



SCUOLA  
ALTI STUDI  
LUCCA

# **JOINT STUDENTS AND TEACHERS BOARD: ANNUAL REPORT 2023 CONCERNING THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-23**

Approved on December 21, 2023

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## I - BACKGROUND

### I.1 Purpose

The Teachers-Students Joint Board (hereinafter referred to as the Board) of IMT Scuola Alti Studi Lucca (hereinafter referred to as the School) was **established**, according to Article 2, paragraph 2, letter g) of **Act no. 240/2010**, by Decree of the Director (hereinafter referred to as the Rector) on **November 7, 2018**. It acts as the first internal evaluator of educational activities. It comprehensively monitors Quality Assurance in educational options and student services. It should be pointed out, for the sake of the considerations that will be made in the Conclusions, that this Report, like all the of the Board's previous annual Reports, is the "downstream" outcome of the constant, ongoing "upstream" monitoring of the educational activities and student services provided by the School in the year, a monitoring process that covers the entire calendar year and has the Board constantly at work. This Report thus represents the concluding formalization of an "upstream" overall monitoring process which is the main responsibility of the Board.

### I.2 Membership

The Board consists of three student representatives and three faculty members appointed by the Rector. The Board took **office on March 6, 2019**, with the last changes in membership occurring on **10 February 2023** and on **31 October 2023**. In the calendar year 2023, the Board had eight members, four of whom alternated with each other:

**Student members:** Mattia Adamo – student representative in the Board of Governors and member of the Board until 31 October 2023, replaced by Ruggero Roni in both capacities as from 1 November 2023; Samrawit Ayele – doctoral student of the XXXVI cycle (acting as a secretary); Flaminia Ferlito – student representative in the Assessment Board (hereinafter referred to as the Assessment Board), member of the Board until 9 January 2023, replaced by Nicolò Castellani, student representative in the Academic Senate, as from 10 February 2023.

**Teacher members:** Amos Bertolacci – Full Professor (acting as Chairman); Gustavo Cevolani – Associate Professor; Irene Crimaldi – Associate Professor.

The Board is deeply grateful to the student representatives who have been replaced over the year (Mattia Adamo and Flaminia Ferlito) for their precious work in support of the Board and for their fruitful efforts. All Board meetings were held in English whenever feasible.

The membership and the certificate of appointment of the Board are available on the School's website (<http://www.imtlucca.it/it/scuola-imt/organ-comitati/commissione-paritetica-docenti-studenti>), where the 2019, 2020 and 2021 Annual Reports covering the AY 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 respectively, their English translations, the guidelines regulating the Board's activities, and the calendar of regular meetings held during the calendar year 2023, can also be found.

### I.3 Tools

**Communication between trainees and the Board** took place via **five main channels**.

- a) As in the past, the Board had four different types of survey questionnaires available which were handed out to and returned by the students: aa) questionnaires for each doctoral year following the first, distributed to all the students of the second and following years that, at the time of delivering the questionnaires (27 October-13 November 2023) had not discussed their theses yet (*End of Year Questionnaire*; see below, Section III.1.3), based on a grid of questions that is a different version of the previous year's; ab) questionnaires on the entire PhD Programme, distributed to students who had discussed their theses and been awarded a Ph.D. in 2023 (*PhD Programme Evaluation Questionnaire*; see below, Section III.1.4); ac) questionnaires on each single course, *Teaching Evaluation Questionnaire* (hereinafter referred to as *TEQ*), distributed to students of the XXXVII cycle

- of the PhD Programme (see below, Section IV); ad) *Good Practice* questionnaires on School's services, filled in by the School's students for the calendar year 2022 (see below, Section V); the students' feedback was collected by separating the questionnaires expressly marked as 'filled by students' from the rest.
- b) The student representatives on the Board constantly recorded the issues reported by the student population during the year. In their capacity as student representatives on other boards and committees of the School (Board of Governors, Academic Senate), they liaised with the students and the Board. As a student representative on the Board, Ms Samrawit Ayele promoted communication with the international student population of the School, especially with the *International Student Union*.
  - c) Another channel of communication was the public posting of the 2022 Annual Report on **19 April 2023** which all of the School's community was invited to. As it happened with the posting of the 2019, 2020 and 2021 Annual Reports, the discussion that followed the submission of the Annual Report by the student representatives on the Board was an opportunity for students, teachers and for the School's management to converse and exchange opinions on the issues listed in the Report.
  - d) The Board can be directly contacted at the email address: Board.paritetica@imtlucca.it, listed on the above page of the School's website, which each student can use freely. This address also served for internal communication among Board members.

#### I.4 Activities

In the calendar year 2023, the Board **met ten times** (21 February; 24 March; 2 May; 23 June; 14 July; 28 September; 27 October; 24 November; 7 December; 15 December). The meeting of 23 June included student representatives from the School's PhD Programmes, especially the newest PhD Programmes; the meeting of 27 October was attended by Ms Ornella Bucci (career guidance advisor) and Ms Daniela Giorgetti (from the Operating Management Unit), for a focus on services and criticalities in the students' psychological wellbeing. The investigations carried out at such meetings led to addressing **communication** with the Quality Enhancement Committee of the School (hereinafter referred to as the Quality Enhancement Committee), the School's policies on the students' and visiting students' email accounts and badges (15 December 2023), and the Office Management and Front Office (hereinafter referred to as the Campus Management Office), as to the criticalities reported to the Board on the allocation of places in the new Halls of Residence in Via Brunero Paoli (30 June, as updated) and the need to provide a wider choice of canteen food to the international students of the School (11 December 2023).

Such ten meetings were formalised in ten **calls** (jointly prepared by the teacher acting as chairman and by the student acting as secretary) with an agenda, and the results were summarised in ten **minutes**, each one approved by the Board at the following meetings. All meetings were held in English, and the minutes were taken in English too. In addition to such meetings, a meeting took place on 19 April during which the results of the **2022 Annual Report** were submitted to and shared with the School's community; the language of the meeting was English too.

The Board also attended a **joint meeting** on 18 September 2023, which was recorded in specific minutes and followed up on a similar meeting held in 2022 which likewise involved the School's Teaching and Research Quality Assurance staff (**Assessment Board, Quality Enhancement Committee and Board**), aimed at improving mutual interactions and specific projects among the three committees while intensifying the existing synergisms. The discussion held at the meeting was recorded in the minutes which have been forwarded to the School. Broadly speaking, as highlighted in the 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 Reports, **interactions and cooperation with the other boards and committees** of the School involved in Teaching and Research Quality Assurance (the Quality Enhancement Committee and the Assessment Board, plus the Operating Management Unit) were excellent. Equally fruitful was the synergism with the School Administration departments, especially the PhD and Higher Education Office (hereinafter referred to as the PhD Office) and the Campus Management and Front Office. As in the past, this Report too was preliminarily reviewed by the Quality Enhancement Committee, for whose helpful feedback the Board is deeply thankful.

In its capacity as a permanent observatory of the School's educational activities and student services as well as a member of the Quality Assurance staff, with its own specific roles and remits, the Board focussed its efforts on

**three main areas.** As to **educational activities**, it continued a thorough review of the results of the feedback questionnaires for each year of the PhD Programmes and for the PhD Programme as a whole and kept monitoring compliance with the scheduling guidelines of the courses and final exams, with a special focus on the widest and most complex educational offering provided by the School as from the a.y. 2022-2023 and the potential criticalities that might ensue from the extension and differentiation thereof. As to student **services**, as well as continuing monitoring the School's ongoing response to the previously reported and assumedly "structural" criticalities (especially the availability and suitability of workstations), the Board focussed on the allocation of places in the new Halls of Residence in Via Brunero Paoli. Reflections on how to make sure the **international student population** is well received, respected and cultural diversity is promoted, which began in the 2021 Report and were implemented in the 2022 Report, continued in in the Services Section of this Report, as to the international students' requirements.

### **I.5 This Report**

This Report loosely covers **five points**, as summarised below:

#### **I – Background**

**II - Framework A:** State of the Art: Analysis of criticalities reported in the previous Annual Report and evaluation of the processes implemented by the School to solve them.

**III - Framework B:** Analysis of end-of-year and PHD evaluation questionnaires, and analyses and proposals on other areas of the educational activities.

**IV - Framework C:** Analyses and proposals for the management and use of the students' survey questionnaires about single courses.

**V - Framework D:** Analyses and proposals concerning student services (teaching support services, residential and non-residential services).

**VI - Framework E:** Summary of main proposals in this report and names of target audiences.

#### **VII - Conclusions**

Compared with the 2022 Report, in compliance with the latest ANVUR AVA3 directives on PhD and Advanced Education Schools, the analysis of the end-of-year questionnaires and the evaluation of the PhD Programme (now Framework B; Framework C in the 2022 Report) come before the other analyses (now Framework C; Framework B in the previous Report). Compared with the 2022 Report, this Report lacks a specific framework on the *status quaestionis* of the international students at the School and the measures taken to address their needs (Framework E in the previous Report), since the evaluation of the measures taken by the School to address such needs and residual criticalities has been moved to other, specific places of the other frameworks.

As in the past, this Report has a complex structure and adopts an exhaustive level of analysis in the hope to provide the best ever service to improve the School's processes and emphasise the importance and central role of the Board as a Quality Assurance member. The length of the Report is made up for by a list of highlights in Framework E.

## **II - FRAMEWORK A: STATE OF THE ART: ANALYSIS OF THE CRITICALITIES REPORTED IN THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL REPORT AND EVALUATION OF THE PROCESSES IMPLEMENTED BY THE SCHOOL TO SOLVE THEM**

The greatest criticality reported in 2022 regarding questionnaires as course evaluation tools was that the results of some TEQs were received by the Board too close to the end of the calendar year and were not optimally structured for analysis. The Board had suggested an improvement in the timeline for collecting all of the TEQ results and structuring the data more efficiently for later analysis (e.g. using tech tutors). Unfortunately, such problems did not improve as the 2023 data were submitted to the Joint Students and Teachers Board on 24 November and, as in the previous year, were incomplete. In this particular case, they lacked two courses that started before the end of

the a.y. but should have ended in the following a.y. and a high number of unscheduled courses or courses without a TEQ.

The main issue with the educational options, as suggested by the previous Report, lay in the recent extension of the PhD Programme (three years), which goes against the recent decision to extend the Programme from three to four years without basically changing the workload. The Board is aware of the external events that inspired the School to make the XXXVIII-cycle PhD Programmes last three years but it pointed out that the number and hours of compulsory courses remained high, despite reducing the overall length of the PhD Programmes, which might have impaired the scope and standards of the research results. The Board hoped a wider discussion – additional to communication within the School’s managing bodies – might be held to understand the reasons for making such important choice, and specific instructions might be provided on how to potentially extend the three-year research fellowship to a fourth year. At the time of writing this Report, the option to extend the research fellowship for six more months had been further discussed. However, the total amount of hours remains the same.

