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AKKREDITIERUNG VON
STUDIENGÄNGEN E.V.

FINAL REPORT

UNIVERSIDAD DE LA FRONTERA, TEMUCO, CHILE

COMMUNICATION (PHD)*

PSYCHOLOGY (PHD)

*IN COOPERATION WITH UNIVERSIDAD AUSTRAL DE CHILE

November 2025



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DRAFT DECISION OF THE AQAS STANDING COMMISSION ON THE STUDY PROGRAMMES

- **COMMUNICATION (PHD)***
- **PSYCHOLOGY (PHD)**

OFFERED BY UNIVERSIDAD DE LA FRONTERA, TEMUCO, CHILE

***IN COOPERATION WITH UNIVERSIDAD AUSTRAL DE CHILE**

Based on the report of the expert panel, the comments by the university and the discussions of the AQAS Standing Commission in its 26th meeting on 8 September 2025, the AQAS Standing Commission decides:

1. The study programmes “**Communication**” (PhD) (in cooperation with Universidad Austral de Chile) and “**Psychology**” (PhD) offered by **Universidad de La Frontera, Chile** are accredited according to the AQAS Criteria for Doctoral Programme Accreditation (PhD).

The study programmes comply with the requirements defined by the criteria and thus the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version.

2. The accreditation is given for the period of **six years** and is valid until **30 September 2031**.

The following **recommendations** are given for further improvement of the programmes:

1. In the psychology programme, the inclusion of qualitative research should be promoted for a more comprehensive methodological basis.
2. In the psychology programme, the involvement of employers in the continuous programme development should be systematised and publicly available curricular documentation should be improved.
3. A more systematic annual data collection process involving all stakeholders, particularly graduates and the labour market is encouraged.
4. To enable exchange on teaching and learning practice from psychology programme to meet once during the semester with the academic coordinator should also be implemented in the communication programme.
5. Recognizing the broadness of entry qualifications. the universities should develop a transparent expectation on the necessary prerequisites – knowledge, skills, competencies - for the relevant field of study in order to allow for further specialisation and remain at the forefront of academic research.
6. Cross programme collaboration is recommended in the field of education and implementation of methods.
7. The programmes should further push and support their students towards broadening their language skills, with offering students the chance to engage with academic writing in a language different from Spanish.

8. Both programmes reflect the region's unique local and indigenous cultural background, a fact that should be emphasised more in public information to make the PhD programmes more attractive and competitive, both in Chile as well as internationally.

With regard to the reasons for this decision the Standing Commission refers to the attached experts' report.

EXPERTS' REPORT**ON THE STUDY PROGRAMMES**

- **COMMUNICATION (PHD)***
- **PSYCHOLOGY (PHD)**

OFFERED BY UNIVERSIDAD DE LA FRONTERA, TEMUCO, CHILE

***IN COOPERATION WITH UNIVERSIDAD AUSTRAL DE CHILE**

Visit to the university: 1-4 July 2025

Panel of experts:

Prof. Cecilia Maria Ruiz Esteban

University of Murcia, Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology

Prof. Pablo Miño

Universidad de los Andes, Faculty of Communication

Dr. Markus Bredendiek

Onestoptransformation AG, Nürnberg, Germany (representative of the labour market)

Leon Grausam

PhD student of Linguistics, University of Bremen (student expert)

Coordinator:

Ronny Heintze

AQAS, Cologne, Germany

I. Preamble

AQAS – Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes – is an independent non-profit organisation supported by nearly 90 universities, universities of applied sciences, and academic associations. Since 2002, the agency has been recognised by the German Accreditation Council (GAC). It is, therefore, a notified body for the accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes in Germany.

AQAS is a full member of ENQA and also listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) which confirms that our procedures comply with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), on which all Bologna countries agreed as a basis for internal and external quality assurance.

