

Report on the Accreditation of Study Programmes

at the

National Research University Higher School of Economics

- Faculty of Social Sciences -

Reference Number I-1757-1



9th Meeting of the ZEvA Commission on 7th July 2020

Item 4.04.

Study Programme	Degree	Programme Duration	Type of Programme	Maximum annual intake
Sociology	B.A.	4 years	full-time	170
Comparative Social Research	M.A.	2 years	full-time	28

Accreditation contract signed on: 13th June 2019

Date of site visit: 29th-30th January 2020

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Hanover, 29th April 2020

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I. Final Vote of the Expert Panel and Decision of the Accreditation Commission

1. Decision of the ZEvA Commission (7th July 2020)

The ZEvA Commission follows the experts' report and recommendations and takes note of the university's response.

The Commission decides to accredit the following degree programmes as offered by the Higher School of Economics (HSE) Moscow Faculty of Social Sciences:

- 1. Sociology (Bachelor)*
- 2. Comparative Social Research (Master)*

The accreditation of the study programmes is valid for a period of six years.

This decision is based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and the recommendations of the ECTS Users' Guide as referred to in the ZEvA Manual for the External Assessment of Study Programmes.

2. Final Vote of the Expert Panel

2.1 General Aspects

2.1.1 General Recommendations:

- Introduce a course on “Ethics in Research” on the graduate level.
- Courses on longitudinal and panel analysis might enrich both curricula.
- HSE could become more visible in the field of Sociology nationally and internationally if “branding” was further pursued.
- Create synergy effects by forming associations with other Russian universities to strengthen the national reputation and international visibility of Sociology in Russia.
- Formalize the regularly conducted self-presentations of companies and professionals in the form of regular seminars.
- Enhance the programmes’ capacities to train students English language competences, with a particular focus on efforts to attract more native speakers as teachers.
- Open a “children’s room” – that is already in place for staff members – for students with children in order to support their study process.
- Access to sports facilities for students could be enhanced.
- Expand the survey questionnaires by questions concerning students’ workload.

2.2 Bachelor’s programme “Sociology”

2.2.1 Recommendations:

- If funding could be allocated, more financed places for outgoing mobility should be offered.

2.3 Master’s Programme “Comparative Social Research”

2.3.1 Recommendations:

- If funding could be allocated, more than five places for the double degree-tracks should be offered.
- The recognition of study results abroad could thus benefit from stronger formalization. Learning agreements, discussed and signed prior to mobility phases, could be a useful asset.

1 Final Vote of the Expert Panel and Decision of the Accreditation Commission

2 Final Vote of the Expert Panel

- Introduce topics with global dimensions to the curriculum such as climate change or global health.

2.3.2 Recommendation to the ZEvA Commission for International Affairs:

The expert group recommends the accreditation of the programmes “Sociology” (B.A.) and “Comparative Social Research” (M.A.) for the duration of six years without conditions.

II Evaluation Report of the Expert Panel

0 Introduction: Purpose, Design and Context of the Accreditation Procedure

II. Evaluation Report of the Expert Panel

Introduction: Purpose, Design and Context of the Accreditation Procedure

It is the purpose of the accreditation procedure to assess the quality of the study programmes **Sociology (B.A.) and Comparative Social Research (M.A.) run by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Higher School of Economics (HSE) Moscow** against international standards. The assessment is based on the “Assessment Framework for the Evaluation of Study Programmes” as laid out in the ZEvA Manual for the Evaluation and Certification of Study Programmes. This assessment framework is based on the “European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG)” (ENQA 2015), the “Framework for Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area” (2005) and the “ECTS Users’ Guide” (European Communities, 2015).

In line with the ESG, the assessment was organized as a peer review procedure, involving an expert panel composed of two university professors in the discipline, one professional from outside academia and one student.

For the purpose of assessing the study programmes, the Faculty of Social Sciences at HSE was asked to submit a self-report in English containing a detailed description of the university, the faculty and the study programmes. Along with the self-report, a number of additional documents were submitted, including detailed course syllabi, CVs of teaching faculty, comprehensive statistical data as well as relevant rules and regulations. All documents were submitted in English translation. By special request of the expert panel, some additional information and final theses were provided during the course of the two-day site visit in Moscow in January 2020.

In Moscow, the expert panel conducted separate interviews with the leadership board of the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Deputy of the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and the Senior Director for Full Degree Programmes, academic supervisors and programme coordinators, teaching faculty, students, graduates and employers. Also, the experts were given a tour of the university campus in central Moscow.

This report is based on the experts’ assessment of the self-report submitted by the university and on their findings during the site-visit. It will serve as a basis for the ZEvA Accreditation Commission to decide on the accreditation of the university’s study programmes. In the case of a positive decision by the Commission, ZEvA will award its quality seal for a limited time period, after which the university can reapply for accreditation.

The experts would like to thank all involved members of the HSE faculty and staff for the professional organization of the site visit and for the friendly reception at the HSE campus in Moscow.

1. Governance, Management and Profile of the University

1.1 Mission and Profile of the University and the Faculty

Within a period of only about 25 years, the Higher School of Economics (HSE) has developed into one of the most renowned higher education institutions of its kind in Russia and beyond. Since its establishment in the early 1990s, HSE has risen to the top league of Russian universities and – as one of about 30 universities – has been granted the status of a National Research University.

At present, about 44.000 students are enrolled at HSE. Apart from the main HSE campus in Moscow, smaller branch campuses have been opened in St. Petersburg, Perm and Nizhny Novgorod.

The university's core focus in research and teaching is still on Economics and Social Sciences, although the spectrum of disciplines has been constantly extended over the years, now including programmes in the humanities, engineering, physics and computer science. According to the self-report (p.7), HSE offers about 80 Bachelor's programmes and more than 170 Master's programmes at present.