As far as services are concerned, at the time of delivering the 2022 Report some criticalities about the final management of the Erasmus grants were still in the process of being solved. As to Erasmus grants, the Board reported the issue to the Management, suggesting that the students should be made preliminarily aware of the terms of payment and the reasons for potential delays, so they can properly plan their stay before leaving Italy. The School did take appropriate solutions to make the students aware of the financial management of future Erasmus grants.

Another problem that impacted different School’s members regarding space was the workstations. As to workstations, the School took action and bought a building (Palazzo Boccella) so that new offices and workstations might be set up there; however, for the time being, the number of workstations does not meet the needs of the School’s scientific community yet. In this case, the number of workstations is too low for both the PhD students, who would need 64 additional workstations, and the fixed-term researchers. As to workstations, the Board talked with the Buildings, Spaces and Sustainability Board (hereinafter referred to as the Spaces Committee) which is considering potential solutions. Right now, a first solution for fixed-term researchers consists in converting the refectory into fixed-term researchers’ workstations, thus partly solving the problem of this specific category of scholars, still falling short of 10 workstations. Lastly, at the time of writing this Report, the Spaces Committee was talking with the student population to try to find additional solutions to the problem.

The other issues reported in 2022 are criticalities in the Campus model, specifically in the unequal allocation of the rooms to the students and the need for further measures to get a better understanding of the conditions of the international students. As to the former criticality, though the School has managed to provide adequate accommodation to all students despite the lack of rooms in the San Francesco Campus, the Board felt a general dissatisfaction in the student population, mainly due to poor communication and to the School’s space-management criteria. The student representatives on the Board organised quite a few general meetings to understand the reasons for such dissatisfaction and liaise with the School Administration Office. The Board wished that communication about space criticalities might improve. The Administration Office increased the involvement of the student representatives and community in the calls, in the attempt to solve the problem. As to the latter criticality, first it was recommended that measures be taken to increase the amount of data on the international students’ applications and admissions. The second recommendation was about adding a “filter” to some of the existing questionnaires. After a few exchanges between the Board and the Quality Enhancement Committee, it was decided that no specific internal questionnaire should be drafted for the international students, and no filters were added to the existing questionnaires.

### **III – FRAMEWORK B: ANALYSIS OF END-OF-YEAR AND PHD EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRES, AND ANALYSES AND PROPOSALS ON OTHER AREAS OF THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

#### **III.1 Issues about the a.y. 2022-2023**

With a call for the XXXVIII cycle of the PhD Programme (a.y. 2022-23), the School substantially reorganised its educational options. This led to open new PhD Programmes and to broaden the scope of the existing PhD Programmes. Specific results are listed below:

- Opening of a PhD Programme in "*Cybersecurity*", which is a PhD Programme of National Interest with four curricula (*Foundational Aspects in Cybersecurity; Software, System, and Infrastructure Security; Data Governance & Protection; Human, Economic, and Legal Aspects in Cybersecurity*) with the aim to train a new generation of experts and future managers who can support and increase the resilience of citizens, public institutions and businesses against cyberattacks by properly developing and implementing more secure and reliable digital processes and infrastructures;
- Opening of a new PhD Programme in "***Economics, Analytics and Decision Sciences***", inspired by the previous curriculum in *Economics, Networks and Business Analytics* (ENBA) of the PhD Programme in "*System Science*"; aimed to train a new generation of economists, social scientists, managers and professionals with outstanding abilities in the analysis, understanding and management of complexity in economic, business and social systems;
- Opening of a new PhD Programme in "***Management of Digital Transformation***", the purpose of which is to train a new ruling class that can meet the need to manage the digital transition process, inspired and prompted by the requirements of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), to bring businesses and institutions closer to the world of university and research. Each grant put out to tender is associated with a specific *a priori* educational and research plan which is proposed by the company or institution that co-funds the position and that is selected by the School as a challenging case study that has a strong impact on digital transition;
- The extension of the PhD Programme in "***Systems Science***" into **four new curricula**: *Complex Systems and Networks, Computational Mechanics, Learning and Control, and Software Quality*, as opposed to the two previous ones (CSSE, ENBA);
- In the PhD Programme in "***Cognitive and Cultural System***", already consisting of two separate curricula (AMCH, CCSN), the addition **of a new Programme**, called "*Museum Studies*", which is specifically targeted to the world of museums and is based on a number of agreements that the School has entered into with some of the most important Italian museums (Museo Egizio in Turin, Galleria Nazionale in Urbino, Museo Nazionale Romano, Parco Archeologico in Pompei, the Italian Directorate-General of Museums), with the latter funding all or part of some PhD fellowship grants.

All of the School's PhD Programmes share the mission of promoting interdisciplinary research and making the most of the complementarity of the different methods of each discipline, offering a unique, distinctive wealth of expertise. In this respect, the Board suggested that the incoming and outgoing students' profiles should be made clearer, by separating the students to be trained who may come from different backgrounds and the educational needs that are involved in creating research doctors in line with the standard Programme.

Since the a.y. 2021-2022, there have been three-year PhD Programmes. Such choice has been made because the previous four-year length was incompatible with many governmental initiatives and financial support opportunities (e.g. the NATIONAL RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE PLAN (PNRR)). At any rate, the School provides financial coverage for a fourth year of a PhD fellowship if needed. In this respect, as mentioned in last year's Report, the Board is baffled that the number and hours of the compulsory courses is still so high, given the reduction in the overall length of the PhD Programmes, which might impair the scope and standards of the research results.

### III.1.1 – Scheduling of courses in the a.y. 2022-2023

It would be useful right now to monitor how well the course schedules of the a.y. 2022-2023 have complied with the scheduling criteria that, at the behest of the Board, have been discussed at the Teaching Staff meetings of 9 October and 22 October 2019 and that since then have been taken into account by the Administration Office when processing the timetables. Specifically, the criteria are:

*Criterion 1 – All lessons finishing by the end of the a.y.*

Most of the planned courses ended by 31 October 2023. Some courses ended by 10 November 2023 instead or otherwise by 20 November 2023, the day the educational activities of the new a.y. are due to start.

*Criterion 2 – Max daily (8 hours) and weekly workload (36 hours) per student.*

No difference was found, which means the criterion has been fully met, as in the previous academic years.

*Criterion 3 - Max length of each lecture (3 hours for School's professors and 5 hours for visiting professors)*

The over 3-hour-long blocks of time, the few that have been held at the School, have been justified by the specific teaching method of the subject and/or by the presence of lots of visiting students.

*Criterion 4 – Time gap between two lectures (minimum 24 hours – does not apply to visiting professors – and max 10 days)*

When scheduling the courses at the start of the a.y., all criteria are met. Over the year, professors may need to go on missions or to attend conferences or because the students ask that or because papers need to be submitted that take a longer time to write or because some off-site lecture has been organised (as in the case of AMCH/MUST) the scheduling of which is closely dependent on the availability of local contacts. So, in some circumstances, the need has been felt to hold back-to-back lectures in the afternoon and the morning after.

### III.1.2 Sharing of educational materials

Since the a.y. 2022-2023, teachers have been invited to share the educational materials for their lessons (syllabus, slides and more) with the whole School community (students, professors and assistants) on Google Drive (a file per planned course). As of 09/11/2023, the Board found that most of the teachers had uploaded just the syllabi of their courses (please note that this is compulsory for all teachers), a few teachers had uploaded some additional educational materials too (slides, exercises, readings, etc. which can be optionally uploaded), while others have unfortunately left the files of their courses completely empty. In this respect, the Board hopes that all teachers will at least upload the syllabi of their courses and, to do this, the Board suggests that a reminder be sent to the teachers once a year with a deadline for uploading the syllabi of their courses on to the files.

### III.1.3 Review of end-of-year questionnaires (*End of Year Questionnaire*) filled in, in the a.y. 2022-2023

In the a.y. 2022-2023, a new version of the questionnaire, which was built on the ANVUR template, completed by a few questions on distinctive aspects of the students' PhD experience at the School, was handed out. The questionnaire was sent to all the students who were enrolled as of 27 October 2023 (i.e. cycle 38 and earlier). It covered the period 27 October to 13 November 2023. Conversely, in the two previous years, the 2023 End of Year Questionnaires had only been sent to students enrolled in the second year and above.

Because of a technical error, the questions in the "*Facilities and equipment*" Section of the questionnaire had been set out as Yes/No instead of using a rating scale of 1 to 10, as in the other questionnaires. That is why the Board decided to leave such questions out of the review. For a review of the "Facilities" section, see the relevant Section of this Report.

Data from the end-of-year questionnaires have been summed up in the following Tables: Tables 1 to 7 show the overall data, while Tables 8 to 11 list the results of the analysis with the data gathered into 4 groups, basically referring to 4 types of PhD Programmes:

- 1) *Systems Science (SyS) + Economics, Analytics and Decision Sciences (EADS) + Management of Digital Transformation (MDT)*;
- 2) *Cognitive and Cultural Systems – Analysis and Management of Cultural Heritage (AMCH) or Museum Studies (MUST)*;
- 3) *Cognitive and Cultural Systems – Cognitive, Computational and Social Neurosciences (CCSN)*;
- 4) *Cybersecurity (Cybersec)*.

The Board pointed out that the PhD Programme in "*Economics, Analytics and Decision Sciences*" could not be separated from the other Programmes of Group 1, since some students entered the wrong PhD Programme when they filled in the questionnaire. The Board supposed (an assumption confirmed by the Board's informal investigation with some students) the mistake must have been made by some students of the ENBA track of the PhD Programme in "*Systems Science*", who mistakenly entered EADS as their PhD Programme. Neither could the PhD Programme in "*Management of Digital Transformation*" be separated, because of the low number of questionnaires handed out (just 5).

Moreover, the Board specified that the answers to questions that had received less than 7 answers for at least a Group have been left out of Tables 8 to 11 (separate analysis per group). Therefore, the results of the analysis per group of the answers to "Experiences abroad", "Experiences at other national research centres/companies/public bodies" and "Students' Teaching experiences" are missing. Answers to such questions are only generically shown in Tables 1 to 7.

Due to using different scales for different types of questionnaires, to make the results comparable in addition to a mean score on the specific scale of the questionnaire, a score in 100<sup>th</sup> has been added in brackets (i.e. on a scale of 0 to 100, calculated as  $(\text{mean score}-1)/(\text{max score}-1)*100$ ).

The main criticalities were found to be:

- the need to have fewer courses on the first year (and maybe extend the length of the courses as from the second year) so that students can do research as early as the first year (and the ensuing need to have an Advisor to plan the thesis topic since as early as the first year too);
- the need to have fewer compulsory courses and more optional courses so the students' curriculum can be more focussed on their research requirements;
- the need to be able to take part in the choice of topics for the seminars, so they are more focussed on the students' research requirements;
- the need to have more courses on how to do research and how to write an article and/or a project;
- the need to have greater support in their research work: a more supportive Advisor and/or Advisory Team and more frequent meetings;
- the need to have regular meetings to exchange views with the other members of the Research Unit and to be more involved in conferences, research projects, etc;
- the need to do research jointly with other students and/or members of the Research Unit;
- the need to have opportunities to do interdisciplinary research jointly with other students and/or members of the Research Unit;
- the need to have adequate workspace (there are too few workstations);
- the need to have adequate technology for their research work (e.g. at least a laboratory with a few computers available) and greater technical and IT support;
- the need to have better communication with the offices (Campus Management and Front Office, PhD Programme Office, IT System and Technology Office), greater support from the staff and more psychological support meetings.