AQAS is an institution founded by and working for higher education institutions and academic associations. The agency is devoted to quality assurance and quality development of academic studies and higher education institutions' teaching. In line with AQAS' mission statement, the official bodies in Germany and Europe (GAC and EQAR) approved that the activities of AQAS in accreditation are neither limited to specific academic disciplines or degrees nor a particular type of higher education institution.

II. Accreditation procedure

This report results from the external review of the PhD programmes "Communication (PhD)**" and "Psychology" (PhD) offered by Universidad de la Frontera, Temuco, Chile.

*In cooperation with Universidad Austral de Chile.

1. Criteria

Each programme is assessed against a set of criteria for accreditation developed by AQAS: the AQAS Criteria for Doctoral Programme Accreditation (PhD). The criteria are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) 2015. To facilitate the review each criterion features a set of indicators that can be used to demonstrate the fulfilment of the criteria. However, if single indicators are not fulfilled this does not automatically mean that a criterion is not met. The indicators need to be discussed in the context of each programme since not all indicators can necessarily be applied to every programme.

2. Approach and methodology

Initialisation

The university mandated AQAS to perform the accreditation procedure in July 2023. The university produced a Self-Evaluation Report (SER). In July 2024, the institution handed in a draft of the SER together with the relevant documentation on the programmes and an appendix as well as statistical data on the programmes. The appendix included e.g.:

- an overview of statistical data of the student body (e.g. number of applications, beginners, students, graduates, student dropouts),
- the CVs of the teaching staff/supervisors,
- information on student services,
- core information on the main library,
- as well as academic regulations.

AQAS checked the SER regarding completeness, comprehensibility, and transparency. The accreditation procedure was officially initialised by a decision of the AQAS Standing Commission on 26 August 2024. The final version of the SER was handed in in January 2025.

Nomination of the expert panel

The composition of the panel of experts follows the stakeholder principle. Consequently, representatives from the respective disciplines, the labour market, and students are involved. Furthermore, AQAS follows the principles for the selection of experts defined by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). The Standing Commission nominated the aforementioned expert panel in April 2025. AQAS informed the university about the members of the expert panel and the university did not raise any concerns against the composition of the panel.

Preparation of the site visit

Prior to the site visit, the experts reviewed the SER and submitted a short preliminary statement including open questions and potential needs for additional information. AQAS forwarded these preliminary statements to the university and to all panel members in order to increase transparency in the process and the upcoming discussions during the site visit.

Site visit

After a review of the SER, a site visit to the university took place on 1 to 4 July 2025. With last minute unforeseen circumstances the student representative was unfit to travel any joined all site visit meetings online. On site, the experts conducted individual interviews with a range of stakeholders, i.e. representatives of the management of the higher education institution, programme management, teaching and other staff, as well as students and graduates. These interviews were conducted in separate discussion rounds, and additional documentation and student work were consulted. Shortly prior to the scheduled site visit, the student representative was prevented from travelling. Following a collective deliberation, it was mutually agreed that a hybrid format would be adopted, with the involvement of the student expert to be facilitated virtually. The visit concluded with the presentation of the preliminary findings of the group of experts to the university's representatives.

Reporting

After the site visit had taken place, the expert group drafted the following report, assessing the fulfilment of the AQAS Criteria. The report included a recommendation to the AQAS Standing Commission. The report was sent to the university for comments.

Decision

The report, together with the comments of the university, forms the basis for the AQAS Standing Commission to take a decision regarding the accreditation of the programmes. Based on these two documents, the AQAS Standing Commission took its decision on the accreditation on 8 September 2025. AQAS forwarded the decision to the university. The university had the right to appeal against the decision or any of the imposed conditions.

In October 2025, AQAS published the report, the result of the accreditation as well as the names of the panel members.

III. General information on the university

General information

The Universidad de La Frontera (UFRO), established in 1981 in the La Araucanía Region, is a public university contributing to education, research, and culture. It holds a six-year Institutional Accreditation (2018–2024) across areas including governance, teaching, postgraduate education, research, and community engagement. The university ranks 10th nationally overall and 5th in Research, Development and Innovation. UFRO offers 44 undergraduate programmes, a Bachelor's in Social Sciences, a Common Plan in Engineering, three technical degrees, and various postgraduate programmes: 11 doctoral, 31 master's, and several medical, dental, and nursing specialties. It serves more than 9,500 undergraduate and over 900 graduate students.

