biannual plan set forth in the Internal Quality Assurance System's PO07 process), applying the following procedure:

- Review of the assessments of the Health and Psychology and Humanities and Communication programmes' monitoring reports.
- Verification with the appropriate person at the Planning and Quality department, who had already carried out the previous verification with the directors of each programme for the programme reports.
- Doctoral School Management Committee meeting.
- Review and sign-off of the report.

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 2 of 25

3. Follow-up on requirements and recommendations from external assessment procedures

Code	Level (Centre / programme)	Description in original final external assessment report	Response	Current status
PM-AC-2019_03	Centre	Although the institution publishes accurate information, efforts should be made to make it more complete and up to date: 1. The admission procedure does not appear to be clearly explained on the website for each programme.	The website for each programme very graphically displays the four steps to be followed (https://studies.uoc.edu/en/doctoral-programmes/humanities-communication/admission)	Resolved
		2. The website for each doctoral programme should include a description of the expected admission profile. Furthermore, the general and specific competencies to be worked on should be specified for each programme.	As we were asked not to include specific competencies for each programme, every programme has the same general competencies. We were asked by the web expert team not to repeat the same content on different websites, as this can result in search engine penalization.	Ruled out
		3. It is very important for students to be able to find out from each doctoral programme's website who will be available to help them throughout the process (tutor, programme director, training coordinator and cohort tutor). This information can generally be found in the "Admission" tab of the "Programme of study" block, but it should be included under a main tab titled "Programme organization".	Each programme website contains a section called *Direction* containing all the information on the people who will be involved in the entire process (https://studies.uoc.edu/en/doctoral-programmes/humanities-communication/direction)	Resolved
		4. The "Doctoral theses" tab should provide more information on this process, particularly with regard to the thesis submission and defence process and the procedure for obtaining an international mention.	As an online university, all procedures can be carried out in the UOC's Virtual Campus, with greater guarantees for data security and procedures than on the public website. Specifically, sections with complete information on the following matters can be found in the *Oral examination of the doctoral thesis* section: *Procedures for the oral examination*, *Admission to the oral examination and open access publication procedure*, *Oral examination and defence of the doctoral thesis* and *Online defence of the doctoral thesis*. Furthermore, the *Research plan* section contains a specific section with information on all available mentions. We prefer to explain this in the *Research plan* section in order to give students the necessary time and perspective to work on it rather than find it is too late when they eventually read the information on doctoral theses.	Resolved
		5. In order to foster communication between candidates, potential candidates or the wider scientific community and the doctoral programme, as stated in the three	Doctoral students meet students of other disciplines and cohorts in the tutoring classroom. There, they can communicate and view each other's profiles.	In progress

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 3 of 25

Code	Level (Centre / programme)	Description in original final external assessment report	Response	Current status
		self-assessment reports, we recommend that all students who are currently taking or have previously taken any doctoral programme at the UOC should have access to their peers' researcher profiles and be able to see the work published by them as part of their doctorate, as well as the courses, activities, research stays and other endeavours carried out by them.	Furthermore, the UOC is improving the exchange of information between students at different stages of research with its Folio tool, which we will be able to roll out next semester. Folio is an innovative and highly visual tool for sharing research progress with teaching staff and thesis supervisors and – subject to obtaining the author's authorization – among all students and the entire scientific community.	
		6. No information has been published on the procedure for drawing up and defending the research plan, but work is being done on creating visual diagrams to help doctoral students understand the steps to be followed at any given time. The lack of information on the doctoral programmes' specific laboratories has also been mentioned, but there are plans to include it. In addition to all this, each programme must include specific information about other learning resources (such as the virtual space, the learning environment, the library, database access, etc.). The two indicators have been included as improvement actions only in the Health and Psychology programme, but they should also be considered in the other programmes (S2.2. There is no information on thesis defence procedures, available laboratories or career opportunities). The inclusion of information on each doctoral programme's requirements for continuation (such as activities, research stays and publications) is also recommended.	As mentioned above, as an online university, all procedures can be carried out on the UOC's Virtual Campus, with greater guarantees for data security and procedures than on the public website. Detailed specific information on all the steps to be taken at any given time can be found in the *Oral examination of the doctoral thesis* and *Research plan* sections. The university has created a research hub with laboratories dedicated to immersive technologies: virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality; research and development in the field of cyber-physics; research in the field of neuropsychology and neuroscience; experimentation for digital design and manufacturing; practical research on social media and digital socialization environments; and a multidisciplinary visual and sound space. In terms of more interdisciplinary resources, students are also provided with tools, software, hardware and technical advice to carry out their research, as well as support throughout the quantitative data research process. These activities are already included on each programme's website. Adding all the required information about research stays and resources would be positive because, in the communication team's opinion, including this much information in the first level of the programme can be confusing for candidates, and it would be better to publish it on the Doctoral School website.	Resolved
		7. The Doctoral School website does not contain any information on temporary withdrawals.	As the UOC is an online university, all procedures can be carried out online in the Virtual Campus. This information can be obtained, and procedures carried out, in the Virtual Campus, where they can be explained in detail and carried out directly. If the Doctoral School website were to provide specific details on all the information and procedures required to complete a doctoral degree, it could prove confusing and make it hard to find information because it cannot all be in the first level, and the information that should be more visible may not be properly highlighted.	Ruled out

