

**Decision No. EI-2024-23 on the accreditation of the Wascal Graduate Study Programme (PhD) in Climate change and land use delivered by Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana**

**The President of the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education,**

Considering the Research Code, in particular Articles L. 114-3-1 to L. 114-3-6;

Considering the Board's deliberation of 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022 on the accreditation criteria for a doctorate/PhD abroad;

Considering the Decision No. 2023-9 of 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023 on the international accreditation procedure of the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education;

Considering the agreement DEL\_20220407 of 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022 - for the evaluation/accreditation of 7 programmes delivered by universities affiliated to WASCAL network and distributed over 7 sub-Saharan African countries;

Considering the opinion issued by the Accreditation Commission on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024;

**Decides:**

**Article 1**

Noting that the Graduate Study Programme (PhD) in Climate Change and Land Use delivered by the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, in Ghana, meets the four accreditation criteria, voted by the Board of the High Council on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022, as follows:

**ACCREDITATION CRITERION 1: DOCTORAL POLICY**

The Graduate Study Programme in Climate change and land use (GSP CCLU) is recognised as a flagship programme of KNUST, well-aligned with its strategic goals and backed by significant institutional support. With the participation from five colleges and over 30 university staff, it offers a multidisciplinary training and research agenda addressing the critical issue of climate change and its mitigation. Recognising the relevance of this topic with the WASCAL network and the broader West African region, the programme adopts a problem-solving approach that considers the needs of socio-economic stakeholders. However, there is room for improvement in engaging stakeholders more actively in programme design and development to maximise the impact of WASCAL graduates on climate change issues. The GSP has established local and international partnerships, ensuring relevant support from research laboratories. While its scientific output is excellent, there is potential for further enhancement through the implementation of a well-designed publication policy. The GSP provides international exposure to its PhD candidates with the organisation of study trips and visits to Germany, although the underlying partnership would benefit from more formal institutional agreements.

**ACCREDITATION CRITERION 2: TRAINING, HOSTING AND SUPERVISION ARRANGEMENTS FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS**

The Graduate Study Programme in Climate change and land use implements a high-quality and transparent recruitment procedure. Its initial training programme effectively equips PhD candidates from various academic backgrounds with the multidisciplinary knowledge and skills necessary to address societal and scientific challenges related to land-use and climate change. The programme features a high-quality international pedagogical team, and benefits from partnership with local research centres and international universities. Integrating input of socio-economic stakeholders could enhance the programme's value further. The supervision scheme for students' research projects is efficient and fosters cross-disciplinarity. However, clearer definitions are needed for hosting arrangements for PhD students within research laboratories. While Doctoral students receive adequate material and financial support through the WASCAL network, there is limited flexibility in budget allocation. Nonetheless, the criteria for the final Ph.D. defence are well-defined, leading to an excellent publication record.

### ACCREDITATION CRITERION 3: ATTRACTIVENESS, PERFORMANCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

The Graduate Study Programme in Climate change and land use benefits from a well-structured international network of partner universities, ensuring high-quality recruitment of PhD candidates through clear admission procedures and regulations. The increasing number of applicants reflects its growing attractiveness, although a qualitative analysis is missing, and there is room for more targeted promotion, particularly among women. The programme features a remarkable 100% success rate for graduates and an outstanding track record of job market integration. However, the career paths of graduates predominantly focus on academia, with marginal impact on private or public decision-making bodies. This partially aligns with the goals set by the WASCAL network and emphasizes the relevance of fostering interactions with private and public stakeholders addressing climate change challenges. Alumni have the potential to contribute more actively to training and research programmes, as well as their promotion.

### ACCREDITATION CRITERION 4: MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF THE DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

The management of the GSP-CCLU is largely effective overall. The governance structure is well-defined, with each body fulfilling its specific roles to ensure the smooth operation of the programme. However, there are opportunities to formalise aspects of the overall management of the doctorate by both KNUST and WASCAL to enhance transparency. Establishing a mechanism for periodic stakeholder meetings would facilitate discussion and improvement of the programme. Additionally, implementing pedagogical meetings involving professors and doctoral students could promote collaborative practices. While the training and supervision team contributes to the international profile of the GSP, there is potential for further development of collaborative research among professors from KNUST, the WASCAL network, and partner universities, including those in Germany. Career development opportunities for GSP staff could be better specified to improve their professional growth. The GSP benefits from an effective internal evaluation process based on high-quality assurance standards, supporting continuous improvement. Nevertheless, formalising student feedback on the training programme would improve transparency. Including students' representatives in programme bodies would enhance governance and the relevance of curriculum review processes. Mediation mechanisms could also be introduced to help resolve problematic situations between PhD candidates and supervisors. Overall, the GSP-CCLU is well managed with high-standard quality assurance processes in place.

#### Article 2

The WASCAL Graduate Study Programme in Climate Change and Land Use delivered by the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, in Ghana is accredited for a period of 5 years, from the date of this decision.

#### Article 3

The decision is accompanied by the following recommendations and comments:

- Structure and formalise partnerships with a set of well identified and recognised German institutions to improve collaborations with them
- Ensure representation of PhD students in key decision-making bodies such as the Local Advisory Board and the curriculum review committee
- Establish annual pedagogical meetings involving all lecturers and teachers to facilitate discussions, reviews, and improvements to the overall training curriculum, overseen by the Local Advisory Board
- Implement mechanisms to foster collaborative research and practices, such as dedicated workspaces with associated facilities or cross-departmental working meetings, to encourage synergies and cross-disciplinary research among faculty and students
- Enhance the monitoring of the programme's continuous improvement process by formalising and transparently documenting processes for gathering and analysing feedback from students on courses, professors, their study environment, and from the GSP stakeholders (namely alumni, public and private partners). Consultative discussions should be held regularly to incorporate this feedback
- Set up a skills portfolio for PhD candidates to encourage reflection on skills acquisition and highlight their competences in academic or socio-economic settings
- Introduce mediation mechanisms to facilitate resolution of potential conflicts between PhD students and supervisors.

#### **Article 4**

This decision will be published on the Hcéres website.

Paris, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

The acting President  
signed  
Stéphane Le Bouler