

# Ergebnisbericht zum Verfahren auf Änderung des akkreditierten Doktoratsstudiengangs „Medizinische Wissenschaft“ der Paracelsus Medizinischen Privatuniversität Salzburg – Privatstiftung, durchgeführt in Salzburg

## 1 Antragsgegenstand

Die Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria (AQ Austria) führte ein Verfahren auf Änderung des akkreditierten Doktoratsstudiengangs „Medizinische Wissenschaft“, durchgeführt in Salzburg, gem § 24 Hochschul-Qualitätssicherungsgesetz (HS-QSG), BGBl I Nr. 74/2011 idgF, iVm § 2 Privatuniversitätengesetz (PUG), BGBl. I Nr. 74/2011 idgF, und iVm § 18 und § 20 Abs 2 Privatuniversitäten-Akkreditierungsverordnung 2019 (PU-AkkVO) durch. Gem § 21 HS-QSG veröffentlicht die AQ Austria folgenden Ergebnisbericht:

## 2 Verfahrensablauf

Das Akkreditierungsverfahren umfasste folgende Verfahrensschritte:

Verfahrensschritt	Zeitpunkt
Antrag eingelangt am	17.12.2019
Rückmeldung der Geschäftsstelle zum Antrag an Antragstellerin	17.01.2020
Überarbeiteter Antrag eingelangt am	19.02.2020 11.03.2020
Mitteilung an Antragstellerin Abschluss der Prüfung des Antrags durch Geschäftsstelle	12.03.2020
Bestellung der Gutachter/innen durch Board	13.03.2020

Information Antragstellerin über Gutachter/innen	13.03.2020
Absage geplantes Vorbereitungstreffen und geplanter Vor-Ort-Besuch wg. COVID-19-Pandemie	09.04.2020
Erstes virtuelles Vorbereitungsgespräch mit Gutachter/innen	07.05.2020
Fragenkatalog der Gutachter/innen an Antragstellerin	08.05.2020
Antworten auf Fragenkatalog durch Antragstellerin (Nachreichung)	15.05.2020
Zweites virtuelles Vorbereitungsgespräch mit Gutachter/innen	19.05.2020
Virtuelles Gespräch der Vertreter/innen der Antragstellerin und der Gutachter/innen	20.05.2020
Nachreichungen nach virtuellem Gespräch	02.06.2020 12.06.2020 17.06.2020
Vorlage des Gutachtens	01.07.2020
Gutachten an Antragstellerin zur Stellungnahme	02.07.2020
Kostenaufstellung an Antragstellerin zur Stellungnahme	08.07.2020
Stellungnahme Antragstellerin zur Kostenaufstellung	08.07.2020
Stellungnahme Antragstellerin zum Gutachten	13.07.2020 14.07.2020
Stellungnahme Antragstellerin zum Gutachten an Gutachter/innengruppe	15.07.2020
Rückmeldung Gutachter/innengruppe zur Stellungnahme Antragstellerin	03.08.2020
Übermittlung geändertes (=endgültiges) Gutachten an Antragstellerin	03.08.2020

### 3 Akkreditierungsentscheidung

Das Board der AQ Austria hat mit Beschluss vom 08.09.2020 entschieden, dem Antrag der Paracelsus Medizinischen Privatuniversität Salzburg – Privatstiftung vom 17.12.2019 auf Änderung des akkreditierten Doktoratsstudiengangs „Medizinische Wissenschaft“, durchgeführt in Salzburg, stattzugeben.

Die Änderungen betreffen folgende Merkmale gem § 14 Z 2 PU-AkkVO: Änderung des Studienplans, die das Profil des Studiengangs wesentlich verändert (Schärfung des Profils hinsichtlich internationale Forschungsqualität, Diversität, Studierbarkeit und Beschäftigungsfähigkeit), der Bezeichnung des Studiengangs (Medical Science) und der verwendeten Sprache (Englisch). Weiters wurde gem § 14 Z 3 PU-AkkVO eine Änderung des Ortes beantragt, an dem der Studiengang durchgeführt wird, und Nürnberg neben Salzburg als weiterer Ort der Durchführung hinzugefügt.

Die Entscheidung wurde am 07.10.2020 vom zuständigen Bundesminister genehmigt. Die Entscheidung ist seit 20.10.2020 rechtskräftig.

## 4 Anlagen

- Endgültiges Gutachten vom 03.08.2020, geändert auf Basis der Stellungnahme der Antragstellerin vom 13. und 14.07.2020
- Stellungnahme vom 13.07.2020 zum Gutachten vom 02.07.2020

# Expert report on the procedure for changes to the accreditation of the doctoral programme “Medizinische Wissenschaft” conducted in Salzburg by Paracelsus Medical University Salzburg – Private Foundation

pursuant to § 7 of the Accreditation Regulation for Private Universities 2019 (PU-AkkVO)

Vienna, 3 August 2020

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# 1 Basic principles for the procedure

## **The Austrian higher education system**

To date, the Austrian higher education system comprises:

- 22 public universities (including the Danube University Krems, a public university for post-graduate continuing education);
- 16 private universities, run by nationally accredited private entities;
- 21 universities of applied sciences, run by state-subsidised entities organised under private law or by nationally accredited public entities;
- the university colleges of teacher education, run by nationally accredited public or private entities;
- the philosophical-theological higher education institutions, run by the Catholic Church;
- the Institute of Science and Technology – Austria, which focusses its tasks on the advancement and appreciation of new fields of research and a post-graduate training in the form of PhD and postdoc programmes.

In the winter semester of 2019/20, 288,497 students were enrolled at public universities (incl. the Danube University Krems). Furthermore, 55,203 students were enrolled at universities of applied sciences and 15,063 students at private universities.<sup>1</sup>

## **External quality assurance**

Pursuant to the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HS-QSG), public universities shall perform an audit procedure for the certification of their internal quality management system every seven years. There are no legal or financial consequences linked to the decision on certification.

Private universities require institutional accreditation conducted by AQ Austria every six years. After twelve years of uninterrupted accreditation, the accreditation may also be awarded for twelve years. Interim degree programmes and certificate university programmes for further education leading to a degree programme also require accreditation.

Following the six-year period of institutional initial accreditation, universities of applied sciences must be re-accredited. After that, they pass on to the audit system. However, the accreditation is linked to a positive decision on certification in the audit procedure. Before degree programmes may be offered, they must be accredited once.

## **Accreditation of private universities and their degree programmes**

In order to be active as a higher education institution in Austria, private universities require institutional accreditation which must be renewed on a regular basis. In addition to institutional accreditation, newly established degree programmes must be accredited once before they may be offered by the private university. The Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria) is responsible for carrying out accreditation procedures.

The accreditation procedures are carried out in accordance with AQ Austria's Accreditation Regulation for Private Universities 2019 (PU-AkkVO). Furthermore, the agency has based its

<sup>1</sup> As at January 2020, data source: Statistics Austria/unidata. Contrary to the data of the public universities, the student numbers of the universities of applied sciences do not include non-degree seeking students. 265,012 degree students were enrolled at the public universities in the winter semester 2019/20.

procedures on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.<sup>2</sup>

The AQ Austria appoints experts for reviewing accreditation applications. On the basis of the application documents and a site visit at the applicant institution, the experts draw up a joint written expert report. The Board of the AQ Austria then makes a decision on accreditation which is based on the expert report and takes into consideration the higher education institution's comment on the expert report. If the statutory prerequisites for accreditation are met and the required qualitative requirements are fulfilled, the degree programmes shall be accredited by official notification.

Before its entry into force, the official notification of the Board shall be subject to approval by the competent Federal Minister. After the procedure has been completed, a report on the outcome of the accreditation procedure as well as the expert report shall be published on the websites of AQ Austria and the applicant institution. Personal data and those parts of the report that disclose funding sources as well as business and operational secrets shall be exempt from publication.

The Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HS-QSG) and the Private Universities Act (PUG) form the legal basis for the accreditation of degree programmes at private universities.

## 2 Short information on the accreditation procedure

Information on the applicant institution	
Applicant institution	Paracelsus Medical University Salzburg – Private Foundation
Legal nature	Private Foundation
Initial accreditation	26 November 2002
Last extension of accreditation	1 January 2015
Site	Salzburg, Nuremberg
Number of students	1399 (2018/19)
Information on the degree programme	
Name of the degree programme	Medizinische Wissenschaft > Medical Science
Type of the degree programme	Doctoral programme
ECTS credits	180
Normal period of studies	6 semesters (3 years)
Number of study places	45 per year (Salzburg), 20 per year (Nuremberg)
Academic degree	Doctor of Philosophy, short Ph.D.
Organisational form	Full-time
Language used	German > English

<sup>2</sup> Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

Site at which the degree programme is offered	Salzburg > Salzburg, Nuremberg
Tuition fees	€ 1,100 per semester
Changes relevant to accreditation	<p>§ 14 PU-AkkVO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modifications of the curriculum, if those modifications result in significant changes of the profile of the degree programme</li> <li>• Modification of the name of the degree programme</li> <li>• Modification of the language of the degree programme</li> <li>• Modification of the site(s) at which the degree programme(s) is (are) held</li> </ul>

Paracelsus Medical University Salzburg – Private Foundation submitted the application on 17 December 2019. In its decision on 13 March 2020, the Board of AQ Austria appointed the following experts for the review of the application:

Name	Function/Institution	Role of the expert
Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Peter <b>Holzer</b>	<p>Professor for Experimental Neurogastroenterology Head of Research Unit</p> <p>Otto Loewi Research Center (for Vascular Biology, Immunology and Inflammation) Division of Pharmacology CBmed Center for Biomarker Research in Medicine Research Unit of Translational Neurogastroenterology</p> <p>Dean for Doctoral Studies</p> <p>Chair, Ombuds Committee for Good Scientific Practice</p> <p>Medical University of Graz</p>	Expert with scientific qualification, chair of the expert panel
Univ.-Prof. Dr. Jörg <b>Timm</b>	<p>Professor for Virology Institute Director</p> <p>Vice Dean for Research of the Medical Faculty</p> <p>Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf</p>	Expert with scientific qualification
Amelie Karin Josephine <b>Schoenenwald</b> , BSc MSc MSc	<p>Doctoral Programme Integrative Structural Biology</p> <p>Max Perutz Labs Vienna Medical University of Vienna</p>	Doctoral Student



Due to the COVID-19-related measurements taken by the Austrian government and, in consequence, by AQ Austria, the site visit already planned had to be cancelled. As an alternative, virtual conferences were held giving the experts the opportunity to talk to the representatives and students of the private university. In addition, preparatory virtual meetings were held for the experts to consult about their findings and draft their joint report.

On 20 May 2020 the expert panel and representatives of AQ Austria conducted online-discussions with the representatives and students of Paracelsus Medical University. These discussions were preceded by a round of written questions answered by the private university.

### 3 Preliminary notes of the experts

This report assesses the application of Paracelsus Medical University Salzburg – Private Foundation (PMU) to alter (i) the designation, (ii) language, (iii) profile and (iv) location of a three-year doctoral programme in Medical Science, a programme that was first accredited as a doctoral programme in Medizinischer Wissenschaft by AQ Austria in 2014. The restructured programme will be taught in English and run not only at the location of PMU in Salzburg but also at a new location, in Nuremberg.

Once the expert panel had gone through the detailed application, a number of questions on several aspects of the programme was raised. These issues were in part clarified by PMU in writing and further discussed with members of the two locations at web conferences on 20 May 2020. The online discussions provided the expert panel further insights into the considerations and aims that PMU had led to the restructuring of the degree programme.

The information provided at the web conferences was deemed very helpful for the assessment of the application by the expert panel. The experts regretted that, due to the current travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to conduct a site visit in Nuremberg to obtain direct information about the research facilities and the academic environment provided by PMU in Nuremberg. Nevertheless, the information related during the discussions and provided by documents before and after the discussions enabled the expert panel to assess the application in a wider context and to issue questions, suggestions and recommendations in a very specific way. For the experts it had become clear that PMU had considered the advice and recommendations of a number of stakeholders, was aware of several issues in doctoral education that are currently debated and was responsive to suggestions, proposals and reflections as to how certain aspects of the programme could be implemented, altered or improved.