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 4 of 25

Code	Level (Centre / programme)	Description in original final external assessment report	Response	Current status
			The Virtual Campus contains a specific section called *Temporary withdrawal and permanent withdrawal*.	
		8. It is essential to include a "Certificates and documents" tab on the Doctoral School website where students can access and download the various forms needed to carry out the procedures required for the doctorate.	Just like in the previous sections, where it is noted that, being an online university, UOC procedures are carried out online through its Virtual Campus, information and procedures relating to certificates and diplomas are also available online. The *Certificates and documents* section contains a subsection with the name *Requesting certificates*.	Ruled out
		9. The three programmes' websites contain no information about the main career opportunities for doctoral students.	This information will be published soon.	In progress
		10. The above information should be completed and the information on the three doctoral programmes' websites should be unified.	The information published on the doctoral programmes' websites has now been unified.	Resolved
PM-AC-2019_07	Centre	*The website does not provide accountability information from the UOC's Internal Quality Assurance System. This information should be added and may include quality indicators for the results of each doctoral programme, the doctoral students' scientific contributions and a document containing the theses defended (this is included in the improvement plan for the three programmes). With regard to this last point, the following information should be included: doctoral programme, author's name, thesis title, date defended, years from enrolment to defence, grade obtained, mentions obtained, international experts taking part in the joint supervision of the thesis, the defence or preparation of the thesis, and a link to the thesis.*	Information on defended doctoral theses can be found in the *Showcase of doctoral theses* section of the Doctoral School website. This page contains the most relevant information about each doctoral thesis and an open link to the actual thesis. An infographic with an overview of the university's doctoral programmes has been commissioned for publication on the Doctoral School website.	Resolved
MO-VE-2019_01	Health and Psychology programme	*Twenty-eight faculty members involved in this programme do not have recent experience of supervising theses.*	Since the verification, the teaching staff members involved in the programme have gained research and thesis supervision experience. For example, the percentage of staff with ongoing six-year research periods has increased to 80.95% (compared to 61.9% when the report was submitted); 3 have obtained advanced research accreditation, bringing the number of teaching staff with this accreditation in the programme up to 9, and 18 have research accreditation from AQU Catalunya. The level of thesis supervision experience has also increased significantly, with 57.14% of teaching staff having supervised at least one successfully submitted thesis in the last 5 years. It should be noted that the amount of thesis supervision experience has also increased.	In progress

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 5 of 25

Code	Level (Centre / programme)	Description in original final external assessment report	Response	Current status
			A number of steps to train staff in the supervision of theses (workshops, resource repositories, etc.) have been taken. Steps have also been taken to ensure that any researchers forming part of thesis committees who have no previous thesis supervision experience are "mentored", which results in more theses being co-supervised. (See S4 for detailed figures)	
MO-VE-2019_02	Health and Psychology programme	*The quality and impact of the scientific contributions made by the theses arising from this programme (given the poor output in terms of theses submitted to support the thesis supervision experience of the teaching staff on this programme).*	As it has only been two years since the first doctoral students joined the programme, it is difficult to assess the outcomes of the resulting theses. Nevertheless, a preventive analysis based on the results of the first and second cohorts suggests that the number and quality of papers published by (or submitted to) high impact journals and/or presented at international events as a result of theses are suitable for this programme. In any case, we are also continuing to take specific steps to train students. (See S6 for detailed figures)	In progress
MO-VE-2019_03	Health and Psychology programme	*Success and drop-out rates over time.*	As it has only been two years since the first doctoral students joined the programme, it is still too soon to calculate drop-out rates. Nevertheless, a preventive analysis based on the results of the first and second years and on an assessment of the work carried out by the doctoral students to date and the ongoing mentoring and monitoring actions carried out suggests that the benchmark indicators are suitable for this programme and are in line with the values envisaged in the report: Drop-out rate: 30% Full-time success rate (3 years): 50% Full-time success rate (4 years): 60% Part-time success rate (3 years): 5% Part-time success rate (4 years): 15% Drop-out rates have also been analysed, and we are working on strategies to address this. (See S6 for detailed figures)	In progress
PM-VE-2019_01	Humanities and Communication programme	*The admission requirements, the admission criterion (proof of an English language level of B2) and the selection criteria (e.g. candidates' academic excellence, suitable academic background, experience and research interests, and previous scientific output) are clearly defined. These last criteria are not weighted. The weighting to be used must be published before the start of the admission processes.*	These selection criteria were laid down by the Programme Committee and sent in response to the assessment body. They were posted on the website in three languages from the first call: https://studies.uoc.edu/en/doctoral-programmes/humanities-communication/call-applications https://estudis.uoc.edu/documents/12253/17273942/00_Seleccio_beques_HiC.pdf/b7c79fba-1b2b-4801-9b04-73d638fb9a0f	Resolved

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 6 of 25

Code	Level (Centre / programme)	Description in original final external assessment report	Response	Current status
			These documents, which are available to the public, contain the full breakdown of the scores and weightings given to each item throughout the year.	

4. Assessment of compliance with the monitoring standards

4.1 Standard 1: Quality of the training programme

The study programme design (research lines, skills profile and training activities) is current according to the requirements of the educational field and it meets the required level of study according to the Spanish Higher Education Qualifications Framework (MECES).
1.1 The programme has mechanisms in place to ensure that the admission profile of PhD students is suitable and that the number of students is consistent with the characteristics and distribution of the programme's research lines and the number of places available.
1.2 The programme has suitable mechanisms in place for supervision of PhD students and, where applicable, of training activities.

