IMT | SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED STUDIES LUCCA

JOINT STUDENTS AND TEACHERS BOARD: 2021 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE 2020-2021 ACADEMIC YEAR

Approved on December 29, 2021

Contents

I - INTRODUCTION

The Joint Students and Teachers Board (henceforth "Board") of the IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca (henceforth "School") was **established** under art. 2, paragraph 2, letter g) of **Law 240/2010**, by a Director's Decree on **November 7, 2018**. The Board acts as the primary internal auditor of the academic activities. It comprehensively monitors the Quality Assurance of the academic offer and student services. Due to considerations that will be expressed in the Conclusion, it may be helpful to recall in advance that this report, like all the previous ones, is the "downstream" result of a constant activity of permanent "upstream" monitoring of the School's academic activities and other student services in the reference year, which extends throughout the entire calendar year and sees the Board constantly engaged. Therefore, this report represents the final formalization of an overall monitoring activity that precedes it and represents the Board's primary task.

The Board comprises three student members and three faculty members appointed by the Director. The Board took office on **March 6, 2019**, with a change in the student representation on **July 2, 2020**. For most of the year 2021, the Board was made up of the following six members, who worked collectively on the drafting of this report:

- **Student members**: Livia Baldinelli - Academic Senate student representative; Erica Ordali - Board of Governors' student representative (Board member until December 23, 2021); Sedric Zucchiatti - Assessment Board student representative (Board member until December 23, 2021).
- **Faculty members**: Amos Bertolacci - Full professor (as Chairman); Irene Crimaldi - Associate professor; Massimo Riccaboni - Full professor (Board member until December 9, 2021).

The Board composition and act of appointment are available on the IMT institutional website (http://www.imtlucca.it/it/the-imt-school/governing-bodies-and-committees/commissione-paritetica-docenti-student), together with the 2019 and 2020 Annual Reports concerning A.Y. 2018-19 and 2019-20 respectively, their translation into English, the guidelines governing the Board activities, and the calendar of ordinary sessions scheduled for the academic year 2020-21.

From a gender representation perspective, it is worth noting that the representation of women on the Board is equal in number to that of men.

Communications between students and the Board took place through **four** principal **channels**.
a) The Board had access to four types of opinion survey questionnaires administered to and completed by the students: aa) questionnaires related to individual courses, administered to students of the XXXVI cycle (see Section III below); ab) questionnaires concerning each of the doctoral years after the first, introduced in 2021 and administered to all students of the second and subsequent years who, at the time of receiving the questionnaire, have not yet discussed their thesis (End of Year Questionnaire; see Section IV.1 below); ac) questionnaires related to the entire doctoral program, administered to students who have discussed the thesis and obtained the Ph.D. title in 2021 (*PhD Program Evaluation Questionnaire;* see Section IV.1 below); ad) the Good Practice project questionnaires, relative to services provided by the School and sent to all IMT students regarding the year 2020 (see Section V below).
b) Student representatives on the Board have constantly collected the requests that emerged from the student body during the year. Their capacity as student representatives on other governing bodies

and committees of the School (Assessment Board, Board of Governors, Academic Senate) has facilitated their role as liaison between students and the Board.

c) The Board was contacted directly via the email address: commissione.paritetica@imtlucca.it, as indicated on the above-mentioned page of the School's website, which students can freely use. The same email address was used for internal communication among Board members.

d) Another communication channel was the public release of the 2020 annual report, which took place on **March 8, 2021**, to which the entire School Community was invited. As already happened during the 2019 annual report release, the discussion that followed the annual report presentation by the Board's student representatives was an opportunity for exchange and dialogue between students and Faculty on all the points the report had addressed.

In the calendar year 2021, the Board **met nine times on a regular monthly basis** (February 2; March 2; April 7; May 5; June 8; July 9; September 24; October 22; November 19) and **twice in extraordinary sessions** (February 16 and December 6). An additional informal Board meeting (November 29) served to organize the drafting of this report. The observation work carried out in the ordinary meetings resulted in **two formal communications addressed to the School's Quality Enhancement Committee** (henceforth "Committee"). The communication on July 30 concerned the exam scheduling and the July 5 CRUI meeting report (see below). The one on December 2 - subsequently transmitted to the new Committee members following their appointment with the decree of December 14, 2021 - focused on a specific critical issue of the educational offer discussed at the November 19 meeting. A third informal communication (email to the Chairman of the Committee of June 8) aimed to promote and prompt a reflection on students' privacy issues. The two extraordinary meetings were called to quickly provide the Board's preliminary feedback to the Committee on the End of Year questionnaires launched in 2021 (see above, ab)) and to discuss the evolution of the communication about didactics sent by the Board to the Committee, in the first instance, on December 2. This second extraordinary meeting produced a **communication addressed to the students interested** in the didactic issue in question (December 7). The communication to the Committee of December 2 and the consequent communication to the students of December 7 refer to a process not yet concluded, currently under the Committee's review, and difficult to disclose at this stage of progress. Any comprehensive discussion of this process may prove appropriate when drafting the 2022 Annual Report. It will be the Board's responsibility to report it at that time. Regardless of the future outcome of the procedure's value, however, its first development concerning the method recommends, in the Board's opinion, a serious and urgent effort to re-examine the internal procedures and communication channels within the School's Quality Assurance system. This explains and supports proposal 6 of Section VI.

The eleven (nine ordinary and two extraordinary) meetings resulted in separate **calls** including their agenda and summarized in separate **minutes**, each submitted for approval by the Board at the next meeting (the minutes of the ordinary meeting of November 19, last of 2021, and of the extraordinary meeting of December 6 are in the process of being approved). All sessions were held online. In addition to the above-mentioned meetings, the **conference** of March 8, **dedicated to communicating** and sharing **the results of the 2020 annual report** with the School Community, must be included. The Board also took part in a **training course** organized by the CRUI for Joint Board members (July 5) and in the **workshop** "Student participation in Quality Assurance," also organized by the CRUI (October 7). Many of the Board's ordinary meetings benefited, at the preliminary level or for a tangible outcome, from the contribution of the School's staff (Human Resources Office; PhD and Higher Education Office), the Delegate for Didactics and Information Services (prof. Mirco Tribastone) and Joint Board members from other Italian universities (Prof. Maurizio Casiraghi, Bicocca University of Milan), whom the Board would like to thank for their collaboration.

As a permanent observatory of the School's academic activities and student services and an actor in Quality Assurance with specific skills and responsibilities, the Board has focused its work on three main areas. At an educational level, in addition to analytically investigating the course satisfaction questionnaires and monitoring compliance with the course scheduling guidelines, the Board has started to pay attention to another element to consider that deserves more regulation: the timing of administration of the exams of the courses, in order to avoid overlaps between different courses and excessive student workload. With regard to services, the Board monitored the actions taken by the School to guarantee extensions of the doctoral scholarship to students in the last year of their doctoral cycle, consistent with those implemented in 2020 following the Covid emergency, as well as available and adequate workstations, with particular reference to the effectiveness and range of the Wi-Fi network coverage on Campus. Ultimately, at the level of reflection on its nature and function, the Board began a dialogue with the Committee on a series of issues about confidentiality (how to guarantee the necessary anonymity of questionnaires of courses attended by a few students; the confidentiality of student communications to the Board; and students' right to privacy in a Campus system such as the School's, a critical issue brought to light by the Covid emergency in 2020), and how to guarantee Board's student members adequate recognition for their work. To this must be added the launch of a reflection on ways to guarantee welcome, respect, and appreciation of cultural differences to all the School students, applying the best practices of the Italian and foreign universities most advanced in this field, in accordance with the international vocation of the School.

In general, as already highlighted in the 2019 and 2020 reports, the **interaction and unity of purpose** between the Board's student and Faculty members were extremely fruitful. Excellent were the communication and collaboration with the other Governing bodies and committees of the School responsible for quality assurance in education and research (Committee and Assessment Board, with the addition of the Operational Management Group) and, more generally, with the administration of the School.