**In Tables 2 to 6, in nearly one third of the cases** (8 out of 29, i.e. 27.6%) **the score can be equated to a Fail** (i.e. less than 6 on a scale of 1 to 10 in the End of Year Questionnaire, i.e. less than 55.56 hundredths).

*Table 1. Response rates from the End of Year Questionnaire in 2021-2023. Note that in 2023 the questionnaire had been reworded and reorganised and distributed to all the students as instructed by ANVUR, while in the previous two years it was only distributed to the students of the second year and above.*

	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
<b>Distributed questionnaires</b>	118	115	202
<b>Returned questionnaires</b>	77	57	129
<b>Response rate</b>	65%	50%	64%

Table 2. End of Year Questionnaire, year 2023 – Answers to questions on educational activities and their organisation (Sections: "Training", "Transparency and Engagement" and "Research training"). The number of answers does not include "Prefer not to answer". The mean score is on a scale of 1 to 10 in the questionnaire with the score in hundredths in brackets.

Questions on educational activities and their organisation (Sections: "Training", "Transparency and Engagement" and "Research training")	Number of answers	Mean score
The training activities are exhaustive and consistent with the main topics of my PhD course.	83	6.41 (60.11)
The topics addressed in the training activities are thorough and up-to-date.	83	7.10 (67.78)
The training activities help with the development of the PhD thesis.	84	5.77 (53)
The workload of the structured training activities (courses, seminars, workshops) lets me spend enough time on my research projects and my thesis.	81	6.11 (56.78)
The interim evaluations (exams, presentations, papers) are just a formality or have not been carried out at all	78	5.38 (48.67)
Overall, I am satisfied with the training activities provided	83	6.31 (59)
Information about training and research activities is constantly updated	83	6.02 (55.78)
PhD students are involved in the planning of such activities	81	4.69 (41)
Information on deadlines and administrative procedures is constantly updated	84	5.96 (55.11)
The topics discussed in the training activities were engaging	81	6.51 (61.22)
The topics discussed in the training activities were consistent with the objectives of my PhD Program	82	6.27 (58.56)

Table 3. End of Year Questionnaire, year 2023 - Answers to questions on experiences abroad (Section: "Experiences abroad"). The number of answers does not include "Prefer not to answer". The mean score is on a scale of 1 to 10 in the questionnaire with the score in hundredths in brackets.

Questions on experiences abroad (Section: "Experiences abroad")	Number of answers	Mean score
During my PhD, I have received proper information and support from my teachers about experiences abroad.	75	6.43 (60.33)
The support received from my home university in my research stay abroad is satisfactory.	52	6.63 (62.56)
The support received from the host university/institute in my research stay abroad is satisfactory.	40	7.33 (70.33)
Overall, I am satisfied with my research stay abroad.	38	7.26 (69.56)

Table 4. End of Year Questionnaire, year 2023 – Answers to questions on experiences at other research centres/companies/public bodies (Section: "Experiences at other national research centres/companies/public bodies"). The number of answers does not include "Prefer not to answer". The mean score is on a scale of 1 to 10 in the questionnaire with the score in hundredths in brackets.

Questions on experiences at other research centres/companies/national public bodies (Section: "Experiences at other national research centres/companies/public bodies")	Number of answers	Mean score
During my PhD, I have received proper information and support from my teachers about experiences at other institutions.	42	5.60 (51.11)
The support received from my home university in my research stay at other institutions is satisfactory.	32	6.34 (59.33)
The support received from the host institution in my research stay is satisfactory.	28	7.11 (67.89)

Overall, I am satisfied with my research stay at other research centres/companies/public bodies.	26	7.54 (72.67)
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Table 5. End of Year Questionnaire, year 2023 - Answers to questions on thesis work and supervision (Sections: "Research output" and "Relationship with the Advisory Team"). The number of answers does not include "Prefer not to answer". The mean score is on a scale of 1 to 10 in the questionnaire with the score in hundredths in brackets.

Questions on thesis work and supervision (Sections: "Research output" and "Relationship with the Advisory Team")	Number of answers	Mean score
I am satisfied with the opportunities I had to disseminate my research	78	5.97 (55.22)
I have worked on an adequate volume of research outputs (e.g., articles, essays, book chapters, presentations, etc.)	77	5.77 (53)
Overall, I am satisfied with the research outputs that I have produced	78	5.47 (49.67)
The frequency of contact with my <i>Advisory Team</i> was adequate	83	6.72 (63.56)
My <i>Advisory Team</i> made themselves available to hold meetings	84	7.31 (70.11)
My <i>Advisory Team</i> gave prompt feedback to my written submissions (e.g., paper/thesis drafts)	80	7.16 (68.44)
My <i>Advisory Team</i> ensured I made progress in my thesis research	80	6.74 (63.78)
Overall, the supervision I have received has contributed to the successful progress of my thesis	80	6.69 (63.22)

Table 6. End of Year Questionnaire, year 2023 - Answers to questions on the students' teaching experiences (Section: "Students' Teaching Experiences"). The number of answers does not include "Prefer not to answer". The mean score is on a scale of 1 to 10 in the questionnaire with the score in hundredths in brackets.

Questions on the students' teaching experiences (Section: "Students' Teaching Experiences")	Number of answers	Mean score
My teaching helps me with my training	7	8.57 (84.11)
The workload of my teaching lets me spend enough time on my training and research projects and on my thesis	6	8.17 (79.67)

Table 7. End of Year Questionnaire, year 2023 – Overall satisfaction (Section: "Overall satisfaction"). The number of answers does not include "Prefer not to answer". The mean score is on a scale of 1 to 10 in the questionnaire with the score in hundredths in brackets.

Overall question (Section: "Overall satisfaction")	Number of answers	Mean score
Overall, so far I am satisfied with my PhD	85	6.68 (63.11)

Table 8. End of Year Questionnaire, year 2023 – Response rate per group. In 2023, the questionnaire was reworded and reorganised, then distributed to all students as instructed by ANVUR.

	SyS+EADS+MDT	AMCH+MUST	CCSN	Cybersec
Distributed questionnaires	83	44	48	27
Returned questionnaires	54	26	32	17
Response rate	65%	59%	67%	63%

Table 9. End of Year Questionnaire, year 2023 – Answers to questions on educational activities and their organisation by group (Sections: "Training", "Transparency and Engagement" and "Research training"). The symbol R stands for the number of answers received (other than "Prefer not to answer") which the mean score has been based upon. The mean score is on a scale of 1 to 10 in the questionnaire with the score in hundredths in brackets.

Questions on educational activities and their organisation (Sections: "Training", "Transparency and Engagement" and "Research training")	Mean score for SyS+EADS+MDT	Mean score For AMCH+MUST	Mean score for CCSN	Mean score for Cybersec
<i>The training activities are exhaustive and consistent with the main topics of my PhD course.</i>	6.90 (65.56) R=40	5.68 (52) R=16	5.8 (53.33) R=16	7 (66.67) R=8
<i>The topics addressed in the training activities are thorough and up-to-date.</i>	7.87 (76.33) R=39	6.44 (60.44) R=16	5.8 (53.33) R=20	7.86 (76.22) R=8
<i>The training activities help with the development of the PhD thesis.</i>	6.68 (63.11) R=40	4.69 (41) R=16	4.4 (37.78) R=20	6.88 (65.33) R=8
<i>The workload of the structured training activities (courses, seminars, workshops) lets me spend enough time on my research projects and my thesis.</i>	7.08 (67.56) R=39	4.87 (43) R=15	4.32 (36.89) R=19	8 (77.78) R=8
<i>The interim evaluations (exams, presentations, papers) are just a formality or have not been carried out at all</i>	4.38 (37.56) R=37	5.14 (46) R=14	7.4 (71.11) R=20	5.43 (49.22) R=7
<i>Overall, I am satisfied with the training activities provided</i>	6.98 (66.44) R=40	5.38 (48.67) R=16	5.11 (45.67) R=19	7.75 (75) R=8
<i>Information about training and research activities is constantly updated</i>	6.79 (64.33) R=38	4.47 (38.56) R=17	5.7 (52.22) R=20	6.5 (61.11) R=8
<i>PhD students are involved in the planning of such activities</i>	5.28 (47.56) R=39	2.73 (19.22) R=15	4.85 (42.78) R=20	5.14 (46) R=7
<i>Information on deadlines and administrative procedures is constantly updated</i>	6.6 (62.22) R=40	4.53 (39.22) R=17	6.37 (59.67) R=19	4.88 (43.11) R=8
<i>The topics discussed in the training activities were engaging</i>	6.77 (64.11) R=39	5.4 (48.89) R=15	6.56 (61.78) R=18	7.11 (67.89) R=9
<i>The topics discussed in the training activities were consistent with the objectives of my PhD Program</i>	6.62 (62.44) R=39	4.67 (40.78) R=15	6.11 (56.78) R=19	7.78 (75.33) R=9

Table 10. End of Year Questionnaire, year 2023 – Answers to questions on thesis work and supervision by group (Sections: "Research output" and "Relationship with the Advisory Team"). The symbol R stands for the number of answers received (other than "Prefer not to answer") which the mean score has been based upon. The mean score is on a scale of 1 to 10 in the questionnaire with the score in hundredths in brackets.

Questions on thesis work and supervision (Sections: "Research output" and "Relationship with the Advisory Team")	Mean score for SyS+EADS+MDT	Mean score for AMCH+MUST	Mean score for CCSN	Mean score for Cybersec
<i>I am satisfied with the opportunities I had to disseminate my research</i>	6.86 (65.11) R=36	4.29 (36.56) R=17	5.41 (49) R=17	6.75 (63.89) R=8
<i>I have worked on an adequate volume of research outputs (e.g., articles, essays, book chapters, presentations, etc.)</i>	6.26 (58.44) R=34	4.59 (39.89) R=17	5.28 (47.56) R=18	7.25 (69.44) R=8
<i>Overall, I am satisfied with the research outputs that I have produced</i>	5.97 (55.22) R=36	4.47 (38.56) R=17	4.41 (37.89) R=17	7.63 (73.67) R=8

<i>The frequency of contact with my Advisory Team was adequate</i>	7.26 (69.56) R=39	5.44 (49.33) R=16	6.15 (57.22) R=20	8.13 (79.22) R=8
<i>My Advisory Team made themselves available to hold meetings</i>	7.73 (74.78) R=40	6.81 (64.56) R=16	6.95 (66.11) R=20	7.13 (68.11) R=8
<i>My Advisory Team gave prompt feedback to my written submissions (e.g., paper/thesis drafts)</i>	7.47 (71.89) R=38	6.29 (58.78) R=17	6.82 (64.67) R=17	8.25 (80.56) R=8
<i>My Advisory Team ensured I made progress in my thesis research</i>	7.5 (72.22) R=38	5.69 (52.11) R=16	5.67 (51.89) R=18	7.63 (73.67) R=8
<i>Overall, the supervision I have received has contributed to the successful progress of my thesis</i>	7.53 (72.56) R=36	6.06 (56.22) R=16	5.95 (55) R=19	7.78 (75.33) R=9

Table 11. End of Year Questionnaire, year 2023 – Overall satisfaction by group (Section: "Overall satisfaction"). The symbol R stands for the number of answers received (other than "Prefer not to answer") which the mean score has been based upon. The mean score is on a scale of 1 to 10 in the questionnaire with the score in hundredths in brackets.