Programme	Progressing towards excellence	Compliant	Compliant with conditions	Non-compliant
Doctoral programme in Health and Psychology		X		
Doctoral programme in Humanities and Communication		X		
Overall assessment		X		

Analysis and assessment

The Doctoral School plans to attract more international talent to the programme. We are planning to draw up a work plan to systematize relations with international institutions in order to obtain external funding grants and aid, as well as an international dissemination plan. Programmes will also be publicized among related master's degree students through their tutors.

The doctoral programme in Humanities and Communication has concluded that it needs 5 more places and will carry out a *Modifica* procedure for that purpose. We also propose to carry out a specific study to assess the ratios of teams to the number of new doctoral students, as well as draw up regulations for doctoral programmes and assessment criteria for action theses (also known as action-based theses).

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 7 of 25

Strengths

As the Humanities and Communication and Health and Psychology programmes are still being rolled out, there is no comparison point from which to assess their results. However, a few strengths shared with the other doctoral programmes have been identified:

- Both programmes have good student demand, which has been rising. All places have been filled, and this has been done with students that fit the desired profile and had no prior relationship with the university.
- There is variety in students' previous studies and a good balance as regards their chosen lines of research.
- The robustness and transparency of the mechanisms for assessing candidates for admission have greatly improved.
- Doctorate-related activities have been made more visible for teaching staff and are better integrated within the relevant faculty.
- There are more students with a grant.
- The gender perspective is firmly embedded in the doctorate, with a significant part of theses focusing on gender and sexuality matters, particularly in the Humanities and Communication programme.

Areas for improvement

We propose the following improvement actions:

- Increase the number of places in the Humanities and Communication programme. In the programme committee's opinion, the number of places should increase from 10 to 15, carrying out a *Modifica* procedure for this purpose.
- Conduct a specific study on the ratios of staff to new doctoral students in order to confirm (beyond people's perceptions) that there is no imbalance.
- Draw up a set of regulations for doctoral programmes and the assessment criteria for action theses (also known as action-based theses), a particular type of doctoral research that is closely linked to art programmes and of which there are already leading international examples. We believe that this initiative will help attract art students in the future and treat their projects appropriately in accordance with the specific characteristics of this field.
- Attract more international talent to the programme.
- Disseminate programmes more widely among UOC master's degree students.
- Design a doctoral competency monitoring procedure for use throughout students' time at the UOC.

4.2 Standard 2: Relevance of public information

The institution appropriately informs all stakeholders of the PhD programme's characteristics and the management processes for quality assurance.

2.1. The HEI publishes truthful, complete, up-to-date and accessible information on the characteristics of the PhD programme, its operational delivery and the outcomes achieved.

2.2. The institution guarantees easy access to relevant information on the PhD programme for all stakeholders, which includes monitoring and, where applicable, accreditation outcomes.

2.3. The HEI publishes the IQAS which forms the framework of the PhD programme.

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022   p. 8 of 25

Programme	Progressing towards excellence	Compliant	Compliant with conditions	Non-compliant
Doctoral programme in Health and Psychology		X		
Doctoral programme in Humanities and Communication		X		
Overall assessment		X		

Analysis and assessment

There have been no significant changes in relation to this standard since the last centre monitoring report.

Strengths

The university publishes clear and comprehensive information on the programmes in the *Quality* section of the website. Furthermore, the following improvement actions were carried out during the monitored period:

- Details of the admission process are graphically displayed on the website for each programme, making it simple to understand (see, for example: https://studies.uoc.edu/en/doctoral-programmes/humanities-communication/admission).
- Information on the bodies in charge of directing each programme has been included on the programme website. This was done in response to the identification of a need for improvement that required students to be informed of all the people involved during their time in the programme. The *Direction* section thus sets out in detail the academic roles involved in each of the programmes and the people who currently hold those roles. See, for example: https://studies.uoc.edu/en/doctoral-programmes/humanities-communication/direction.
- In response to a request for improvement, the *Procedures* section of the Virtual Campus now includes a description, the steps to be followed, any applicable fees and what the thesis defence procedures involve *(Admission to the oral examination and open access publication procedures*, *Oral examination and defence of the doctoral thesis*, and *Online defence of the doctoral thesis)*, submitting the research plan, requests for temporary/permanent withdrawal, and access to certificate and diploma request forms. It is worth noting that academic procedures can only be carried out from the UOC's Campus website, which can only be accessed by students enrolled in the programme. The general public cannot carry out thesis submittal or defence procedures.
- The format of the information published for each programme has been standardized by the Doctoral School so that it all looks similar while providing the specific information for each programme.
- The *Showcase of doctoral theses* section has been updated to contain the relevant information on the doctoral theses defended at the Doctoral School.

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 9 of 25

Areas for improvement

Once the new satisfaction assessment tools based on specific indicators for doctoral programmes have been put in place, the university will publish them in the *Quality* section of the website.

The possibility of adding a specific section for external researchers on the Doctoral School website is being considered.

4.3 Standard 3: Efficacy of the internal quality assurance system

The HEI has a functioning internal quality assurance system that has a formal status and assures the quality and continuous enhancement of the PhD programme in an efficient way.
3.1. The IQAS implemented facilitates the processes for the design and approval of the PhD programme, its monitoring and its accreditation.
3.2. The IQAS implemented ensures information and relevant outcomes are compiled for effective management of the PhD programmes.
3.3 The IQAS implemented is reviewed periodically in order to analyse its suitability and, where applicable, an enhancement plan is put forward in order to optimize it.