The governance structure consists of a Board of Directors, Academic Council, Rector, and several Vice-Rectors overseeing academic, research, undergraduate, and financial areas. The university operates nine Centres of Excellence and six Interdisciplinary Development Institutes, which focus on areas like biotechnology, environmental science, and indigenous studies. Doctoral students are supported by national scholarships and internal funding, with postgraduate activities coordinated by the Postgraduate Academic Directorate (DAP).

The University's structure

The Vice-Rector's Office for Research and Postgraduate Studies was created in 2006 to direct policies and resources in these areas. Under its oversight, four units operate, including the DAP. The DAP is responsible for managing and accrediting postgraduate programmes, supporting their development, and facilitating cooperation.

The Postgraduate Academic Director, appointed by the Rector, leads the DAP with support from the Committee for Postgraduate Programmes and Specialties, which reviews new programme proposals and accredits academic staff. Internal programme coordinators support self-evaluation, curriculum updates, and management improvements. The Postgraduate Policy, updated in 2023, outlines goals such as consolidation of postgraduate offerings and internationalisation.

Doctoral programmes are designed to support advanced research and integration of graduates into academic and professional environments. The university uses regulatory frameworks to guide academic and financial activities and operates an information system for enrolment and academic records. Since 2002, quality assurance is ensured through accreditation; non-accredited programmes are suspended.

Programme proposals must align with the Strategic Development Plan and meet criteria on academic quality and sustainability. A system for accrediting doctoral and master's programme staff has been in place since 2006, with updates in 2010 and 2016. Teaching is integrated into planning, and feedback is collected to improve programmes. A curricular innovation programme supports reforms and implements the Chilean Transferable Credit System.

Scientific output has increased steadily, with 616 WoS publications in 2022 compared to 265 ISI publications in 2013. The university ranked 10th in FONDECYT projects awarded in 2023.

National higher education context

According to the National Accreditation Commission (2017), Chilean doctoral education has traditionally focused on basic sciences and academic careers. A shift toward societal impact and collaboration with industry and the state has emerged. Programmes follow a national model: a general academic phase, qualifying exam, thesis project, and defence. Doctorates require 240 credits over four years. Following Law 21091 (2018), 80% of Chilean doctoral programmes had achieved accreditation by 2022.

Cooperation with Universidad Austral de Chile (PhD programme “Communication”)

According to the self-evaluation report, the PhD programme “Communication” is a collaborative programme between Universidad de La Frontera and Universidad Austral de Chile. This programme aims to enhance undergraduate and postgraduate offerings in Communication, focusing on communication and culture. It is the fourth programme of its kind in Chile and the first outside the capital.

The report highlights Universidad Austral de Chile's mission, which is to contribute to societal progress through scientific, humanistic knowledge, technological advancement, and artistic creation, aligning with sustainable development goals. The university values personal development and free expression of ideas within a framework of mutual respect and excellence.

Universidad Austral de Chile was founded in 1954 in Valdivia and operates as a non-profit private Law Corporation, recognised by the State, with academic, administrative, and financial autonomy. It offers a broad range of programmes, including undergraduate, technical, Bachelor's, Doctoral, Master's, Medical Specialty, and Diploma programmes.

The university's governance includes Collegiate Bodies, Central Administration, and Academic Units. The community comprises around 16,900 undergraduate students, 1,200 postgraduate students, 1,150 academics, and 2,584 administrative staff. The university is a member of the Council of Rectors of Chilean Universities and one of the eight traditional universities in the pre-1981 system.

Degree-awarding powers are governed by Decree with Force of Law No. 1 of 1981, allowing the university to award Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral degrees. The Doctorate, the highest degree, requires advanced studies and research.