This report summarizes the activity of the Board in 2020 into **five main sections**: **II - Framework A:** Progress Report: Analysis of the critical issues reported in the previous annual report and evaluation of the processes put in place by the School for their solution. **III - Framework B:** Analysis and proposals for the administration and use of the Teaching Evaluation Questionnaires. **IV - Framework C:** Analysis and proposals concerning other elements of the academic activity. **V - Framework D:** Analysis and recommendations for student services (Academic Support, Residential, and Non-Residential Services). **VI - Framework E:** Summary of the proposals included in this report with specific indication of their target audience. Framework IV analytically reviews the Teaching Evaluation Questionnaires of individual courses for PhD cycle XXXV, considering the results of those courses that had ended at the time of drafting this report. Framework B analytically examines the questionnaires relating to the teaching of individual courses for the XXXVI doctoral cycle (see above aa)) from a quantitative and qualitative perspective, considering the courses that are concluded at the end of the academic year (October 31, 2021). The aggregate form of the available results relating to the End of Year questionnaires (see above, ab)) recommended an exclusively qualitative analysis. Framework C complements the previous framework by focusing attention on course scheduling. Frameworks D looks into the critical issues that stemmed from the 2020 Good Practice questionnaires (see above ad)), together with additional input that the Board received through other channels. The infrequent results of the third type of questionnaires, namely those administered to students at the end of their doctoral program (see above ac)) - lasting three years up to cycle XXXiV included, four years from XXXV cycle included) - suggested that the examination of this critical source of the student body's opinion be included in Framework A as a valuable tool for tracking the progress. Framework E seeks to implement the recommendations from the CRUI courses dedicated to Joint Boards on the conciseness and effectiveness of annual reports.

At a methodological level, it is worth emphasizing the difference in the chronological period and the nature of the data of some of the survey factors on which: while the questionnaires of the individual courses refer to the academic year 2020-21 (aa), the Good Practice questionnaires refer to the calendar year 2020 only (ad); Similarly, the data relating to the End of Year Questionnaire (ab) were made available to the Board in aggregate form, by

adding together different cycles and doctoral tracks, to better guarantee the anonymity of the respondents; the same aggregation, with the same purpose, concerns the doctoral tracks of the PhD Program Evaluation Questionnaire (ac).

For this reason, the different timeframe of the two questionnaires had a significant impact on this report because the questionnaires on services currently available do not evaluate the management of the Covid-19 emergency, and, to account for it, the Board had to refer to personal remarks received from students at different times and in different ways. For this reason, the results of the questionnaires mentioned above are examined in separate sections of this report: the questionnaires of the individual courses in Section III; the End of Year Questionnaire and PhD Program Evaluation Questionnaire in Section IV; and the Good Practice questionnaires in Section V.

II - FRAMEWORK A: PROGRESS REPORT: ANALYSIS OF THE CRITICAL ISSUES REPORTED IN THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL REPORT AND EVALUATION OF THE PROCESSES PUT IN PLACE BY THE SCHOOL FOR THEIR SOLUTION

The main critical issues identified in 2020 about the **questionnaires as course evaluation tools** mainly concerned the **low relevance of some questions** included in the questionnaire or the limited range of possible answers. With regard to the measures proposed by the Board to resolve these issues, see Section IV below.

With regard to this, a process of reassessment and revision of the questions of the Teaching Evaluation Questionnaires has begun. However, the Board is not aware that **some of the proposals made in its 2020 annual report have been taken on**: in particular, the proposal to reformulate question Q3 ("The course was relevant and useful for my research project") with "The course was relevant and useful for an IMT student "; to give the respondent to question Q6 ("The examination method was appropriate") the opportunity to indicate whether the final exam of the course was actually taken; to adopt a timing for sending questionnaires designed to ensure that the questionnaires are sent to students after the exam is taken (but before receiving the results, to avoid possible distortions in opinions), not before.

Regarding the **educational offer**, however, most of the critical issues (excessive course load, little flexibility in study plans, absence of a definite lesson calendar from the beginning of the academic year) were already addressed and managed during 2019 and 2020. However, at the end of 2020, some specific problems concerning the **exam procedures** (such as the overlap between exams of the same or different Tracks, the generic exam deadlines, and the validation of exams taken abroad or at other institutions), **the timing of the drafting of the lesson calendar** and the **partial overlapping of the content of some courses**. See Section IV below about the measures proposed by the Board to resolve these issues.

As for the **services provided**, the main critical issues had been resolved or taken on in the course of 2020; only the issue concerning **IT services** (particularly Wi-Fi coverage) was not entirely satisfactory. At the time of completing this report, the Board records that between the end of October and the beginning of November 2021, the School has started addressing the situation. Members of the technical service have started to solve the issue of individual rooms' Wi-Fi coverage (on this issue, see also Section V below).

The 2020 report intensely focused on analyzing the **Covid-19 emergency management** and the related critical issues. The Board has monitored with particular attention some problems that arose during the emergency in 2020, as directly concerning the students, such as the management procedures of the first quarantine in the San Francesco Campus following positive cases among students, and the return of some students from foreign countries included in the "red list." Due to the impressive array of measures put in place by the School to contain and manage

the infection among students and overcome the initial phase of the health emergency, this report will not consider this topic.

III – FRAMEWORK B: ANALYSIS AND PROPOSALS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION AND USE OF THE TEACHING EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRES

Within the Quality Assurance system, the survey of students' opinions and opinions on the School's individual courses has the dual role of proving the effectiveness of the individual courses compared to the PhD program educational objectives and allowing for a continuous improvement of the academic offer.

Currently, the survey of students' opinions is performed for each course provided by the School and is based on an anonymous online questionnaire. This questionnaire is sent to each student who has attended the course and comprises multiple-choice questions with a 5-level scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) and open questions. The layout of the questionnaire is illustrated in Table 1.

Before proceeding with the analysis of the questionnaires about the individual courses of the School, it is appropriate to recall **some methodological considerations**.

First, the analysis relies on data from the last three doctoral cycles, from the XXXIV to the XXXVI cycle. This decision is motivated by reasons of comparability of the data. In fact, the students of cycles XXXIV, XXXV, and XXXVI were given the same course evaluation questionnaire. The adoption of the same questionnaire allows the comparative analysis of the trend of the quality of teaching perceived by the students belonging to different cycles and the detection of possible changes taking place in the absence of possible confounding factors associated with variations of the questionnaire itself. In addition, a focus on just the last three PhD cycles allows avoiding comparisons between cycles that are too distant from each other.

Second, some clarifications are needed about the data analyzed. It should be emphasized that it was impossible to analyze the data relating to all the courses offered by the School for the XXXVI cycle. More specifically, students' opinions were analyzed for 85 of the 88 courses of the XXXVI cycle, whose results were available as of October 31, 2021 (for courses of the XXXVI cycle that spread beyond that date, see below, Section IV.2). The Board believes that, although incomplete, the available data allow broadly to highlight the evolution of the perception of the quality of teaching by the students. Therefore, it has decided to summarize the partial results in this report to ensure timely feedback to the School's bodies and committees to constantly improve the quality of teaching. The complete results of the analysis may appropriately be reported in the following annual report. For the same reason, in this report, the data relating to the XXXV doctoral cycle incorporate surveys of opinions relating to courses that it was not possible to analyze in the previous report as these courses were not yet completed at the date of the previous survey.

Table 1: Layout of the Teaching Evaluation Questionnaire.

No.	TEXT OF THE QUESTION (ENGLISH)	ANSWER TYPE
Q1	The course was intellectually stimulating	Multiple Choice
Q2	The official schedule of lessons was respected	Multiple Choice
Q3	The course was relevant and useful for my research project	Multiple Choice

Q4	The course was well organized	Multiple Choice
Q5	The assigned work was reasonable	Multiple Choice
Q6	The examination method was appropriate	Multiple Choice
Q7	The lecturer clearly explained the educational objectives, responsibilities and requirements of this course	Multiple Choice
Q8	The lecturer clearly explained the arguments of the course	Multiple Choice
Q9	The lecturer was well organized and prepared for the class	Multiple Choice
Q10	The lecturer was available for information and clarification outside of regular class time	Multiple Choice
Q11	What aspects of the course or the instructor's approach contributed most to your learning?	Open
Q12	In which ways you benefited the most for your research project?	Open
Q13	What aspects of the course or the lecturer's approach would you change to improve the learning that takes place in the course?	Open
Q14	Other Suggestions?	Open

Third, it should be noted that many of the courses offered by the School can be included in the study plan by students from different tracks. The lack of information about the PhD program and track of the respondents makes it unattainable to perform a separate analysis by the doctoral program (CCS, SS) and track (AMCH, CCSN, CSSE, ENBA). Despite this evident limitation, the Board has decided to propose analyses based on the PhD program and track, considering these dimensions particularly important for the School.