## 4 Review and assessment based on the assessment criteria stipulated in the PU-AkkVO

### 4.1 Assessment criteria § 17 (1) 1 to 2: Development and quality assurance of the doctoral programme

#### Development and quality assurance of the degree programme

*1. The degree programme was developed using a predefined procedure for the development and establishment of degree programmes and involving the relevant stakeholder groups.*

According to the application documents, the doctoral programme in Medical Science was developed together with current doctoral students, academic, administrative and clinical staff at both PMU sites, as well as at the University Hospital Salzburg and the Klinikum Nuremberg. The project development guidelines provided by the Quality Assurance Office were followed in this process. Further input was collected from external stakeholders from the private sector as well as from public universities and universities of applied sciences in Salzburg and Rosenheim. The course director played a leading role in developing the curriculum and previously gained experience in developing several academic degree programmes over a period of 13 years in the United Kingdom.

A panel from the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), that visited the private university in 2018, provided further recommendations, which were partly incorporated in the curriculum. During the web conference on 20 May 2020, PMU clarified which recommendations given by the Austrian Science Fund were not implemented and satisfactorily explained the underlying reasons. For example, one recommendation was to make one first-author publication obligatory to successfully end the degree programme. PMU unfolded that cumulative theses are retained as default format, while monographic theses accompanied by one or more original research papers are also permitted. In contrast, monographic theses without publication are permitted by application only if intellectual property rights are at stake.

Thus, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

#### Development and quality assurance of the degree programme

*2. Following its accreditation, the degree programme is incorporated into the private university's quality management system. The quality assurance measures also comprise adequate structures and procedures to ensure that the rules of good scientific practice are adhered to.*

The Quality Assurance Office provides the evaluation software EvaSys. According to the application, the private university will use this software to annually review the teaching quality of their lecturers and will declassify the results to all students and staff on the module. Negative evaluations will be discussed by both the course director and the affected lecturer to develop a solution for the following year. If the shortcomings persist, the course director may substitute the lecturer in question. In the web conference on 20 May 2020, representatives of the private university proclaimed, that it opposed an unconditional replacement of the lecturer after two

negative evaluations to flexibly account for the manifold reasons that might have led to the subpar performance.

The experts consider PMU's approach to ensure compliance with good scientific practice and ethical and legal requirements, including plagiarism, sufficient but worthy of greater in-depth consideration. The experts deem a sound understanding and awareness of a variety of aspects of good scientific practice of utmost importance within the context of a scientific education such as the one offered by PMU.

Furthermore, the application documents include a full list of the stakeholders in the curriculum committee which consists of students, lecturers, supervisors, research contacts, teaching contacts, the head of the Quality Assurance Office, the course director, representatives of the course administration and other doctoral programmes at PMU, the head of faculty and coopted members from both PMU sites.

In the web conference on 20 May 2020, PMU stated that all previous arising student-supervisor problems were successfully solved internally and/or with help of the course director. This was confirmed by the conference with the student representatives. Furthermore, an anonymized complaint management online tool has been implemented in 2019 and facilitates consultation at any time.

In summary, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

At the same time, the experts offer the following recommendations: In the annual supervisor evaluation, the quality of supervision should be closely watched, especially with increasing group size. Furthermore, the experts recommend more emphasis on good scientific practice in the curriculum. Such as in the taught module PhD Novice, aspects of good scientific practice other than plagiarism, such as authorship criteria, data documentation, copyright issues and confidentiality, should be accounted for in more detail.

## 4.2 Assessment criteria § 18 (2) 1 to 6: Research environment

### Research environment

- 1. The private university has developed a research concept, which incorporates the doctoral degree programme, and a development plan, which comprises enhancement measures for the degree programme.*

The private university has a development plan in which research priority areas are defined. The research priority areas from the current development plan for Salzburg include (i) neuroscience, (ii) oncological, immunological and allergic disorders, (iii) musculoskeletal disorders, biomechanics and sport medicine, (iv) metabolic disorders and (v) regenerative medicine. The development plan will be updated for the years 2021–2027 and it is indicated in the application that the research priority areas may be further developed. In Nuremberg, the research priority areas are (i) oncology including haematology, immunology and microbiology, (ii) cardiovascular diseases, (iii) mental and nervous diseases and (iv) musculoskeletal disorders. The research output in these areas is good and internationally visible at both sites.

The private university follows a strategy of internationalisation and in line with this, the programme will be offered in English language.

The research concept of the doctoral programme covers medical science as a whole. In the web conference on 20 May 2020 representatives of PMU could elucidate the underlying strategy of the doctoral programme to provide maximal flexibility for incorporation of research clusters that may be further developed at PMU. The expert panel therefore sees the programme as an integral part of the overarching university strategy.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

At the same time, the experts strongly encourage the private university to further develop the doctoral programme with thematic clusters in line with the development plan of PMU with the goal to further enhance the visibility of the research profile. On a side note, the private university may also continue with a stringent development of key research areas to foster the visibility of the research profile.

#### Research environment

*2. The private university has defined a research focus for the degree programme which covers the broadness of the respective discipline as regards content and methods. The focus of the research performance corresponds to the university's approach as well as to the respective subject culture and guarantees international visibility.*

The private university has defined a broad research focus for the doctoral programme in medical and biomedical sciences without specific thematic differentiation. In this regard, the programme is in line with this broad range of research topics at PMU and covers the broadness of the respective discipline. The research output in terms of publications is good at both sites and shows the high quality of the research at PMU. The strong contribution by the doctoral students to this output by numerous first authorships indicates that the programme is one of the drivers for the research performance.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

Nevertheless, it was discussed within the expert panel and during the web conferences with representatives of the private university whether the doctoral programme would benefit from a more stringent thematic structure that might increase international visibility and might add value to the students' identification with the goals of the programme. The expert panel would strongly endorse a strategy with defined core areas within an overarching programme that match with the research topics of PMU.

#### Research environment

*3. The private university has employed permanent professors qualified in the discipline relevant for the degree programme who cover the broad range of the discipline's content and methods. Permanent staff here means working at least 50% of one's total working hours in salaried employment at the private university.*

Both sites of PMU are well staffed with qualified and fully employed researchers and professors. The list of supervisors appended to the application includes highly qualified and successful researchers. This is also reflected by the high funding rate of the supervisors reported in the application. The sources of third party funding were discussed by the expert panel and additional information was provided by PMU in a response from 2 June 2020. According to the provided

graph, in 2019 funding at the location in Nuremberg has substantially increased by novel financial support in the range of 6 million Euros by “Deutsche Ministerien und Förderung durch deutsche Universitäten”. PMU may want to re-evaluate whether these funds indeed fall into the category of competitive third party funding. Moreover, internal financial support provided by PMU does not fall into the category third party funding. Nevertheless, there is substantial funding by foundations and public funding agencies such as “Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)” and FWF indicating that the research projects and supervisors are competitive.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

#### Research environment

*4. The private university maintains institutionally anchored co-operation projects in research and development or the advancement and appreciation of the arts which are relevant for the degree programme and adequate for the respective subject culture.*

The individual research groups have established scientific cooperations at the level of the supervisors. Within the programme, incentives were implemented to allow establishment of international cooperations between research groups. There are currently no structural co-operations at degree level but are considered in the development plan for 2021–2027. However, the private university has a longstanding partnership with Mayo Clinic (USA) and Dhulikhel Hospital (Nepal). The partnership will benefit from changing the programme language to English and will allow further exchange.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

At the same time, they encourage establishment of further structured cooperations with national and international research institutions.

#### Research environment

*5. The private university promotes research and development activities by providing for appropriate organisational or structural framework conditions.*

The structural framework of the research activities includes research offices, the Institute for Clinical Innovation, and PMU-FFF (PMU Research Fund) as financial research support. Research offices in Salzburg and Nuremberg provide support for clinical trials, research organization and application for funding. The Institute for Clinical Innovation at PMU Salzburg provides advice and guidance regarding the translation and transfer process of research results. PMU plans to offer a combined Research and Innovation Office that covers the functions of the current research office and the Institute for Clinical Innovation. This office will work hand-in-hand with the office of PMU Nuremberg. PMU-FFF provides competitive funding which is mainly seed funding and complementary funding for excellent externally funded research projects at PMU Salzburg and Nuremberg. The private university also offers a Discite! Stipend that covers the salary of a doctoral student for the first year. Overall, the expert panel considers the structural framework as sufficient for the programme.

One additional aspect regarding the organisational framework for the clinicians within the doctoral programme was further discussed by the expert panel. It is understood by the expert

panel, that clinicians are hired by the University Hospital Salzburg or the Klinikum Nuremberg. For clinicians within the programme there is yet no individual signed agreement defining the working hours dedicated to research. The workload of the degree programme with 180 ECTS requires that about half of the working time of clinicians is dedicated to research within the programme. Upon discussion with the programme director it was evident that PMU is aware of the high clinical workload possibly posing a risk to the research project. It was explained that most clinicians work on research projects that are well integrated within the clinical duties. Moreover, PMU plans to establish time recordings for the working time in research of the programme participants. These time recordings will be recorded in an app that is currently being developed and will be evaluated. The expert panel believes that this is a suitable measure for ensuring sufficient research time for the programme participants.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

The expert panel discussed during the web conferences the situation of doctoral students when the salary is not covered by funding for the time of the complete programme. The representatives of PMU explained that a statement regarding the funding for the full three years is part of the mentoring agreement and is signed by the supervisors. In this respect, the Discite! Stipends were discussed, as only one year of funding was covered, which may put a lot of pressure on the supervisor and the student finding additional funding for the remaining time. The expert panel believes that internal funding programmes providing seed funding for innovative projects are extremely important. However, the panel also recommends a longer funding period for doctoral students within this stipend programme or alternative strategies ensuring the funded completion of the programme by all doctoral students.

#### Research environment

*6. The private university's research infrastructure as well as its facilities and equipment are adequate on a quantitative and a qualitative basis for operating the degree programme. In the case that the private university draws on external resources, their authorisation to use them has been contractually secured.*

PMU provided a list of the available research infrastructures, the research and lab space and the animal facilities. Unfortunately, the site visit had to be held as a web conference and therefore, the expert panel was unable to visit the facilities. Based on the provided list, the infrastructure and lab space at the new location in Nuremberg are also suitable for the programme. The animal facility seems rather small; however, the overall research profile may not require larger facilities.

It was discussed by the expert panel how access to important research technologies, e. g. next generation sequencing, imaging, flow cytometry or proteomics, is provided to the programme. Although some of these technologies are available at PMU, the process for using the technology is not well-defined and seems to depend on individual cooperations between research groups. This process bears the risk that access may not be guaranteed if the mutual terms of individual cooperations are in conflict between supervisors or directors. The expert panel recommends development of a strategy how access to key technologies is ensured. During the web conference on 20 May 2020 PMU was able to convince the expert panel, that the current process as it is enables all researchers to gain access to the technologies that are required within the individual projects.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

At the same time, the expert panel recommends development of a strategy for establishment of shared infrastructures for defined high-end technologies (core facilities) and a structured process for access to high-end research equipment for doctoral students.

#### 4.3 Assessment criteria § 18 (3) 1 to 3: Supervision and counselling services

##### Supervision and counselling services

*1. The private university shall conclude agreements with the doctoral students which govern the respective rights and duties of the private university, the doctoral students and their supervisors.*

The private university has a cooperation agreement which specifies PMU to be responsible for teaching modules, the quality assurance, student counselling and course administration at the new location in Nuremberg. The research proposal, the supervision agreement and the indenture define the rights and duties of the private university, the doctoral students and the supervisors.

The research proposal describes the key aspects of the scientific project and is signed by the student and the lead supervisor. The supervision agreement sets out the relationship between the student and the supervisor. The supervisor confirms that access to all required resources, to the taught modules and to the needed financial means is secured. The indenture regulates the legal relationship between the student and PMU which provides the degree programme at the locations Salzburg and Nuremberg. It is signed by the student and the course director on behalf of PMU.

Consequently, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

##### Supervision and counselling services

*2. The private university shall enable the doctoral students to engage in an intensive dialogue with scientists or artists, respectively, by collaborating with higher education institutions and, if applicable, partners outside the higher education area in Austria and abroad and promote the participation of doctoral students in national and international symposia.*

According to the application documents, PMU rewards the attendance of external scientific meetings, summer schools, workshops, ring lectures and international placements with ECTS credits. However, an international placement or the participation at an external scientific meeting is not mandatory. In the web conference on 20 May 2020, PMU based this decision on the possibility of disadvantaging students who might not have adequate travel funding as the financial arrangement for such travels reside within the respective research groups. Moreover, PMU stated that a mandatory research stay is difficult to implement as this may cause a conflict of obligations for the medical doctors (currently 59 % of the students) due to their contractual working time. However, the experts consider international experience of any kind of utmost importance for the students' development during a doctoral education, this experience includes national conferences or meetings with international reach. Furthermore, in the web conference with student representatives on 20 May 2020, the students adumbrated that supervisors do support endeavours for international stays but are mostly initiated by the students themselves, and that there is little information easily accessible about travel grants.