Programme	Progressing towards excellence	Compliant	Compliant with conditions	Non-compliant
Doctoral programme in Health and Psychology		X		
Doctoral programme in Humanities and Communication		X		
Overall assessment		X		

Analysis and assessment

The satisfaction measurement tools and indicators for doctoral students and thesis supervisors were too heavily influenced by the tools and indicators used for bachelor's and university master's degree programmes. As doctoral programmes need specific indicators to measure other aspects that are specific to them, no meaningful or useful conclusions could be drawn from the results.

It was decided that satisfaction in relation to all doctoral programmes should be assessed from the ground up: what information we want to find out, who and how often we want to ask, and which is the most appropriate method. Furthermore, in order to reduce survey fatigue, we stopped sending the surveys we had been sending until then.

Four new satisfaction surveys will be used from the 2022/2023 academic year: (1) surveys of specific courses every semester; (2) surveys of research courses every semester; (3) annual surveys of each doctoral programme; and (4) a focus group to ascertain thesis supervisors' satisfaction levels. Rather than ceasing to use surveys, we have transformed them.

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022   p. 10 of 25

1. The course-based surveys carried out each semester have been tailored to optional courses and bridging courses for doctoral students. They will only be sent to the students who are taking those courses, and this will be done when sending surveys for all programmes, which is at the end of January and June.
2. As to the surveys of research courses sent every semester, some of the questions have changed. These surveys will be sent at the end of January and June.
3. Annual surveys on doctoral programmes will be sent at the end of the year, as before. The number of questions in these surveys has been reduced, and others have been tailored to the students who take these programmes, not all of whom are doctoral students.
4. As for thesis supervisor focus groups, a script is currently being written to carry these out based on predefined indicators. Ten different thesis directors, each of them representing one programme, will be called to take part each year. The focus groups will be held in the first half of June.

Strengths

Thanks to the coordinated work of the team that reviews the doctoral programme assessment tools (led by Mireia Fernàndez, director of the programmes), the Planning and Quality department, the director of the Doctoral School and all the programme directors, the resulting assessment tools and the method used to apply them will yield very useful results on the satisfaction levels of everyone involved.

Areas for improvement

An area for improvement that we are already working on is the creation of a satisfaction assessment system tailored to doctoral programme indicators and to the people involved in doctoral programmes.

4.4 Standard 4: Suitability of teaching staff

Teaching staff are both sufficient and suitable in accordance with the characteristics of the PhD programme, the scientific field and the number of students.
4.1. Teaching staff have accredited research activity.
4.2. Teaching staff are sufficient in number and work a suitable number of hours in order to perform their functions.
4.3. The PhD programme has suitable actions in place in order to promote thesis supervision.
4.4. The level of involvement of foreign teaching staff and international doctors in monitoring committees and thesis assessment boards is suitable for the scientific field of the programme.

Programme	Progressing towards excellence	Compliant	Compliant with conditions	Non-compliant
Doctoral programme in Health and Psychology		X		

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 11 of 25

Doctoral programme in Humanities and Communication		X		
Overall assessment		X		

Analysis and assessment

The Health and Psychology programme wants to include more international teaching staff, and tutors have been asked to consider including researchers in the proposed thesis committees and as external research plan assessors. We also propose to explain to external researchers how the programme works, and information sessions are held on a regular basis.

In the period covered by the report, the Humanities and Communication programme worked on 153 indexed articles, 18 books, 77 book chapters and 4 relevant publications. There were also 35 R&D projects funded under competitive calls and led by teaching staff from this faculty. These figures are evidence of a very high scientific output.

Strengths

The following main strengths have been identified in relation to the standard of teaching staff:
- The young team of teaching and research staff in the Health and Psychology programme are very highly motivated and engaged, almost reaching levels of excellence, which in turns results in a higher number of six-year research periods and research accreditations. The percentage of six-year research periods has increased very significantly (from 69% to 80%).
- It was found at the programme verification stage that, as a whole, the teaching staff were young and lacked thesis supervision experience. They have quickly started supervising theses, and the programme has invested resources in thesis supervision training courses (open to the doctoral community as a whole).
- Both programmes have teaching and research staff with a great ability to obtain funding and results for research.
- The Humanities and Communication programme has a good proportion of foreign teaching staff members.
- The Humanities and Communication programme also has a good ratio of students to thesis supervisors, reaching almost 1:1.
- The Humanities and Communication programme has a very high scientific output (in terms of papers published in journals and book chapters).

Areas for improvement

The following areas for improvement have been identified:
- Seven out of ten theses currently in progress are jointly supervised. Although this figure has gone up, we are continuing to encourage this practice in order to increase it further.
- Resume the work carried out to increase the number of research stays for researchers in training.
- The Health and Psychology programme needs more international teaching staff members.
- The Health and Psychology programme wants to help external teaching and research staff understand how the programme works, and it holds information sessions on the programme.

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 12 of 25

- The Humanities and Communication programme wants to correct the imbalance in competitive research funding obtained for lines of research in "social sciences", in spite of a balanced research output in terms of number of publications.
- This programme needs more places for Communication research, an area that leads to a large amount of research output. The programme committee has therefore asked to increase the number of annual places from 10 to 15.

4.5 Standard 5: Effectiveness of learning support systems

The physical resources and services needed to deliver the activities envisaged in the PhD programme and for the training of PhD students are sufficient and suitable in accordance with the number of PhD students and the characteristics of the programme.

5.1. The available physical resources are adequate for the number of PhD students and the characteristics of the PhD programme.