Fourth, the Board decided not to include in the analysis the seminars and presentation of the research activities of the students (instead, long seminars without exams were included in the analysis). Indeed, the Board considers that the questionnaire on individual courses currently available is not adequate to evaluate these activities.

Fifth, regarding the analysis of the students' opinions based on their affiliation (School students vs. external students)[1], it is worth noting that the School has introduced - starting from the XXXVI doctoral cycle - procedures for administering the Teaching Evaluation Questionnaire that allow a distinction between answers provided by School students and those provided by external students, as proposed by the Board in the previous annual report. Given this greater availability of information, the Board has decided to analyze opinions of the School's students and those of external students both jointly and separately. More specifically, the main analyses illustrated in this report are in aggregate form. A comparison of opinions is then illustrated based on the different affiliations of the respondents for the XXXVI cycle, the only doctoral cycle for which this analysis can be performed.

Finally, some considerations about administering the questionnaires about the individual courses are required. In particular, in the last report, the Board highlighted how sending questionnaires to all students who

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[1] Opinions of "external" students, i.e., students who are not enrolled at the School but are part of joint programs (students of the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies or other students admitted to course participation for various reasons) are surveyed as to course evaluations.

included a specific course in their study plan could cause a decrease in the response rate to the questionnaire if a student decides not to attend a course initially included in the study plan. At the same time, the study plan was not promptly updated. Following these considerations, the Board expected measures to resolve this potential problem. In this report, the Board notes that the School has introduced attendance logs starting from the XXXVI cycle[2]. Consequently, questionnaires are no longer sent automatically to all students who include a specific course in their study plan but only to those who have attended the course. It should be noted that currently, there are no guidelines regarding minimum attendance required; a rate of 50% is generally utilized, but variations are observed between courses. Despite this, in the Board's opinion, the introduction of attendance logs appears to be an adequate measure to eliminate a possible underestimation of the response rate regarding cycle XXXVI. This consideration does not apply to the previous cycles considered in this report. Therefore, trend comparatives of the response rate between cycle XXXVI and previous cycles must be made with caution, especially considering that the changes made by School should favor, in principle, an increase in the response rate *ceteris paribus*.

During the last three doctoral cycles, the School has offered 270 courses (343 modules), of which 85 (113) in the XXXIV doctoral cycle, 91 (113) in the XXXV, and 95 (117) in the XXXVI cycle. It is noted that ENBA consistently turns out to be the Track that offers more courses over time. With the only exception of the CCSN and, albeit to a lesser extent, the CSSE Track, the presence of courses featuring multiple modules is not particularly frequent, as observed by comparing the number of courses offered and the corresponding number of modules. The values for each Track/PhD and cycle combination are shown in Table 2.

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[2] Errata: The School has introduced attendance logs from cycle XXXV.

Table 2: Number of courses and modules offered by Track/PhD program and cycle.

PhD program	Track	XXXIV Courses	XXXIV Modules	XXXV Courses	XXXV Modules	XXXVI Courses	XXXVI Modules
	AMCH	17	21	23	24	23	24
	CCSN	18	29	20	30	21	34
CCS		35	50	43	54	44	58
	CSSE	18	28	18	25	20	26
	ENBA	32	35	30	34	31	33
SS		50	63	48	59	51	59
Total		**85**	**113**	**91**	**113**	**95**	**117**

To survey students' opinions about the courses offered, the School sent 2375 questionnaires, 599 of which refer to cycle XXXIV, 755 to cycle XXXV, and 1022 to cycle XXXVI. Of these, 1611 questionnaires were completed, indicating an average response rate equal 67.83% for cycles XXXIV-XXXVI. Concerning the evolution of the average response rate over time, following a slight decrease from XXXIV (67.74%) to XXXV cycle (64.93%), it subsequently increased substantially and stood at 70.93% for the XXXVI cycle. The increase could be at least in part associated with the new method of administering the questionnaires adopted for the XXXVI cycle. It is worth mentioning that, following a divergence between the response rates of the two PhD programs, for cycle XXXVI, the response rates appear substantially similar between the two doctoral programs. Finally, the high response rate in the AMCH track observed in cycles XXXV and XXXVI should be emphasized. More information is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Questionnaires sent, responses obtained, and response rate by Track/PhD program and cycle.

PhD Program	Track	XXXIV Sent	XXXIV Responses	XXXIV Response Rate	XXXV Sent	XXXV Responses	XXXV Response Rate	XXXVI Sent	XXXVI Responses	XXXVI Response Rate
	AMCH	141	104	73.84%	155	139	90.71%	144	132	93.98%
	CCSN	139	89	69.57%	146	94	64.18%	190	102	54.95%
CCS		280	193	71.71%	301	233	77.45%	334	234	71.21%
	CSSE	124	91	75.51%	228	142	66.51%	447	314	72.71%
	ENBA	195	120	58.87%	226	115	49.02%	241	169	69.18%
SS		319	211	64.98%	454	257	55.35%	688	483	70.70%
Total		**599**	**404**	**67.74%**	**755**	**490**	**64.93%**	**1022**	**717**	**70.93%**

The average number of questionnaires sent per course was equal to 7.22, 9.10, and 9.64, respectively, for the XXXIV, XXXV, and XXXVI cycles. In contrast, the average number of responses to the questionnaires increased from 4.81 to 5.90 and, finally, 6.96. No particular trends are observed by breaking down these data by PhD program or track (as reported in Table 4). It is worth highlighting the data relating to the CSSE track for cycles XXXV and XXXVI, with average values significantly higher than the other tracks are observed; however, this is mainly caused by the presence of a relatively small number of uncommon courses with over 50 participants (the vast majority of whose are external to the School).

*Table 4: Average number of questionnaires sent and responses obtained by Track/PhD program and cycle.*

PhD Program	Track	XXXIV		XXXV		XXXVI	
		Average Sent	Average Responses	Average Sent	Average Responses	Average Sent	Average Responses
	AMCH	8.29	6.12	8.61	7.72	7.20	6.60
	CCSN	8.18	5.24	8.11	5.22	6.79	3.92
CCS		8.24	5.68	8.36	6.47	6.96	5.09
	CSSE	6.89	5.06	13.41	8.35	17.88	13.08
	ENBA	6.29	3.75	7.53	3.83	7.30	5.12
SS		6.51	4.22	9.66	5.47	11.86	8.47
Total		**7.22**	**4.81**	**9.10**	**5.90**	**9.64**	**6.96**

The analysis of course distribution based on the number of questionnaires sent and the number of responses received is shown in Figure 1. The figure shows that, on average, for more than 80% of the courses, no more than nine (9) questionnaires were sent. In comparison, for over 60% of the courses, no more than six (6) responses were received.

The number of questionnaires sent represents an indicator of the number of students per class, which is particularly valid for the XXXVI cycle, given the new methods of administering opinion survey questionnaires. In this regard, approximately 40% of the courses were attended by no more than six (6) students; moreover, the micro-classes, classes made up of 3 or fewer students, represent at least 15% of the courses in the cycles considered.

In this regard, it should be emphasized that the small number of students per class and, consequently, of completed questionnaires is critical in terms of statistical significance and the reliability of the responses provided. In fact, for some courses, the number of attending students is so small that it can compromise the anonymity of opinions, which might introduce distortions in the survey. In addition, it should be noted that micro-classes frequently comprise students who select the course based on their research and study path and, therefore, are often supervised by the lecturer. This could lead to a further distortion of the results obtained.