In its development strategy dating from 2009, HSE has defined the following strategic goals (cf. self-report, pp. 12-13):

- *HSE will become one of the world's R&D (Research and Development) leaders in several advanced areas of socioeconomic science as well as in some areas of mathematics, computer science, and humanities;*
- *HSE will reorganize the teaching process to put more emphasis on students' individual work, reduce the teaching load on faculty members, and individualize learning trajectories;*
- *HSE will design and ensure world-level quality of teaching programmes and R&D work in areas where Russia is largely lagging behind the developed countries (for example, international finance, cognitive studies, economic analysis of law, quantitative methods and computer modeling in the socioeconomic sphere, knowledge management, and cliometrics), etc.;*
- *HSE will achieve world-level quality of all teaching programmes (this will include recognition of HSE programmes and courses by the leading foreign universities, having at least 50 percent of faculty members from each department and school publishing in international peer-reviewed journals, etc.);*
[...]
- *HSE will provide students with academic and extracurricular services required for efficient learning and personal development, as well as for successful careers, at the level of world's leading universities; [...]*

In the course of a large-scale structural reform in the year 2014, the academic units at HSE were re-organized into bigger faculties ("mega-faculties"), each one comprising a number of departments or schools. A major goal of this reform was to de-centralize the management

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1 Governance, Management and Profile of the University

structures of the university by assigning a higher degree of responsibility and decision-making powers to the collegial bodies at faculty level.

The study programmes in Social Sciences are offered by the School of Sociology, which was established in 1999 as the “Faculty of Sociology”. During the process of re-organizing HSE into “Big Faculties” six years ago, the “Faculty of Sociology” was re-named “School of Sociology”. The “School of Sociology” became part of the Faculty of Social Sciences in 2014. The School of Sociology currently offers one undergraduate and five Master’s programmes. Moreover, the faculty members teach in the Doctoral School of Sociology. Currently, the School counts 120 faculty members, including 22 full professors. The Head of the School of Sociology is also a member of the HSE Academic Council.

On the HSE website, the School’s mission is described as follows:

Achieving New Evidence-based Knowledge

Our mission is to teach seeing, thinking, and acting. Seeing the problems of contemporary society and the changes taking place in its social structure. Thinking freely, openly and using evidence. Acting for the good of society by implementing one’s own professional projects. To do this, we seek excellence in teaching and research by creating an atmosphere that promotes the exchange of experience and knowledge between teachers and students.

Strategic goals

Taking the leading position in the country in sociological education and research

Strengthening our leading position on the market for sociological education and academic sociological research in the faculty’s priority areas; developing Master’s programmes; becoming integrated into international exchange and cooperation programmes; modernizing sociological education in Russia and taking a leading role in this sphere.

Becoming competitive with the leading universities in developed countries in terms of research

Developing internationally recognized research projects in the relevant areas of sociology; achieving full-scale integration into the international academic community based on joint research with Russian and international scholars. Publishing significant research results in international academic journals. Providing regular transfer of research results to the study process. Becoming the leading sociology department in Eastern Europe in terms of research organization.

Becoming competitive with the leading universities in teaching sociology

High-quality training in mathematics, economics, and English language at the undergraduate level has been among the defining characteristics forming competitive advantage in HSE’s sociology programmes, both at the undergraduate level and in specialized research-based Master’s programmes in the key fields of the faculty’s research activities.

HSE in general and the School of Sociology in particular aim at a close alignment with international standards and developments, i.e. the “global mainstream” of the discipline. As it was put in the self-report, the School’s motto is: “The main thing is not what you learn, but what

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you learn to do.” In accordance with this, the School puts a particular emphasis on a profound methodical training, especially in quantitative scientific methods, and on enhancing students’ capability for evidence-based research. Graduates of the School are to be able to compete with graduates from high-profile Western research universities, especially in the realm of research, but also in professional life outside academia. Accordingly, many of the School’s graduates do not (or not immediately) proceed to the next educational level, but take working positions in commercial companies, HR, marketing agencies, NGOs or sociological research centers.

Experts’ Appraisal

The on-site talks with the members of the HSE, the Deputy of the Vice Rector for academic affairs, the Senior Director for Full Degree Programmes and the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences have confirmed that the School of Sociology has developed its own distinctive institutional profile, which is closely in line with the general HSE strategy, but attaches particular importance to practical skills. These strategic cornerstones are also clearly reflected in the two programmes assessed here. The outline of the development strategy of the Faculty of Social Sciences until 2024 was laid out convincingly. This applies also to the internationalization strategy of the two study programmes and the Faculty of Social Sciences as a whole.

The competition between HSE and other leading Russian universities for the most attractive study programmes and the best students clearly has a positive effect on the general development of the institution and results in a convincing portfolio of state-of-the-art study programmes at the School of Sociology. The expert panel would like to encourage the School to further strengthen the possibilities for inter- and multidisciplinary research.

1.2 Internationalization

Increasing internationalization is a core strategic goal of both HSE as a whole and the School of Sociology in particular. According to the self-report provided to the experts, the university’s main objectives in internationalization are to:

- *strengthen the international profile and reputation of HSE,*
- *develop key international academic partnerships,*
- *achieve international excellence in teaching and research,*
- *increase and diversify the international body of faculty and students.*

In order to reach these objectives, HSE has decided upon a number of strategic initiatives which are contained in a general action plan (“Global Competitiveness Programme”) launched in 2013. In the realm of teaching and learning, strategic measures include

- *Introduction of a new major-minor study model and a system of tutorial support (individualized learning trajectories)*
- *Increasing the use of English as the language of education and communication by expanding the range of courses and educational programs offered in English*

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- *Widening the range of joint programmes and courses conducted in conjunction with top international universities*
- *Supporting greater student mobility and exchange*
- *Upgrade of programme content to meet international standards and employee expectations*
- *Development of preparatory courses affiliated with Master's programmes, as well as preparatory training courses for international students*
- *Creating mechanisms for attracting talented students to Master's and Ph.D. programmes, including a scholarship fund for international students, summer/winter schools, and Olympiad competitions.*

The above mentioned points are part of HSE's Development Strategy until 2020. During the on-site-talks in January, the Head of the Faculty of Social Sciences mentioned that a new university-wide development strategy was agreed upon only recently.

In its self-report, the Faculty of Social Sciences formulates the goal of "preparing students to meet global demands and requirements as successful professionals." In order to reach this goal, exchange programs and double degree MA programmes in co-operation with several European universities are in place. Moreover, to further strengthen "internationalization at home", the Master's programme in "Russian Studies" was recently opened for foreign students.

Bachelor's programme "Sociology"

The goals of the Bachelor's programme "Sociology" are in line with the above mentioned goals of the Faculty of Social Sciences: preparing students for the demands of the global academic and non-academic labor market. Fluency in English (especially for research purposes) is an integral part of this aim.