<b>Overall question (Section: "Overall satisfaction")</b>	<b>Mean score for SyS+EADS+ MDT</b>	<b>Mean score for AMCH+MUST</b>	<b>Mean score for CCSN</b>	<b>Mean score for Cybersec</b>
<i>Overall, so far I am satisfied with my PhD</i>	7 (66.67) R=40	5.71 (52.33) R=17	6.21 (57.89) R=19	8.11 (79) R=9

### III.1.4 Review of PhD evaluation questionnaires (PhD Programme Evaluation Questionnaire) filled in, in a.y. 2022-2023

This version of the questionnaire was first handed out in January 2023 to the students of cycles 33, 34 and 35 and will be taken back at the end of November 2023, when it will be replaced by the ANVUR version as part of the AVA3 standard.

The questionnaire covered the two PhD Programmes listed below:

- (CCS) *Cognitive and Cultural Systems*;
- (SyS) *Systems Science*.

Answers to the end-of-cycle questionnaires are shown in Tables 12 to 14, which list the results from both the overall sample and every single PhD Programme (in this case, questions which received less than 7 answers in at least a PhD Programme have been left out). The Board pointed out that for most questions the mean score of each PhD Programme is basically identical to the overall mean score listed in the Tables. The only major difference is the one shown in Table 14, at the question on "Study rooms and personal workspace".

The main criticalities are the same as those that had already been reported in the end-of-year questionnaires. The only addition is the need to promote more partnerships with other Universities/Institutions. Moreover, in a dedicated Section the students could mention which points of the PhD Programme they had liked the most. Here, some of the School's strong points came to the fore, such as life in the campus, the wide variety of disciplines as well as the cultural and geographic diversity of the student population and the teachers, freedom of research and the School's many services. **The question "Would you recommend your PhD Programme to other students?" received 16 answers, including 7 "probably yes", 6 "definitely yes", 1 "uncertain", 1 "probably no" and 1 "definitely no".**

Table 12. Response rates for the 2019-2023 PhD Programme Evaluation Questionnaires.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2023 per PhD Programme
<b>Distributed questionnaires</b>	13	25	19	19	22	8 to CCS and 14 to SyS
<b>Returned questionnaires</b>	11	21	8	11	18	8 from CCS and 10 from SyS
<b>Response rate</b>	85%	84%	42%	58%	82%	100% for CCS and 71% for SyS

Table 13. PhD Programme Evaluation Questionnaire, year 2023 – Answers to questions in the "Overall evaluation" Section. The number of answers does not include "Prefer not to answer". The mean score is on a scale of 1 to 5 in the questionnaire with the score in hundredths in brackets.

Questions in the "Overall evaluation" Section	Number of answers	Mean score	Mean score per PhD Programme
<i>Academic experience</i>	17	3.76 (69)	4 (75)=mean score for CCS in 8 answers and 3.56 (64)=mean score for SyS in 9 answers
<i>Academic advising and guidance</i>	17	3.82 (70.5)	4.125 (78.125)=mean score for CCS in 8 answers and 3.56 (64)=mean score for SyS in 9 answers
<i>Interaction across disciplines</i>	17	3.41 (60.25)	3.5 (62.5)=mean score for CCS in 8 answers and 3.33 (58.25)=mean score for SyS in 9 answers
<i>Research training</i>	17	3.59 (64.75)	3.875 (71.875)=mean score for CCS in 8 answers and 3.33 (58.25)=mean score for SyS in 9 answers
<i>Work-life balance</i>	17	3.12 (53)	3.25 (56.25)=mean score for CCS in 8 answers and 3 (50)=mean score in 9 answers
<i>The extent to which the School has provided a welcoming and supportive environment</i>	17	4.24 (81)	4.25 (81.25)=mean score for CCS in 8 answers and 4.22 (80.5)=mean score for SyS in 9 answers
<i>The extent to which the School has provided a culturally sensitive environment</i>	17	3.82 (70.5)	3.625 (65.625)=mean score for CCS in 8 answers and 4 (75)=mean score for SyS in 9 answers
<i>Visa and immigration support</i>	4	5 (100)	

Table 14. PhD Programme Evaluation Questionnaire, year 2023 – Answers to questions in the "Facilities, Resources and Services" and "Placement and career prospects" Sections. The number of answers does not include "Prefer not to answer". The mean score is on a scale of 1 to 5 in the questionnaire with the score in hundredths in brackets.

Questions in the "Facilities, Resources and Services" and "Placement and career prospects" Sections	Number of answers	Mean score	Mean score per PhD Programme
<i>Financial support</i>	17	3.82 (70.5)	3.75 (68.75)=mean score for CCS in 8 answers and 3.89 (72.25)=mean score for SyS in 9 answers
<i>IT resources: computers and software</i>	16	3.63 (65.75)	3.43 (60.75)=mean score for CCS in 7 answers and 3.78 (69.5)=mean score for SyS in 9 answers
<i>Library: services and resources</i>	16	4.13 (78.25)	4.29 (82.25)=mean score for CCS in 7 answers and 4 (75)=mean score for SyS in 9 answers
<i>Antiplagiarism check and thesis submission</i>	17	4.41 (85.25)	4.12 (78)=mean score for CCS in 8 answers and 4.67 (91.75)=mean score for SyS in 9 answers
<i>Study rooms and personal workspace</i>	17	3.18 (54.5)	2.125 (28.125)= mean score for CCS in 8 answers and 4.11 (77.75)= mean score for SyS in 9 answers
<i>Accommodation</i>	17	4.29 (82.25)	4.125 (78.125)=mean score for CCS in 8 answers and 4.44 (86)=mean score for SyS in 9 answers
<i>How would you rate the quality of the career services?</i>	5	4 (75)	

### III.2 Issues in the a.y. 2023-2024

#### III.2.1 New PhD Programmes

As from the a.y. 2023-2024, the educational options of the School have been supplemented by two new PhD Programmes, "Cultural Systems" and "Cognitive, Computational and Social Neurosciences", the offshoots of the earlier PhD Programme in "Cognitive and Cultural Systems" and the PhD Programme in "Social Sciences for Sustainability and Wellbeing", jointly provided by the School and by the University of Florence. The latter PhD Programme is focussed on the study of interactions among social, economic and environmental systems in order to promote sustainability and wellbeing. The goal is to train experts in social science methods applied to sustainability and wellbeing, in the broadest sense. The educational approach promotes systems thinking, interdisciplinarity and "crossdisciplinarity", and is based on learning by practice, with theme courses, internships and participation in real research projects. Job opportunities are aplenty, as more and more public institutions and private companies are proactively trying to integrate sustainability and wellbeing into their policies and programmes, so they offer financial support for research and job opportunities in public and private sectors.

### III.2.2. Scheduling of courses in the a.y. 2023-2024

As decided last year, all lectures will start after the official opening of the a.y. (which is 18 November every year), so the new students can get to Lucca and settle in the Campus before the lessons start.

As to the length of the scheduling process, the Board pointed out that in the current a.y. the timetables have only been posted at the end of October 2023, even if some members of the PhD Programme staff had sent the timetable to the PhD Programme office either before or just after the summer holidays. The Board hopes that in the future the scheduling operations may start earlier so the timetables may be ready and published by late September/early October.

In addition, because of the great amount of courses, the Board asks to consider the option to extend the course and exam time beyond the first year. Each option should be considered within each PhD Programme, as every Programme is extremely specific.

The Board also noticed that the extension of exam time does not mean the students cannot be examined by the end of the first a.y. to move on to the second year. For instance, the Board suggests that a minimum number of passed exams could be set out as a prerequisite to move on to the second year.

### **III.3 Open issues to review/monitor**

Some of the issues that the Board is planning to deal with and/or monitor in the next year are listed below:

- a) The need to upgrade the PhD Programme Office to reflect the increased number of PhD Programmes provided by the School. The Board actually found that the Office was stressed out on several occasions, on the side of students and teachers alike. A larger staff and more efficient IT support, as well as better assistance to students and teachers, would make it easier to handle and send data from the students' survey questionnaires, which would undoubtedly help the Board in its work. In particular, a proper IT management of the questionnaires could not only help the PhD Programme Office with the work it does for the purpose, but it would also make improvements, such as those reported as Necessary in the above paragraph III.1.3 (technical error in the type of answer; misnamed PhD Programme in the end-of-year questionnaire) and in paragraph IV.1 below (no clear distinction between the respondents' PhD Programmes and tracks, or between the resident and visiting students, in the TEQs).
- b) Analysis of the reasons that led to a decrease in the number of students who graduated abroad.
- c) Considering the option to grant credits to the students' educational activities. In particular, the list of benefits that the students would receive from a credit system (for instance, they are useful for a double degree and for some competitive examinations) should be compared with the list of disadvantages resulting from such system.
- d) Considering the option to give teaching assistantships to students as co-teachers, without further increasing the long hours of the PhD Programme.
- e) This year too, in October, online preparatory/introductory courses were taught to the new students of the EADS PhD Programme, in the attempt to strengthen and standardise their knowledge prior to the standard courses they will begin in November. The same initiative might be helpful for students of the other PhD courses as well.

## **IV – FRAMEWORK C: ANALYSES AND PROPOSALS FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF THE STUDENTS' SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES ON SINGLE COURSES**

As part of the Quality Assurance system, collecting the students' feedback on the School's courses plays a double role: testing the effectiveness of the courses for the educational goals of the PhD Programmes and steering and promoting the improvement of the educational options.

The students' feedback is collected for every course provided by the School and is based on anonymous online questionnaires, which are distributed at the end of the course and are known as TEQs (*Teaching Evaluation Questionnaires*). Such questionnaires are sent to any student who attended the course and consist of open-ended as well as multiple-choice questions, with the answers ranging across 5 levels (*strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree*). The structure of such questionnaires is explained in Table 15.

Before looking into the questionnaires on the School's courses, some preliminary and methodological considerations should be made.

#### IV.1 Preliminary considerations

IV.1.1 The Board pointed out that ANVUR presented the innovations of the AVA3 standard in terms of Quality Assurance for the PhD Programmes by explaining that the students' survey questionnaires for each course should only cover the scope of the syllabi, not the PhD Programmes.

