

Decision No. EI-2024-28 on the accreditation of the WASCAL Doctoral Research Programme in West African Climate systems, delivered by the Federal University of Technology Akure, Akure, Nigeria

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 29th September 2022 on the accreditation criteria for a doctorate/PhD abroad;

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

Considering the agreement DEI_20220407 of 12th May 2022 - for the evaluation/accreditation of seven training courses, delivered by training and research centres affiliated to the WASCAL network in seven sub-Saharan African countries;

Considering the opinion issued by the Accreditation Commission on 25th April 2024;

Decides:

Article 1

Noting that the Doctoral Research Programme in West African Climate systems delivered by the Federal University of Technology Akure in Nigeria meets the four accreditation criteria, voted by the Board of the High Council on 29th September 2022, as follows:

ACCREDITATION CRITERION 1: DOCTORAL POLICY

The Doctoral Research Programme in West African Climate Systems benefits from the strong national and international recognition of the Meteorological Department of FUTA, its host university, and its track record of excellence in education and research. The programme deploys a strong training and research programme focused on atmospheric and climate sciences, with relevance to land systems, preparing graduate students to engage with fields such as water management, agriculture, and energy. While the programme interacts with socio-economic stakeholders through outreach activities, there is potential to involve them more actively in the programme design and development to maximise the societal impact of its graduates and their research. The DRP has established both local and international partnerships to provide relevant support, including access to high-power computing facilities. Its scientific output has significantly improved over the years, reaching an excellent standard, although there is room for improvement through a well-designed publication policy and increased visibility and accessibility of research outputs. The DRP also provides international exposure to its PhD candidates through study trips and visits to Germany. However, the underlying partnership could benefit from more formal institutional agreements.

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

The Doctoral Research Programme in West African Climate Systems implements a high-quality and transparent recruitment process. The initial training programme equips PhD candidates with the disciplinary knowledge and skills they need to address issues relating to atmospheric and climate sciences, in relation to land systems. Students benefit from a high-quality and international pedagogical team. However, there is a limited involvement of public and private socio-economic stakeholders, whose perspectives could provide a clear added-value to the DRP. The supervision scheme for research projects lacks formalisation and monitoring by the DRP governance, highlighting a need for further guidance. Hosting arrangements for PhD students in research laboratories require better definition to address concerns. While doctoral students benefit from adequate material and financial conditions, challenges remain in accessing high-power computing capacities and data. International exposure opportunities, such as visits to Germany, are encouraged but may require further facilitation by the DRP management. Finally, the criteria for the final Ph.D. defence are clearly defined at the level of the School of Post-graduate Studies (SPGS) and tailored to the DRP.

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

The Doctoral Research Programme in West African Climate Systems has established clear admission procedures and benefits from the well-structured WASCAL network in West Africa. While it only attracted a moderate number of applications for its latest four batches, it experienced a surge in applications for batch 5. This increased attractiveness is uneven across WASCAL countries, and could be boosted by a qualitative analysis of applications and a targeted promotion of the DRP, especially among women. Despite this, the programme features a 100% success rate for graduates and a strong job market integration, primarily within academia and meteorological agencies. To maximise its impact, the DRP should encourage greater involvement from alumni in training, research, and programme promotion.

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

The Doctoral Research Programme in West African Climate Systems relies on dedicated and qualified staff managing the programme and an internationally diverse teaching staff engaged in student supervision. While the programme possesses sufficient human, material, and financial resources, there is room for improvement in the conditions for supervisors, which could enhance the overall effectiveness of the programme. The programme would benefit from the introduction of an internal policy or actions to promote career development of DRP supervisors and staff. The recruitment procedure for PhD students is well defined and aligned with criteria established by relevant stakeholders. Moreover, students have opportunities to provide feedback on courses and supervision, contributing to ongoing quality improvement efforts. However, there is potential to enhance the quality assurance procedure by aligning it more closely with departmental and university policies, particularly as FUTA's quality policy is still evolving.

Article 2

The WASCAL Doctoral Research Programme in West African Climate systems delivered by the Federal University of Technology Akure, in Nigeria, 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:

- Build on the recent surge in applications to analyse applications and increase the attractiveness of the programme, especially among women and candidates from outside of Nigeria
- Deploy a quality assurance system for all aspects of the Doctoral Research Programme, from students' recruitment to the monitoring of their career path with the help of the QAMU and in line with national and WASCAL standards
- Set up a closer and more inclusive governance, including students' representatives
- Set up annual pedagogical meetings to discuss, review, and improve the overall training curriculum with all lecturers and teachers,
- Structure/formalise partnerships with a set of well-identified and recognised German institutions to improve collaborations with them
- Foster collaborative, cross-disciplinary research between researchers involved in the programme and develop interfaces with research centres working on water, energy, or agriculture-related issues
- Introduce courses focusing on soft skills and entrepreneurship in the initial training programme
- Define a consistent and effective publication policy and improve the support to PhD candidates in the publication process.

Article 4

This decision will be published on the Hcéres website.

Paris, 14th June 2024.

The acting President
signed
Stéphane Le Bouler