To reach these objectives, mobility programmes are offered which include stays at Western European partner universities or facilitate participation in international conferences. The programme management and the teaching faculty support students in these endeavors by providing reference letters and contacts from their professional networks. Some elective courses are offered in English. Moreover, skills in digital analytics and programming structures were introduced to the curriculum in 2016/17.

The share of international students lay at around 5.5% in 2019.

Master's programme "Comparative Social Research"

According to the self-report, the Master's programme "Comparative Social Research" is the most highly internationalized study programme of the Faculty of Social Sciences. It is conducted entirely in English. Graduates are prepared to work in Russia and abroad for international organizations, think tanks or in academia.

The attempt to internationalize the learning experience is supported through several means. The curriculum offers the possibility to complete one or two semesters abroad with the support of Erasmus+-funds. Two double degree tracks with the School for Advanced Studies in

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the Social Sciences in Paris and the Free University Berlin offer students the possibility to receive two degrees. For the double degree tracks, five places are available each year. Moreover, the compulsory internship can be absolved abroad or at an international organization based in Russia.

International summer schools are conducted regularly at HSE. At this occasion, HSE students usually present their research results. They are also highly encouraged to participate in summer schools abroad.

Moreover, roughly 30% of the total student body in 2018 was composed of incoming students from various countries as e.g. Ghana, France, Mongolia, Serbia and the Philippines.

The objective to create a “global classroom” is also reflected in the teaching body. Further details on this topic can be found in chapter 1.3. of this report.

Both in the self-report and during the talks in Moscow, the representatives of the School took a rather critical view at the achievement of their objectives in internationalization. Especially from the point of view of the academic supervisors of the programmes, the overarching goal of increasing the university’s international reputation and visibility has not yet been reached to a satisfying extent.

Experts’ Appraisal

The topic of internationalization was discussed with HSE students, faculty and staff throughout the on-site talks in Moscow. The experts have gained the overall impression that HSE has already come a long way in enhancing its international profile – especially when keeping in mind that, like all Russian universities, HSE is facing considerable external challenges in this undertaking, including language barriers, financial obstacles, and volatile exterior circumstances. Without doubt, there is a need for optimization in some regards, but the general direction taken by the university is certainly very promising. This is also reflected in the establishment of the Master’s programme “Comparative Social Research” in 2014, which has been offering double degree tracks since 2018.

The experts also see a plausible link between the institutional internationalization strategy and the two study programmes in Sociology: for instance, there are well-established partnership ties with foreign universities at programme level, allowing students (especially the Master’s students) to participate in student exchange. Partners include, for instance, the public universities in Helsinki, Tilburg, London and Lisbon. Furthermore, guest lecturers from foreign universities are frequently invited, and students are encouraged to participate in scientific conferences and summer schools abroad.

The Master’s programme in “Comparative Social Research” shows a particularly strong international profile: the programme is now taught exclusively in English and counts a considerable number of students from various European and non-European countries. During the talks in Moscow it was mentioned, that an internship programme and the extension of the double degree-tracks with two Dutch universities are foreseen. Additionally, a study exchange programme is envisioned with a Chinese university. These plans will surely contribute to the international dimension of the programme and the School of Sociology as a whole.

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Incoming students are supported by additional Russian language trainings and orientation courses. According to the teaching staff and incoming students, their integration process works smoothly.

The experts encourage HSE and the School of Sociology to maintain the strong efforts that have already been taken at various levels. In the course of future development, the experts recommend paying particular attention to the following aspects:

- If funding could be allocated, more than five places for the double degree-tracks should be offered. During the on-site-talks, the experts gained the impression that far more students are potentially interested in studying abroad.
- The recognition of study results abroad seems to be working to a satisfying extent for both the students and the programme managers. It could however benefit from stronger formalization. Learning agreements, discussed and signed prior to mobility phases, could be a useful asset.

1.3 Teaching Faculty

At present, the School of Sociology counts more than 120 faculty members, including 22 full professors. There are lecturers both from Russia and from abroad in both study programmes. Some of the lecturers are currently enrolled as Ph.D. students or are graduates of HSE.

For each study programme HSE appoints an Academic Director or “Supervisor” from among the teaching faculty. The Academic Directors bear the main responsibility for the design and contents of the programme, and for the appointment and coordination of the teaching staff.

CVs of the core teaching faculty were submitted to the experts as part of the self-report. Also, the experts had the opportunity for talks with the Academic Supervisors of the programmes and other members of faculty during the site visit.

As a general rule, faculty members are employed on a temporary basis and have to undergo a process of internal re-evaluation (and re-application) on a regular basis. All professional activities of the staff members (research output/publications, results of course evaluation, projects, etc.) are included in the evaluation process. There is also an annual “Best Teacher Award” to reward particular excellence in teaching, which also comes with a financial bonus.

There are multiple options for further professional development. During the site visit the programme “Teach for HSE” was mentioned, which is meant to increase the quality of teaching in general. Moreover, the Academic Writing Center was highlighted which supports staff members in enhancing their writing skills.

According to the provided documentation, most members of the teaching faculty are active members of the international academic community, as lecturers, editors of international journals or as members of international research societies. Moreover, lecturers are involved in research laboratories such as the “Laboratory for Studies in Economic Sociology” based at HSE or the “Laboratory of Comparative Social Research”.

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Bachelor's programme "Sociology"

The majority of the lecturers are of Russian nationality, but possess rich international experience, holding degrees from European or American universities or having taught at foreign universities.

Master's programme "Comparative Social Research"

The teaching body is constituted of Russian and international teachers. Additionally, researchers from abroad are regularly invited for guest lectures and workshops on current research topics. In the academic year 2017-18, seven international lecturers contributed to the programme. This was enabled by Erasmus+-funds and the incoming mobility programmes of HSE.

It was reported during the on-site-talks that the working conditions for international teachers at HSE enable them to focus on their publication activities. Their workload was described as lower than that of the Russian colleagues, but they are expected to have a higher publication output. It was stated that it was usually easier for international staff to be granted sabbaticals. HSE also provides funds for the participation in conferences, summer schools or workshops for all lecturers.