The experts consider the criterion to be partially fulfilled and suggest the following condition: The participation at a conference, summer school or course with international outreach or an international placement should be compulsory to provide every doctoral student with the opportunity to develop the networking and international skills inherent to and specific for a scientific career (see also § 18 (4) 3).

In response to the expert report in the version of 2 July 2020, PMU amended the text in the "Study & Examination Regulations" (Section 4.2 Curriculum, Competencies and Program Outcomes, page 9) to read: "While students can select the activities listed below as appropriate for their individual research project, all students must obtain at least 6 ECTS through international engagements by attending conferences, summer schools and/or courses with international outreach and/or by completing an international placement. International outreach requires that a meeting, summer school or course is attended by European and/or overseas participants and is conducted through the medium of English." [...] "It is mandatory for all students to acquire at least 6 ECTS for international engagements through an international placement and/or the attendance of a level II and/or III conference, a summer school and/or a course with international participants that is conducted through the medium of English."

In view of the precautions taken and textual changes made, the experts decided to alter their report to account for the amendment of the "Study & Examination Regulations". They consider the criterion under consideration to be fulfilled and recommend the Board of AQ Austria to refrain from imposing a condition with regard to said criterion.

In addition, the experts suggest that PMU creates an information structure (e.g. FAQ, links) regarding stays abroad and their funding available for all students. Furthermore, the experts highly encourage the pursuit of establishing a travel fund within PMU-FFF and the encouragement of supervisors to increase their willingness of supporting stays abroad for their students.

#### Supervision and counselling services

*3. The private university shall provide the doctoral students with adequate counselling services which are tailored to the specific degree programme.*

The application documents include a thorough description of the counselling services: A wide variety of options is available including the supervision team, the research office, older peers, the Quality Assurance Office, online tools, the course administration team, the course director and his deputy in Nuremberg. Moreover, the Doctoral Service Centre (in development) will tend issues arising at both PMU sites, in person at PMU in Salzburg as well as online at PMU in Nuremberg. However, the experts emphasize that an adequate group size is crucial for appropriate supervision and counselling within the research group. From the questions answered by PMU on 15 May 2020, it became clear that another important counselling office is held by the "ÖH-Beratungszentrum". In addition, psychological counselling for students is established at Nuremberg. This service will be available for doctoral students independent of their location. The web conference on 20 May 2020 confirmed that the current students are overall pleased with the current services, support and the flexibility provided by PMU. Additionally, the students expressed the wish for a statistical advisory service to assist with data evaluation.

In sum, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.



After consultation with the students during the web conference on 20 May 20, the experts suggest that PMU advertises vacant positions for prospective doctoral students to facilitate more transparency and ease for student-project matching. In addition, the experts suggest the establishment of a statistical counselling centre at PMU or, if possible, a cooperation with the Data Science Centre at the University of Salzburg while enabling appropriate accessibility for students based in Nuremberg.

#### 4.4 Assessment criteria § 18 (4) 1 to 8: Degree programme and degree programme management

*Taking into account a heterogeneous student body, the following criteria shall apply. In the case of doctoral programmes with special profile elements, the descriptions shall furthermore address the characteristics defining the profile. Special profile elements in doctoral programmes may include, for example, distance-learning degree programmes or joint degree programmes.*

##### Degree programme and degree programme management

1. The profile and the intended learning outcomes of the degree programme have been clearly defined. They include scientific and/or artistic competences, personal skills, and social competences and are in accordance with level 8 of the National Qualification Framework.

According to the application, the profile of the English doctoral programme is based on seven outcomes that take account of the National Qualification Framework at level 8, the Austrian University Development Plan to educate the next generation of young scientists as well as European and international quality standards (e.g. Salzburg Principles). Seven intended learning outcomes are being defined: (i) research, (ii) scientific analytics, (iii) communication, (iv) ethics, diversity & society, (v) employability, (vi) entrepreneurship and (vii) internationalisation. The change to the English language, the focus on research-based learning rather than on formal teaching and the design of 3 modules (PhD Novice in year 1, PhD Advanced in year 2, PhD Expert in year 3) taught in a “summer school” format are considered to be an asset by the experts.

Given that the profile and the intended learning outcomes of the degree programme are clearly defined, the experts consider this criterion to be fulfilled.

##### Degree programme and degree programme management

2. The name of the degree programme and the academic degree correspond to the degree programme's profile.

The name of the degree programme (“Medical Science”) and the academic degree (“Doctor of Philosophy, PhD”) correspond to the degree programme's profile which is described above.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

##### Degree programme and degree programme management

*3. The minimum duration of studies stipulated in the curriculum is three years. The contents and structure of the curriculum ensure that the intended learning outcomes are achieved, while combining research (research and development and/or advancement and appreciation of the arts) and teaching.*

As outlined in the application, the minimum duration of the curriculum is set to be three years, and both content and structure of the curriculum are proposed to ensure that the intended learning outcomes in science and research are achieved. The three-step skills & career ladder (PhD Novice, PhD Advanced and PhD Expert, in total 13 ECTS) is comprehensive and well organized. Courses are offered twice a year in a "summer school" format, once in the winter term and once in the summer term, which enables completion of the courses within a three-year period. Apart from the research project (148 ECTS), the optional research activities (19 ECTS) include 11 different areas of engagements. While these research activities were considered to be appropriate for developing the research and career perspectives of the doctoral candidates, it was left open as to how some of the activities are defined and whether the allocated ECTS credits are justified. PMU was able to clarify these issues, e.g., that the "Teaching & Supervision" activity is related to co-supervision of Bachelor's and Master's degree projects, in the case of Master's degree projects based on an introductory course on good scientific practice, for which ECTS credits can be earned. The expert panel was told that the "External Modules & Summer Schools" activity includes attendance of elective courses at co-operating universities such as the University of Salzburg.

The initial step of degree programme management relates to the announcement of the available research projects and the recruitment of the students. It is important that the research projects are subjected to a quality control to confirm that they are suitable as a thesis project and can be completed within a three-year period (some criteria outlined in the Study and Examination Regulations). In this document, it is also stated that research projects are either widely advertised or designed within clinics or institutes of the private university and the university hospitals. The experts recommend that a successful internationalisation strategy should also include an international announcement of the research projects followed by a recruitment of international graduates. While the language change to English clearly supports this aspect of internationalisation, the experts emphasize the need to encourage and enable doctoral students to gain international experience during the doctoral programme. The participation at a conference, summer school or course with international outreach or an international placement should therefore be compulsory for every doctoral student. The experts emphasize that without this mandatory requirement the programme outcome of internationalisation, as defined in the application ("Upon completion of this program, students know about the crucial importance of international networks for the generation of high impact work and the capture of grant monies"), cannot be achieved.

Another issue of discussion concerned the internal structure of the research basis of the doctoral programme and its relation to existing key research areas within PMU. In the application, plans for the formation of research clusters are mentioned, but it is not clear how quickly these plans will be implemented. The experts suggest that the doctoral programme in Medical Science, which virtually covers all medical disciplines, would benefit from being structured into doctoral schools that are related to the research clusters in development. The establishment of thematic doctoral schools would enhance the successful progression of the doctoral programme towards eligibility for FWF doctoral funding (as alluded to in the application). Research clusters and related thematic PhD schools would mutually benefit from each other in strengthening the research profile of PMU and enabling the students to be trained and doing state-of-the-art research in a highly active and visible research area.

Much discussion was related to the output of the thesis project, i. e. a cumulative thesis based on at least two first – or equal – author publications versus a monographic dissertation without a publication. The question as how the publications of a cumulative thesis are scored (minimum 5 score points) in relation to journal metrics according to the Web of Science was satisfactorily explained. However, the proposal of a monographic dissertation without publication was questioned. In line with recommendations by the FWF, the experts emphasized that the development of research career competences needs to include knowledge and experience in successfully publishing a research paper. PMU reacted to this discussion with an amendment of the Study and Examination Regulations (provided on 2 June 2020) which was positively received by the experts. While the cumulative thesis is retained as default format, a monographic thesis accompanied by one or more original research papers is also permitted, in which the student may only be a co-author and does not need to reach a certain score in journal metrics. In contrast, a monographic thesis without publication is permitted by application only if intellectual property rights are at stake.

Another matter of discussion was related to the undergraduate studies of the doctoral candidates and their employment status, factors that may influence the successful completion of the thesis. In the written answers of PMU as well as in the web conference it became clear that a majority of the graduates are in medical training whereas the other part of doctoral students is constituted by science graduates who are typically employed via grants awarded to their supervisors. This mix of medical and science students is considered by PMU as an asset to foster transdisciplinary and translational research for the benefit of patients, a contention that is affirmed by the students. The heterogeneity in graduation and related employment status, however, also poses a challenge in enabling all students to pursue the same optional research activities. Not all students may have access to funds that enable them to actively attend congresses abroad and overseas, while limitations in the contractual working time may keep medical graduates away from a mandatory research stay in a laboratory abroad. The experts suggest that these limitations need to be kept in mind and that all doctoral candidates should have the same opportunities for international placements and conference attendances.

In summary, the answers of PMU along with the Study and Examination Regulations (provided on 2 June 2020) were positively received by the expert panel. The experts were impressed by the reflections in response to the panel's questions and consider the criterion to be partially fulfilled. On the one hand, they see it as a condition that every doctoral student participates in a conference, summer school or course with international outreach (defined by conference language, international faculty and audience) or takes an international placement.

In response to the expert report in the version of 2 July 2020, PMU amended the text in the "Study & Examination Regulations" (Section 4.2 Curriculum, Competencies and Program Outcomes, page 9) to read: "While students can select the activities listed below as appropriate for their individual research project, all students must obtain at least 6 ECTS through international engagements by attending conferences, summer schools and/or courses with international outreach and/or by completing an international placement. International outreach requires that a meeting, summer school or course is attended by European and/or overseas participants and is conducted through the medium of English." [...] "It is mandatory for all students to acquire at least 6 ECTS for international engagements through an international placement and/or the attendance of a level II and/or III conference, a summer school and/or a course with international participants that is conducted through the medium of English."

In view of the precautions taken and textual changes made, the experts decided to alter their report to account for the amendment of the "Study & Examination Regulations". They consider

the criterion under consideration to be fulfilled and recommend the Board of AQ Austria to refrain from imposing a condition with regard to said criterion.

On the other hand, the experts offer a number of recommendations. First, the thesis projects should be announced publicly and internationally, and PMU should strive to attract and recruit international graduates into the doctoral programme. Second, the research projects should be subjected to a rigorous quality control to confirm that they are suitable as a thesis project and can be completed within a three-year period. Third, another recommendation relates to early implementation of research clusters (as recommended by FWF) which would foster the establishment of related thematic doctoral schools and would enable the students to be trained and doing state-of-the-art research in highly active and visible research areas of PMU.

#### Degree programme and degree programme management

*4. The workload related to the individual modules ensures that the intended learning outcomes, especially writing the doctoral thesis, can be achieved within the stipulated duration of studies. The ECTS is applied correctly; in any case to the curricular parts (courses) of the degree programme.*

The application holds that the individual modules (research project, optional research activities, skills & career ladder) can be achieved within the stipulated duration of studies (three years). The experts agree that the workload attributed to the individual curricular activities is adequate and the ECTS appears to be correctly applied to the various activities. However, the experience gathered with the preceding doctoral programme "Medizinische Wissenschaft" shows that it takes, on average, 3.7 years to complete the degree programme. This raises questions as to which factors contribute to this delay in study completion and what measures can be taken to minimize such delays.

PMU explained that while the taught modules and optional research activities are usually completed during the three-year period, an extension of the three-year period is usually needed for completion of publications and thesis. PMU emphasized, however, that writing the thesis is part of the three-year study period but that there is no defined period attributed to writing which is thought to be a continuous activity accompanying the progress of the thesis project. If needed, an extension of the three-year study period is easily granted because the supervision & mentoring agreement is valid beyond three years as outlined in the application documents. There is, however, also the possibility that the agreement can be terminated because of adequate progress in the thesis project is lacking. In this context it was interesting to learn that, since 2014, 7 students had left the degree programme prematurely for private or workplace reasons or because they lost interest in research work.