5.2. Services available to PhD students provide suitable support to the learning process and encourage access to the labour market.

Programme	Progressing towards excellence	Compliant	Compliant with conditions	Non-compliant
Doctoral programme in Health and Psychology		X		
Doctoral programme in Humanities and Communication		X		
Overall assessment		X		

Analysis and assessment

The university has recently created a research hub in its 22@ building. This is a very relevant fact not just because all contracted doctoral students are now together in one (extensively refurbished) building but also because they have full access to its new research laboratories. In particular, the building is home to immersive technology laboratories: virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality; research and development in the field of cyber-physics; research in the field of neuropsychology and neuroscience; experimentation for digital design and manufacturing; practical research on social media and digital socialization environments; and a multidisciplinary visual and sound space. These are in addition to the existing virtual laboratories.

Strengths

The availability to researchers in training of a research hub suitable for individual and collaborative work, as well as the specialist laboratories for the type of research carried out by the university.

Areas for improvement

The university is providing a set of Canvas classrooms for every programme, which it is planning to

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 13 of 25

tailor to doctoral programmes too.

4.6 Standard 6: Quality of (learning) outcomes

The learning outcomes achieved, supported by the doctoral theses and the scientific results derived from them, are consistent with the intended training profile. The quantitative results of the indicators in terms of academic performance, satisfaction and access to the labour market are adequate.

6.1 The learning outcomes achieved correspond to the training objectives set and to the level established in the Catalan Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (MCQ) for PhD programmes.

6.2. The number of PhD theses defended, their duration and the scientific results derived from them are adequate and consistent with the intended training profile.

6.3. PhD students, graduates and faculty are satisfied with the training provided by the PhD programme and its results.

Programme	Progressing towards excellence	Compliant	Compliant with conditions	Non-compliant
Doctoral programme in Health and Psychology		X		
Doctoral programme in Humanities and Communication		X		
Overall assessment		X		

Analysis and assessment

The *Academic Regulations for Doctoral Programmes* are being reviewed this academic year (2022/2023) to update the aspects relating to the remote submission and defence of doctoral theses by electronic means after the end of the exemption period caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the processing of changes to those doctoral programmes that require it will be planned as soon as possible and in accordance with AQU Catalunya's proposed timeline.

It is worth noting that the programmes being monitored this year only started two years ago, which means that their results in terms of number of theses defended, their output, mentions (both international and cum laude) and drop-out rates cannot be properly assessed. Something that is very much worth highlighting is the very stringent standards in the drafting of research plans required from the outset. For example, 17% of students in the Health and Psychology programme have been asked to redo their research plan to implement specific corrections. It is also worth highlighting that the university takes a qualitative approach to the assessment of doctoral students' outcomes, avoiding the use of bibliometric indicators that do not comply with the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), to which the university is a signatory.

Post-COVID-19 outcomes and assessment

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 14 of 25

The most recent centre monitoring reports were characterized by the (unavoidable) changes to our academic activities due to the exceptional situation arising from the pandemic. Previous monitoring reports contain details of the actions carried out, which included: extending predoctoral contracts, making changes to the online/hybrid thesis assessment model, and carrying out specific doctoral student welfare monitoring and improvement actions.

However, it was still too early to assess the effects of the pandemic on programme outcomes. When we have more hindsight in relation to the exceptional situation, we will assess the effects of the pandemic on the three cohorts that were doing their doctorates at its peak.

Starting year	Sept. 2015	Sept. 2016	Sept. 2017	Sept. 2018	Sept. 2019
Average completion times (years)	3.909	3.392	3.669	3.512	-
Completed theses with UOC grants	6	7	3	3	0
Total number of theses with grants	11	9	10	10	14

Table 4.6.1 Percentage of time taken to complete a doctoral programme, number of graduates and number of predoctoral researchers contracted with a UOC grant.

Table 4.6.1 shows the recent graduation results of the UOC's contracted predoctoral researchers for the 2015/2016 to 2019/2020 cohorts. Only UOC grants have been included, because they account for most Doctoral School grants and their starting process coincides with the start of the semester. COVID-19 and the state of emergency started to have a significant impact on the research carried out by predoctoral researchers in the early spring of 2020. The first cohort affected by it should be the students starting in September 2017 (i.e. those in the last 6 months of their thesis). After that, the students most harshly affected by the pandemic should be the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 cohorts. The 2020/2021 and later cohorts have not been included in this analysis because their grants will end in September 2023 and no deposits are expected one year in advance of the end of the grant. The table clearly shows that theses in progress were very significantly affected by the pandemic. Since the first affected cohort (2017/2018), the number of theses defended per year has dropped by 50%. These doctoral students are still in the programme as part-time students.

The UOC prepared a set of specific measures to mitigate these effects. These were welcomed by the contracted researchers and included extending their contracts for the same amount of time as the duration of the state of emergency plus an additional period (see the centre monitoring report for 2020/2021). Although these actions are partly responsible for the delays in the oral examination of theses, they do not explain the low number of defences seen in the last few years, which can undoubtedly be attributed to the pandemic.

The percentage of the total number of doctoral students, including both full-time and part-time students, who have been involved in any kind of mobility programme or research stay during the pandemic was 15.77%. Counting only full-time doctoral students, this increases to 72.16%, clearly due to their greater availability.

Strengths

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 15 of 25

Although the two programmes are fairly new, students are yielding quality results. The newness of the programmes makes it difficult to draw reliable conclusions from the figures.