The lecturers pointed out during the interviews that HSE offered a lot of flexibility in terms of time management, which was highly appreciated. In order to cope with the workload, which was described as demanding, standard tasks like grading papers are often left to teaching assistants. In addition, there is a "children's room" that supports staff members in reconciling the duties of parenthood with the demands of their professional life.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts are impressed by the excellent qualifications, the international profile and the open, self-reflected mindset of the teaching faculty they encountered during the site visit. There is no doubt that the lecturers as well as the faculty leadership attach high importance to the quality of teaching and to their own professional role as teachers. The university's excellent staff resources are further supplemented by regular visiting lecturers from inside and outside academia, and the university ensures that students receive qualified training and supervision during internships and projects.

The approach of connecting working contracts to publication activity stimulates the research activities and research output of the teaching body and also results in a high quality of teaching. The professional qualification programmes offered by HSE, which include courses on blended learning or students' assessment, seem to be highly frequented and valued by the members of faculty.

Furthermore, the experts commend HSE on the strong team spirit among the members of faculty who share responsibilities for the same programme. The efforts to internationalize the teaching staff are certainly a complex endeavor, especially considering the current political circumstances. The approach of providing favorable working conditions and other incentives in order to attract international staff to HSE appears reasonable from the experts' point of view.

1.4 Learning Environment and Student Support System

The infrastructure, resources and student services provided at HSE are described in detail in the self-report. In addition, the experts were given an extensive tour of the HSE premises in central Moscow, especially the central library which was opened only about six months ago on Pokrovsky Boulevard. In addition to that, the experts also visited the library of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Moreover, the experts got a chance to talk to some members of the administrative staff of the library.

The main library comprises over 700,000 books and periodicals and is subscribed to approximately 400 Russian periodicals and 130 international journals. It is open 24/7. Approximately 500 workplaces are provided to the students for self-studying. According to the HSE website, the library provides access to a wide range of electronic resources, including e-books and journals, databases of peer-reviewed literature, patents, business data and other data collections. The digital library resources can be accessed externally by both students and staff. There are numerous workplaces for students on campus, as, for example, in the library or in separate rooms that are put at the students' disposal. Students mentioned that books are ordered by the library according to their needs and interests.

Student services include a career development center and a center for psychological counseling. HSE takes high efforts to create equal opportunities for students with disabilities. For instance, a social project was launched in 2016 with the aim of improving the learning environment for disabled students. As a general rule, disabled students can receive special assistance during the final state examination by using technical aids or by taking the exam in an alternative format. Student volunteers act as special consultants and tutors to disabled fellow students in order to support them in their academic progress. HSE takes further equal opportunities measures for the benefit of socially vulnerable or disadvantaged students: for instance, special scholarships or other forms of financial assistance are provided.

In all matters concerning programme-related administrative issues, students can approach the support staff at the responsible programme office. In all academic matters, they may turn to their lecturers or to the Academic Director of their programme, depending on the particular question.

Students can also contact the central Student Council or the student councils at Faculty level for information and support. The members of this board are elected by the students in order to represent their interests.

The alumni network seems to be vivid and working effectively. As was stated during the on-site talks, a lot of alumni stay in touch with HSE and distribute information about vacancies or internship openings at their current workplaces through the HSE network. On top of that, career fairs are held on campus twice a year.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts have come to the conclusion that the students of the School of Sociology are provided with an excellent learning environment in Moscow. Infrastructure and equipment are

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modern and in very good condition, providing a motivating atmosphere and enough work-space for students. The central location of the campus is already a big advantage in itself. Teaching and learning methods appear modern and motivating, which was emphasized both by students and teachers. The overall atmosphere amongst students and staff seemed very collegial, open and engaged.

Volunteering as mentors or tutors also provides a great opportunity for students to further develop their social skills and prepares them for active citizenship. Teaching and learning at the School of Sociology are clearly aimed at producing articulate, confident and independent personalities with highly developed self-management skills.

Considering all that, the experts were not surprised to find that the students and graduates of the Sociology programmes were very enthusiastic about their university and their studies and displayed a high level of satisfaction and commitment to their institution during the on-site talks.

Nonetheless, the expert panel recommends to open a “children’s room” – that is already in place for staff members – for students with children in order to support their study process. As was mentioned during the on-site talks, the access to sports facilities for students could be enhanced. Such measures may level the study environment to a degree that is standard in other European universities.

1.5 Quality Assurance

The main responsibility for the quality of the study programmes lies with the Academic Director and with the so-called Academic Boards (one for each degree programme).

Various measures for the quality assurance and enhancement of teaching and learning have been implemented at HSE. These activities involve all relevant internal and external stakeholders, including students, teaching staff, employers and alumni. Students reported that they generally felt their voice was heard and that teachers are open to their feedback.

HSE Moscow applies several instruments for the quality assurance and enhancement of teaching and learning. As a general rule, students evaluate each of their classes based on standardized survey questionnaires. The surveys serve to determine the students’ level of satisfaction with the quality of their courses, programmes and teaching staff. It is compulsory for the students to evaluate their courses. If students do not participate in the evaluations, the student council is consulted. Lacking participation in evaluation can lead to a remark in the personal record or even to expulsion.

The results of the surveys are made available to the teachers and – in aggregated form – to other interested parties within the university (as e.g. deans, academic supervisors and programme managers) and serve as a basis for the continuous improvement of the programmes. The questionnaires are relatively short and concise, comprising only about eight questions, but also free comment options.

In addition, students may also provide face-to-face feedback to their teachers or, in case of general complaints, use the so-called “Expressive Button” hotline. Via this anonymous hot-

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line, participants in the educational process at all HSE campuses may provide all kinds of feedback, lodge complaints or queries, or give recommendations for improvement.

In case the general evaluation of a course turns out to be substantially below average (reaching only three out of a maximum of five points), the Heads of Departments are entitled to exclude lecturers from teaching a course. During the on-site talks it was mentioned, that in case of below-average evaluations, teachers are supported through professional development programmes and counselling through their supervisors.

On the other hand, HSE does not only apply sanctions for “substandard” evaluation results, but also a number of “moral” and financial incentives for particularly good teaching. These include an internal “Best Teacher Award” that also entails monthly supplements to the winning lecturer’s salary. In addition to that, the publication activity of the permanently employed teachers is evaluated annually. An automatic rating of the publication index is being conducted and made available to the teachers through their personal profile webpage. The publication index is not evaluated for practitioners.

The on-site talks have also shown that potential employers are often in close touch with the university, especially in the context of teaching and alumni networks, and hence provide a lot of informal input, too.