The Department of Postgraduate Studies oversees postgraduate policies, guidelines, and compliance. Graduate Schools manage programme administration, admission, student progress, and graduation, with quality assurance managed by the Postgraduate Council and other committees.

IV. Assessment of the study programmes

1. Aims and structure of the doctoral programmes

Doctoral degree

The intended learning outcomes of the programme are defined and available in published form. They reflect both academic and labour-market requirements and are up-to-date with relation to the relevant field. The design of the programme supports the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The academic level of graduates corresponds to with the requirements of the appropriate level of the national qualifications framework or the European Qualifications Framework.

The curriculum's design is readily available and transparently formulated.

[ESG 1.2]

Description

1.1 Common elements

The Universidad de La Frontera reports defining specific competencies for its postgraduate programmes using the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for Higher Education, established by the Ministry of Education of Chile in 2016. According to the University, this framework aims to create a coherent, transparent, and understandable certification system for higher education.

For Doctoral Programmes, which represent the highest level of certification in Chile's education system, the University states that the focus is on specialised qualifications in artistic, professional, and research areas. The Doctorate degree is said to certify that graduates possess advanced theoretical and practical knowledge, evaluation and integration skills, problem-solving abilities in uncertain contexts, and the capacity to generate knowledge contributing to their field. Graduates are also expected to perform autonomously in research, innovation, or artistic creation.

The qualifications for a doctorate (Level 5) are reported to encompass:

- Knowledge: Demonstrating advanced theoretical and practical knowledge in their study area and related disciplines.
- Skills: Evaluating and integrating diverse information, solving problems in uncertain contexts, generating knowledge, and effectively communicating research results in Spanish and a second language.
- Competence: Applying knowledge and skills with responsibility, ethics, and autonomy, making decisions, leading teams, and respecting diversity.

The University explains that Doctoral Programmes ensure the acquisition of knowledge through research lines, specialisation courses, participation in research groups, and national and international projects. Cognitive, technical, and communication skills are developed through an educational model that promotes a person-centred, competency-based approach.

The institutional educational model, according to the university, includes:

- Pillar competencies: Aspirational performances guiding institutional actions.
- Specific competencies: Expected performances in a disciplinary area, forming part of graduation profiles.
- Generic competencies: Transferable skills across professional areas, such as autonomy, communication, ethics, teamwork, and critical thinking.

Graduation profiles are reported to outline the domains and competencies to be developed, articulated through a competency matrix indicating the contribution of curricular activities.

The university states that it employs the Transferable Credit System (SCT-Chile) to quantify student workload, aligning with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Latin American Credit System (CLAR). One SCT is equivalent to 28 chronological hours, including contact and independent study hours.

Curriculum evaluation is governed by Exempt Resolution 1441 of 2023, involving curricular analysis to ensure coherence, relevance, and sufficiency with the graduate's profile. This process is described as identifying weaknesses and proposing improvements, covering macro-curricular and micro-curricular aspects.

For employability, UFRO Alumni reports offering various programmes under the Directorate of Integral Formation and Employability (DIFEM), established in 2020. The university states that these programmes include virtual courses on professional preparation, providing flexible and comprehensive training for students transitioning into the workforce. Additionally, it is noted that training workshops are conducted to aid workforce integration, focusing on developing generic competencies necessary for professional success.

UFRO Alumni explains that they also provide assistance with professional presentation, helping students and graduates refine their CVs, prepare for job interviews, and create a strong professional image. Professional orientation sessions, as described by the university, offer personalised support, guiding individuals in identifying their strengths and developing tools for effective career management.

Moreover, the university mentions organising labour preparedness days to enhance personal branding and job search skills, equipping participants with the necessary resources for a successful job search. Job search tips are also provided to further support graduates in navigating the employment market effectively.

1.2 Communication (PhD)

According to the self-evaluation report, the PhD programme "Communication" at Universidad de La Frontera (UFRO) and Universidad Austral de Chile (UACH) aims to train graduates capable of conducting autonomous research and disseminating knowledge in the field of communication. It was reported that the programme, which began in March 2018 with ten students, has grown to 22 students by 2024, with twelve graduates and 31 publications associated with their theses.