Because of this, the Quality Enhancement Committee started to reflect on the best way to distribute the TEQs, considering the actual benefits in terms of quality and improved teaching, as well as the workload imposed on the administration offices and problems with the significance of the data (as reported many times before) due to the small number of students in each course and the low response rate. In the light of the new ANVUR annual questionnaire for PhD students, the structure of which is quite complex and covers learning as well, the Quality Enhancement Committee is considering, as potential guidance for the a.y. 2023/24, to remove the TEQs, which are not currently included in the AVA3 standard.

In particular, this topic was also discussed at the joint meeting of the Assessment Board, the Quality Enhancement Committee and the Board on 18 September 2023, when the attendees were called to discuss the pros and cons of discontinuing the TEQs that used to be distributed at the end of each course. The matter is so important that it will be further investigated at a meeting between the Rector and the PhD Programme Coordinators and at the forthcoming Quality Enhancement Committee meetings.

The Board emphasised the importance of giving students a chance to anonymously report any criticality they may find in the courses. Therefore, it hopes that, even if the TEQs are discontinued, the end-of-year questionnaires will include some part on the courses (for example, an open-ended question) in which the students may report any criticalities. The Board also pointed out that sometimes the criticalities reported by the students at the end of a specific course are eventually overcome by the end of the year when they have had a chance to attend other, related courses. By way of example, a given theoretical course may be felt as quite uninteresting but then it can be enjoyed after attending other, practical courses associated with it. Therefore, the Board believes that an advantage of questioning the students about the courses at the end of the year, instead of during the year, is that by the end of the year the students will have developed an overall view of the curriculum and the connections among the courses, thus reducing the criticalities reported in the questionnaires to the most substantial ones only. Lastly, another potential advantage is that a lower number of distributed questionnaires might increase the response rates for the applicable questionnaires.

If the TEQs are not discontinued, the Board emphasised that, to protect the respondents' anonymity, it would be extremely important to distribute and fill in the questionnaires in English. Actually, sometimes they are filled in in Italian even if distributed in English. In addition, the Board pointed out that, when distributing the questionnaires, it should be explained that the teachers can read the comments written in the questionnaires about the courses and can keep such comments into due consideration when planning the curricula for the following a.y.

IV.1.2 As opposed to the previous Reports, in this Report the analysis of the TEQs is solely based on data about the last cycle of the PhD Programme, i.e. the XXXVIII cycle. The Board believes that such choice has been inspired by the fact that data about different cycles no longer have to be comparable, and this is because of three main reasons. Firstly, with the XXXVIII cycle of the PhD Programme (a.y. 2022/2023), the School has kicked off a process of transformation and extension of the doctoral courses that would make the current data incomparable with data from the previous cycle. Such process actually led to opening three new PhD Programmes, as mentioned and detailed in Section III.1, viz:

- *Cybersecurity (CySec)*, a PhD Programme of National Interest with four curricula (*Foundational Aspects in Cybersecurity; Software, System, and Infrastructure Security; Data Governance & Protection; Human, Economic, and Legal Aspects in Cybersecurity*);
- *Economics, Analytics and Decision Sciences (EADS)*;

- *Management of Digital Transformation (MDT)*<sup>1</sup>.

Secondly, substantial changes have been made in the structure of the two existing PhD Programmes, as also mentioned in Section III.1. As to *Cognitive and Cultural Systems (CCS)*, a new curriculum in *Museum Studies (MUST)* has been added to the well-established curricula in *Analysis and Management of Cultural Heritage (AMCH)* and *Cognitive, Computational and Social Neurosciences (CCSN)*. As to the *Systems Science Programme (SyS)*, changes have been made in the topics, with a quantitative and qualitative analysis of distinctive phenomena in economic and social systems flown into the EADS, and in the organisation, with the addition of four specialist curricula i.e. *Complex Systems and Networks (CN)*, *Computational Mechanics (CM)*, *Learning and Control (LC)* and *Software Quality (SQ)*.

Thirdly, after the Quality Enhancement Committee meeting of 27/01/2022 and a later discussion between the Quality Enhancement Committee and the Board, it has been decided that as from the XXXVIII cycle of the PhD Programme the TEQs would have been changed as follows:

- Question Q3, changed from "*The course was relevant and useful for my research*" to "*The course was relevant and useful for my research goals and/or doctoral education*";
- Removing question Q6 (i.e., "*The examination method was appropriate*"), with its contents added to the question "*The lecturer clearly defined the examination procedures*" in the second Section of the Teacher Evaluation questionnaire (to be filled in for each teacher if co-teaching or if modules taught by different teachers).

See Table 15 for a thorough description of the distributed TEQs.

For the above reasons, therefore, the Board deemed it appropriate to separately consider the data from the TEQs of the XXXVIII cycle. In special circumstances, when there are good reasons to compare them with data from previous cycles, this analysis will refer to the 2022 Annual Report, the official document of which is posted on the official website of the School at: <http://www.imtlucca.it/it/scuola-imt/organi-comitati/commissione-paritetica-docenti-studenti>.

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<sup>1</sup> We would like to inform you that for the XXXIX cycle the doctoral courses will be changed again by separating the CCS PhD Programme into (i) CCSN, which will become a separate Programme, and (ii) the new Programme in *Cultural Systems (CS)*, which will include the remaining tracks, i.e. MUST and AMCH.

Table 15: Structure of the students' questionnaires for the XXXVIII cycle.

No.	TEXT OF QUESTION IN ITALIAN AND ENGLISH	TYPE OF ANSWER
Q1	Il corso è stato intellettualmente stimolante <i>The course was intellectually stimulating</i>	Multiple choice
Q2	Il calendario delle lezioni è stato rispettato <i>The official schedule of lessons was respected</i>	Multiple choice
Q3	Il corso è stato rilevante e utile per i miei obiettivi di ricerca e/o per la formazione dottorale <i>The course was relevant and useful for my research goals and/or doctoral education</i>	Multiple choice
Q4	Il corso è stato ben organizzato <i>The course was well organized</i>	Multiple choice
Q5	I compiti assegnati sono stati adeguati <i>The assigned work was reasonable</i>	Multiple choice
Q6	Il professore ha spiegato con chiarezza (nel syllabo del corso oppure in classe) i requisiti, gli obiettivi formativi e gli argomenti del corso <i>The lecturer clearly explained (in the syllabus and/or in class) the requirements of this course, the educational objectives, and the topics</i>	Multiple choice
Q7	Il professore ha definito con chiarezza (nel syllabo del corso oppure in classe) le procedure d'esame (inclusa l'opzione "no esame finale") <i>The lecturer clearly defined (in the syllabus and/or in class) the examination procedures (including the "no final exam" option)</i>	Multiple choice
Q8	Il professore era ben preparato e organizzato <i>The lecturer was well organized and prepared for the class</i>	Multiple choice
Q9	Il professore è stato disponibile per ulteriori informazioni e chiarimenti fuori dall'orario delle lezioni <i>The lecturer was available for information and clarification outside of regular class time</i>	Multiple choice
Q10	Quali aspetti del corso o dell'approccio del professore hanno contribuito maggiormente ai tuoi obiettivi di ricerca e/o formazione dottorale? <i>What aspects of the course or the lecturer's approach contributed to your research goals and/or doctoral education?</i>	Open-ended
Q11	Quali aspetti del corso o dell'approccio del professore suggeriresti di cambiare? <i>What aspects of the course or the lecturer's approach would you suggest changing?</i>	Open-ended
Q12	Altri suggerimenti? <i>Other suggestions?</i>	Open-ended

In addition, a few clarifications about the processed data are in order. It should be pointed out that, for the XXXVIII cycle, not all data about the School's courses could be processed. More specifically, ten of the 173 courses of the XXXVIII cycle that had been initially planned were cancelled or were never held. Of the other 163, the TEQs of 124 courses were given out to the students. There are different reasons why the TEQs were not distributed, such as the fact that some courses were still being held on 30 November 2023 (the deadline for submission of the questionnaires), while others had not met the minimum requirement (4 students) for distributing the questionnaires while keeping them anonymous. The Board thinks that, even if incomplete, the available data still provide important

information about the students' perceived quality of the courses. The Board decided to summarise the interim results in this Report, so as to provide timely feedback to the School's bodies and committees, with a view to optimising the quality of the teaching.

It should also be noted that many of the School's courses can be selected by students from different tracks for their curricula. Because of this, a sharply separate analysis by PhD Programme (CCS, CySec, EADS, MDT, SyS) and by track is not feasible, as the respondents' PhD Programmes and tracks are unknown. Despite such limit, the Board decided that analyses by PhD Programme and by track may be proposed, if reasonably feasible. The Board decided to leave seminars and presentations of the students' research work out of this analysis (*long seminars without exams* have been included, instead).

As to the analysis of the students' feedback based on their connection with the School (students of the School vs visiting students)<sup>2</sup>, the current data make it impossible to make a clear distinction between the School's students' answers and the visiting students' answers. Therefore, unlike in the previous Report, the Board will just analyse the School's students' and visiting students' answers as aggregate data.

Finally, a few considerations about the TEQ distribution procedure. As to the TEQs, in the past the Board had pointed out that sending questionnaires to all the students enrolled in the courses of their curricula might have led to reducing the response rate if a student decided not to attend one of the courses that had been initially included in the curriculum. Based on such consideration, the Board had hoped that measures would have been taken to solve the problem. It should be noted again, then, that, as from the XXXVI cycle, the School has implemented Attendance Registers; since then, the questionnaires have no longer been automatically sent out to all the students who included a specific course in their curricula, but only to those who have actually attended the course, as proven in the Attendance Register. The implementation of the Attendance Registers turned out to be an adequate measure to reduce the risk of potentially underestimating the response rates, and this is why such procedure has also been implemented for the XXXVIII cycle, in line with what has been done for the previous two cycles.

#### **IV.2 Educational options, attended courses and TEQ response rates**

During the last cycle of the PhD Programme (XXXVIII cycle), the School provided a total of 163 courses (205 modules), significantly more than in the previous cycle when the School had provided a total of 97 courses (128 modules). An important contribution to such big increase in the number of educational options was made by the new PhD Programmes: MUST with 17 courses (18 modules), CySec with 30 courses (36 modules), MDT with 5 courses (8 modules) and EADS, which is the PhD Programme with the widest choice of courses (49 courses and 55 modules). The XXXVIII cycle also saw a decrease in the number of educational options for the PhD Programme in *Systems Science* (SyS), from the 53 courses (65 modules) of the XXXVII cycle to the current 28 (34 modules). The Board points out that such decrease is mainly due to the fact that a large number of such courses have been incorporated into the EADS, which, we repeat, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of distinctive phenomena in economic and social systems that was previously in SyS merged into. The numbers of courses/modules per track/PhD Programme pair are listed in Table 16.