Figure 1: Course distribution by number of questionnaires sent and number of responses received per cycle.
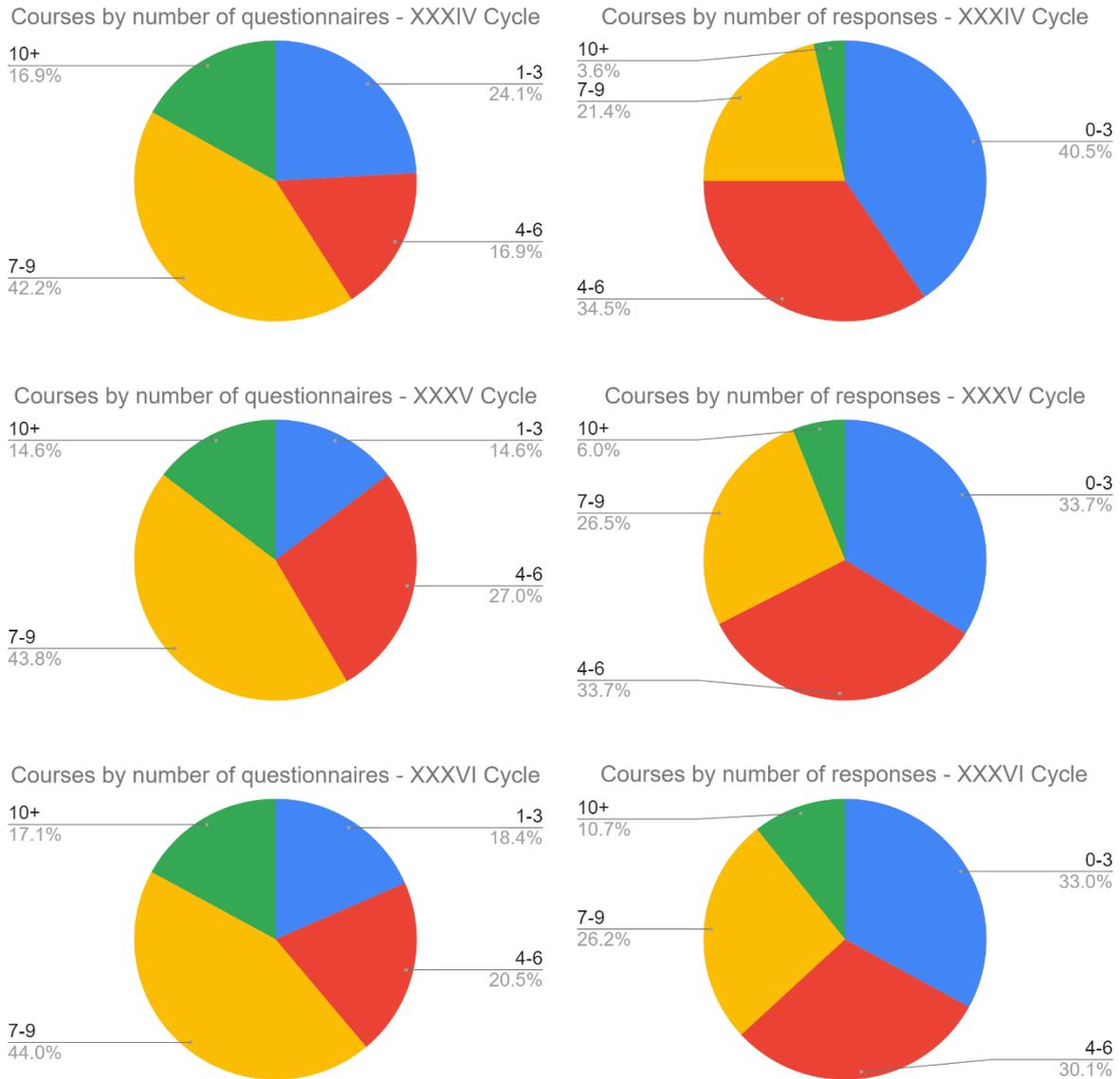
The following analysis of the XXXIV-XXXVI cycle student opinions on the School's academic offer focuses on the multiple-choice questions Q1-Q10. As previously mentioned, these questions have five possible answers: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. In short, student ratings were aggregated at track/PhD program level for each cycle and used to calculate a satisfaction rate indicator. This indicator corresponds to the weighted average of the responses provided, with weights ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The weighted average thus calculated was then divided by four (4) to obtain an indicator between 0 and 1 and, finally, multiplied by 100 to obtain a percentage. The values thus obtained for each question and each combination of cycle and track/PhD program are shown in Table 5. Figure 2 graphically represents the data for each track.

Table 5: Synthetic indicators of students' opinions by Track/PhD program and cycle (cycles XXIV-XXXVI).

| Cycle	PhD program	Track	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Tot
XXXIV		AMCH	75.0	84.7	62.3	77.4	81.0	81.3	80.3	81.7	84.9	81.0	77.4
		CCSN	76.6	72.5	69.8	66.7	78.0	74.0	80.8	79.0	79.3	79.6	76.6
	CCS		75.8	78.6	66.0	72.0	79.5	77.7	80.6	80.1	81.7	80.2	76.9
		CSSE	95.9	96.5	90.8	93.6	90.8	88.2	93.7	92.4	94.4	94.1	92.6
		ENBA	80.0	87.8	76.5	74.5	74.8	75.5	79.5	80.5	82.7	86.0	80.3
	SS		85.9	91.0	81.7	81.5	80.7	80.1	85.9	85.9	88.0	89.7	85.8
			81.7	**85.9**	**75.3**	**77.6**	**80.2**	**79.1**	**83.6**	**83.3**	**85.2**	**85.5**	**81.9**
XXXV		AMCH	85.3	92.5	63.1	87.6	86.6	85.5	91.5	90.9	93.5	93.5	87.0
		CCSN	95.0	86.4	79.3	86.8	91.7	88.0	94.9	93.7	96.1	94.0	91.8
	CCS		90.1	89.4	71.2	87.2	89.1	86.7	93.5	92.5	95.0	93.8	89.7
		CSSE	87.6	91.9	77.7	86.6	84.2	84.5	91.9	91.9	93.3	91.9	88.6
		ENBA	84.9	89.0	76.5	84.8	86.4	85.6	87.8	85.9	91.2	91.7	86.6
	SS		85.9	90.0	76.9	85.5	85.6	85.2	89.4	88.2	92.0	91.8	87.4
			87.7	**89.8**	**74.4**	**86.3**	**87.2**	**85.9**	**91.2**	**90.2**	**93.3**	**92.7**	**88.4**
XXXVI		AMCH	80.7	90.3	64.9	81.0	84.7	84.6	83.1	81.5	86.9	84.8	81.8
		CCSN	84.4	87.0	72.4	80.0	85.1	84.3	88.8	86.4	94.0	94.8	87.7
	CCS		82.8	88.4	69.2	80.4	84.9	84.5	86.7	84.6	91.3	91.1	85.5
		CSSE	93.6	95.7	86.5	91.6	90.7	87.8	95.1	93.7	96.4	94.6	92.9
		ENBA	83.4	89.6	80.7	80.0	82.3	80.9	84.2	80.8	87.1	92.6	84.3
	SS		87.7	92.2	83.2	84.9	85.9	83.8	89.3	86.7	91.4	93.5	88.3
			85.5	**90.5**	**76.9**	**82.9**	**85.4**	**84.1**	**88.0**	**85.7**	**91.4**	**92.3**	**86.9**
Total			**85.0**	**88.9**	**75.6**	**82.3**	**84.3**	**83.1**	**87.5**	**86.2**	**89.9**	**90.1**	**85.7**

The AMCH and CCSN tracks show a notably positive variation between the XXXIV and XXXV doctoral cycles. However, this increase is followed by a decline in the XXXVI cycle bringing the AMCH indicator values back to the XXXIV cycle. Regarding CCSN, the decrease is less marked. Moving on to the PhD in Systems Science, the ENBA and CSSE tracks record average levels of the indicator substantially constant in the assessed cycles.

For cycles XXXV and XXXVI, the overall assessments of the PhD programs are substantially comparable and decidedly favorable. Furthermore, the aggregate indicators and those relating to the particular questions are generally positive for all cycles considered (generally higher than 75/100). This applies to each track and PhD program.

The Board notes that the synthetic indicator of opinions relating to question Q3, "The course was relevant and useful for my research project," is often below average. This is particularly evident when looking at the track AMCH. The reasons for this deviation can be manifold. For example, some students have not yet clearly identified their research project at the time of course evaluation. In this case, it is possible that these students, not knowing how to answer the question and not having the possibility not to answer this question, provide a neutral answer. Furthermore, the Board believes that question Q3, as currently posed, is of dubious interpretation regarding the quality of teaching. In fact, given its multidisciplinary system, the School offers both highly specialized and

introductory courses necessary for creating shared knowledge among students from different disciplines. These introductory courses may not be entirely in line with the development of specific research projects. However, they should not be evaluated less positively for this reason. Thus, the Board reiterates its suggestion to consider reformulating the Q3 question in a perspective that is attentive to the different objectives of the various courses offered by the School.