The report states that the programme's purpose is to develop students into qualified PhD holders who can conduct independent research and effectively communicate their findings. The programme description emphasises that graduates are trained to analyse problems in diverse intercultural contexts using various theoretical and methodological techniques from an interdisciplinary perspective, fostering critical thinking.

The curriculum, spanning eight semesters, is typically completed in 9.4 semesters. By 2024, graduates are predominantly employed in academic settings, with 56% working as lecturers or professionals. The programme aligns with the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, which defines a Doctorate as a degree certifying advanced knowledge, problem-solving abilities, and autonomous research skills.

The curriculum added to the SER, looks as follows:

N.o	CURRICULAR ACTIVITY	FLEXIBILITY	CRED. SCT		PRE-REQUISITE
			UFRO	UACH	
	Level I				
1	Epistemological and theoretical Fundaments of Culture and Communication	Mandatory	12	13	NO
2	Communication and Culture I	Mandatory	12	13	NO
3	Elective I	Elective	6	6	NO
	Level II				
4	Fundaments of Research in Culture and communication	Mandatory	12	13	NO
5	Communication and Culture II	Mandatory	12	13	NO
6	Elective II	Elective	6	6	NO
	Level III				
7	Research Methodology in Culture and Communication	Mandatory	18	19	NO
8	Research Seminar I	Mandatory	12	13	NO
	Level IV				
9	Research Module I	Mandatory	6	7	NO
10	Thesis project	Mandatory	22	23	NO
11	Qualifying Examination	Mandatory	2	2	1 to 10
	Nivel V				
12	Dissertation Advance I	Mandatory	30	32	11
	Nivel VI				
13	Dissertation Advance II	Mandatory	18	20	11 and 12
14	Research Seminar II	Mandatory	12	13	11
	Nivel VII				
15	Dissertation Advance III	Mandatory	30	32	11 to 13
	Nivel VIII				
16	Doctoral Dissertation	Mandatory	26	28	11 to 15
17	Doctoral Degree Examination	Mandatory	4	4	11 to 16

It is reported that the study plan involves collaboration with lecturers from both universities and external, preferably international, lecturers to provide a broad research perspective. The curriculum includes mandatory and elective courses, with some electives tailored to the interests of each cohort.

Electives offered since the programme's inception have covered various perspectives on communication research, with notable modules such as "Methodologies in Framing Analysis" and "Scientific Writing Workshop."

The programme structure, unchanged since 2018, is regularly reviewed to meet students' needs and research interests, according to the programme coordinators. They have stated that improvements and updates are implemented based on feedback and evaluations, ensuring alignment with the graduate profile and study plan.

Graduate performance and ongoing self-evaluation indicate the programme's success, with 56% of graduates working in academia and an average of 3.4 publications per graduate, as noted in the self-evaluation report. Teaching performance is evaluated through surveys and performance agreements, ensuring quality and relevance.

Programme coordinators have explained that they have harmonised evaluation processes between UFRO and UACH, with over 80% of students and academics affirming the quality and relevance of the academic staff. They also highlighted that the programme offers double graduation agreements with universities such as Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (Colombia) and Universidad de Sevilla (Spain), providing on-site internships to deepen research.

In terms of supporting employability, the programme encourages academic publications, providing financial incentives for research aligned with faculty projects. The report highlights that UFRO has an annual Competitive Fund to Support Publications, assisting students in progressing their research and submitting articles to scientific journals.

Experts' evaluation

First of all, the expert panel wants to underline that the site visit generally confirmed the facts and impressions provided and presented in the self-evaluation report. To that end the panel believes that the university features a high level of self-reflective competency leading to a realistic presentation of the academic offers. The visit confirmed a well-defined and intentional focus of the programme at the intersection between communication (conceived as an "open field", as explained by both faculty and students) and culture. There is a strong focus on qualitative research methods, as well as other methodologies rooted in critical-cultural studies. Some faculty members explained that a small number of students have had the chance to engage with quantitative methodologies as well, mainly through workshops focused on artificial intelligence and digital methodologies. However, the programme has intentionally developed an expertise in qualitative research methods. That is a key distinction of this program.