A particular reason for the frequent extension of the three-year study period is related to the employment status of the doctoral students. Currently, 59% of the students in the doctoral programme "Medizinische Wissenschaft" are in medical training (part- or full-time physicians in residence), and the question arises as to how sufficient research time can be secured to enable the students to conduct their thesis projects within the three-year period. In the web conference the doctoral students also confirmed that full-time clinical duties are difficult to reconcile with an adequate progress in the thesis project, especially if the thesis project is not clinical but translational or basic research in nature. In order to obtain more information on the time spent with the curriculum and thesis project, representatives of PMU related (in the web conference on 20 May 2020) to a time-recording app that can be used for this purpose and would enable the collection of important data for appropriate measures and agreements with the hospital

managements. The experts thought that this would be a best-practice example to continuously monitor the course of doctoral studies.

Despite the issue of clinical versus PhD work, the doctoral students are eager and motivated to enrich their medical training with research-related activities and in this way to improve their career opportunities. Therefore, they emphasize the need to support doctoral students in medical training by dedicated scholarships and external grants to secure them more time to be spent in the laboratory. The initiation of PhD projects with cooperation partners, e.g. other universities and industry, may offer additional opportunities to obtain external support in this respect.

According to the cooperation agreements (PMU & University Hospital Salzburg and PMU, Klinikum Nuremberg & Klinikum Nuremberg Medical School, provided on 2 June 2020) specific agreements with regard to research time of physicians in residence have not yet been concluded. However, both PMU Salzburg and PMU Nuremberg were reassuring the expert panel that this issue is being negotiated with the University Hospital Salzburg as well as the Klinikum Nuremberg and Klinikum Nuremberg Medical School and that, for instance, dedicated scholarships are being set up to enable doctoral students in medical training to devote more time to their thesis projects. In contrast, science graduates are usually employed by fixed-term contracts (full- or part-time) funded by research grants. For this reason, they have more time available for pursuing their thesis projects.

In conclusion, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled but strongly advise PMU to secure enough time and funds for all PhD candidates to enable them to complete the degree programme within a reasonable time frame.

#### Degree programme and degree programme management

*5. Regulations for the doctoral programmes have been established. The examination methods are suitable to assess whether and to what extent the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.*

Detailed regulations for the doctoral programme have been established, and several rules such as the separation of supervisor and thesis reviewer functions are appreciated by the expert panel. Following initial assessment, though, the experts noticed some inconsistencies in how the various activities are assessed and graded. These issues were discussed in writing and during the web conference (20 May 2020) in which PMU was able to adequately respond to the queries and to amend the Study and Examination Regulations (provided 2 June 2020). These changes were well received by the experts and included new regulations such as: "Doctoral students are allowed to revise the PhD thesis before publication because of formal mistakes or typing errors, or because of changes requested by the two independent reviewers" and "The defence may take place online via Microsoft Teams. In this case the student must be in a dedicated room with the required internet and video access at a PMU or affiliated hospital location in the presence of either a part of the examination board or, if this were not to be possible, of an invigilator."

Further matters of discussion related to the statement in the application that "none of the intended learning outcomes on the amended PhD course is assessed by MCQ or formal examination. All assessments are research activities, tasks, essays, calculations, presentations, poster, group work or problem-solving exercises performed by the students either during contact time with the lecturer or after the formal teaching sessions as homework. Exceptions

may arise when students complete external modules, events or summer schools.” In contrast, in the document “Module & Teaching Descriptors” the assessment of the module units is said to be graded by the Austrian marking system. In the web conference it was agreed that the method of assessment of the learning outcomes in each module need to be appropriate to the definition of the learning outcome and be transparently communicated with the students. PMU explained that all summative examinations are graded analogous to the Austrian University law (§ 72 (2) UG, based on the Austrian grading system of marks between 1 (excellent) and 5 (fail)).

With regard to thesis assessment one of the reviewers proposed that the thesis could be graded as excellent, sufficient or insufficient/failed (with the possibility of resubmission), which together with the marks earned in the defence could yield the final grade: passed with honours, passed, failed. The course director promised to discuss this with the Dean for Teaching & Learning, and the expert panel encourages PMU to consider this proposal but does not make it a condition. The experts agree that PMU is careful in its considerations of adequate assessment and grading methods, adapting them in a manner appropriate to the learning outcomes and Study and Examination Regulations. The Diploma Supplement holds that, according to a template of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy of March 1, 2017, a comprehensive assessment of several subjects should be graded as passed with distinction, passed with merit, passed or insufficient.

All in all, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled and emphasize that PMU should monitor and adapt the assessment methods if this appears appropriate.

#### Degree programme and degree programme management

6. A “Diploma Supplement” that complies with the requirements laid down in Annex 1 to § 6 of the University and Higher Education Statistics and Education Documentation Decree (Universitäts- und Hochschulstatistik- und Bildungsdokumentationsverordnung, UHSBV), original version: F. L. G. II no. 216/2019, will be issued.<sup>3</sup>

A template of the Diploma Supplement in English and German is provided in the application documents and considered to be adequate by the expert panel.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

#### Degree programme and degree programme management

7. The admission requirements have been clearly defined. In terms of the qualification level, they correspond at least to the provisions provided by the Universities Act 2002 (UG), F. L. G. I no. 120/2002.

The admission requirements have been clearly defined in the general and specific admission criteria of the application, and they correspond to the provisions provided in § 63, § 63a and § 64 of the Universities Act 2002 (UG). This also applies to confirmed evidence for the command of the English language at level B2. An appropriate command of the English language will also be checked during the selection process of the doctoral students, in which it is in addition evaluated whether – on the basis of their previous academic education – the candidates have sufficient skills and competences to successfully perform the thesis project in consideration.

<sup>3</sup> The Accreditation Regulation for Private Universities 2019 (PU-AkkVO) refers to Annex 2 of the UniStEV 2004. This decree was amended. Therefore, the text of the assessment criterion in the expert report was adapted accordingly.

Open questions of the experts with regard to the admission and selection process were clarified in writing. The selection process includes a pre-selection of candidates by the group leaders and a presentation of the pre-selected candidates before a selection panel in which defined assessment criteria to the research proposal, the work plan and the competences (including command of English) of the candidates are applied.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

#### Degree programme and degree programme management

*8. The admission procedure has been clearly defined and ensures a fair and transparent selection of the applicants according to the admission requirements and the required competences.*

Following discussions with the expert panel, PMU answered several queries of the experts in writing and during the web conference. Issues in consideration related, for instance, to the fact that students can apply at either PMU site for a vacancy in the doctoral programme but will be enrolled only at one of PMU sites. Thesis projects funded by FWF or DFG will be announced internationally to comply with the funders' regulations. PMU explained, as addressed in the application, that the initial selection is done by the research group leaders according to the job descriptions and/or the funding conditions. Only candidates with an agreed research project and a supervision agreement can apply for a place in the doctoral programme, the final selection being taken by a selection panel whose composition is defined in the application documents. The overarching selection criterion is that the candidates – apart from meeting the general admission criteria – present with appropriate qualifications, command of English, skills and competences to master the thesis project, independent of their nationality, gender or religion. Austrians and Germans, by the way, are not considered international students in the doctoral programme run at Salzburg and Nuremberg.

Following these clarifications, the expert panel considers the admission procedure (as defined by the general and specific admission criteria in the application documents) to ensure a fair and transparent selection of the applicants according to the admission requirements and the required competences. Therefore, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

#### Degree programme and degree programme management

*9. The recognition procedures for higher education competences in terms of crediting towards examinations or parts of a degree programme have been clearly and transparently defined. When recognising or crediting higher education competences, the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention) shall be considered.*

The crediting of examinations or parts of a degree programme has been described in the application documents. Students enrolled in the current doctoral programme "Medizinische Wissenschaft" have the option to change to the new doctoral programme "Medical Science", if they want, and will be credited for the courses completed in the preceding programme. Although, according to the students' opinion in the web conference, this option is being actively advertised by PMU, only students who have not yet completed a number of taught modules are likely to be interested in a change. New crediting procedures have been included in the amended



version of the Study and Examination Regulations (provided on 2 June 2020) to govern the crediting process if a student wants to change the thesis project during his/her PhD study.

While the crediting criteria are in essence clearly and transparently defined, the experts raised concern as to whether the regulations are in accordance with the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention). This concern applies specifically to the statement that “students have no fundamental right to crediting”. In addition, the wording of the statement is prone to distract students changing to PMU from another university and to jeopardize internationalisation efforts of PMU.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion to be partially fulfilled and request that, on condition, the wording is changed to comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (which in its summary states: “It provides that requests should be assessed in a fair manner and within a reasonable time. The recognition can only be refused if the qualification is substantially different from that of the host country – and the onus is on its educational institution to prove that it is”).

It should also be taken into account that the Austrian Universities Act 2002 reads in § 78 (1): “On application of the degree student concerned, examinations passed by students shall be recognized by the officer responsible for study matters by official notification, provided that they are equivalent to those prescribed by the curriculum, if taken ...”.

In response to the expert report in the version of 2 July 2020, PMU amended the text in the “Study & Examination Regulations” (Section 7 Recognition of External Courses, Modules and Seminars, page 24) to read: “Recognition refers to the crediting of already completed study or learning qualifications so that individual modules or courses do not have to be attended or exams do not have to be completed. Credit is always based on the learning objectives (outcomes) of the module or course as described in the curriculum for which students request credit. It is essential for the credit that the learning objectives of the respective course or module have been demonstrably achieved.”

In view of the textual changes made, the experts decided to alter their report to account for the amendment of the “Study & Examination Regulations”. They consider the criterion under consideration to be fulfilled and recommend the Board of AQ Austria to refrain from imposing a condition with regard to said criterion.

#### 4.5 Assessment criteria § 18 (5) 1 to 5: Staff

##### Staff

1. *The private university has sufficient scientific and/or artistic staff as well as sufficient non-academic staff for operating the degree programme.*

The scientists operating as supervisors in the degree programme are listed in the application (52 potential supervisors in Salzburg, 18 potential supervisors in Nuremberg). All formal teaching is provided by personnel of PMU in Salzburg. The number of scientists involved in teaching appears to be appropriate and sufficient, after PMU had clarified in writing that the taught modules are run twice each year, the locations alternating between both PMU sites. The experts were also told that Microsoft Teams and other online apps are increasingly used to



deliver teaching across the two PMU sites and that the conference app BigBlueButton is planned to be employed for holding seminars online. In addition, PMU is developing an app with which supervisors and students can communicate securely within their research group, settle administrative issues and obtain information and support relevant to the thesis project. With these measures, the teaching load can be reduced and kept at a manageable burden. A course director at PMU in Salzburg, a deputy course director in Nuremberg and a PhD Administrative Office at PMU in Salzburg (staffed with two persons part-time) will be able to operate the programme in its strategic, organisational and administrative dimensions.

All in all, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

#### Staff

*2. The scientific staff or the artistic staff, respectively, is qualified according to the requirements of the activities provided for in the degree programme. The scientific and/or artistic staff envisaged for the supervision of thesis projects is authorised to teach (venia docendi) or has an equivalent qualification for the scientific or artistic subject, respectively. It is involved in the research and development or the advancement and appreciation of the arts of the respective subject and performs research and development activities which are in accordance with the university's approach and the respective subject culture. The majority of the scientific and/or artistic staff assigned to the supervision of theses has experience in this field.*

The formal requirements for supervising doctoral students are met by the scientific staff, the lead supervisors presenting with a *venia docendi* or equivalent (professorship) qualification, the co-supervisors presenting with a proper doctoral degree (PhD, Dr. rer. nat.). The majority of the supervisors in Nuremberg has experience in supervising doctoral students. However, successful supervision also requires some experience in this task, which is more difficult to judge. PMU plans to offer a supervisor training programme, which the experts strongly recommend to introduce as soon as possible. Furthermore, given that a research (thesis) project forms the core of educational activity in the doctoral programme, the supervisor staff needs to have knowledge, experience and a track record in the research areas in which the thesis projects are offered. This criterion also appears to be generally met. A question asked by the expert panel relates to the monitoring of supervision performance and the English teaching skills of the scientists involved in supervising and teaching. PMU argues that the group leaders present regularly at international conferences and for this reason are supposed to have appropriate skills in teaching and lecturing in English. The experts recommend that some monitoring of supervision performance by the use of quantifiable parameters should be introduced.