Figure 2: Radar plot of the synthetic indicators of students' opinions by Track and cycle.
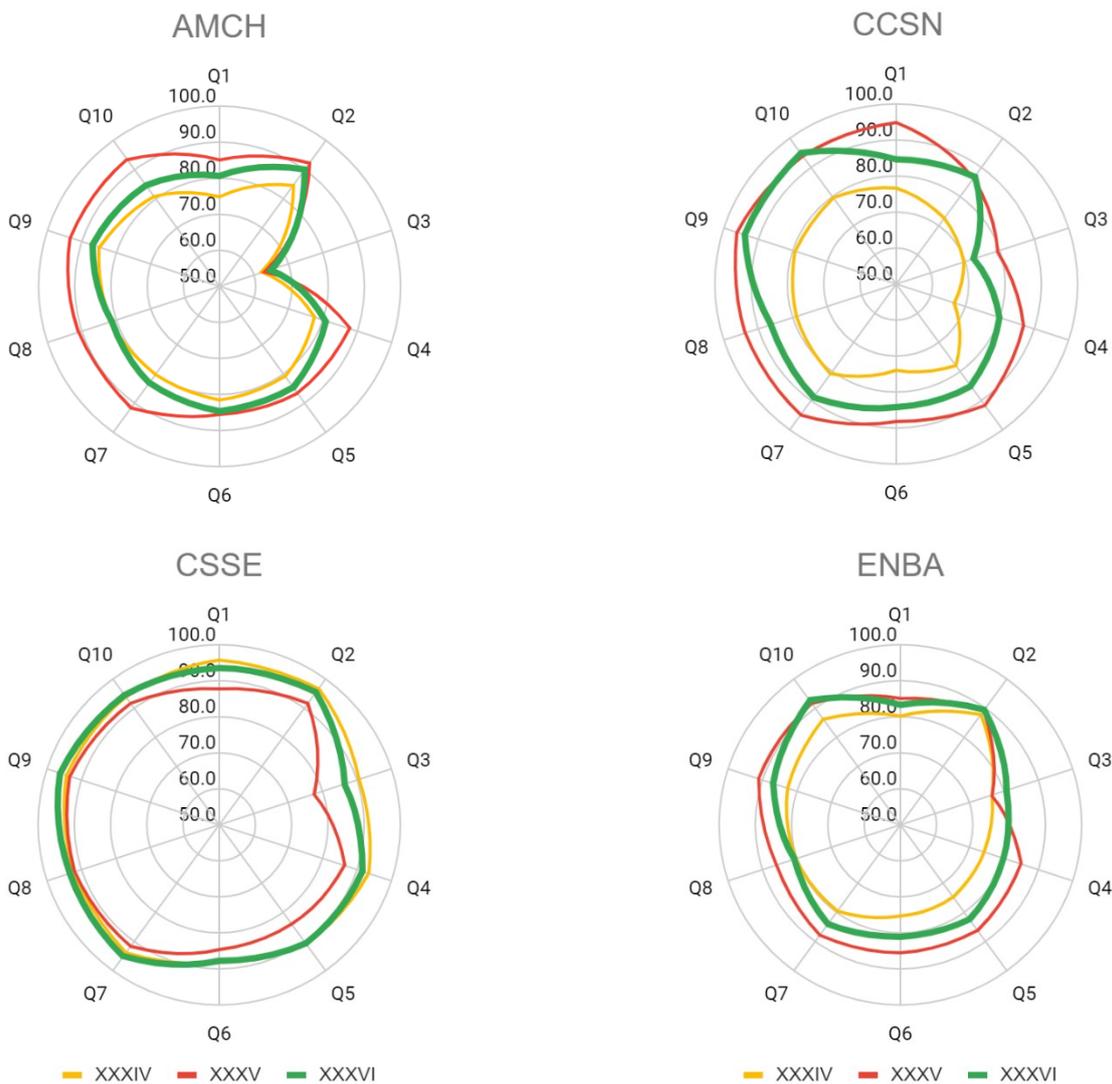

For academic planning purposes, it is of particular interest to analyze whether there is a significant difference in the opinions on compulsory courses and those on elective and specializing courses. More specifically, compulsory courses may be penalized compared to elective courses as the latter (i) are voluntarily chosen by students, and (ii) if a student is not interested in an elective course, they may decide not to pursue it. In summary,

there could be a distortion in the students' opinions about individual courses based on their type (compulsory or elective) due to the possibility of self-selection by the students in the case of elective courses.

Figure 3 shows the synthetic indicators for the individual questions based on course type for cycles XXXV and XXXVI. Generally, indicators referring to compulsory courses tend to be lower than those referring to elective courses, albeit not too remarkably. On the other hand, the difference is quite significant regarding question Q3. This may partly be because courses presenting introductory topics deemed necessary for developing shared knowledge among students are often compulsory. Also, compulsory courses are generally delivered at the beginning of the curriculum, when students may have not yet clearly defined their research project.

It should be emphasized that this analysis was not extended to cycle XXXIV due to the lack of the necessary information. Furthermore, the analysis was not carried out at the track level since there are significant differences between tracks regarding the relative presence of compulsory and elective courses, as already highlighted in the previous report. At one end in the AMCH track, the overwhelming majority of courses are compulsory, while at the opposite end, in the CSSE track, all courses are elective.

Figure 3: Radar plot of synthetic indicators of students' opinions, cycles XXXV and XXXVI.
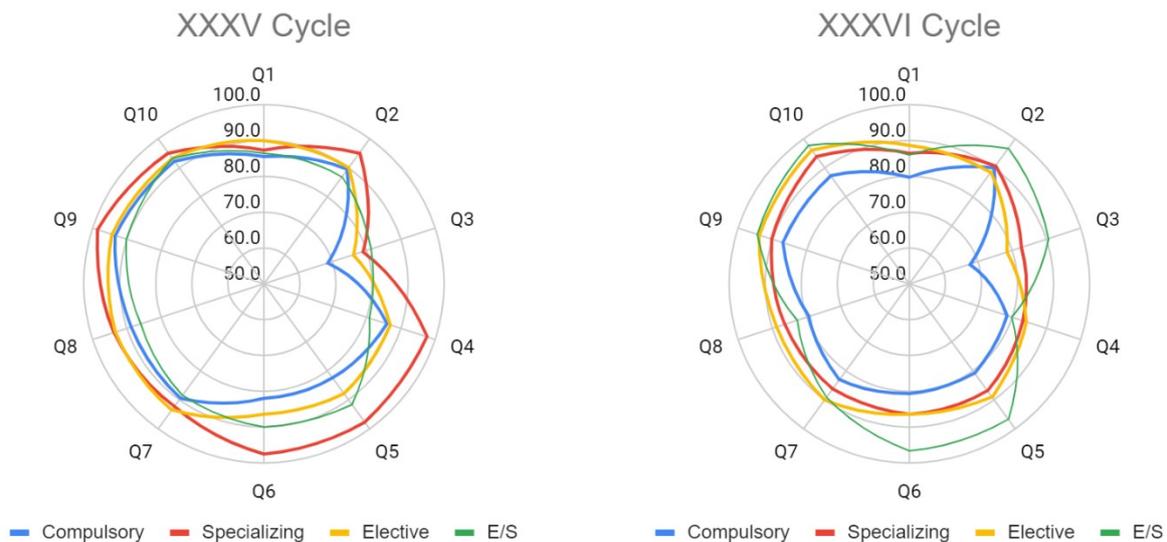
Another relevant aspect concerns the analysis of possible differences in students' opinions based on the affiliation of the lecturer who taught the course. About 80% of the courses in the assessed cycles were held by lecturers affiliated with the School. Also, in this regard, there are differences between tracks. In particular, the AMCH track is the one that makes greater use of external lecturers (indicatively between 40% and 50% of the courses in the considered cycles). On the other hand, external lecturers are significantly less frequent in the other tracks. Considering this heterogeneity and, more precisely, the small number of courses held by external lecturers in three out of four tracks, the Board has decided to analyze this aspect at the cycle level. As shown in Figure 4, in the cycles considered, there is a progressive divergence in the average opinions of the students between courses held by lecturers of the School and those taught by external lecturers. More specifically, while the opinions referring to the XXXIV cycle are substantially comparable between the two course types, in the XXXV cycle, the indicators of courses held by lecturers of the School are generally higher than those of courses taught by external lecturers. Finally, a comparison between cycles XXXV and XXXVI shows substantial stability in the opinions associated with courses held

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by internal lecturers. In contrast, the remaining courses undergo a decrease, increasing the difference between the two types of courses. It should also be emphasized that the most marked difference is constantly observed on question Q3 regarding the usefulness of the course for the development of one's research project.