Faculty and students expressed that this focus was explained due to the geographical location of both universities, specifically in southern Chile, approximately 700 kilometres away from Santiago, the country's capital. The locations in Temuco (UFRO) and Valdivia (U. Austral) allow students to engage with topics focused on indigenous and local cultures, challenging dominant and traditional views of the "open field" of communication studies. Some students have focused their research topics at the intersection of education and communication, as well as environment and communication, always keeping in mind a cultural and anthropological mindset. One faculty member poignantly said: "the territory that we live in demands and challenges the research questions that we ask in our scholarship."

Both faculty and students praised as a strength the fact that many students come from a wide variety of backgrounds. While most of them held a professional undergraduate degree in journalism, some of them came from the health sciences, engineering, as well as the arts. An important observation was that faculty members aim their students to become independent scholars and not just "copies" of their PhD mentors. The panel learned that this was important because communication, as an academic field, is relatively new in Chile, and faculty members want to contribute with the placement of unique scholars in different universities and institutions. All students have academic mentors both at UFRO and U. Austral, as well as an international scholar who mentors them through their dissertation process. Students are encouraged to publish their research in

peer-reviewed journals in collaboration with their mentors, who have strong research ties both in Chile as well as internationally. UFRO pays for APC fees for faculty and students to publish in these journals.

The programme has gone through an intense internationalisation process since its inception in 2018. Outside of having an international mentor, students are encouraged to pursue double degrees with a few selected universities in Europe and Latin America. More than half of the enrolled students have funding to pursue their doctoral studies from ANID, the national agency that fosters research initiatives. That scholarship allows students to spend a few months during their programme abroad, being mentored by scholars in foreign universities. International students make up a small percentage of the total enrolment of the programme, coming from countries such as Cuba, Colombia and Peru. Faculty members expressed that for them, being an “international” programme was important because the local realities in southern Chile are part of global conversations on technology, communication and culture. The programme also has invited international speakers to give academic talks on campus and one dissertation so far has been completely written and defended in English.

Students praised the academic director of the programme, as well as their professors, who were described as constantly open to receive them in their offices and help them out with any issues they could be dealing with. They mentioned that it would be helpful to incorporate academic writing in English from the first year in the programme, as well as research methodologies focused on quantitative research, digital humanities and artificial intelligence. They appreciated the interdisciplinary focus of the programme, as well as the collaboration between UFRO and U. Austral offer a wide range of courses and electives that can help them with their research. Alumni of the programme have been placed in academia, higher education administration, as well as government offices and cultural management.

In conclusion, and after carefully considering student work and thesis, this assessment led the panel to agree that the programme fulfils the European Qualifications Framework at the PhD level. While the programme is fairly new, the curriculum, the level of expertise of the faculty members teaching and mentoring students, the diversity of profiles represented in their student population, the research outputs that have come out of the programme, and the quality of graduates justify this categorisation. Students have a wide variety of resources available to succeed, both at the financial level as well as the access to university resources (libraries from both institutions, funding to pay for open access fees to publish research, funding to attend conferences, access to inter-national resources, and mentorship at two universities). Moreover, the programme has a distinct focus on communication and culture, aiming to contribute to academic discussions from a Global South standpoint.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

1.3 Psychology (PhD)

The SER indicates that the PhD programme in Psychology at the Universidad de La Frontera is designed to provide advanced training in psychological science fundamentals, research methods, and cultural psychology, with a focus on developing capacities for original research. The programme operates full-time from Monday to Friday.

The programme aims to achieve three specific objectives:

1. Train graduates to develop original research in psychology using advanced research methods.
2. Equip graduates to produce scientific documents, such as research projects, articles, and books.