Overall, the School sent out 1296 TEQ questionnaires. 885 of such questionnaires were filled in, which means an average response rate of 70.5% for the XXXVIII cycle. Despite the Board noting that a comparison between the current data and the previous data – because of the differences in the syllabi of the PhD Programmes and the differences in the samples – can be considered only moderately suggestive, a brief analysis of the evolution of data over time as aggregate data has been included. After reporting a drop of 9 percent points in the XXXVII cycle compared to the XXXVI cycle (for details, see the 2022 Report), with the XXXVIII cycle the response rate increased again, with data going up to about the same levels as those of the XXXVI cycle (70.5% for the XXXVIII vs 70.9% for the XXXVI). This fact looks even more promising in the light of the increase in the total number of distributed questionnaires: 1296 questionnaires sent in the XXXVIII cycle versus 770 in the previous cycle. In addition, if we look at the data of each PhD Programme, the response rate is below average for the CCSN track (67%, which however received a mere 59% response rate in the previous one), and the two new Programmes, EADS and CySec

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<sup>2</sup> In the evaluations of the courses, some feedback comes from "visiting" students, i.e. students who are not enrolled in the School but in joint programmes (students of Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna or other visiting students that for some reason have been admitted to attend the lessons).

(62% and 65%, respectively). The figures of the distributed questionnaires and response rates are summed up in Table 17.

*Table 16: Number of courses provided, and modules provided in the track/PhD Programme (XXXVIII cycle)*

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Track</i>	Courses	Modules
CCS	AMCH	21	26
	CCSN	13	28
	MUST	17	18
Total for CCS		51	72
CySeC		30	36
EADS		49	55
MDT		5	8
SYS		28	34
<b>Total</b>		<b>163</b>	<b>205</b>

*Table 17: Questionnaires sent, answers received and response rate per track/PhD Programme*

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Track</i>	XXXVIII		
		Sent	Answers	Response rate
CCS	AMCH	154	129	83.6%
	CCSN	110	70	67.2%
	MUST	107	84	79.9%
Total for CCS		371	283	78.5%
CySeC		329	185	55.2%
EADS		372	230	62.0%
MDT		23	15	76.3%
SyS		201	172	83.9%
<b>Total</b>		<b>1296</b>	<b>885</b>	<b>70.5%</b>

Now, moving on to look at the average number of questionnaires sent per course, it was 10.45 for the XXXVIII cycle, while the average number of answers to the questionnaire turned out to be 7.20. If the data about

the questionnaires sent are divided by track/PhD Programme (as summed up in Table 18), they provide a rough estimate of the average number of students who attended a course in each track/PhD Programme. In this respect, note that the average number of questionnaires sent for each course in SyS (13.40) and above all in CySec (17.32) were above the total average. Compared with the previous cycle, CCSN saw a rise in the average number of questionnaires sent, from 8 to 10, a number that decreased instead for AMCH compared with the previous Report (from 11.5 to 7.7).

*Table 18: Average number of questionnaires sent and answers received per track/PhD Programme (XXXVIII cycle).*

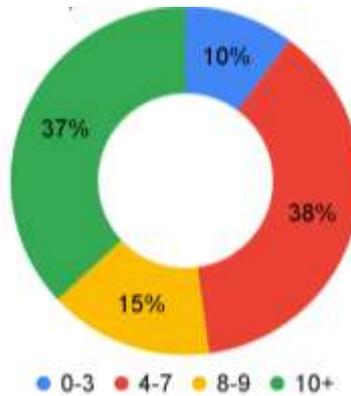
<i>Programme</i>	<i>Track</i>	XXXVIII AVERAGE SENT	AVERAGE ANSWERS
CCS	AMCH	7.70	6.45
	CCSN	10.00	6.36
	MUST	6.29	4.94
Total for CCS		7.73	5.90
CySeC		17.32	9.74
EADS		9.79	6.22
MDT		5.75	3.75
SyS		13.40	11.47
<b>Total</b>		<b>10.45</b>	<b>7.20</b>

An analysis of the distribution of the courses based on the number of questionnaires sent and answers received is shown in Figure 1. The Figure shows that more than ten questionnaires were sent out, for 37% of the courses provided. Such proportion rises up to 52% if we include courses with more than 7 distributed questionnaires. Such figures confirm the constant expansion of the School's student community.

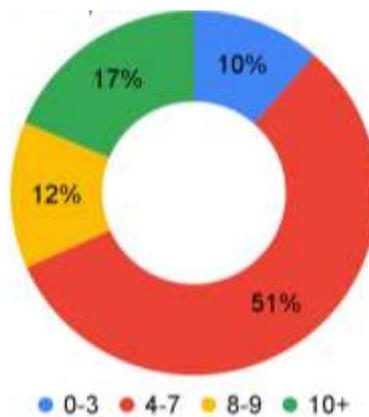
Such figures also point to a further decrease, compared with the previous cycle, in the critical phenomenon of "micro-classes", i.e. classes for which less than 4 questionnaires are sent out or filled in. This is confirmed by the fact that the number of courses whose TEQs were not handed out, as they did not meet the minimum requirement of 4 students, is still low (10%; in the XXXVII such rate was 9%), while only in 10% of the cases the questionnaires were filled in by less than 4 students (such proportion was 23% in 2022). At any rate, in this respect the Board would like to recall that micro-classes are often attended by students who choose the courses based on their own research Programmes and curricula, and are therefore often supervised by the course's teachers. This could be a source of bias in the results.

Figure 1: Distribution of courses (XXXVIII cycle) by number of questionnaires sent and number of answers received

Courses by number of questionnaires sent



Courses by number of answers received



### IV.3 Evaluation of educational options

The following analysis of the XXXVIII-cycle students' evaluation of the School's educational options covers the multiple-choice questions Q1 to Q9. Such questions could be answered in five different ways: *strongly agree*, *agree*, *neutral*, *disagree*, *strongly disagree*. To provide synthetic results, the students' evaluations have been aggregated by track/PhD Programme and used to calculate a per cent satisfaction indicator. Note that data from the questionnaires of each course are allocated to the track/Programme that is included in the syllabus of such course, not to the track/Programme the student belongs to. If a course is included in the syllabus of multiple tracks/Programmes, the data are allocated to all of them. Such indicator is the weighted average of the answers given, with weights ranging from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). The weighted average thus calculated is then divided by 4, so as to have an indicator of 0 to 1, and lastly multiplied by 100, so as to have a percentage. The percentages calculated for each question and track/Programme are listed in Table 19.

Table 19: Synthetic students' feedback indicator per track/PhD Programme (XXXVIII cycle).

Programme	Track	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Total
CCS	AMCH	77.6	80.4	69.9	72.9	79.3	80.7	82.4	78.8	85.1	78.6
	CCSN	75.6	79.4	73.8	74.5	80.9	84.3	89.3	82.3	86.8	80.8
	MUST	80.5	84.0	75.8	74.7	83.6	72.0	70.0	81.9	78.3	77.9
Total for CCS		77.8	81.1	72.9	73.9	81.1	79.3	81.0	80.9	83.7	79.1
CySeC		84.0	87.3	82.7	85.2	83.8	87.9	84.5	87.6	87.9	86.0
EADS		82.9	86.2	76.2	80.6	82.4	85.0	85.3	88.2	87.5	83.9
MDT		79.9	94.4	88.2	82.6	80.6	89.6	94.4	92.4	91.7	88.2
SyS		89.1	90.5	86.4	87.8	84.6	89.6	89.1	91.9	91.9	89.2
Total		81.7	85.0	77.4	79.6	82.3	83.8	84.1	85.6	86.6	83.1

As aggregate data, the general satisfaction level for the XXXVIII cycle ranges, for all questions, between 80 and 86, with an overall average of 83.1. A minor inconsistency can be found in question Q3v, with an aggregate rate of 77.4. Regarding question Q3, note that it is one of those questions that had been changed from the previous TEQs. In its previous version, the question, which we can call Q3\*, had actually been worded like this: "The course has been relevant to and useful for my research project". The reason for such change, as mentioned in the Board's previous Report, is the fact that, when assessing the courses, some students had not made up their minds about a definite research project yet. In that case, some students, not knowing how to answer the question and unable to leave the question unanswered, might have given a neutral answer. In addition, the Board had thought that, in the way it was asked, question Q3\* could be misunderstood as a course-quality assessment tool. Actually, because of its multidisciplinary approach, the School provides both highly specialist courses and foundational courses, which are necessary for students of different disciplines to build a shared knowledge. Such foundational courses may feel slightly inconsistent with the development of some research projects, but this does not mean they should be less favourably rated. The new wording of the question then aimed to correct the flaws of the previous Q3\* and find out whether the reason for its below-mean scores could be due to that. The Board believes that the outcome of such change should be considered incomplete. Though the scores for the current Q3 are not yet perfectly in line with those of the other questions, it has still increased by three points compared to those of the Q3\* for the XXXVII cycle.

In terms of track/Programme, the highest overall satisfaction score has been reported for SyS, with an overall score of 89.2. Not far from this score is the MDT, a new PhD Programme that has received an overall satisfaction score of 88.2. Such two Programmes have also scored high in question Q3, with 86.4 and 88.2, respectively. The lowest mean scores are instead those reported for the MUST (77.9) and the AMCH (78.6), with the latter scoring the lowest at 69.9 in question Q3. A chart with all the figures per track/Programme can be found in Figure 2.