All in all, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

#### Staff

*3. The benchmark for an adequate tutoring ratio for the supervision of doctoral theses is eight doctoral students per supervisor (full-time equivalent).*

The average student-supervisor ratio of 2.6–3 in the existing doctoral programme “Medizinische Wissenschaft” is acceptable. The experts emphasize, however, that the number of doctoral students per supervisor must be compatible with the supervisors' workload allocation to research and teaching. Therefore, it has been the opinion of the experts that the benchmark of 8 doctoral students per supervisor – as defined by AQ Austria – is too high for medical and

science areas in which thesis projects involve, to a large extent, clinical, laboratory and infrastructure-dependent work. In the same vein, the experts emphasize that the time expenditure for supervising doctoral students should not be underestimated. Supervisors who spend little time in research and teaching (e.g. only 0–5%) as stated in a table of the application (amended on 17 June 2020) may not be able to maintain an acceptable quality and intensity of supervision unless they are assisted by research-experienced postdoctoral group members. The application (as amended on 17 June 2020) shows, however, that in the current doctoral programme “Medizinische Wissenschaft” only 1 or at most 2 doctoral students were taken care of by supervisors with a 0–5 % workload allocation to research when no postdoctoral staff for assistance was available. The experts express concern, however, that one supervisor with 0 % allocation to research can adequately mentor 2 doctoral students, much as another supervisor (20 % time allocation to research) overseeing 14 doctoral students can adequately take care of each of these candidates.

While the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled, they advocate that the course director should keep an eye on the student-supervisor ratio to maintain an adequate level of high quality supervision.

#### Staff

*4. The prioritisation of the permanent scientific and/or artistic staff's teaching, research, and administrative activities ensures that there is sufficient time for research and development or the advancement and appreciation of the arts as well as the supervision of doctoral students.*

The workload allocation of the supervisors to research, teaching, administration, clinical work and other tasks has been presented in an amended table (provided on 17 June 2020). Together with the size of the supervisor's team (senior postdocs, postdocs, doctoral students, diploma students, bachelor students and technical staff) this information enabled the experts to assess whether each supervisor is able to spend enough time for research and supervision of doctoral students. The application shows that the relevant workload allocation is quite heterogeneous among the supervisor faculty members. PMU argued in writing that the link between the supervisor's workload and the number of doctoral students may be self-regulatory as supervisors who are short of time resources are unlikely to apply for research funds or to develop clinical research projects. The experts, however, recommend that the course director should actively monitor the situation and limit the number of doctoral students if the workload allocation of a supervisor to research and teaching is inadequate.

Another issue addressed by the expert panel related to the contractual commitment of clinically active personnel at PMU Nuremberg to provide enough time for teaching and supervising activities. A cooperation contract between PMU, Klinikum Nuremberg and Klinikum Nuremberg Medical School was concluded on 14 February 2020 (Zusatzvereinbarung zum Kooperationsvertrag über die Gründung und den Betrieb eines Campus' der PMU in Nürnberg). This agreement provides a framework under which PMU Nuremberg provides teaching and supervision personnel as well as space and infrastructure to the doctoral programme and defines the mutual duties of PMU Nuremberg and the doctoral students, the mutual duties of supervisors and students, the organisation and execution of the curriculum and related matters. The cooperation agreement also states that professors and other teaching personnel (i.e. persons with a *venia docendi* and other staff) have a contractual commitment to conduct relevant teaching tasks. PMU also explained that teaching and supervision of doctoral students

is considered to become one of the criteria that persons applying for an associate professorship will have to meet.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled but recommend that the number of doctoral students per supervisor must be compatible with the supervisor's workload allocation to research and teaching.

#### Staff

*5. The private university provides for personnel development measures aimed at the supervision of doctoral students.*

Besides a PhD supervisor kick-off in Nuremberg, PMU offers a voluntary supervisor training programme that contains web-based tutorials. The experts emphasize that continuous education is a relevant task to enable supervisors to cope with the challenges in supervising, mentoring and educating doctoral students and recommend more efforts to be laid on personnel development in this respect. To this end, PMU may take advantage of workshops and courses offered by other universities or by the Austrian Agency of Research Integrity. In addition, the expert panel suggested that the doctoral students should have the opportunity to propose topics and themes that should be included in the supervisor training programmes.

Another issue under discussion related to the question whether supervisor training programmes should be offered on a compulsory rather than voluntary basis. PMU explained that, instead of imposing mandatory trainings, it plans to offer incentives for taking voluntary trainings, incentives that support the supervisors' academic and/or medical career.

All in all, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled but advocate measures to extend and diversify the doctoral supervisor training programme.

## 4.6 Assessment criterion § 18 (6): Funding

#### Funding

*The degree programme's funding is secured. Provisions have also been made to fund expiring degree programmes.*

The sole source of income for the programme is the tuition fee (€ (...) per year) covering teaching costs, staff costs for the course director and administrative, internal services and office costs. According to the financial forecast for the next years, there will be a surplus amounting to more than € (...) in the year 2023/2024. The funding will secure finishing of the current doctoral programme "Medizinische Wissenschaft" and the start of the new doctoral programme "Medical Sciences". Based on these numbers the funding for the programme is secured. The annual profit will be partially reinvested into the programme by providing financial support for travel and publication expenses and hardship funds for doctoral students with funding gaps.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

#### 4.7 Special provisions - Assessment criteria § 20 (2) 1 to 5: Criteria for the accreditation of degree programmes to be offered at another location as the institutionally accredited site

##### Degree programmes to be offered at another location as the institutionally accredited site

*1. The private university shall ensure that the degree programme is offered in the same quality and under comparable study conditions as the degree programmes offered at the institutionally accredited site, without it leading to a lack of resources and, subsequently, a deterioration in quality at existing sites.*

According to the application documents, both PMU sites in Nuremberg and Salzburg are monitored by PMU and its Quality Assurance Office. All modules of the curriculum are taught by the same group of lecturers and will be evaluated with the same measures at both sites. In addition, the course director will frequently travel between the both sites and will also be available digitally, e.g. via phone, email and Skype. Furthermore, meetings of members of both locations are held regularly to ensure and promote exchange between both locations. Even though the administrative power is mostly located at the Salzburg site, the experts see no hindrance in assuring comparable quality and conditions between both PMU sites as PMU envisaged to appoint a deputy course director located in Nuremberg.

In the web conference on 20 May 2020, it became evident that students have a strong feeling of belonging to PMU. However, there might be a possibility for an "outpost" feeling to arise for students located at PMU in Nuremberg due to geography and due to pursuing their own busy agenda. Furthermore, the students noted, expressed their wishes for financial support regarding travel and accommodation when travelling between the two PMU sites.

In conclusion, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled. At the same time, they suggest PMU to consider reimbursement for travels between the sites for the participation in events at the respective other PMU site to overcome potential preferential treatment of students located at one site versus the other.

##### Degree programmes to be offered at another location as the institutionally accredited site

*2. The private university shall ensure that the specific challenges of a degree programme offered at another site are explicitly taken account for in their internal quality management.*

According to the application documents, there are frequent exchanges between the two PMU sites, mostly on administrative level and less on student level. The overarching evaluation software EvaSys will ensure persistence in quality. Moreover, new exchanges are planned to be implemented, such as a survey for students and staff at Nuremberg which can be compared to the outcome of a similar survey in Salzburg. Students, lecturers and supervisors from both locations are joined in one curriculum commission that meets once a term.

A PhD supervisor kick-off in Nuremberg will prepare prospective supervisors for possible future challenges. A PhD app is currently under development and aims at improving communication and support between the two sites.

Thus, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

**Degree programmes to be offered at another location as the institutionally accredited site**

*3. The private university shall ensure that the counselling and support services for students are adequate and comparable to those offered at other sites. Furthermore, the private university shall provide for a procedure for students to lodge a complaint.*

According to the application document, the PhD Administrative Office, the course director and the prospective Doctoral Service Centre are responsible for both sites. PMU envisaged to appoint a deputy course director located in Nuremberg for better interaction with the students at that PMU site. In addition, all online tools will be accessible for students of both sites. With this framework, a solid basis for homogeneity between the two PMU sites in counselling, support and complaint management is available.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

**Degree programmes to be offered at another location as the institutionally accredited site**

*4. If the site offering the degree programme is located abroad, the private university shall also ensure that the respective national legislation is observed. Moreover, the private university shall ensure that other educational traditions and cultural differences regarding teaching and learning, including examinations, are respected, in particular with regard to the students' role in the teaching and learning process as well as in any quality assurance processes.*

Although there are legislative differences between Germany and Austria, the basic academic culture between the two PMU sites is comparable.

Furthermore, PMU provided a letter from the Bavarian State Ministry for Science and Art stating that the prerequisites for a notification according to Art. 86 of the BayHSchG is given, but the notification can be provided only after a positive accreditation by AQ Austria.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

**Degree programmes to be offered at another location as the institutionally accredited site**

*5. If the private university operates the degree programme in co-operation with another institution, a contract has been concluded which clearly and transparently defines the co-operation.*

PMU declared in the web conference on 20 May 2020 that such cooperation contracts exist and clearly define the cooperation, including the hierarchies and duties of each party. Said agreement was provided by PMU and consists of an additional agreement to the cooperation contract between PMU, Klinikum Nuremberg and Klinikum Nuremberg Medical School. This agreement contains information about the mutual duties of supervisors and students, the mutual duties of the Klinikum Nuremberg/Klinikum Nuremberg Medical School and the students, the execution and organisation of the curriculum, tuition fees and accounting, the deputy course director in Nuremberg as well as about the location of courses.

Upon receiving said cooperation contract, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

## 5 Summary and final evaluation

This report provides an assessment of the application of Paracelsus Medical University Salzburg – Private Foundation (PMU) to alter (i) the designation, (ii) language, (iii) profile and (iv) location of a three-year doctoral programme in Medical Science, a programme that was first accredited as a doctoral programme in Medizinischer Wissenschaft by AQ Austria in 2014. The restructured programme will be taught in English and run not only in Salzburg but also at a new location, in Nuremberg. A panel of three experts (expert panel) has gone very carefully through the detailed application and the related documents and provides a comprehensive evaluation of the application in two parts: (1) a summary of the findings and recommendations to PMU and (2) recommendations to the Board of AQ Austria.

### Summary of the findings and recommendations to PMU

#### § 18 (1) Development and quality assurance of the doctoral programme

1. The doctoral programme “Medical Science” was developed together with current doctoral students, academic, clinical and administrative staff at both PMU sites, as well as at the Salzburg University Hospital and Klinikum Nuremberg. The project development guidelines provided by the Quality Assurance Office as well as input from private stakeholders, public universities, universities of applied sciences and the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) were taken into account. In writing as well as during the web conference on 20 May 2020, PMU satisfactorily explained how this input was incorporated in the curriculum. In addition, PMU amended the format of the monographic thesis inasmuch as it should also be accompanied by a publication, unless intellectual property rights are at stake.

The experts considered the criterion to be fulfilled and do not offer any recommendation.

2. PMU uses the evaluation software EvaSys to annually review the teaching quality of the lecturers. Negative evaluations are discussed by the course director and the pertinent lecturer in order to seek a solution or substitute the lecturer in question. The course director (located at PMU Salzburg) and his deputy (located at PMU Nuremberg) are central authorities to oversee the organisation, administration and quality assurance of the doctoral programme. They are assisted by the curriculum committee (degree programme committee) consisting of student representatives, lead supervisors, lecturers, co-opted members from both PMU sites, head of faculty, head of Quality Assurance Office, course director and his deputy, representatives of the course administration and representatives of other doctoral programmes at PMU. Student-supervisor problems have thus far been successfully solved internally and/or with the help of the course director.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled. At the same time, they offer the following recommendations: In the annual supervisor evaluation, the quality of supervision should be closely watched, especially with increasing group size. In the taught module PhD Novice, aspects of good scientific practice other than plagiarism (e.g. authorship criteria, data documentation, copyright issues and confidentiality) should be accounted for in more detail.