Areas for improvement

The university is working on an institutional data governance project under which it will be possible to break down all indicators by gender, including the most individualized academic results. We are hoping to be able to analyse data based on gender parameters as of the 2025/2026 academic year.

Those in charge of the Health and Psychology programme are concerned about students dropping out in the first few weeks. We therefore propose as follows:

- To ask the teaching staff involved in thesis proposals to carry out a more careful assessment of the motivation of candidates who contact them, and to provide candidates with detailed information on what doing a doctorate entails.
- To emphasize and make more explicit the involvement required of doctoral students in the candidate welcome tutoring classroom.

5. Assessment of the programmes

Although this report covers mainly the Health and Psychology and Humanities and Communication programmes, we are also working on monitoring reports for the Tourism and Business Administration and Management programmes. The doctoral programme in Tourism is an interuniversity programme coordinated by the university of Málaga and assessed by the Andalusian quality assurance agency. The doctoral programme in Business Administration and Management is also an interuniversity programme, in this case coordinated by the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC).

5.1 Doctoral programme in Health and Psychology

Although this is still a very new programme, we consider overall that it is being carried out adequately and addressing in a satisfactory manner the matters identified for special monitoring. The programme has attracted interest, with the two cohorts of students analysed so far filling all available places. The student profile is appropriate in that the students have training backgrounds from various disciplines related to the programme and there is a consistent distribution of students across the various research lines. In addition, most of them have not had any prior contact with the university, which highlights the interest generated by the programme and the research carried out by the teaching staff involved.

However, more work is needed to attract international talent in terms of both students and the researchers / teaching staff involved in thesis committees. Therefore, and as this can also affect the other programmes, we propose the creation of a strategic plan within the Doctoral School.

The team members working in this programme are also young, but they are making very good progress: the percentages of ongoing six-year research periods, accreditations and thesis supervision experience have increased every year. Nevertheless, we are still working on providing thesis supervision training opportunities and increasing support for less experienced teaching staff.

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 16 of 25

The quality of outcomes is difficult to assess in such recent programmes, but some results have already been recognized in publications and presentations, and actions are being taken to further boost these results. This is without losing sight of the need for a more comprehensive assessment of the quality of theses as per the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment. In this standard, our aim is to lower pre-research plan drop-out rates (students dropping out in the early stages), because this has a significant impact on our organization and resource consumption and prevents other potential candidates from accessing the programme.

5.2 Doctoral programme in Humanities and Communication

The overall assessment of this programme, based on the results we can see from its first two years, is very positive. Basically, we have found that there is great demand or interest among both UOC and non-UOC students (Standard 1). We must also consider in this regard the request made by departments to increase the number of places due to an increase in the number of teaching staff and their research competencies (Standard 4).

Shortcomings have been identified in relation to some quality monitoring aspects, specifically: (a) the establishment of monitoring criteria (Standard 3); (b) adapting the university's results and satisfaction data collection procedures to the doctoral programme's specific needs (Standard 3); and, therefore, (c) the availability of public information in this regard (Standard 2).

The main proposals for improvement include the need to take the necessary steps to change the annual number of places from 10 to 15, and the gradual implementation of better results and satisfaction data collection procedures at both centre and university levels.

6. Improvement actions

See Annex 1 Centre improvement plan. Monitoring of the 2021/2022 academic year

The ability for students to defend their theses remotely was established during the state of emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The university put all necessary mechanisms in place to ensure and guarantee that thesis defences could be held in this way. In view of the positive experiences, the university wants to continue to allow remote or hybrid thesis defences. The *Academic Regulations for Doctoral Programmes* are therefore being revised for this purpose.

7. Annexes

Annex 1. Centre improvement plan. Monitoring of the 2021/2022 academic year

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 17 of 25

Annex 1. Centre improvement plan. Monitoring of the 2021/2022 academic year

Monitoring of the improvement plan for the 2020/2021 academic year

Program me	Stand ard	Weakness identified	Description of the cause	Proposed action	Status	Observations
Centre	S1	The technology transfer between doctoral programmes and the world of business could be improved.	There are very few industrial doctoral students. The UOC is among the universities with the most industrial doctoral programmes, but we want to work on attaining more.	Advise on the submission of proposals for industrial doctoral programmes: - Interviews with companies. - Researcher advice service.	Resolved	Since the university included this as an improvement action in the 2019/2020 academic year, this goal has been gradually achieved. The university gained 1 industrial doctoral student in the 2019/2020 academic year; 3 in the 2020/2021 academic year; and 2 in the 2021/2022 academic year. This academic year (2022/2023), it has gained 1 and is working on including more in the future.
Centre	S2	Include an option on the website for students, thesis supervisors and members of thesis assessment boards to download the documents they need, so that they are all accessible to everyone. As these documents are not available on any public web page, users without a Virtual	As these documents are not available on any public web page, users without a Virtual Campus account are unable to access them. As external researchers cannot log on to the Virtual Campus, they do	Create a specific institutional blog or website for non-UOC researchers.	Analysis ongoing	A new page for external researchers who work with the university on an occasional basis should be available on the Doctoral School website as of the 2023/2024 academic year.