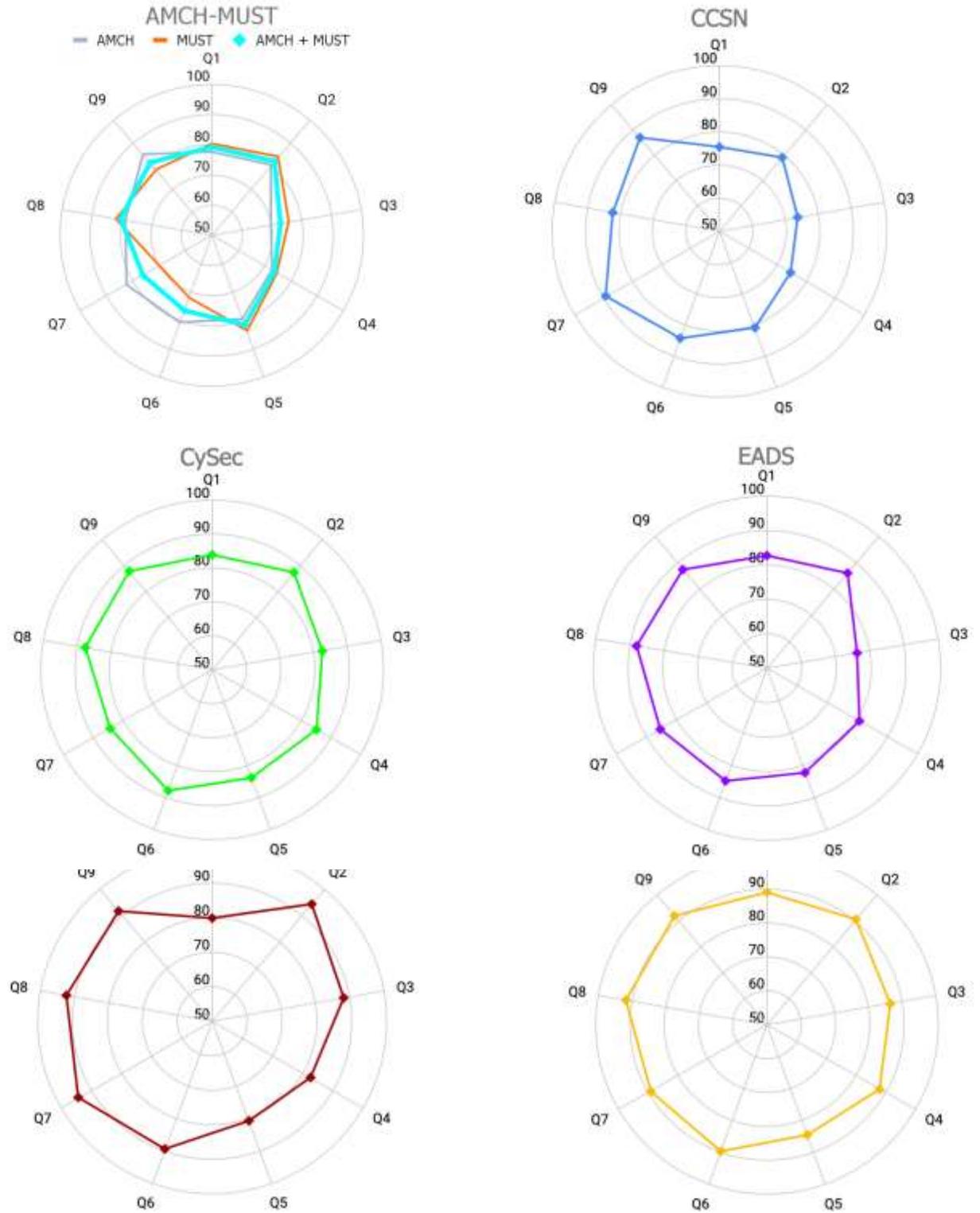


Figure 2: Radar plots of synthetic students' feedback indicators per track/Programme (XXXVIII cycle).

All tracks/Programmes are shown as one single radar plot in Figure 3 (an aggregate plot is included for AMCH and MUST). Such plot shows a heterogenous satisfaction level in each question across the different tracks/Programmes, thus confirming that the analysis of aggregate data should always be supported by a parallel analysis per track/Programme.

Figure 3: Radar plot of synthetic students' feedback indicators for all tracks/Programmes (XXXVIII cycle).

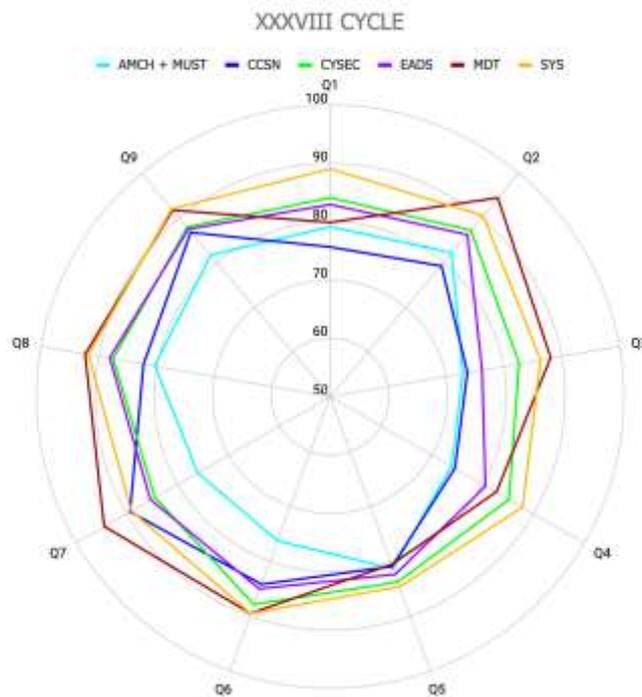


Figure 4 lists synthetic indicators per question, based on the type of XXXVIII-cycle course. Generally speaking, the indicators of the compulsory courses tend to be lower than those of the optional courses. The Figure shows that such difference can also be found in the XXXVIII cycle. The gap between optional and compulsory courses is fairly homogenous in all questions. It should also be noted that, in line with the previous Reports, the analysis did not cover the single tracks/Programmes, as there are remarkable differences in the relative number of compulsory courses and optional courses: at one end of the MUST track range, the compulsory courses far outnumber the optional ones, while at the opposite end of the spectrum all courses are optional in the SyS Programme.

One last significant point concerns the analysis of potential differences in the students' opinions depending on the teacher's affiliation. In the XXXVIII cycle, approximately 71% of the courses were taught by teachers who belonged to the School. This figure is lower than the 80% of the previous cycles. It was mainly two new tracks/PhD Programmes, i.e. MUST and CySec, that contributed the most to the relative increase in the number of courses taught by visiting professors, next to the AMCH, which, even in the previous cycles, was the track with the greater number of visiting professors, covering as much as 83% of the courses held by non-IMT teachers. On the other hand, all of the other tracks used a significantly lower number of visiting professors. In the light of such heterogeneity and, more specifically, of the low number of courses taught by visiting professors in four tracks out of seven, the Board decided to investigate such point anyway at an aggregate level across the entire cycle, in line with what had been done in the previous Reports. Figure 5 shows a substantial overlapping in the students' average opinions between courses taught by the School's teachers and courses taught by visiting professors. One of such minor differences that may be worth pointing out is that courses held by visiting professors tend to score better in the

Overall Satisfaction Section of questions (questions Q1-Q5), while such scores tend to be higher for courses taught by the School's teachers in the Teacher Evaluation Section (questions Q6-Q9).

Figure 4: Radar plot of synthetic students' feedback indicators by type of course (XXXVIII cycle).

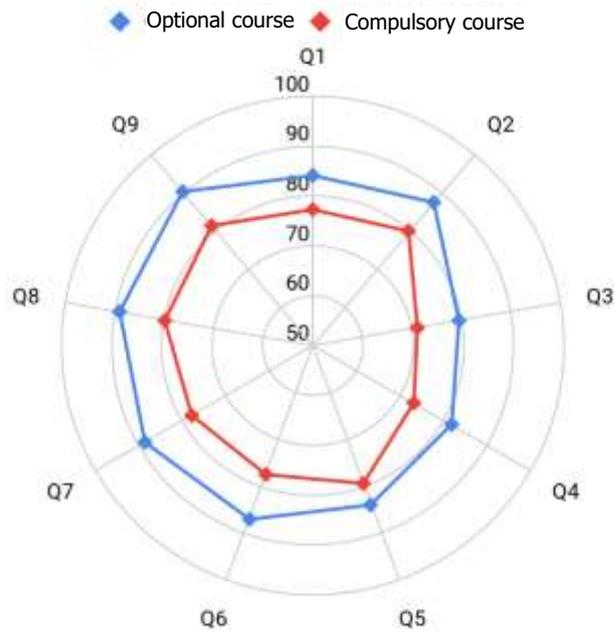
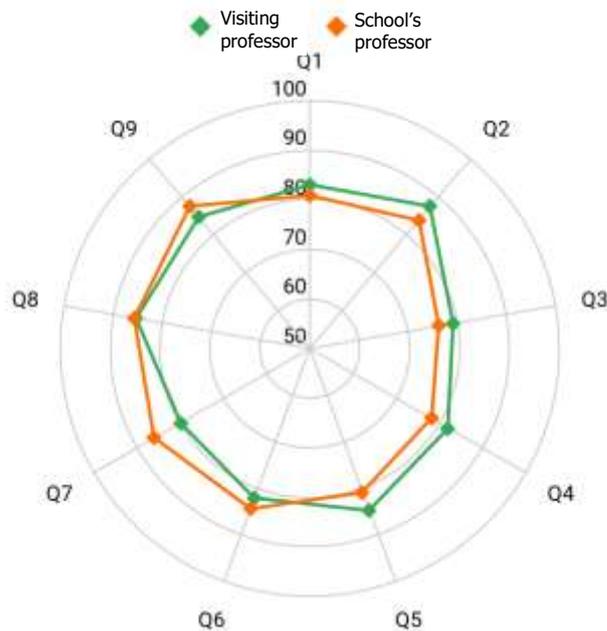


Figure 5: Radar plot of synthetic students' feedback indicators by teacher's affiliation (XXXVIII cycle).



## V – FRAMEWORK D: ANALYSIS AND PROPOSALS CONCERNING STUDENT SERVICES

### V.1 Foreword

This Section provides an exhaustive analysis of the services offered to the students as well as to the teaching and clerical staff, inspired by the *Good Practice* questionnaires delivered in 2023 and the items they address (V.2). In addition, this Section covers broader issues concerning services, placing emphasis on some key points that were discussed at Board meetings (V.3). Some of the Board's specific measures are mentioned in the Conclusions (V.4).

### V.2 2022 *Good Practice* Questionnaire

#### V.2.1 – Results

Used to evaluate services provided in 2022, the questionnaires came with a grid score of 1 to 6. It is essential to point out that such results reflect the 2022's performance. The response rate showed an increase in the students' response, with 78 respondents out of 180 students (43.3%). Such rate is higher than that of the 2022 questionnaire (36%, services provided in 2021) but lower than that of 2021 (47%, services provided in 2020). The average overall satisfaction rate was 4.26 out of 6, remarkably higher than the 3.96 of the year before.

Scores by service are listed below:

<b>Service</b>	<b>Mean score (scale: 1-6)</b>	<b>Mean score (scale: 0-100)</b>
<i>Teaching Support</i>	4.17	63.4
<i>Research Support</i>	4.21	64.2
<i>Administration and personnel management</i>	3.84	56.8
<i>Supply support and campus services</i>	4.09	61.8
<i>IT systems</i>	4.44	68.8
<i>Communication services</i>	3.59	51.8
<i>Quality of information and information dissemination</i>	3.60	52
<i>Library services</i>	4.94	78.8

As to the School's performance vs last year's, 24% of the students rated it as improved, 37% as the same, 5% worse, while 33% were not sure. As to the importance of support services, 40% of the students put Support for Research first, followed by Campus Infrastructures and Services (22%).

#### V.2.2 – Internal and external communication

The students' satisfaction for internal (3.59) and external communication (3.60) was still in line with the year before. In particular, the students' satisfaction for information about environmental sustainability has increased (from 3.12 to 3.52). However, in the free comments the students insisted on the need for more organised, structured and consistent communication from the administrative offices, especially the Campus Management and Front Office, to the students. This emphasises the key role played by effective, transparent communication in promoting a positive, informed academic environment. External communication on social media aroused concern for its mainly Italian approach, which thwarts the School's competitiveness at a European and international level.

#### V.2.3 – Canteen services

Canteen services received a mean score of 3.57, slightly less than the year before (3.66). Though the students praised the expertise and kindness of the canteen assistants, there are remarkably concerned about the quality of the ingredients and the range of foods in the canteen menu, which partly reduced the overall score of such service.