3. Enable graduates to effectively communicate disciplinary knowledge and research results to both specialised and non-specialised audiences, including undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The programme, which typically lasts 4.9 years, currently oversees seven ongoing doctoral projects and has produced 422 publications in WoS and Scopus journals over the past decade. Additionally, it has organised 21 colloquia for research dissemination and academic interaction, and its doctoral students have participated in numerous national and international conferences.

The profile states that graduates will have advanced training in the fundamentals of psychological science, research methods, and cultural psychology, with the ability to conduct original research. They will be adept at producing scientific documents and effectively communicating research results. Additionally, graduates are expected to possess generic competences such as autonomy, ethical conduct, and teamwork.

The curriculum added to the SER, looks as follows:

First Semester	Second Semester	Third Semester	Fourth Semester	Fifth Semester	Sixth Semester	Seventh Semester	Eight Semester
Scientific paradigm in psychology (7 SCT)	Disciplinary in-depth elective course (6 SCT)	Thematic in-depth elective course I (6 SCT)	Thematic in-depth elective course II (6 SCT)	Supervised Teaching (8 SCT)	Doctoral internship (8 SCT)		
Advances in social psychology (7 SCT)	Cultural psychology and human diversity (7 SCT)	Culture and behaviour (7 SCT)	Cultural research (7 SCT)				
Bivariate research methods (7 SCT)	Multivariate research methods I (7 SCT)	Multivariate research methods II (7 SCT)	Methodological in-depth elective course (6 SCT)				
Supervised research I (8 SCT)	Supervised research II (8 SCT)	Supervised research III (8 SCT)	Supervised research IV (8 SCT)	Thesis I (21 SCT)	Thesis II (21 SCT)	Thesis III (29 SCT)	Thesis IV (28 SCT)
Practical academic activities I (3 SCT)	Practical academic activities II (3 SCT)	Practical academic activities III (3 SCT)	Practical academic activities IV (11 SCT)	Practical academic activities V (11 SCT)	Practical academic activities VI (11 SCT)	Practical academic activities VII (11 SCT)	Practical academic activities VIII (11 SCT)
Fundamentals of psychological science (26 SCT)				Research methods (27 SCT)		Research (134 SCT)	
Cultural psychology (26 SCT)						Academic activities (24 SCT)	

Experts' evaluation

The Doctoral Psychology programme has a strong focus on quantitative research methods. Also, it articulates learning outcomes that align with the expected qualifications, including quantitative competencies, applied research skills, and proficiency in mixed methodologies. Additionally, the programme demonstrates a robust interdisciplinary orientation, achieved by integrating components such as anthropology and public health within its curriculum. This approach is further supported by a broad admission profile, allowing access to candidates from diverse academic backgrounds. The interaction among doctoral candidates fosters and ensures a high degree of interdisciplinarity.

The programme is designed to train researchers for academic careers. In this context, the requirements for submitting and defending the doctoral dissertation have been progressively reinforced. Recently, these requirements have been revised so that currently only the thesis by compendium is permitted. This measure ensures that all doctoral candidates are thoroughly prepared for the scientific dissemination of their research. Furthermore, their quantitative methodological training is considered strong; however, the incorporation of a qualitative component is suggested to promote a more comprehensive methodological foundation (**Finding 1**).

As the panel learned during the visit, the programme enrolls students from various nationalities and invites visiting professors from different countries to deliver courses or seminars. However, although some double degree options have been offered, further internationalisation is envisaged by increasing the number of agreements with other universities to facilitate additional double degree programmes.

For programme updates, meetings with students are conducted at the end of each semester, and employer participation is encouraged during curricular reviews (e.g., TrampolinLab). Student feedback is systematically collected through surveys during accreditation processes or curricular modifications, and meetings with alumni are also held to gather additional perspectives. According to this example, and after carefully interviewing and reviewing the provided evidence the involvement of the labour market into the continuous programme development seems to remain a challenge and it is recommended to systematise it. To increase transparency for this target group, stronger standardisation of publicly available curricular documentation is encouraged (**Finding 2**).