These means of quality assurance are complemented by graduate surveys. One survey is annually conducted in September among graduates just after their graduation, followed by a second survey six months later. It contains questions about the graduates’ current salary, their satisfaction with their current employment situation or about whether the skills obtained at university are of use to them. This information is used for the further development of the study programmes.

Experts’ Appraisal

During the on-site talks, the experts got the overall impression that quality assurance activities at the Faculty of Social Sciences basically fulfil their purpose. Students reported that they generally felt their voice was heard and that teachers are open to their feedback. The “Expressive Button” hotline is also a good idea that seems to be working well in practice.

HSE makes use of a wide variety of instruments for the continuous monitoring and review of its programmes. Apart from written surveys, these also include the analysis of performance indicators as e.g. dropout rates or the number and profile of applicants.

As regards course evaluation, the experts recommend expanding the survey questionnaires by additional questions, especially concerning student workload. It became clear during the on-site talks that this aspect still seems to be a “blind spot” in quality assurance. For the sake of educational quality, it would nonetheless be helpful to monitor it more closely, as course requirements do actually seem to be a challenge at times, especially since a lot of students appear to be working in part-time or full-time jobs. According to the on-site talks, roughly 50% of the Master’s students are already working on full-time contracts. As an alternative to integrating such questions into course evaluation, separate workload surveys at programme level may be another option.

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Another particularly strong point is the tight network between the university and the employment market, which is especially facilitated by the compulsory internships. By repeatedly accepting HSE students as interns many employers stay in touch with the university on a permanent basis and get a chance to provide regular feedback not only on the performance of the interns, but on the study programmes in general.

During the site-visit, a graduate reported that HSE has taken great efforts to develop the quality of the study programmes and as an institution itself. It was confirmed that during the last decade, the system of electives, summer and winter schools, the interaction with the teachers, the quality of lectures, the accessibility of research laboratories for students and the general presence of HSE in the city has greatly developed. The expert panel would like to encourage HSE to pursue this path, also with the means of adapted quality assurance mechanisms.

1.6 Transparency and Public Information

All key information on the Department and its study programmes (intended learning outcomes, profile, contents, course syllabi, etc.) can be found on the HSE website, almost all of it in both English and Russian language. Also, there is extensive additional information available for international students, concerning, for example, admission regulations and exchange programs, possible sources of funding etc. University-wide regulations on student assessment, term papers and theses, projects and internships are officially documented and accessible to students at all times.

Both Russian and international students in the Master's programme reported that they found out about the programme and applied online. They were very satisfied with their application process.

Some graduates also report their experiences, research interests and career paths on the website of HSE.¹

It was also stated, that the day of "open doors" was very helpful in deciding for a future study path. According to the on-site-talks, speakers and alumni informed about the topics and goals of various study programmes.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts commend HSE on the high degree of transparency and easy accessibility of its website. For all enrolled students, maximum transparency regarding course requirements and assessment procedures is also warranted. Information for prospective students on content of the study programmes and administrative procedures is provided as well.

¹ <https://www.hse.ru/en/ma/csr/alumni>, last checked 01.04.2020

2. Assessment of the Study Programme/s

2.1 Common Features and Strategic Dimension of the Programmes

General Structural Features

In terms of structure, the study programmes follow the Russian “4 + 2” model, which comprises four-year undergraduate programmes (240 credit points) and 2-year Master’s programmes (120 credit points). HSE was the first university in Russia to adopt this two-tier model and has now fully disestablished the pre-Bologna “specialist” programmes.

The study programmes are based both on Federal Educational Standards that are binding for all higher education institutions in the country, and on HSE’s own standards, which it is entitled to apply due to its status as a National Research University. The self-report names the following innovative features that distinguish HSE educational programmes from those offered by other universities (cf. p. 16):

- *General cycle of courses in all Bachelor’s programmes (so-called Mago-Lego subjects): taken by students from different departments, these courses are to broaden intellectual horizons and to cast a firm foundation for the development of a scientific worldview;*
- *Bachelor’s students get not only a specialized education in a selected area (Major), but can also choose a secondary specialization in a different area (Minor) to complement the Major;*
- *Master’s and Bachelor’s programmes offer a lot more research, project and internship activities than required by Federal Educational Standards.*

Strategic Dimensions

Both in the self-report and the on-site-talks, further internationalization was mentioned as a strategic goal of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the School of Sociology. As mentioned above, international publications and international recruitment are central elements of the recently adopted HSE development strategy.

Experts’ Appraisal

The experts commend the School of Sociology at HSE on the high degree of internationalization it has already reached in both research and teaching. To further strengthen this international dimension, the panel would like to give the following recommendations:

- HSE could become more visible in the field of Sociology nationally and internationally if “branding” was further pursued. The experts suggest associating the School of Sociology more closely with a certain theory, method or research area. The mentioned establishment of “Centers of Excellence” is already a promising step in this direction. Quantitative methods or the intersection of digitalization and Sociology could become focus areas.
- In order to strengthen the national reputation and the international visibility of Sociology in Russia — the panel recommends creating synergy effects by forming associa-

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2 Assessment of the Study Programme/s

tions with other Russian universities that work in this discipline. These collaborations could, for instance, result in joint publications or jointly offered workshops and courses for students.

- Collaboration with other Russian Sociology Schools could also be conducted in the form of student exchange, modeled on the scholarship programmes that have already been in place for three years to enable students from other Russian universities to study at HSE for a limited time period or participate in seminars, workshops or research.

2.2 Key Data

Bachelor's programme "Sociology"

Annually, HSE offers 170 places on the Bachelor's programme, of which 95 are state-funded, 70 are for fee-paying Russian students and 5 are for fee-paying international students. Teachers are not provided with the information whether students are studying on a fee-paying or state-funded place.

In 1999 the Faculty of Sociology was launched, which is now merged into the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Bachelor's programme focuses on sociological methods – especially quantitative methods – and on engaging students in research activities. Therefore, the programme offers three specialisations: 1) Social Theory and Social Applied Knowledge, 2) Applied Methods and Technologies of Social Research and 3) Economic Sociology. The majority of courses are taught in Russian, though some courses are offered in English.

According to the provided documents, a total of 618 students were enrolled in the academic year 2019, 75% of whom were female and 5% came from abroad. The admission process is highly selective, as the number of applicants usually exceeds enrolment capacities by about 5 times.