#### V.2.4 – Reimbursement of mission expenses

One of the critical areas that deserve special attention is the reimbursement services. The 51 respondents to the question gave the quality of the reimbursement services a mean score of 3.88, lower than the 4.18 of the previous year. However, the fact that since March 2023 the reimbursement service has made praiseworthy progress, remarkably reducing the reimbursement-processing time down to about 2 weeks from the submission of the receipts, is worthy of note. The Board has gladly acknowledged the efforts successfully made by the School Administration to streamline the process. For this purpose, it is essential to note that delays in the reimbursement process are usually due to missing or misfiled applications. This figure emphasises the importance of having clear, accurate submission processes that may allow the students to have an easier reimbursement experience.

### **V.3 Other topics**

#### V.3.1 – Workstation management

A noteworthy topic is the management of desk space, where the number of students at the School outnumber the School's workstations. To address such challenge, the Spaces Committee is working at a full three-year policy. The purpose of such strategic policy is to optimise the short- and long-term management of desk space, based on the evolving needs of the student population. Several ideas have been discussed by the Spaces Committee, such as the implementation of a workstation-booking service in the San Francesco and Brunero Paoli Complexes, like the one used in the library but a long-term, maybe a monthly service. For the sake of inclusion, a student meeting was convened to listen to the students' opinions, making such topic an ongoing issue that is closely monitored by the Board and by the Spaces Committee.

#### V.3.2 – The Brunero Paoli Complex

The XXXVIII-cycle students are concerned about several problems in the Brunero Paoli Complex. Cases of study rooms closed and then reopened by the Campus Management and Front Office have been Reported. In addition, the students complained that there were no mosquito nets or pest control in the rooms and there was a problem with the air conditioning being too cold in the summer without being able to open the windows. Even if such concerns went on unabated all through the summer of 2023, they are expected to be solved next year, provided such improvements are approved by the Foundation.

#### V.3.3 – Career services

A dedicated meeting was held to discuss the PhD students' psychological wellbeing on a global scale, with a full presentation of the measures taken by the School through the Career and Placement services of the PhD Programme Office. In addition to a diagnostic approach, the future plans of the Career Service include the implementation of workshops on soft skills and a closer involvement of trade associations. The Board has been proactively engaged in discussions about such plans, aware of the importance of taking measures to promote holistic wellbeing and a career-ready mindset for the students.

### **V.4 Board's measures**

In response to the concerns and requirements expressed by the students, the Board has taken measures to address specific areas of the students' life, both on and off Campus. Firstly, aware of the different dietary needs of the student community, the Board has been proactively engaged in discussions with the School Administration with a view to entering into a contract with a supplier of halal meat to meet the needs of the Muslim community at IMT regarding the nature of meat in the canteen food. The purpose of such request is to offer such students the opportunity to eat meat dishes, so they can have a wider selection of food choices apart from the vegetarian options, the only ones currently available to fulfil the need for halal food. Such initiative is targeted to improving the inclusion and meeting the needs of the Muslim community at IMT. A specific notice has been sent to this effect to the Campus Management and Front Office, which promptly contacted the contractor who supplies food to the canteen and started addressing the problem.

Likewise, attention has been paid to the School's policy on the cancellation of email accounts (using Google tools) and the deactivation of the badges that give access to the Campus areas, at that delicate time of the students' ending their syllabi. The Board hopes that specific rules may be promptly drawn up and shared with the students well ahead of the cancellation of their accounts/badges, so as to minimise any inconvenience. A specific notice has been sent to this effect to the Quality Enhancement Committee.

Moreover, the Board has proven to be committed to improving the students' overall wellbeing by keeping monitoring the workstation-allocation policy. By staying updated and closely monitoring any development in this respect, the Board intends to create an optimal, inclusive academic environment, by dealing with immediate concerns as well as with long-term worries, for the benefit of the student community.

Finally, as to the study and research periods that the students spend off campus and abroad, the Board acknowledged that in 2023 the School Administration has made substantial progress in the reimbursement processes. Noticeable improvements have been made, especially in the length of the reimbursement-processing time, with reimbursements now cleared within an optimal timeframe, i.e. two weeks after submissions of the receipts. The Board appreciates the greater efficiency and transparency of such processes, which contribute to creating a generally positive experience for the students, despite the ambiguities reported in Section V.2.4 still lingering around.

## VI - FRAMEWORK E: SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS IN THIS REPORT

This Section sums up the main suggestions made in this Report, mentioning the relevant areas (Teaching; Services; Internationalisation) and the Sections of the Report in which they are more extensively addressed.

Issue	Proposal	Target audience
1) (Teaching) Most of the teachers uploaded just the syllabus of the course in the Drive file (compulsory for all teachers); some teachers uploaded additional educational materials as well; regrettably, others left the files of their courses completely empty (III.1.2).	The Board hopes that all teachers will at least upload the syllabi of their courses and, to do this, the Board suggests that a reminder be sent to the teachers once a year with a deadline for uploading the syllabi of their courses on to the files. The Board also hopes the link to the Drive file, giving access to each course file, may be posted on the Intranet of the School.	Pro-rector for Didactics and Quality Enhancement Committee
2) (Teaching) The responses in the <i>End of Year Questionnaire</i> point to a few unsatisfactory areas	The Board hopes that the results of such questionnaires are given careful consideration, and responsibility is really taken for the issue (e.g. a meeting of the Quality Enhancement Committee with the PhD Programme Coordinators)	Doctoral Programme Coordinators; School's bodies and committees responsible for Quality Assurance
3) (Teaching) The timetables have not been published until late October 2023, even if some PhD Programme Coordinators had sent the calendar to the PhD Programme Office before or just after the summer holidays (III.2.2).	The Board hopes that the scheduling operations may be promptly started so the timetables may be ready and posted by late September/early October.	Doctoral Programme Coordinators; School's bodies and committees responsible for Quality Assurance; Pro-rector for Didactics and Information Services
4) (Teaching) Despite the dedication of the affiliated staff, the PhD Programme Office is understaffed and underequipped for the needs of the students and the Board (e.g. timely submission of data from the questionnaires and optimal data setup for analysis)	Upgrading the PhD Programme Office and providing it with appropriate IT support to enter, manage and send data, using <i>ad hoc</i> IT staff	General Manager; Pro-rector for Didactics; Quality Enhancement Committee

(III.3)		
5) (Teaching) Considering the option to give credits to the students' educational activities and involving the students in assistantships (III.3)	The Board hopes that the School may consider such options and weigh up the costs and benefits of each one	General Manager; Pro-rector for Didactics and Quality Enhancement Committee
6) (Services) No organised, structured or consistent communication from the School Administration, especially the Campus Management and Front Office, to the students (V.2.2).	The Board hopes that communication from the School Administration to the students may be more timely and accurate, and the students may be well informed and receive explanations about the decisions taken.	General Manager; School Administration
7) (Services) Working out a more efficient desk-allocation policy, partly in consultation with the Spaces Committee, which is working at a full three-year policy (V.3.1).	Student representatives on the Board convened a general meeting to understand the reasons for such inconvenience and to find a satisfactory solution in consultation with the Spaces Committee. The Board hopes greater interaction may help the students communicate their problems and be involved in potential solutions.	General Manager; School Administration, Spaces Committee
8) (Services) Unclear policy on the cancellation of email accounts (using Google tools) and deactivation of the badges giving access to the Campus areas when the students end their syllabi.	The Board hopes that specific rules may be promptly sent to the students, well ahead of the cancellation of their accounts/badges	General Manager; School Administration, Quality Enhancement Committee
9) (Services) Problems have been reported by some XXXVIII-cycle students about the Brunero Paoli Complex (temporarily closed study rooms; problems resulting from a combination of (i) air conditioning being centrally controlled at low temperatures; (ii) air conditioning impossible to turn off unless by opening the windows; (iii) no mosquito nets on windows) (V.3.2).	Student representatives on the Board met with the XXXVIII-cycle representatives to understand the reasons for such discontent and find a satisfactory solution in consultation with the Spaces Committee and the School Administration	General Manager; School Administration; Spaces Committee.

10) (Internationalisation) Measures need to be taken to collect more data on the international students' applications and admissions (II).	Providing the PhD Programme Office with dedicated staff, partly by recruiting students upon payment	Quality Enhancement Committee
11) (Internationalisation) Decrease in the number of students who graduated abroad (III.3)	The Board hopes that the School may give careful consideration to such issue	Pro-rector for Didactics; Quality Enhancement Committee; Delegate for Cooperation and International Relations
12) (Internationalisation) The international student population has dietary needs that are currently unmet by the canteen's choice of foods (V.2.3).	Ensuring inclusion and pluralism by catering to the dietary needs of the international community of the School.	School Administration

## VII - CONCLUSIONS

The three areas of investigation addressed in this Report, as mentioned at the start (above, I.4), deserve to be carefully reflected upon. In terms of **educational** options, on one hand the new academic opportunities have led to an increase and a differentiation in the doctoral courses, which will definitely be beneficial for the future; on the other hand, however, they are entangled with the students' overall evaluation of the PhD Programmes, mainly covering single years of each course (see above, Section III.1.3), as well as the PhD Programme as a whole and the single courses, with their **levels of satisfaction pointing to criticalities** that need to be investigated and properly addressed, since the response rates are increasing.

As to the **Services**, the growth in the School's student population is also a source of criticalities, in terms of accommodation, workstations, canteen, email accounts and badges, issues that have already been brought to the fore and mentioned in the previous Annual Reports. In this respect, the School should broaden its focus and take care of the affiliated students of the PhD Programmes that are headquartered in the School and of other types of students orbiting around the School (affiliated students of the PhD Programmes co-managed by the School, visiting students etc.), keeping a few things in mind, for instance, about accommodation, the fact that renting a flat in a tourist destination such as Lucca can be seriously difficult.

Finally, in terms of **international character and approach**, the School is called to monitor its level of international attractiveness and the evolving inflows of international students over time (especially since the end of the Covid-19 pandemic and its negative impact on the number of applications and admissions to the PhD Programmes of international students vs Italian students, as documented in the 2022 Report). At the same time, the School is called to take care of the specific international student services it delivers, so as to increase its attractiveness. It is from this perspective that a reflection should be made on the option to distribute a specific questionnaire to international students in the future, as the Board had wished for in the 2022 Report.

To give students **instant feedback** about their complaints, **measures should be taken to encourage them** to contact the Board for any matter it is responsible for and to **fully involve them** in the Quality Assurance processes. The Board is pleased to find that even this Report, like the previous ones, will be **publicly shared** with the entire academic community of the School at a meeting in English on 20 February 2024. May all of the School's populations be invited to such meeting, as an opportunity to exchange opinions and further reflect on these issues, and as an opportunity to **reiterate the Board's prerogatives, tasks and importance before the School's Community** as part of the School's Quality Assurance system. To have the widest turnout and ease communication

at the meeting, the Board asks to suspend any other academic activity and add a convivial event at the end of the meeting.

Lucca, 21 December 2023

Joint Students and Teachers Board