Figure 4: Synthetic indicators based on the lecturer's affiliation.
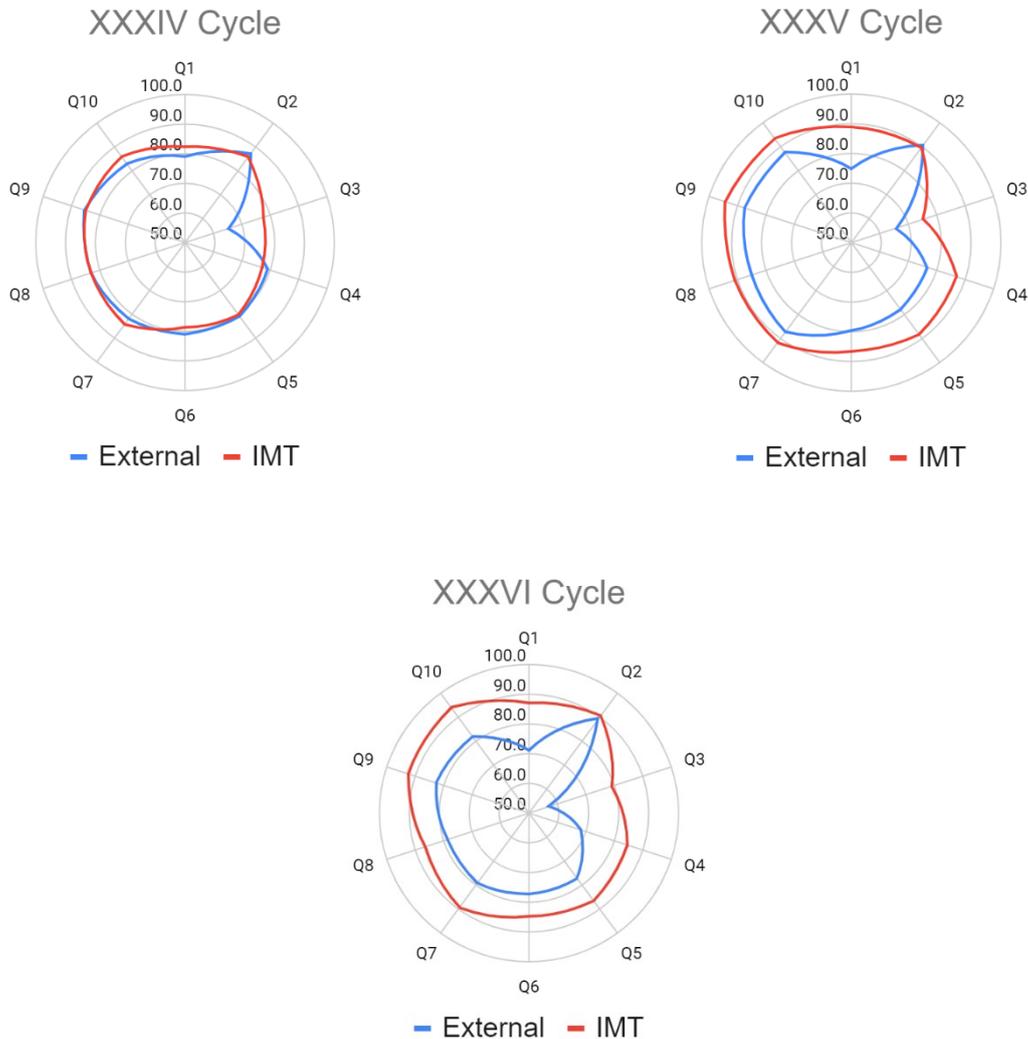
A final important aspect is to assess any differences in the opinions expressed by the School students compared to those expressed by external students attending the same courses. This analysis is possible for the XXXVI cycle as the School has implemented a differentiated administration of the questionnaires between School and external students. This analysis also highlights substantial differences between tracks. For the AMCH track, there are no courses attended by external students. In contrast, external students attend eight (8) courses for the ENBA and CSSE tracks and ten (10) courses in the case of the CCSN track. Figure 5 shows a difference in the average opinions regarding the CCS PhD program (in fact, only the CCSN track), where the synthetic indicator is lower for

School students than for external students. On the other hand, an opposite trend is observed in the case of the SS PhD program.

Figure 5: Synthetic indicators by respondent type and PhD program.
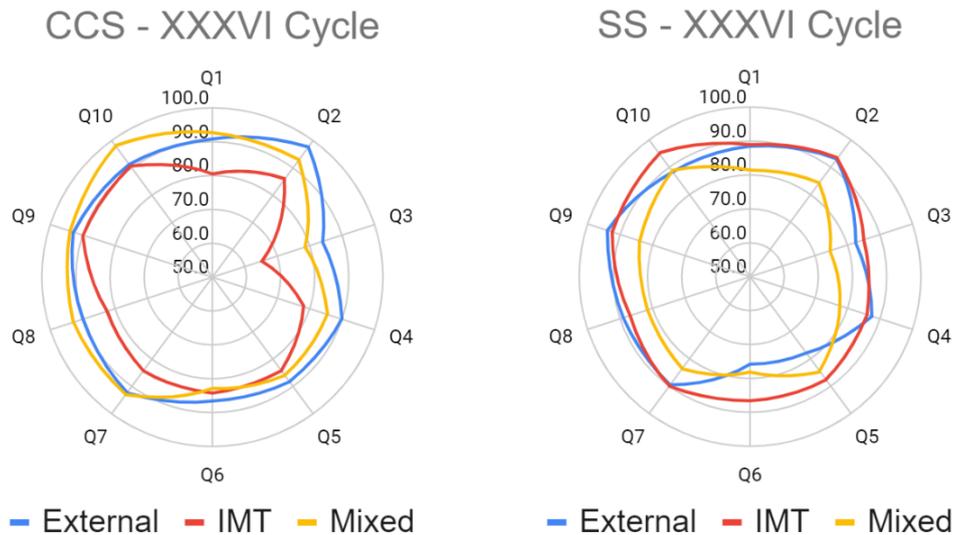
In conclusion, the **average rating** of the School's academic offer is generally positive and steady. This attests to the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance tools put in place by the School to ensure constant monitoring and promote continuous improvement of the educational offer. There is also an increase in the response rates to XXXVI cycle questionnaires, possibly associated with the new procedure for administering the questionnaires put in place by the School. In this regard, the Board hopes that the School will proceed along the path undertaken to raise awareness of the importance of the questionnaires to survey students' opinions about individual courses.

Regarding the questionnaires for surveying students' opinions examined in this section, in a perspective of continuous improvement, **the Board proposes the following** actions with the purpose of:

a) including **the option of not answering specific questions**, thus guaranteeing students who do not wish to express their opinion on specific aspects of the course to refrain from doing so, such as, for example, question Q3 for students who have not yet developed a thesis project. **The option of not answering could extend to all the questions in the questionnaire** to preserve a student's freedom not to answer the questionnaire as a whole.

b) **Sending the results of an exam only after a student has completed their questionnaire**, where applicable. In any case, the student will have the right not to answer the questionnaire, thanks to the action referred to in point a), obtaining, on the other hand, a foreseeable increase in the response rate.

c) Introducing guidelines about the **minimum number of students per course** that makes it reasonable to administer a questionnaire on the specific course (to ensure the necessary anonymity and consequent reliability of the survey) and the **minimum attendance rate** to consider a student attending and consequently required to complete the questionnaire.