According to the self-report, there has been an average student drop-out rate of 14% after one year of study between 2017 and 2019. Almost 100% of the students completed their studies in nominal time.

The majority of graduates continue their studies in a Master's programme at HSE, another Russian university or abroad. When graduates of the Bachelor's programme enter the labour market, they are mostly employed in the realm of research: roughly 70% work in consumer-oriented research and roughly 30% in non-profit research. The career trajectories of the graduates are monitored through graduate surveys.

Master's programme "Comparative Social Research"

Annually, HSE offers 28 places on the Master's programme, of which 15 are state-funded for Russian students, 5 are for fee-paying Russian students and 8 are for fee-paying international students. Teachers are not provided with the information whether students are studying on a fee-paying or state-funded place.

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The “Comparative Social Research” programme was opened at the School of Sociology in 2014. It is the youngest programme at the School and the only one conducted entirely in English. The International Laboratory of Comparative Social Research (established in 2010 with Ronald F. Inglehart as academic supervisor) functioned as partner in founding the programme and contributes teaching and research opportunities for students. Moreover, in 2012 the School started hiring international faculty members.

The Master’s programme focuses on research orientation and global trends in social research. The curriculum puts an emphasis on the methods and specific issues of social research. A particular focus is placed on comparative approaches to social analysis. The international teaching and student body, double degree tracks with universities in Berlin and Paris and several opportunities for international study exchange are to provide a “global learning experience”. All courses are conducted in English.

According to the provided documents, in the academic year 2018 a total of about 29 students were enrolled, of whom almost 80% were female and 30% came from abroad. The admission process is selective, as the number of applicants usually exceeds enrolment capacities by about 1,5 times.

According to the self-report, the average drop-out rate after one year of study lay at an average of 22,8% between 2016 and 2019. There are several explanations for this above-average drop-out rate. Firstly, the students have graduated from Bachelor’s programmes of other disciplines such as Psychology, Economics or Political Science. The strong research orientation makes the programme highly demanding. Another factor is that some students decide to drop out for personal reasons. Due to the rather low number of students admitted in each cohort, the percentage of dropout students appears high, even though the total number of dropouts may actually be quite low.

Graduates of the Master’s programme mostly continue their professional lives in research: roughly a third of the graduates of the academic year 2018/19 pursue a Ph.D., 40% are employed in non-profit research and analytics and about a fifth are working in research and analytics in the commercial sector. The career trajectories are monitored through graduate surveys.

2.3 Intended Learning Outcomes

The university has defined Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for the both programmes. They are rooted both in the Federal Educational Standards and in the HSE standards. The ILOs include *Universal*, *General Professional* and *Professional Learning Outcomes*. All three categories cover academic research skills as well as soft skills and professional/management skills, with a clear focus on analytical aspects.

Bachelor’s programme “Sociology”

According to the self-report of HSE University (cf. p. 41), the intended learning outcomes are as follows:

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2 Assessment of the Study Programme/s

“PC-1 Able to solve the standard tasks of professional activity based on knowledge and skills of information and communication technologies and taking into account the basic requirements of information security

PC-2 Able to understand, summarize, and critically analyze information in professional field

PC-3 Able to analyze social problems and social processes with impartiality and scientific objectivity

PC-4 Able to use the basic social sciences principles and methods in implementation of professional tasks

PC-5 Able to use the basic principles of natural sciences in professional activities, apply methods of mathematical analysis and modeling, theoretical and experimental research in implementation of professional tasks

PC-6 Able to independently formulate goals, set specific tasks of academic and applied research in various fields of sociology and solve them using up-to-date research methods

PC-7 Able to prepare professional academic and technical documentation, reports about the results of the studies, and presentations on the research findings

PC-8 Able to present the results of sociological studies taking into account the characteristics of a potential audience

PK-9 Able to prepare research project proposals

PC-10 Able to process and analyze data to justify analytical solutions, expert opinions and recommendations

PC-11 Able and ready to plan and carry out projects in the field of studying public opinion and market research

PC-12 Able to participate in analytical and consulting activities

PC-13 Able to use methods of collection, processing and interpretation of complex social information to solve organizational and managerial tasks, including those located outside the immediate scope of activity

PC-14 Able to develop curricula for teaching sociology and conduct training sessions”

Through the Bachelors' programme, graduates are to gain the competencies of *“critical thinking and comprehensive vision of social phenomena, understanding of processes social change, knowledge of data collection and applied methods of data analysis, including macro statistics and Big Data Analysis, good training in one of the close areas of training (minors in economics, history, philosophy, law, psychology, etc), fluent English for academic purposes, writing and presentation skills, skills in project work and communication.”*

Moreover, professional and soft skills include the ability to communicate and interact in a cross-cultural environment.

Master's Programme “Comparative Social Research”

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The Masters' programme "Comparative Social Research" prepares students for a future career in research, either in academia or (international) enterprises and organizations.

According to the self-report of HSE University (cf. p. 57), the mission of the programme is to:

"teach qualified students from abroad and Russia in-depth methods, theory, and design of advanced academic-quality comparative sociological research, train future internally experienced sociologists for academic posts abroad and in Russia, and also qualify them to work in non-academic spheres, develop the ability to write scientific articles based on the analysis of empirical data and to empower graduates to publish their research papers in international peer-reviewed journals, encourage students to continue their careers within European partners' PhD programmes, potentially in collaboration with the NRU HSE academic PhD programme, develop skills of applied research implementation in international organizations and companies."

Graduates of the programme should for example be able to *"formulate goals, setting specific objectives for research in fundamental and applied areas of sociology and proposing scientifically grounded solutions"*, *"Reasonably and efficiently using information technologies and software to solve professional problems, including methods and tools for handling non-reactive and large data"*, *"Identify the needs and interests of social groups, proposing mechanisms for their coordination with each other and with the socio-economic development priorities of social communities"*, *"Manage social projects in the field of public opinion research, organization of marketing services, social expertise of management decisions in various areas"* and *"Disseminate sociological knowledge and advising employees of management bodies, enterprises, institutions and organizations when dealing with social issues"*.

Professional and soft skills include the ability to take management decisions, organize multi-lateral communication, and to conduct research and development activities in international environments while taking into account cultural differences.