#### § 18 (2) Research environment

1. PMU in Salzburg has a development plan in which the following research priority areas are defined: (i) neuroscience, (ii) oncological, immunological and allergic disorders, (iii)

musculoskeletal disorders, biomechanics and sport medicine, (iv) metabolic disorders and (v) regenerative medicine. The development plan is subject to updates for the years 2021–2027. In Nuremberg the research priority areas are (i) oncology including haematology, immunology and microbiology, (ii) cardiovascular diseases, (iii) mental and nervous diseases and (iv) musculoskeletal disorders. The research concept of the doctoral programme covers medical science as a whole and is an integral part of the overarching university strategy. The research output in these areas is good and internationally visible at both sites.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled. At the same time, the experts strongly encourage PMU to further develop the doctoral programme with thematic clusters in line with the development plan of PMU and with the goal to further enhance the visibility of the research profile.

2. In line with the broad range of research topics at PMU, the research focus of the doctoral programme covers a broad range of medical and biomedical sciences without specific thematic differentiation. The research output in terms of publications is good at both sites and shows the high quality of the research at PMU. The strong contribution by the doctoral students to this output is one of the drivers for the research performance.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, the doctoral programme would benefit from a more stringent thematic structure that might increase international visibility and add value to the students' identification with the goals of the programme. The expert panel strongly endorses a strategy with defined core areas within an overarching programme.

3. Both sites of PMU are well staffed with fully employed supervisors who are highly qualified and successful researchers. This is also reflected by a high rate of funding although it was a matter of discussion as to how many of the funds reported fall into the category of competitive third party grants. Nevertheless, there is substantial funding by foundations and public funding agencies, indicating that the research projects and supervisors are competitive.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

4. The individual research groups have established scientific cooperations at the level of the supervisors, and incentives of PMU foster the establishment of international cooperations. Although there are currently no structural cooperations at the degree level, there is a partnership with the Mayo Clinic (USA) and the Dhulikhel Hospital (Nepal). All international partnerships will benefit from changing the programme language to English.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled but encourage PMU to establish further structured cooperations with national and international research institutions.

5. The structural framework of the research activities includes the research offices in Salzburg and Nuremberg (support for clinical trials, research organization and grant application), the Institute for Clinical Innovation (advice and guidance for the translation and transfer process of research results) and PMU-FFF (competitive seed funding and complementary funding for excellent externally funded research projects). Some discussion was raised with respect to the workload of the doctoral programme (180 ECTS) which for clinically employed doctoral students would occupy about half of their working time in the hospital. PMU is aware of this aspect which may pose a risk for the research project, but it was explained that most doctoral students in medical training work on research projects that are well integrated in their clinical duties. PMU plans to establish time recordings for the working time spent in research, which the expert



panel thinks is a suitable measure for ensuring sufficient research time. Another subject of discussion related to the funding of doctoral students beyond the Discite! stipend that covers the salary for the first year.

Overall, the expert panel considers the structural framework to be sufficient for the programme and the criterion fulfilled. Although a statement confirming the funding for the full three years of the doctoral programme is part of the mentoring agreement, the expert panel recommends to establish internal funding programmes providing seed funding for innovative projects and to provide funds for prolonged support of doctoral students in order to ensure completion of the programme by all doctoral students.

6. Information on the available research infrastructure, research and lab space as well as animal facilities was provided, which was deemed suitable for the modified programme by the experts. Access to important research technologies, e.g. next generation sequencing, imaging, flow cytometry or proteomics, was another matter of discussion because this issue is not well-defined and seems to depend on individual cooperations between research groups.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled but recommend the establishment of shared infrastructures for defined high-end technologies (core facilities) and of a structured process for access to high-end research equipment by doctoral students.

#### § 18 (3) Supervision and counselling services

1. The cooperation agreement specifies that PMU is responsible for module teaching, quality assurance, student counselling and course administration in Nuremberg. The rights and duties of the private university, the doctoral students and the lead supervisors are defined by three documents: (i) the research proposal describing key aspects of the thesis project, signed by student and lead supervisor, (ii) the supervision agreement describing the relationship between student, lead supervisor and co-supervisors, signed by these parties, and (iii) the indenture defining the legal relationship between student and PMU which provides the doctoral degree in Salzburg and Nuremberg, signed by student and course director on behalf of PMU.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled and do not offer any recommendation.

2. PMU rewards the attendance of external scientific meetings, summer schools, workshops, ring lectures and international placements with ECTS credits, although an international placement or the participation in an external scientific meeting is not mandatory. The explanations given hold that some doctoral students may not be able to obtain adequate travel funding from their research groups and that doctoral students in medical training may face a conflict with their contractual obligations in medical service. Nevertheless, the experts consider international experience of any kind of utmost importance for the students' development during doctoral education.

The experts consider the criterion to be partially fulfilled and suggest the following condition: The participation at a conference, summer school or course with international outreach or an international placement should be mandatory to provide every doctoral student with the opportunity to develop the networking and international skills inherent to and specific for a scientific career (see also § 18 (4) 3).

In response to the expert report in the version of 2 July 2020, PMU amended the text in the "Study & Examination Regulations" (Section 4.2 Curriculum, Competencies and Program



Outcomes, page 9) to read: "While students can select the activities listed below as appropriate for their individual research project, all students must obtain at least 6 ECTS through international engagements by attending conferences, summer schools and/or courses with international outreach and/or by completing an international placement. International outreach requires that a meeting, summer school or course is attended by European and/or overseas participants and is conducted through the medium of English." [...] "It is mandatory for all students to acquire at least 6 ECTS for international engagements through an international placement and/or the attendance of a level II and/or III conference, a summer school and/or a course with international participants that is conducted through the medium of English."

In view of the precautions taken and textual changes made, the experts decided to alter their report to account for the amendment of the "Study & Examination Regulations". They consider the criterion under consideration to be fulfilled and recommend the Board of AQ Austria to refrain from imposing a condition with regard to said criterion.

In addition, the experts recommend that an information structure regarding stays abroad and funding opportunities for all students should be established. They advise that PMU sets up a travel fund within PMU-FFF and encourages supervisors to support their students spending some time at a research institution abroad.

3. The counselling services include the supervision team, the research office, older peers, the Quality Assurance Office, online tools, the course administration team, the course director and his deputy in Nuremberg. Counselling is also offered by the "ÖH-Beratungszentrum" and psychologists in Nuremberg. Moreover, the Doctoral Service Centre (in development) will tend issues arising at both PMU sites, in person at PMU Salzburg and online at PMU Nuremberg. The current students are overall pleased with the available services, their support and flexibility. The experts emphasize that an adequate group size is crucial for appropriate supervision and counselling within the research group.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled but make two recommendations: PMU should advertise vacant PhD positions to enhance transparency and ease student-project matching. In addition, PMU should establish a statistical counselling centre (or service), either alone or in cooperation with the Data Science Centre at the University of Salzburg, and ensure that the service is also accessible for students based in Nuremberg.

#### § 18 (4) Degree programme and degree programme management

1. The profile of the English doctoral programme is based on seven outcomes that take account of the National Qualification Framework at level 8, the Austrian University Development Plan to educate the next generation of young scientists as well as European and international quality standards (e. g. Salzburg Principles). Seven intended learning outcomes are being defined: (1) research, (2) scientific analytics, (3) communication, (4) ethics, diversity & society, (5) employability, (6) entrepreneurship and (7) internationalisation. The change to the English language, the focus on research-based learning rather than on formal teaching and the design of 3 modules (PhD Novice in year 1, PhD Advanced in year 2, PhD Expert in year 3) taught in a "summer school" format are considered to be an asset by the experts.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

2. The name of the degree programme ("Medical Science") and the academic degree ("Doctor of Philosophy, PhD") correspond to the degree programme's profile.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

3. The minimum duration of the curriculum is three years, and both content and structure of the curriculum are proposed to ensure that the intended learning outcomes are achieved. The three-step skills & career ladder (PhD Novice, PhD Advanced and PhD Expert, in total 13 ECTS) is comprehensive and well organized. Courses are offered twice a year in a "summer school" format. Apart from the research project (148 ECTS), the optional research activities include 11 categories of activities among which the students can choose to earn a total of 19 ECTS credits. With regard to the research basis of the doctoral programme, the experts advocate to structure the doctoral programme into thematic research clusters/schools to enhance its eligibility for FWF doctoral funding and enable the students to be trained in a highly active and visible research area. The output of the thesis project (format of thesis) was changed by PMU following discussion with the experts: while the cumulative thesis is retained as default format, a monographic thesis accompanied by one or more original research papers is also permitted, whereas a monographic thesis without publication is permitted by application only if intellectual property rights are at stake. The employment status of the doctoral candidates was discussed as an important factor for the successful completion of a PhD thesis within three years. A majority of the graduates is in medical training, whereas the other part of doctoral students is constituted by science graduates typically employed via grants of their supervisors. While this mix of medical and science students is considered by PMU as an asset to foster transdisciplinary and translational research, it poses a challenge in enabling all students to pursue the same optional research activities (international placements, attendance of international conferences). The experts mandate that all doctoral candidates should have the same opportunities for pursuing international activities.

The experts consider the criterion to be partially fulfilled. They see it as a condition that every doctoral student participates in a conference, summer school or course with international outreach (defined by conference language, international faculty and audience) or takes an international placement. Without this mandatory requirement the programme outcome of internationalisation cannot be achieved.

In response to the expert report in the version of 2 July 2020, PMU amended the text in the "Study & Examination Regulations" (Section 4.2 Curriculum, Competencies and Program Outcomes, page 9) to read: "While students can select the activities listed below as appropriate for their individual research project, all students must obtain at least 6 ECTS through international engagements by attending conferences, summer schools and/or courses with international outreach and/or by completing an international placement. International outreach requires that a meeting, summer school or course is attended by European and/or overseas participants and is conducted through the medium of English." [...] "It is mandatory for all students to acquire at least 6 ECTS for international engagements through an international placement and/or the attendance of a level II and/or III conference, a summer school and/or a course with international participants that is conducted through the medium of English."

In view of the precautions taken and textual changes made, the experts decided to alter their report to account for the amendment of the "Study & Examination Regulations". They consider the criterion under consideration to be fulfilled and recommend the Board of AQ Austria to refrain from imposing a condition with regard to said criterion.

In addition, the experts recommend that thesis projects are subjected to a rigorous quality control to ensure their completion within a three-year period, that thesis projects are announced

publicly and internationally, that international graduates are recruited into the doctoral programme, and thematic doctoral schools related to research clusters are implemented.

4. The application holds that the individual modules (research project, optional research activities, skills & career ladder) can be achieved within a three-year period. The experts agree that the workload attributed to the individual curricular activities is adequate and the ECTS appears to be correctly applied to the various activities. While the taught modules and optional research activities are usually completed during the three-year period, an extension of the three-year period (on average to 3.7 years) is needed for completion of publications and thesis. The fact that 59% of the students in the doctoral programme "Medizinische Wissenschaft" are in medical training is another reason for the delayed completion of a PhD thesis, which was confirmed by the students during the web conference. Recording the time spent with the curriculum and thesis project with an app was considered by the students and experts to be a best-practice model to monitor the course of PhD studies. The doctoral students are eager and motivated to enrich their medical training with research-related activities and in this way to improve their career opportunities but emphasize the need to support doctoral students in medical training by dedicated scholarships and external grants to secure them more time to be spent in the laboratory. While specific agreements with regard to research time allocated to physicians in residence have not yet been concluded, this issue is – according to PMU – currently negotiated.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled but strongly recommend PMU to secure enough time and funds for all PhD candidates to enable them to complete their PhD study within a reasonable time frame.

5. Detailed regulations for the doctoral programme have been established, and several rules such as the separation of supervisor and thesis reviewer functions were appreciated by the expert panel. Some queries as to how the various activities are assessed and graded were clarified by PMU in the amended Study and Examination Regulations (provided on 2 June 2020). These changes were well received by the experts and included new regulations such as the possibility to revise the PhD thesis before publication because of formal mistakes or changes requested by the reviewers. The defence may take place online via Microsoft Teams. Some discussion was raised by the format of examinations with which the intended learning outcomes of the doctoral programme are assessed. In the web conference it was agreed that the method of assessment of the learning outcomes in each module need to be appropriate to the definition of the learning outcome and be transparently communicated to the students.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled and emphasize that PMU should monitor and adapt the assessment methods if appropriate.

6. A template of the Diploma Supplement is provided in English and German and considered to be adequate by the expert panel.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled and do not offer any recommendation.