In view of the gradual expansion of the academic offer and participation in PhD programs, the Board also expects **separate questionnaires to be adopted to survey students' opinions for seminars and laboratory**

activities. Furthermore, in the Board's opinion, the **use of ad-hoc questionnaires for specific educational programs** (Masters, other PhD programs in collaboration with other Schools and universities) is particularly relevant in the future.

IV – FRAMEWORK C: ANALYSIS AND PROPOSALS CONCERNING OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE ACADEMIC ACTIVITY

This section analyzes the **recently introduced questionnaires (2021)** concerning respectively the evaluation of each doctoral year after the first (End of Year Questionnaire) for all students of the second and subsequent years who have not yet discussed the thesis at the time of the questionnaire administration, and the evaluation of the doctoral program as a whole (PhD Program Evaluation Questionnaire), for students who defended their thesis and obtained their Ph.D. title in 2021 (IV.1); the data available on course scheduling (IV.2); and other educational issues (IV.3).

IV.1) The **End of Year and PhD Program Evaluation Questionnaires** are analyzed here on a qualitative level: referring to a retroactive period, they provide an overview of the current state of the School's educational offer and teaching.

In the **End of Year Questionnaire**, students were asked a series of questions regarding different areas, such as the quality of the School's academic activities, the student's relationship with their Advisor and Advisory Team, the possibility of presenting their research, off-campus research periods, any relational problems (both professional and personal) with one's Advisor/Advisory Team or a member of the School Community in general, the use of psychological support and problem reporting and, finally, some questions on the pandemic and Covid-19, such as whether the pandemic has had effects -and what- on one's research work. The overall **assessment** that emerged from the analysis of the answers provided by the 77 students participating in the survey is **positive**. In the section about problems arising with one's Advisor/Advisory Team or a member of the Community and the possibility of reporting these problems or benefiting from psychological support, however, **a critical issue emerged concerning the possibility of reporting the problem**. Specifically, it emerged that not all students who indicated that they have or have had a professional/personal problem with the Advisor/Advisory Team/School's community member (about 20% of the respondent sample) were aware of the possibility to report the problem or to whom to report it. This lack of operational knowledge also concerns the psychological support service: some students did not know they could avail of it.

The **PhD Program Evaluation Questionnaire** was completed by 40 students belonging to the doctoral cycles XXX (6), XXXI (13), XXXII, and XXXIII (5). The survey generally concerned the students' experience at the School, courses and lessons taken, Campus and services offered, and their research. Again, **a positive picture of the School** emerges, with students generally satisfied with their experience during the PhD years. In the final sections of the questionnaire, it was possible to indicate the major critical issues experienced by the students and the School's strengths. Many **critical issues**, if not all, reported by students enrolled in cycles XXX to XXXIII, **have been resolved over the years**, so they are no longer relevant at the moment. For example, a general poor course and lesson time organization or the possibility of knowing their schedule in advance was reported - all things that are now being implemented. Some students of the first doctoral cycles examined in this survey reported a lack of laboratories or partial adequacy since they were not completed. This issue has been resolved over the years. The School now has a Multidisciplinary Laboratory in San Ponziano and other laboratories at the San Francesco Campus (Neuroscience Lab, MUSAM). Even the suggestions for improvement that students could submit in a dedicated section

have been implemented by the School. From greater flexibility of the deadlines for doctoral thesis submission and defense to hiring more professors and researchers to improve the quantity and quality of courses offered or change the number of compulsory courses to the possibility of permanently having a single room. The strengths of the School also stand out, such as interdisciplinarity, the young, active, and stimulating research environment, the possibility of collaborating with many universities and organizations, the relationship with the Faculty, the possibility to work on one's project, and last but not least all the School services (Library, study rooms, the administrative-organizational support provided by the Offices).

Regarding the questionnaires examined in this section, to provide a more detailed analysis in the future, similar to that provided for the Teaching Evaluation Questionnaires, the Board exhorts to consider the possibility of making the End of Year Questionnaire available in a disaggregated form to discern student course year and track in the responses. It must be considered that this may result in a reduced guarantee of respondents' anonymity and a possible decline in the response rate.

IV.2) Course scheduling

It is useful here to monitor to what extent the calendars of the courses delivered during the A.Y. 2020-2021 have complied with the scheduling standard discussed, at the Board's request, during the Scientific Board meetings of October 9 and 22, 2019. Since then, these standards have been taken into consideration by the administrative offices when defining the lesson calendars, thus becoming effectively operational starting from the A.Y. at issue. Equally valuable is comparing data relating to the A.Y. in question to the previous one to observe the resulting trend lines.

Standard #1 - Regarding the **overall duration of individual courses**, it can be preliminarily observed that out of 98 courses planned for the XXXVI doctoral cycle, 96 were delivered. Among these, 92 courses (95.8%) finished by the end of the academic year (October 31, 2021), while four (4) courses have exceeded that date, in whole or in part. Compared to the previous A.Y., the ratio between courses delivered and completed by the end of the A.Y. rises from 89.6% to 95.8%, showing a **positive trend**.

For the 92 courses of cycle XXXVI concluded by October 31, 2020, the following data on the deviation of course calendars from the scheduling lesson standards are observed, showing substantial compliance with the relevant parameters, with few exceptions.

Standard #2 - **No deviation** is noticeable compared to the **maximum daily** (8 hours) and **weekly** (36 hours) **commitment** per student, calculated according to the workload per track, confirming full compliance with the standard recorded in the previous A.Y.

Standard #3 - There are **occasional deviations**, limited to very few cases (one or two courses), from the **maximum length of each lecture** (3 hours for School lecturers and 5 hours for visiting faculty). In these cases, the lecturer has deemed more profitable from an educational perspective, carrying out blocks of four (4) hours, alternating the lecture with case studies and/or group work.

Standard #4 - There are **occasional deviations** concerning the **time interval between lectures** (minimum 24 hours - not applicable to visiting faculty - and maximum ten (10) days), limited to rare occasions when the lecturer has granted a request from the students or assigned a paper requiring more than ten (10) days for its discussion in the classroom.

The previously proposed scheduling data are approximate since they do not consider the partition of courses into PhD programs and tracks. Despite the non-specific and provisional nature of the findings, the **comparison between the scheduling of cycle XXXV** (affected in itinere by the Covid-19 emergency) **and that of cycle XXXVI** under consideration (with the Covid-19 emergency already in place and ad-hoc teaching methods) and the resulting positive trend, clarify that the most significant transgression of standards 1-to-4 recorded in the 2020 annual

report largely depended on the new Covid-19 emergency. The following annual report will confirm the positive trend recorded here or, if not, formulate other proposals to optimize the educational offer.

Regarding standards 2-to-4, the Boards deems it appropriate to stress three aspects. a) A better rationalization of the academic calendar, with a better distribution of courses during the A.Y. and a lower concentration of courses held in the fall, would let the Board use a larger number of data relating to the Teaching Evaluation Questionnaires and a more careful and complete examination of them. b) As highlighted in the 2020 report, the time limits for maximum daily and weekly workload, the maximum length of lectures, and minimum and maximum interval between lectures analyzed above have been **conceived for an in-person education system**. They are therefore **excessive when applied to a remote or mixed-mode education system**. For this reason, any exceeding of these time limits must be carefully monitored during the current academic year and in situations that recommend adopting teaching methods different from in-person education in the future (e.g., joint programs with other universities). c) Another potential future improvement of course scheduling standards, already highlighted by the Board in the 2020 annual report, is the **transition from their current status of simple guidelines** - brought to the attention of lecturers by the administrative offices when putting together course calendars - **to qualifying points of proper specific regulation**, as initially envisioned by the Scientific Board of October 9, 2019.

IV.3) Concerning the educational aspects referred to in Section II, it is helpful to point out the following.

In 2021, the Board's members, the Delegate for Didactics, Prof. Mirco Tribastone, and the XXXVI doctoral cycle student representatives held an informational meeting regarding the **exam methods** to assess the possibility of optimizing the examination procedures taking into account the student needs. In general, the Board suggests including the course final exams, written or oral, in the lesson calendar. Often, these are added to the calendar afterward, overlapping parts of courses already scheduled. On the other hand, we still need to understand how to manage the assignments that are expected in some courses. When they take the form of intermediate exams, they negatively impact students' participation in other courses.