Experts' Appraisal

From the experts' point of view, the intended learning outcomes are formulated in a very detailed, yet precise manner and fully match the actual profiles of the programmes. The formulated goals of the programmes are demanding, yet they are adequately reflected in the curricula. The intended learning outcomes are closely aligned with the taxonomies of the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. It becomes clear from the descriptions that the programmes enable both the ability of critical thinking and a thorough preparation for the demands of the labour market.

As was mentioned during the on-site talks, graduates of the Bachelor's programme are to be able to "close the gap" between the needs of business and computer sciences on a basic level. Graduates of the Master's programme qualify for the international job market in academia and research. Graduates of both programmes appear in fact to be in demand on the labour market.

Due to their schedules, students are not only to gain the skill sets mentioned in the Intended Learning Outcomes, but also develop good self-management skills.

2.4 Concept and Structure of the Study Programmes

2.4.1 Bachelor's programme "Sociology"

During the first year, students attend a number of courses that provide basic knowledge about Philosophy, Social History, Economics and Psychology. Moreover, mathematical basics in Algebra and Analysis, Probability and Statistics, Data Analysis and Economic Theory are taught. Sociological Theory is offered both in English and Russian. An English Language Test helps to classify the knowledge of the students. English language classes are offered optionally. As mentioned above, a special emphasis is put on digital skills. Consequently, a course in Applied Software completes the first year.

In addition, a range of electives covering mathematics, social theories or an introduction to informatics are offered.

In the first year of study, the students have to absolve an educational internship and the course "introduction to profession". Moreover, a research project is to be delivered.

The second year deepens the students' knowledge in Philosophy, Probability and Statistics, Data Analysis and Sociological Theory. The latter is again offered in both Russian and English. The students are introduced to Methods and Methodology for Sociological Research, Economic Sociology and Social and Economic Anthropology (conducted in English). Students also need to choose minor classes in a discipline related to Sociology (for example in economics, history, philosophy, law or psychology). In the second study year, students are expected to hand in two term papers and conduct two practical projects. Again, optional English language courses are offered.

In the third year, a wide range of electives are offered, covering topics as diverse as "Sociology of Religion", "Sociology of Morality", "Sociology of Education" or "Sociology of Economic Development". In addition to that, the sociological and mathematical basics are built upon in compulsory courses for all students. Minors, practical work, an internship and term papers are to be accomplished.

In the fourth year, one out of three areas of specialization are up to the students' choice: 1) Social Theory and Social Applied Knowledge, 2) Applied Methods and Technologies of Social Research and 3) Economic Sociology. As in the third year, the students are offered various electives in the field of Sociology and Social Sciences. Two internships are integrated into the curriculum and a research project is to be presented. In addition to that, the fourth year is dedicated to the final graduation thesis and the final state exam. Optional Academic Writing Classes in English are offered as a supportive measure.

2.4.2 Master's programme "Comparative Social Research"

For students who do not have a background in Sociology or Social Research, additional courses, as e.g. in mathematics, are offered. According to the teaching staff interviewed on site they usually catch up within one year. The same accounts for international students who are offered special assistance, for example in the form of Russian language classes.

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During the first year, all students attend the compulsory introductory courses from the so-called “general cycle”, introducing them to Comparative Sociology and Quantitative Research Methods. This unit is followed by “core courses”, where students are equipped with more knowledge on research tools, such as Multi-level Regression Analysis, Structural Equation Modeling (taught by colleagues of the International Laboratory for Comparative Social Research) or Basic Statistics and Introduction to the open-source Statistics Software Package “R”. These two elements of the curriculum of the first study year are completed by a range of ten elective courses, out of which 6-7 are up to the students’ choice. Amongst others, topics like Social Network Analysis, Applied Research on Inequalities, Analysis of Mass Communication or Questionnaire Design are offered. In the courses “Research Design” and “Academic Practice”, students learn how to design a research proposal. The students can add an individual element to their curriculum in the second year by choosing one course from the university wide Mago-Lego pool, the general set of elective subjects that must be chosen by first-year Master’s students in all educational programmes.

The second year is very much dedicated to the graduation thesis. Ideally, the above mentioned research proposal is already linked to the final state certification. Hence, the second year consists amongst others of a research internship. The internship must last at least 10 weeks and can be completed in an institute or organization in a country of the students’ choice. The term paper and the accompanying research seminars serve to prepare and support the Master thesis proposal and the writing process. The students can add an individual element to their curriculum in the second year by choosing one course from the Massive Online Open Course Pool (MOOC).

Term papers or internship papers are submitted to peer-reviewed magazines and in some cases have been accepted for publication.

Experts’ Appraisal

The experts fully embrace the overall profile and concept of both study programmes. With a view to the formulated objectives and intended learning outcomes, the curricula are designed in a convincing and plausible way, offering a good balance of mandatory and elective courses and thus enabling student-centred learning. The entry qualifications of the students are taken into account.

It appears that the needed time for effective self-study is accounted for in the study programmes. The students reported that lecturers were always open to their questions and that individual solutions to obstacles blocking the study path were always found.

The experts have no doubt that both study programmes effectively prepare students for careers in segments of the labour market that are linked to research activities. The internships fulfil the key function of enhancing the employability of the future graduates. So far, internships have been conducted in organizations as diverse as Procter and Gamble, the UN or national and international research institutes. The experts commend the School on the combination of digital skills and sociological research methods in the Bachelor’s programme. On top of the high employability of the graduates, the ability to critically relate their academic knowledge to the social contexts and realities in which it is acquired, is raised through the study programmes.

Students reported, that companies and professionals regularly present themselves at HSE in order to establish contacts for internships or give the students a realistic perspective on the different segments of the labour market for Sociologists. The panel recommends a formalization of these events. This could for example take place in the form of regular seminars, where representatives of the practice meet the students and present their profession and their own background.

Regarding both programmes, the panel recommends to enhance the programmes' capacities to train students English language competences, with a particular focus on efforts to attract more native speakers as teachers.

Regarding the Master's programme, the experts recommend introducing topics with global dimensions to the curriculum such as climate change or global health, provided qualified staff is available. A compulsory course on "Ethics in Research" could further enrich the curricula both at undergraduate and graduate level.

From the experts' point of view, the overall structure and content of the study programmes are well-considered and convincing.