7. The admission requirements have been clearly defined in the general and specific admission criteria of the application, and they correspond to the provisions provided in § 63, § 63a and § 64 of the Universities Act 2002 (UG). This also applies to confirmed evidence for the command of the English language at level B2. An appropriate command of the English language is also checked during the selection process of the doctoral students, in which it is in addition evaluated whether – on the basis of their previous academic education – the candidates have sufficient

skills and competences to successfully perform the thesis project in consideration. The selection process includes a pre-selection of candidates by the group leaders and a presentation of the pre-selected candidates before a selection panel in which defined assessment criteria to the research proposal, the work plan and the competences (including command of English) of the candidates are applied.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled and do not offer any recommendation.

8. The admission procedure (as defined by the general and specific admission criteria in the Study and Examination Regulations) is considered to ensure a fair and transparent selection of the applicants according to the admission requirements and the required competences. While students can apply at either PMU site for a vacancy in the doctoral programme, they will be enrolled only at one of the PMU sites. Thesis projects funded by FWF or DFG will be announced internationally to comply with the funders' regulations. The initial selection is done by the research group leaders according to the job descriptions and/or the funding conditions. Only candidates with an agreed research project and a supervision agreement can apply for a place in the doctoral programme, the final selection being taken by a selection panel whose composition is defined in the application. The overarching selection criterion is that the candidates – apart from meeting the general admission criteria – present with appropriate qualifications, command of English, skills and competences to master the thesis project, independent of their nationality, gender or religion.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled and do not offer any recommendation.

9. The crediting of examinations or parts of a degree programme are described in the application. Students enrolled in the current doctoral programme "Medizinische Wissenschaft" have the option to change to the new doctoral programme "Medical Science", if they want, and will be credited for the courses completed in the preceding programme. New crediting procedures have been included in the amended version of the Study and Examination Regulations (provided on 2 June 2020) to govern the crediting process if a student wants to change the thesis project during his/her PhD study. While the crediting criteria are in essence clearly and transparently defined, the experts raised concern as to whether the regulations are in accordance with the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention). This concern applies specifically to the statement in the application that "students have no fundamental right to crediting". In addition, the wording of the statement is prone to distract students changing to PMU from another university and to jeopardize internationalisation efforts of PMU.

The experts consider the criterion to be only partially fulfilled and request the following condition: The wording in the application need to be changed to comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (which in its summary states: "It provides that requests should be assessed in a fair manner and within a reasonable time. The recognition can only be refused if the qualification is substantially different from that of the host country – and the onus is on its educational institution to prove that it is"). It should also be analogous to § 78 (1) of the Austrian Universities Act 2002.

In response to the expert report in the version of 2 July 2020, PMU amended the text in the "Study & Examination Regulations" (Section 7 Recognition of External Courses, Modules and Seminars, page 24) to read: "Recognition refers to the crediting of already completed study or learning qualifications so that individual modules or courses do not have to be attended or exams do not have to be completed. Credit is always based on the learning objectives

(outcomes) of the module or course as described in the curriculum for which students request credit. It is essential for the credit that the learning objectives of the respective course or module have been demonstrably achieved."

In view of the textual changes made, the experts decided to alter their report to account for the amendment of the "Study & Examination Regulations". They consider the criterion under consideration to be fulfilled and recommend the Board of AQ Austria to refrain from imposing a condition with regard to said criterion.

#### § 18 (5) Staff

1. The scientists operating as supervisors in the degree programme are listed in the application. All formal teaching is provided by personnel of PMU Salzburg. The number of scientists involved in teaching appears to be appropriate and sufficient to run the taught modules twice each year, the locations alternating between both PMU sites. Microsoft Teams and other online apps are increasingly used to deliver teaching across the two PMU sites, and the conference app BigBlueButton is planned to be employed for holding PhD seminars online. In addition, PMU is developing an app with which supervisors and students can communicate securely within their research group, settle administrative issues and obtain information and support. A course director at PMU Salzburg, a deputy course director at PMU Nuremberg and a PhD Administrative Office at PMU Salzburg will be able to operate the programme in its strategic, organisational and administrative dimensions.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled and do not offer any recommendation.

2. The formal requirements for supervising doctoral students are met by the scientific staff, the lead supervisors presenting with a *venia docendi* or equivalent (professorship) qualification and the co-supervisors presenting with a proper doctoral degree (PhD, Dr. rer. nat.). The supervisors have knowledge, experience and a track record in the research areas in which the thesis projects are offered. PMU plans to offer a supervisor training programme, which the experts strongly recommend to introduce as soon as possible.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled. They recommend that the supervisor training programme should be implemented at the earliest opportunity. In addition, supervision performance and English teaching should be monitored by the use of quantifiable parameters.

3. The average student-supervisor ratio of 2.6–3 in the existing doctoral programme "Medizinische Wissenschaft" is acceptable. The experts emphasize, however, that the number of doctoral students per supervisor must be compatible with the supervisor's workload allocation to research and teaching. In addition, the experts emphasize that the time expenditure for supervising doctoral students should not be underestimated. Supervisors who spend little time in research and teaching (e.g. only 0–5 %) as given in the application (amended on 17 June 2020) may not be able to maintain an acceptable quality and intensity of supervision unless they are assisted by research-experienced postdoctoral group members.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled. They recommend that the course director keeps an eye on the student-supervisor ratio to maintain an adequate level of high quality supervision.

4. The workload allocation of the supervisors to research, teaching, administration, clinical work and other tasks is presented in an amended table (provided on 17 June 2020). The size of the supervisors' teams (senior postdocs, postdocs, doctoral students, diploma students, bachelor

students and technical staff) time allocated for research and supervision of doctoral students is quite heterogeneous, and the experts recommend that there should be a balance between the number of doctoral students and their supervisors' workload allocation. In this context the contractual commitment of clinically active personnel at PMU Nuremberg to teaching and supervising activities is relevant. An addition to the cooperation agreement (Zusatzvereinbarung zum Kooperationsvertrag über die Gründung und den Betrieb eines Campus' der PMU in Nürnberg, dated 14 February 2020) states that professors and other teaching personnel have a contractual commitment to conduct relevant teaching tasks. The agreement also provides a framework under which the Klinikum Nuremberg provides space and infrastructure to the doctoral programme.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled but offer the recommendation that the number of doctoral students per supervisor must be compatible with the supervisor's workload allocation to research and teaching.

5. Besides a PhD supervisor kick-off in Nuremberg, PMU offers a voluntary supervisor training programme. The experts emphasize that continuous education is a relevant task to enable supervisors to cope with the challenges in supervising, mentoring and educating doctoral students, and recommend more efforts to be laid on personnel development in this respect. The expert panel also suggests that the doctoral students should have the opportunity to propose topics and themes that should be included in the supervisor training programmes. Instead of imposing mandatory trainings, PMU plans to offer incentives for taking voluntary trainings.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled. They recommend, however, to extend and diversify the PhD supervisor training programme.

#### § 18 (6) Funding

The sole source of income for the programme are tuition fees (€ (...) per year) covering teaching costs, staff costs for programme coordinator and administration, internal services and office costs. Budget forecasts for the next years predict that funding will be sufficient to finish the current doctoral programme and start the new doctoral programme. The annual profit will be partially reinvested into the programme by providing financial support for travel and publication expenses and hardship funds for doctoral students with funding gaps.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

#### § 20 (2) Criteria for the accreditation of degree programmes to be offered at another location as the institutionally accredited site

1. PMU has taken provisions to keep close ties between the PhD faculties in Salzburg and Nuremberg. Both sites are monitored by PMU Salzburg and its Quality Assurance Office. All modules are taught by the same group of lecturers and evaluated with the same measures at both sites. The course director (located in Salzburg) is available in person and multiple communication lines and will be supported on-site by a deputy course director in Nuremberg. Members of the doctoral programme at both locations will regularly meet with each other to ensure and foster exchange and interaction. The experts expect that the programme will be run with comparable quality at both PMU sites but advocate to closely monitor the situation and take action, should students in Nuremberg be at risk to develop an "outpost" feeling.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled. They recommend PMU to consider reimbursement for travels between the sites for the participation in events at the respective other PMU site.

2. The provisions of the application hold that there will be frequent exchanges between the two PMU sites, mostly on an administrative level and less on student level. The overarching evaluation software EvaSys will ensure that the same programme quality is sustained at both PMU sites. A survey for students and staff at Nuremberg will be compared to the outcome of a similar survey in Salzburg. Students, supervisors and lecturers of both locations are joined in one curriculum commission that meets once a term. A PhD supervisor kick-off in Nuremberg will prepare prospective supervisors for their new task in the PhD programme. A PhD app is currently under development to support and improve communication between the two sites.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled and do not offer any recommendation.

3. The PhD Administrative Office, the course director and the prospective Doctoral Service Centre (all located in Salzburg) are responsible for both PMU sites. These organizational and administrative services are complemented by a deputy course director in Nuremberg. In addition, all online tools will be accessible for students of both sites. With this framework, a solid basis for homogeneity between the two PMU sites in counselling, support and complaint management is available.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled and do not offer any recommendation.

4. Although there are legislative differences between Germany and Austria, the basic academic culture between the two PMU sites is comparable. The plan to establish a doctoral programme in Medical Science at PMU Nuremberg was certified by the Bavarian State Ministry for Science and Art subject to a positive accreditation by AQ Austria.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled and do not offer any recommendation.

5. A cooperation contract between PMU, Klinikum Nuremberg and Klinikum Nuremberg Medical School (Zusatzvereinbarung zum Kooperationsvertrag über die Gründung und den Betrieb eines Campus' der PMU in Nürnberg, concluded on 14 February 2020) provides a framework under which PMU in Nuremberg provides teaching and supervision personnel, space and infrastructure to the PhD programme and defines the mutual duties of university, supervisors and students as well as the organisation and execution of the curriculum.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled and do not offer any recommendation.

### **Recommendations to the Board of AQ Austria**

The experts recommend the Board of AQ Austria to approve the changes to the accreditation of the doctoral programme "Medizinische Wissenschaft" under the following two conditions which may be fulfilled within one month:

1. The participation at a conference, summer school or course with international outreach or an international placement is compulsory to provide every doctoral student with the opportunity to develop the networking and international skills inherent to and specific for a scientific career. The experts emphasize that without this mandatory requirement the programme outcome of internationalisation, as defined in the application ("Upon completion of this program, students

know about the crucial importance of international networks for the generation of high impact work and the capture of grant monies”), cannot be achieved.

In response to the expert report in the version of 2 July 2020, PMU amended the text in the “Study & Examination Regulations” (Section 4.2 Curriculum, Competencies and Program Outcomes, page 9). In view of the precautions taken and described therein, the experts consider the criteria under consideration to be fulfilled and recommend the Board of AQ Austria to refrain from imposing a condition with regard to said criteria.

2. The wording in the application that “students have no fundamental right to crediting” needs to be changed to comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (which in its summary states: “It provides that requests should be assessed in a fair manner and within a reasonable time. The recognition can only be refused if the qualification is substantially different from that of the host country - and the onus is on its educational institution to prove that it is”).

In response to the expert report in the version of 2 July 2020, PMU amended the text in the “Study & Examination Regulations” (Section 7 Recognition of External Courses, Modules and Seminars, page 24). In view of the changes described therein, the experts consider the criterion under consideration to be fulfilled and recommend the Board of AQ Austria to refrain from imposing a condition with regard to said criterion.

## 6 Documents reviewed

- Application of Paracelsus Medical University Salzburg – Private Foundation from 17 December 2019 in the version of 11 March 2020 for changes to the accreditation of the doctoral programme “Medizinische Wissenschaft”
- Submission of further information from 15 May 2020, 2 June 2020, 12 June 2020 and 17 June 2020
- Comment of Paracelsus Medical University Salzburg – Private Foundation from 13 and 14 July 2020 on the expert report in the version of 2 July 2020



Board of the Agency for Quality Assurance and  
Accreditation Austria  
Franz-Klein-Gasse 5  
1190 Wien

Salzburg, 10. Juli 2020

**Re: Response to the Reviewers Comments on the Doctoral Program Medical Science**

GZ:I/A04-40/2002; PU\_04\_PMU\_Übermittlung zur Stellungnahme\_ÄA MW\_20200702

Dear Board Members,

First of all, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the experts and the AQ Austria for the very constructive review process of our application to amend the three year PhD program in Medical Science.

Please find below our replies regarding possible factual errors and the reviewers conditions and recommendations. We have also included a copy of the Study and Examination Regulations with the text sections highlighted that were amended in response to the two conditions below.