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 18 of 25

		Campus account are unable to access them.	not have access to important information needed as ad-hoc collaborators.			
Centre	S2	Presentation of competencies on the website for each programme.	The information on the competencies of each programme should be more accessible.	Specify the general and specific competencies on the website for each programme.	Resolved	The general competencies have been published on the website for each programme, but the specific ones have not because we were asked to remove them at the verification stage.
Centre	S2	The career opportunities arising from the doctoral programmes have not been published.	A section on the career opportunities arising from each programme should be included on each doctoral programme's website.	Write up the career opportunities arising from each programme and publish this information on the website for each programme.	Resolved	The career opportunities arising from each doctoral programme have been published.
Centre	S2	Difficulty finding the information searched for on the website	The information required by thesis supervisors, thesis committee members, the members of the doctoral programmes' academic committees and cohort tutors needs to be available.	Create a page on the Doctoral School website with the information required by thesis supervisors, thesis committee members, academic committee members and cohort tutors.	Resolved	We have considered this function and decided that the best place to publish this information is in the section for teaching and research staff on the Virtual Campus.
Centre	S2	The admission profile for each doctoral programme does not appear on the website.	Candidates should be able to find the expected admission profile for each programme.	The information page on each doctoral programme should include a description of the expected admission profile.	Resolved	The information pages for each programme have been updated to include this information.

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 19 of 25

Centre	S2	Students need to know what the research plan is.	Doctoral candidates or potential candidates may be confused about what a research plan is.	Each programme's information page in the programme of study should contain an explanation of what the research plan is.	Resolved	The *Procedures* section of the Virtual Campus has a page on research plans with comprehensive information about them.
Centre	S2	Only the research profiles of those researchers who have a published thesis offer are visible.	The public information is insufficient.	Publish information on all the teaching staff / researchers in the doctoral programme.	Resolved	The Communication team provides support for the proper dissemination of information on the research staff working in doctoral programmes.
Centre	S2	Results are insufficiently publicized.	Contributions published under the programme are not visible on the website.	Post the best publication results on the Doctoral School website.	Resolved	All doctoral theses are published on the Doctoral School website, and the Communication team highlights the most outstanding ones or those with the most educational content.
Centre	S2	There is insufficient public information on the indicators of certain aspects.	There is no public data on some employability satisfaction indicators.	Publish satisfaction, employability and academic results on the Doctoral School website.	Ruled out	This information is centrally organized in the *Quality* section of the UOC website, together with satisfaction data for the other official programmes. Two improvement actions in this regard are still being carried out to complete the proposed actions.
Centre	S2	There should be more data on the quality of outcomes on the website's *Data* page (in the *Quality* section of the UOC website).	Some doctoral data have not been published.	Publish all doctoral data on the UOC website's *Data* page.	In progress	All satisfaction assessment tools are being redesigned. When these begin to yield significant data, they will be published. This information is centrally organized in the *Quality* section of the UOC website, together with satisfaction data for the other official programmes. Due to an IT issue, not all results can be viewed at present, but this is a temporary issue.

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 20 of 25

Centre	S2	At present, some of the information can be found on the Doctoral School website. This is because it was decided that putting too much information on the programme website would make it difficult to view.	On the website for each programme, students should be able to view the learning resources they will have, the laboratories, and the training activities and stays they will have to carry out.	Write and publish a text with a list of the learning resources, laboratories and planned training activities for each programme.	Resolved	Various actions have been carried out to complete and update the public information on doctoral programmes.
Centre	S4	Although the teaching staff's dedication to research is appropriate, actions need to be taken to increase it.	The teaching staff's dedication to research is one of the keys to the quality of research and also of the doctoral programme.	Encourage the joint supervision of doctoral theses.	Pending	Seven out of ten theses currently in progress are jointly supervised. Although this figure has gone up, we are continuing to encourage this practice in order to increase it further.
Centre	S4	Although the programme's teaching staff carry out research stays, this is a good activity to maintain.	Research stays result in better training for doctoral candidates.	Promote and encourage research stays abroad.	Ruled out	Teaching staff will be encouraged to apply for competitive calls to increase the number of research stays based on each faculty's availability.
Centre	S5	The need for campus technological support on what should be a doctoral classroom, with its time targets and specific assessment and monitoring needs.	The current Virtual Campus classrooms do not meet the needs of either doctoral candidates or thesis supervisors.	We need to create classrooms tailored to the needs of doctoral programmes.	Pending	The university is putting in place Canvas classrooms for every programme, and we will consider how to tailor these to the doctoral programmes.
Centre	S5	The current management tools have become obsolete and they are not tailored to the doctoral programmes.	The current management tools are not tailored to the doctoral programmes.	GAUDÍ will have to cater for the needs/requirements of the doctoral programmes.	Ruled out	This has been ruled out because the management tools will not be fully integrated until GAUDÍ has been implemented.
Centre	S6	The monitoring of competency acquisition is yet to be implemented.	This activity still follows the traditional assessment guidelines.	Adjust the assessment guidelines.	Pending	