2.5 Methods of Teaching and Student Assessment

HSE attributes special significance to providing a solid methodological and theoretical training, analytical skills and general professional skills to ensure the employability of its graduates and convey "critical thinking". Special attention is given to quantitative methods in both study programmes. Above all else, students are to learn how to approach and solve problems from an academic point of view and by means of scientific tools and methods.

In order to achieve this aim, a mixture of teaching methods is applied in both programmes, including lectures and seminars, research projects, internships and, of course, independent self-learning.

The applied methods of student assessment are diverse, ranging from regular written assignments, research essays and text analysis to projects and presentations. Active participation in class has an impact on the overall course grade. On principle, it is the responsible lecturers' task to ensure a constructive alignment between intended learning outcomes, contents, didactic methods and the forms of assessment within their courses. The selection of course literature is at the lecturers' discretion as well.

As a general rule, examinations are not clustered within one time period at the end of the academic year, but evenly distributed across the year to avoid excessive exam workload. Students in both programmes stated that exam dates, if possible, are also adapted to their needs.

Bachelor's programme "Sociology"

According to the self-report, HSE employees are the leading experts of Sociology in their respective fields. The School of Sociology is striving to actively introduce new forms of teach-

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ing. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) were introduced to the curriculum of Sociology in the academic year 2015/16.

It was reported, that roughly 30-40% of classes are conducted in the form of lectures. The remaining classes are held in the form of seminars and tutorials with elements of blended learning. In addition to traditional lectures and seminars, the following formats are also used:

- E-learning
- Internships
- Students' participation in research labs
- Project work (either a research project, a practical applied project or a service project)
- Term papers
- Research seminar (supporting to prepare papers and final theses)

Classes are scheduled at varying times of the day, leaving at least some room for side jobs or other extracurricular activities.

The students' assessment occurs in the form of essays and reports on theoretical, empirical or analytical issues. The essays should include analytical argumentations on the base of scientific literature and the application of analytical instruments. Students are also required to present their research results in presentations. It appears that the grading makes use of the whole range of grades, which allows for detailed and specific assessment of the students' performances. The final theses that were made available during the on-site-talks were state-of-the-art.

The Bachelor's programme has introduced mechanisms allowing students to take any course exam three times without having to switch to an individual curriculum on a fee-paying basis.

Masters's programme "Comparative Social Research"

In the Master's programme, seminars are the predominant teaching format. Lectures are also held regularly. In addition to that, the following formats are applied:

- Practical classes: especially in the courses on quantitative methods, computer classes are used to practice the instruments of descriptive or explanatory statistical analysis (such as the Statistics Software Package "R")
- E-learning (one credited, programme-related course from the Coursera-platform is prescribed)
- Internships (10 weeks, research-related)
- Project Work (students are gaining Credit Points through the participation in the research projects of teaching faculty members)
- Research Seminar (preparation of MA thesis)

The structure of the Master's programme promotes the students' responsibility, as roughly 1/3 of the total study load accounts for classroom hours, whereas 2/3 is foreseen for independent work.

Classes are scheduled in the evening and on Saturdays, leaving room for side jobs or other extracurricular activities. According to the on-site talks, roughly 50% of the Master students are already working on full-time positions.

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Essays and reports are the most common used form of students' assessment. They are to be written about theoretical discussions or empirical-analytical questions, developing argumentations on the base of scientific literature and applying analytical instruments. Students are also required to present their research results. Less often, in-class-exams are used in methodological classes, where students have to use statistical software.

The programme applies the general HSE examination procedure, which allows students to retake exams twice, if necessary. Students who are unable to pass a course exam after three attempts can also take advantage of the individual curriculum mechanism, which allows them to continue their studies on a fee-paying basis.

Experts' Appraisal

The students' assessment seems fair, tailored to the students' body and achieves to cover different competencies. This accounts especially for the project work. The on-site talks have proved the success of these methods: students and graduates displayed a high level of commitment to their university and obviously possess excellent communication skills. It also became clear that due to their special skill set, the graduates enjoy a high degree of employability in a variety of professional areas.

The degree of choice, either provided through the Mago-Lego courses, the different electives and the students' development of the topics of term papers and final theses, is adequate and ensures student-centered learning. The major-minor system is a useful asset in this regard.

According to the given information, it is not possible to schedule two exams in one day.

III Appendix

1 Statement of the University in Response to the Expert Report

III. Appendix

1. Statement of the University in Response to the Expert Report

Statement – Sociology, 18th May 2020:

1. factual errors in the report

p.II-2

In 2020 HSE offers **80** Bachelor programs not 110 as it mentioned in the report

p.II-3

"The study programmes in Social Sciences are offered by the School of Sociology, which was established in 2014 is part of the Faculty of Social Sciences at HSE."

It sounds as if *the School of Sociology* is 5 years old which is not true

Better to mention that the School of Sociology was established in **1999** (as the Faculty of Sociology). In 2014, in the process of creating Big faculties the Faculty of Sociology became the School of Sociology within the Faculty of social sciences.

"Currently, the School counts 17 members of faculty, including three full professors and eight associate and assistant professors."

Better to edit: Currently, the School counts 120 faculty members, including 22 full professors.

2. comments on contents of the report

It was a pleasure to meet with the experts and to discuss the HSE bachelor program in Sociology. We are very thankful for the discussions with the expert panel and for their recommendations for its further development in the report.

Statement – Comparative Social Research, 18th May 2020:

1. factual errors in the report

II-3:

"Currently, the School counts 17 members of faculty, including three full professors and eight associate and assistant professors."

➔ correctly written on page II-7

II-14:

III Appendix

1 Statement of the University in Response to the Expert Report

“Annually, HSE offers 28 places on the Master’s programme, of which 15 are state-funded, 2 are for fee-paying Russian students and 8 are for fee-paying international students.”

→ correct into “Annually, HSE offers up to 28 places on the Master’s programme, of which 15 are state-funded for Russian students, 5 are for fee-paying Russian students and 8 are for fee-paying international students.”

2. comments on contents of the report

The CSR MA is very grateful for the constructive discussions with the expert panel during the Moscow visit and for their productive and invaluable recommendations for further development in the report! We will consider all recommendations carefully and take steps for their realization, in particular the strengthening of possibilities for inter- and multidisciplinary research, the broadening of double-degree possibilities for our students, the formalization of study exchange (learning agreements are an excellent idea!), enhancing the international visibility of the programme, and improving the curriculum with courses on timely topics and research ethics.