**Factual Errors:**

We did not find factual errors with the exception of the statement on page 14 that the „Courses are offered once a year in a `Summer School` format...“. Each module is offered twice every year, once in the winter term and once in the summer term as students can start the program in October or March, respectively.

**Reviewers Conditions:**

**§18 (3) 2 on page 28 and §18 (4) 3 on page 30**

**Condition:**

The experts consider the criterion to be partially fulfilled and suggest the following condition: The participation at a conference, summer school or course with international outreach or an international placement should be mandatory to provide every doctoral student with the opportunity to develop the networking and international skills inherent to and specific for a scientific career (see also § 18 (4) 3).

**Response:**

We have included this suggestion into our Study & Examination Regulations (Section 4.2 Curriculum).

The section has been changed as follows:

*The remaining 19 ECTS collect students by completing tasks from the list of research activities. While students can select the activities listed below as appropriate for their individual research project, all students must obtain at least 6 ECTS through international engagements by attending conferences, summer schools and/or courses with international outreach and/or by completing an international placement. International outreach requires that a meeting, summer school or course is attended by European and/or overseas participants and is conducted through the medium of English.*

*The optional Research Activities include:*

*International Placement (2 ECTS / week) ≤ 8 ECTS*  
*Conferences Level III ≤ 6 ECTS*  
*Conferences Level II ≤ 4 ECTS*  
*Conference Level I ≤ 2 ECTS*  
*Professional Training (methods, digital & analytical skills) ≤ 6 ECTS*  
*Publications & Third Mission ≤ 6 ECTS*  
*Teaching & Supervision ≤ 4 ECTS*  
*External Modules & Summer Schools ≤ 8 ECTS*  
*Ring Lecture ≤ 4 ECTS*  
*FWF or DFG Grant Writing Workshop 1,0 ECTS*  
*Network Partner Fair 2,0 ECTS*

*It is mandatory for all students to acquire at least 6 ECTS for international engagements through an international placement and/or the attendance of a level II and/or III conference, a summer school and/or a course with international participants that is conducted through the medium of English.*

## §18 (4) 9 on page 31

### Condition:

This concern applies specifically to the statement in the application that "students have no fundamental right to crediting". In addition, the wording of the statement is prone to distract students changing to PMU from another university and to jeopardize internationalisation efforts of PMU. The experts consider the criterion to be only partially fulfilled and request the following condition: The wording in the application need to be changed to comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (which in its summary states: "It provides that requests should be assessed in a fair manner and within a reasonable time. The recognition can only be refused if the qualification is substantially different from that of the host country – and the onus is on its educational institution to prove that it is"). It should also be analogous to § 78 (1) of the Austrian Universities Act 2002.

### Response:

Recognition of prior academic qualifications and learning is well practiced throughout the PMU and this process is described in the process management system Signavio (Fig. 1). We consider the current regulations to be more than fair exceeding the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition

Convention and the Austrian Universities Act in that not only prior learning from other higher education institutions, but also non-formal learning and professional experiences are included in the recognition process.

The statement cited by the experts – „students have no fundamental right to crediting“ – is not meant to prevent recognition or distract students, but to point out that the university reserves the right to deny recognition if the requirements prescribed by the curriculum are not met.

However, to avoid this misunderstanding, we have changed the statement in section 7 of the study & examination regulations as follows:

*Recognition refers to the crediting of already completed study or learning qualifications so that individual modules or courses do not have to be attended or exams do not have to be completed.*

*Credit is always based on the learning objectives (outcomes) of the module or course as described in the curriculum for which students request credit. It is essential for the credit that the learning objectives of the respective course or module have been demonstrably achieved. It is irrelevant whether these learning objectives have been achieved in one or more previous courses or modules, whether the learning goals are part of post-secondary teaching or they were obtained in the context of professional or voluntary activities, non-university teaching or advanced training events, and whether the workload needed to acquire these learning objectives corresponds to the quota of ECTS credits allocated for the respective course. It is also independent of the regional location of the institution where the qualifications were obtained.*

*Students apply for the recognition by submitting the required documentation that allows for the evaluation of whether the learning objectives are met. The evaluation of previously achieved learning objectives by the course director may involve teachers on the relevant course or modules to assess the request for crediting. Upon a positive evaluation, the corresponding ECTS are recognised in the curriculum but no mark is allocated. All recognised ECTS are listed in the certificate with the note „credited“. In case the learning objectives are not fully met, the course director may decide in discussion with the lecturers on the module or course, for which recognition was applied for, that only parts of the module are credited. The remaining parts of the module or course must then be completed as stipulated in the curriculum.*

This change of the regulations has already been ratified by the Leitungsteam Studium & Lehre and approved by the Dekan für Studium & Lehre. Since the regulations for recognition are the same for all study programs, this new statement applies to all study programs of the PMU.

## Reviewers Recommendations:

### §18 (1) 2 on page 26

#### **Recommendation:**

In the annual supervisor evaluation, the quality of supervision should be closely watched, especially with increasing group size. In the taught module PhD Novice, aspects of good scientific practice other than plagiarism (e. g. authorship criteria, data documentation, copyright issues and confidentiality) should be accounted for in more detail.

**Response:**

As stated in the application, we will monitor closely the quality of the supervision at both locations, Salzburg and Nürnberg. The suggestion to correlate the results with group size and research time of the lead supervisor is very good and will be implemented directly into the annual survey.

We agree on the high importance of good scientific practice with the reviewers and will incorporate the information on authorship criteria, conflicts of interest, data documentation, copyright issues and confidentiality in the first year module PhD Novice. The current content research conduct, plagiarism, data ownership, and patient anonymity in the teaching unit "Ethics & Diversity" will be extended by the inclusion of confidentiality and conflicts of interests. The new content authorship criteria, data documentation and copyright issues will be incorporated into the teaching unit "Research Funding & Project Management".

**§18 (2) 1 on page 27**

**Recommendation:**

At the same time, the experts strongly encourage PMU to further develop the doctoral programme with thematic clusters in line with the development plan of PMU and with the goal to further enhance the visibility of the research profile.

**Response:**

As discussed in the video conference with the reviewers, the PhD program is designed to support research clusters in line with the development strategy of the PMU. We strongly support the suggestion by the reviewers to use the structure of doctoral schools within this program to enhance the visibility and research content of such clusters.

**§18 (2) 2 on page 27**

**Recommendation:**

Nevertheless, the doctoral programme would benefit from a more stringent thematic structure that might increase international visibility and add value to the students' identification with the goals of the programme. The expert panel strongly endorses a strategy with defined core areas within an overarching programme.

**Response:**

As explained above, the PMU favours the development of defined core areas. The ability to develop such clusters was one important reason to amend the PhD program. In cooperation with the PMU Nürnberg and the new research management & technology transfer office, we will start this process as soon as possible.

**§18 (2) 4 on page 27**

**Recommendation:**

....but encourage PMU to establish further structured cooperations with national and international research institutions.

**Response:**

Further structured research cooperations will be formed as the research clusters develop within the PhD program.

**§18 (2) 5 on page 28**

**Recommendation:**

.....the expert panel recommends to establish internal funding programmes providing seed funding for innovative projects and to provide funds for prolonged support of doctoral students in order to ensure completion of the programme by all doctoral students.

**Response:**

As mentioned in the video conference, we strongly support the need for PhD project seed funding and for a new PhD stipend that supports students in all years of the program. The latter developments will be taken forward jointly with the Dean for Research, colleagues at the PMU Nürnberg and the research management & technology transfer office.

**§18 (2) 6 on page 28**

**Recommendation:**

..... recommend the establishment of shared infrastructures for defined high-end technologies (core facilities) and of a structured process for access to high-end research equipment by doctoral students.

**Response:**

The university launches a new infrastructure system this summer. All research instruments and high-facilities can be digitally identified and are online bookable for all researches across the PMU.

**§18 (3) 2 on page 28**

**Recommendation:**

In addition, the experts recommend that an information structure regarding stays abroad and funding opportunities for all students should be established. They advise that PMU sets up a travel fund within PMU-FFF and encourages supervisors to support their students spending some time at a research institution abroad.

**Response:**

We will provide information regarding stays abroad and funding opportunities for all students through the new web page of the Doctoral Service Centre as explained at the video conference. To support international networking by our students, we will consult with the Dean for Research, colleagues at the PMU Nürnberg and the research management & technology transfer office to add a designated PhD travel fund to the PMU-FFF.

### §18 (3) 3 on page 29

#### **Recommendation:**

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled but make two recommendations: PMU should advertise vacant PhD positions to enhance transparency and ease student-project matching. In addition, PMU should establish a statistical counselling centre (or service), either alone or in cooperation with the Data Science Centre at the University of Salzburg, and ensure that the service is also accessible for students based in Nuremberg.

#### **Response:**

The PMU will ensure that all research vacancies including the PhD vacancies are internationally advertised as this is also a requirement by external sponsors.

We strongly support the idea of a statistic counselling service that should be free of charge for all students and researcher. We will liaise with colleagues at the PMU Nürnberg, their Centre for Clinical Studies and the research management & technology transfer office here at the PMU Salzburg to identify the best means to provide such a service through the new Doctoral Service Centre.

### §18 (4) 3 on page 30

#### **Recommendation:**

In addition, the experts recommend that thesis projects are subjected to a rigorous quality control to ensure their completion within a three-year period, that thesis projects are announced publicly and internationally, that international graduates are recruited into the doctoral programme, and thematic doctoral schools related to research clusters are implemented.

#### **Response:**

The quality control measures for the submitted research proposals are outlined in sections 5.2 and section 6.3 of the Study & Examination Regulations. As a new measure we will list all active PhD research projects in a database that will be freely available through our web page. The submitted PhD dissertations are already openly accessible through our library and PhD webpage. As stated above, we will implement doctoral schools representing the research clusters as they are being established.

### §18 (4) 4 on page 30

#### **Recommendation:**

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled but strongly recommend PMU to secure enough time and funds for all PhD candidates to enable them to complete their PhD study within a reasonable time frame.

#### **Response:**

As explained at the video conference, the PMU is already in talks with the state of Salzburg to secure funding for PhD research sabbaticals for medical doctors who work in the University hospital. The Klinikum Nürnberg offers already 4 such sabbaticals with a duration of 3 months. To support



all students across all years of the program, we work on removing the current limitation of the PhD Discite! stipend that only sustains students in the first year.

#### §18 (5) 2 on page 32

**Recommendation:**

They recommend that the supervisor training programme should be implemented at the earliest opportunity. In addition, supervision performance and English teaching should be monitored by the use of quantifiable parameters.

**Response:**

The PMU will implement the planned supervisor training program as soon as possible. The PhD Kick-off event for the new PhD supervisors at the PMU Nürnberg is the first step of this process. Both, supervision performance and teaching quality will be continuously monitored at both locations through the Evasys software. We will liaise with our survey experts regarding quantifiable parameters.

#### §18 (5) 3 on page 32

**Recommendation:**

They recommend that the course director keeps an eye on the student-supervisor ratio to maintain an adequate level of high quality supervision.

**Response:**

The evaluation results will be analysed and discussed at the meetings of the curriculums committee which is chaired by the course director.

#### §18 (5) 4 on page 33

**Recommendation:**

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled but offer the recommendation that the number of doctoral students per supervisor must be compatible with the supervisor's workload allocation to research and teaching.

**Response:**

To monitor this, we will include questions on the supervisor's workload allocation to research and teaching in the annual Evasys evaluation.

#### §18 (5) 5 on page 33

**Recommendation:**

The experts emphasize that continuous education is a relevant task to enable supervisors to cope with the challenges in supervising, mentoring and educating doctoral students, and recommend more efforts to be laid on personnel development in this respect. The expert panel also suggests

that the doctoral students should have the opportunity to propose topics and themes that should be included in the supervisor training programmes.

**Response:**

We will include this very good suggestion in our supervisor development program.

**§20 (2) 1 on page 34**

**Recommendation:**

They recommend PMU to consider reimbursement for travels between the sites for the participation in events at the respective other PMU site.

**Response:**

We will reimburse the travel costs for journeys between both PMU sites. We have currently budgeted €        per annum for 2020/21 increasing over a period of 5 years to €        (Table 17 in the application). We will review this budget as the number of traveling students evolves.

Sincerely yours,

Rector

Chancellor



Figure 1: Process: Application for the Recognition of Previous Academic Achievements (Antrag auf Anrechnung von Vorleistungen)