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 21 of 25

Centre	S1	Increase international student enrolment.	We need to increase international dissemination and put agreements in place to attract international talent to the various programmes at the Doctoral School.	As of the 2023/2004 academic year, a set of specific actions will be designed to increase the international impact of dissemination actions.	Pending	Although there is already a large amount of international dissemination and many agreements, these should be increased. We propose drawing up a work plan to systematize relations with international institutions in order to secure grants and aid to provide external funding for students on the programme. We also want to develop a plan to raise our international profile.
Centre	S6	No programme data broken down by gender are currently recorded or studied.	The fact that this information was missing was identified during the preparation of the monitoring report.	The university's data governance project will allow even the most individualized academic results to be broken down by gender, but this is not yet possible. We do not expect this to be ready before the 2025/2026 academic year.	Pending	A section on gender has been added to the Doctoral School's current database.
Centre	S6	The implementation of joint supervision and cooperation agreements must be streamlined to a high degree.	The time taken to reach joint supervision or cooperation agreements must be reduced.	Design a new management process for joint supervision.	Resolved	The Legal Office's new management tool has led to shorter processing times.
Centre	S6	There are as yet no significant data on access to the labour market among Doctoral School graduates.	We must continue to produce surveys in order to provide long time series and significant results.	Monitor the employment surveys.	Ruled out	The AQU Catalunya management team said that the figures on access to the labour market extracted by it were enough. The reason why they appear as such strong indicators in monitoring reports is surprising.
Health and	S4	The internationalization of the programme needs to be increased.	We need more international teaching staff on thesis committees, as this may	Starting with the next cohort (beginning in September for the 2022/2023 academic year), tutors will be asked to	Pending	In this new cohort (beginning in September for the 2022/2023 academic year), we asked tutors to

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 22 of 25

Psychology programme			increase the programme's visibility in other places.	expressly consider the inclusion of international researchers in their thesis committee proposals.		expressly consider the inclusion of international researchers in their thesis committee proposals. In addition, when assessing research plans, we will give priority to international assessors (except in the case of thesis committees, there should be at least one external assessor for the assessment of the research plan).
Health and Psychology programme	S4	Increase thesis supervision training for teaching staff and provide information about the programme to all members of thesis committees.	The aim is to continue providing thesis supervision training to teaching staff.	We plan to hold a soft skills workshop and produce an infographic in 2022.	In progress	We want to make it easier for external teaching/research staff to understand the programme and their role within it. To that end, we hold annual information sessions on the programme, and we will share with them the infographic we are creating and information about the programme on a regular basis.
Health and Psychology programme	S6	The percentage of students leaving the programme in the early stages must be reduced.	Inform potential supervisors and first-year tutors of the importance of commitment and the work required to complete the doctoral programme.	Send a message to the teaching staff involved in the programme to explain the importance of setting realistic goals with students and assessing the time they have available before enrolment, and reinforce this information at the programme presentation session held every year for the teaching staff involved.	Pending	We believe that this drop-out rate is largely explained by students' lack of realistic expectations on what doing a doctorate entails. This is something we want to work on.

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 23 of 25

Monitoring of the improvement plan for the 2021/2022 academic year

Programme	Standard	Weakness identified	Description of the cause	Proposed action
Centre	S3	Both student surveys about the courses and programme and satisfaction surveys for thesis supervisors need to improve.	The surveys sent so far have not been successful in gathering adequate information, because they were a mere adaptation of those used for the other official programmes. We need to create a satisfaction assessment system tailored to the indicators used to measure doctoral programmes and the people involved in them.	Develop a satisfaction assessment system tailored to the indicators that need to be measured for doctoral programmes. We will continue without an assessment system for academic results.
Centre	S1	The ability for students to defend their theses remotely was established during the state of emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The university put all necessary mechanisms in place to ensure and guarantee that thesis defences could be held in this way. In view of the good experience in this regard, the university wants to continue allowing remote or hybrid thesis defences. The Academic Regulations for Doctoral Programmes are therefore being revised for this purpose.	Online and hybrid doctoral defences need to be regulated.	We will take the following steps to regularize online assessments: 1. Centre monitoring report: A note stating that the university has the necessary mechanisms to ensure online thesis defences in accordance with an online method will be added. 2. Academic Regulations for Doctoral Programmes: The text under review has been proposed (link). 3. Methodological framework for the assessment of doctoral programmes: The definitions of face-to-face, online and hybrid formats will be included.
Health and Psychology programme	S6	The programme must be better publicized among students of related university master's degrees.	We must ensure that more students from related university master's degrees stay on to do a doctorate.	The call for applications must be better publicized among the associate deans so they can forward it to the tutoring classrooms, reinforcing communications between the support team and tutors.

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 24 of 25

Humanities and Communication programme	S1	A balanced student distribution in terms of lines of research.	Ensure there is an adequate balance of doctoral students based on their lines of research.	Conduct a specific study on the ratios of staff to new doctoral students in order to confirm (beyond people's perceptions) that there is no imbalance.
Humanities and Communication programme	S1	Insufficient number of validated places.	Demand for the programme exceeds the number of validated places.	Carry out a *Modifica* procedure to increase the number of places from 10 to 15.
Humanities and Communication programme	S4	There is a certain imbalance in the competitive research funding obtained for lines of research in "social sciences", in spite of a balanced research output in terms of number of publications.	This may be due to the current situation or to teams having less than average funding capacity. What we need to do is find out the reason.	Study on the funding conditions of social science research groups.
Humanities and Communication programme	S1	We must draw up regulations for doctoral programmes and assessment criteria for action theses (also known as action-based theses).	The university's regulations must include this new type of doctoral programme, a specific type of doctoral research that is closely linked to art programmes and of which there are already leading international examples.	Revise the regulations for doctoral programmes to include this new type of doctorate.

Standard: (S1) Quality of the training programme; (S2) Relevance of public information; (S3) Efficacy of the internal quality assurance system; (S4) Suitability of teaching staff; (S5) Effectiveness of learning support systems; (S6) Quality of (learning) outcomes.

Centre monitoring report. Doctoral School. Academic year 2021/2022
Internal Quality Assurance System Manual (PO07 Roll out, revise and improve the qualifications)

2 Dec 2022

p. 25 of 25