Regarding **course scheduling**, the Board deems it appropriate to bring forward the approval of the academic program compared to the current timeframe, inviting the PhD and Higher Education Office and faculty to speed up the preparation of calendars. In this regard, the Board suggests approving the academic program and calendar (as well as the calendars of the Governing Bodies sessions) in July to schedule the lesson calendar by October. In addition, the Board deems it appropriate to begin classes after the inauguration of the academic year (traditionally set on November 18) to allow new students to arrive in Lucca and settle on Campus before classes begin.

The **partial content overlaps between distinct courses** occur in two forms: a) the same content is sometimes covered by different courses attended by the same students (as lecturers are often not aware of the contents of the other courses because sometimes the syllabus is not sufficient to provide complete information); b) in light of a diverse audience, the course content appears to be new for some students and already acquired for others. a) About the first problem, it is helpful to plan the educational offer more consistently within the individual tracks, encouraging communication between lecturers and the sharing of course materials (particularly the lesson slides). This would help lecturers have a complete view of the interaction of their course with those of their colleagues, and students complete the study plan more intentionally. b) About the second problem, the value of preparatory courses, possibly held online in the fall, before the beginning of the academic year, has been pointed out. In this regard, it should be noted that the project financed by the Tuscany Region provided funds for tutoring activities - by already recruited PhD students - that could be used for these introductory courses.

V - FRAMEWORK D: ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENT SERVICES

This section examines the services offered to the School students, basing the analysis mainly on what emerged from the Good Practice questionnaires administered in 2021 (related to services provided by the School in 2020, rated with scores from 0 to 6), without, however, at the same time neglecting issues brought to the Board's attention in other ways.

In selecting the elements deserving further examination, it was deemed appropriate to focus attention on those services that have shown the most critical issues and that the Board has often had to address during its meetings. In examining the questionnaires, an attempt was made to compare the data of the Good Practice 2021 with those from the Good Practice 2020: this comparison, in addition to highlighting some aspects still considered critical by the students (canteen, Wi-Fi), also made it possible to appreciate an improvement in an area that appeared rather critical in the last report, namely the timing of mission reimbursement.

Before examining the individual services, it is also appropriate to briefly mention further developments in the School management of the Covid emergency, a topic to which an entire section in the 2020 report was dedicated. No other elements worthy of note seem to have emerged: some critical issues have been reported concerning the actual housing management; however, the School has always been able to guarantee adequate accommodation for all students, handling the shortage of rooms in the San Francesco Campus. The student body appreciates these efforts.

Finally, it seems necessary to underline that, despite a slight decline in the overall satisfaction of students in relation to the individual services offered by the School (from a -0.01 to the question "are you satisfied overall in IT services?" To a - 0.5 to the question "are you satisfied overall in the administrative support received from the doctoral school?"), in general, conversely, regarding the support provided by the School in technical and administrative services, out of a total of 74 answers, 13 students found it better, 21 the same, and only three (3) worse than the previous year (the remaining 37 decided to use the "I do not know" option).

IV.1) Canteen

The Good Practice questionnaire for 2020 still shows incomplete satisfaction with the canteen services (average value of 3.84 points out of 74 answers, -0.25 compared to 2019, when the answers were 39).

As can be learned from the section dedicated to free comments (two of them include criticisms of the canteen service), on the one hand, meal variety and quality are questioned. On the other, the change in meal quality depending on the kitchen staff present daily is contested.

Compared to last year, no steps have been taken to equip more spaces, for example, with microwave ovens and kettles. However, the reopening of the kitchenette will allow students to prepare meals independently.

IV.2) Wi-Fi coverage on Campus

The Good Practice questionnaire for 2020 shows no complete satisfaction with the Wi-Fi coverage on Campus (average value of 3.64 points out of 74 answers, -0.43 compared to 2019, when the answers were 39).

It seems that the problem was about to be solved or solved in fall 2021 through technical interventions in the rooms where the coverage was poor.

IV.3) Workstations

There are still problems relating to workstation availability on Campus, an even more pressing problem when some students are housed off Campus (in Hotels or San Micheletto). The matter has been referred to the Spaces Investigation Committee in its new composition (appointed with Directorial Decree IMT Prot. n. 11472(356).II.1 of

December 6, 2021). This body will implement the directives coming from the Director (to whom the question has already been presented) and will probably proceed to identify the criteria for assigning the workstations, as well as more generally deal with the management of other spaces, in an attempt to develop plans that allow in the future to cope with the expansion of the School's staff.

In any case, about the issue of workstations more specifically, it should be remembered that again in the fall of 2021, the Cassa di Risparmio di Lucca Foundation, at the School's request, intervened in the ten (10) double rooms without desks on Campus replacing one of the two beds with a study station. Therefore, each Campus room will be equipped with a desk in the future.

IV.4) Timing of the reimbursement of mission expenses

The 2019 questionnaire revealed some discontent with the timing of reimbursement of mission expenses (average value of 2.68 points out of 22 answers). For this reason, this issue had been investigated in several meetings of the Board, which also asked the administrative staff for guidance. The latter had already said at the time that they had undertaken a series of measures on several fronts to speed up the process. Apparently, these measures proved beneficial, as the average value was 3.81 points out of 27 responses (+1.13 compared to 2019) in the 2020 questionnaire.

VI - FRAMEWORK E: SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSALS INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT

Issue	Proposal	Target Audience
1) The results of the individual course questionnaires are incomplete at the end of the academic year or get to the Board too close to that date	Improvement in quantity (possibly all the courses delivered in the specific academic year) and timing (possibly in advance of the end of the academic year) of the available data of the questionnaires of the individual courses.	Scientific Board
2) Overlapping of course content	Initiating a reflection on the suitability to rationalize the drafting of the syllabi of the individual courses, primarily within the track of affiliation, with the possibility of creating an environment for sharing course materials (e.g., the slides shown in class).	Scientific Board
3) Timing of the lesson calendar and overlapping of course exam dates with those of lectures or exams of other courses	Enter the exam dates on the calendar, both final and intermediate (where applicable). Bring forward the approval of the academic program and calendar (as well as the Governing Bodies session calendars) to July in order to schedule the lesson calendar of the following A.Y. by October.	Scientific Board
4) Critical issues regarding the services in the process of being resolved or residual	Monitoring the effective resolution of the critical issues relating to services (Wi-Fi and workstations) in the process of being resolved and expanding the measures	School Administration; Spaces Committee

	aimed at resolving the remaining critical issues (canteen and reimbursement of missions).	
5) Critical issues related to the Campus model	Consider the institution of focus groups on the diverse critical issues reported or mentioned in this report as a better focus on Campus life from the point of view of privacy protection and other sensitive issues.	School Administration
6) Inadequate knowledge of the Board's role and importance at the School	Encourage a better knowledge of the Board's nature, tasks, and institutional stakeholders within the Quality Assurance system at the School, for the benefit of the students and the whole School (see above, Introduction).	Other bodies responsible for Quality Assurance

VII - CONCLUSION

The following can be remarked about the two main types of problems highlighted in the 2020 report, namely a) problems due to the School's academic and administrative system organization that is being improved, and therefore can be solved in the short term, and b) problems due instead to the School's structural deficiencies, related to the limited size and the peculiar conformation of its current spaces that need a longer time for their solution. About the first item, the improvement process already observed as underway in 2019 and 2020 has grown in size and effectiveness. About the second item, the School is well aware of the relative critical issue - already reported in the 2019 and 2020 reports and amplified by the precautionary measures that became necessary following the Covid-19 emergency - and is appropriately planning a long-term solution. The Board is satisfied with the virtuous trend now consolidated about item a), while awaiting positive future developments, already planned and ready to be implemented, regarding item b).

In order to provide students with **immediate feedback** on the requests received, implement **measures that encourage** them to apply to the Board for matters of its competence and allow them to **become fully involved** in the Quality Assurance process, the Board hopes that this report, like that of previous years, is also made the subject of **public release**, open to the School's entire academic community. The meeting, to be held in English at the beginning of 2022, to which all the members of the School will be invited, will be an opportunity to exchange views and further reflection on the issues addressed and the practice of releasing the Board's annual report will continue to remain customary. This meeting will be a valuable first opportunity to **reaffirm the Board's prerogatives, tasks, and importance** within the School's Quality Assurance system **to the entire School Community**.

Lucca, December 29, 2021

The Joint Students and Teachers Board