During the review the panel also learned that it might happen that courses at level 4 of the Chilean system – master's level – are part of the PhD programme. As the PhD level clearly is defined to be above master's level, it might make sense to fill gaps in the levelling phase, however, the panel believes that such courses should not be an integral part of a PhD programme. This might be an element of reflection for the future development of the programme.

The learning outcomes are aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) at Level 8. The proposed curricular structure is deemed appropriate and ensures the provision of high-level training consistent with EQF Level 8 standards which was also demonstrated by reviewing student work.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

2. Procedures for quality assurance

Doctoral degree

The programme is subject to the higher education institution's policy and associated procedures for quality assurance, including procedures for the design, approval, monitoring, and revision of the programmes.

A quality-oriented culture, focusing on continuous quality enhancement, is in place. This includes regular feedback mechanisms involving both internal and external stakeholders.

The strategy, policies, and procedures have a formal status and are made available in published form to all those concerned. They also include roles for students and other stakeholders.

Data is collected from relevant sources and stakeholders, analysed, and used for the effective management and continuous enhancement of the programme.

[ESG 1.1, 1.7 & 1.9]

Description

According to Universidad de La Frontera, it has established a postgraduate policy based on strategic guidelines and defined principles, such as recognised quality, interdisciplinarity, continuous innovation, cooperation, ongoing evaluation, relevance, flexibility, sustainability, and impact.

The university reports that it has implemented a quality assurance system aimed at improving formative processes, using tools for planning, implementation, evaluation, and feedback. The Quality Policy's guidelines are utilised, supported by the Development Plans Monitoring tool (SEPLAD). SEPLAD is described as a planning

and control system focused on monitoring Development Plans, accessible through the university's Intranet since 2019. This platform allows the Quality Management Department to monitor the Development Plan and the annual action plan of programmes online, compiling evidence of progress on commitments. This procedure is documented in the SGIC-UFRO (Comprehensive Quality Management System) and detailed on the university's quality website.

The university states that the Postgraduate Academic Directorate actively promotes continuous innovation in postgraduate profiles and study plans, considering the evolving environment and conducting internal review processes. This involves a participatory, consultative, and validating framework for modifications, engaging key stakeholders from the programme and specialty communities. It is stated that units responsible for Curricular Design and Management, along with the Quality Management unit, provide consistent support to programmes. To keep curricular content up to date according to external demands, a biennial monitoring process collects feedback from graduates about employment outcomes and the relevance of curricular activities in professional performance.

Additionally, postgraduate programmes and specialties are subject to continuous improvement through monitoring recommendations from external evaluations and commitments in their improvement plans. The SEPLAD tool, along with annual evaluations and action plans, helps maintain evidence of objective achievement or the necessary redefinition of strategies and actions to sustain their objectives.

The university highlights its commitment to safeguarding students' rights through the Gender Quality and Inclusion Policy (Annex 4.2) and the University Coexistence Regulation (Annex 4.9). These measures ensure protection against intolerance and discrimination and guarantee rights such as comprehensive and quality training, non-arbitrary discrimination, freedom of expression, student mobilisation, the right to information, the right to petition, and the right to complain.

The university reports that various stakeholders involved in the programmes have access to platforms providing systematic and updated information for decision-making within the framework of quality assurance and continuous improvement. These platforms include:

- Intranet: Manages academic and administrative actions related to postgraduate programmes.
- SEPLAD: Tracks commitments and planning for continuous improvement.
- System for Managing Courses and Programs (ASIGNA): Monitors all academic activities of students.
- Academic Planning (PLANAC): Manages the planning of curricular activities and courses.
- Biennial monitoring of occupational employment and curricular feedback: Surveys graduates about employment trends and knowledge demands in the labour market.
- Management Report: The Postgraduate Academic Directorate generates an annual report of key internal efficiency indicators for postgraduate programmes and specialties to support decision-making for continuous improvement.

Student progression and success rate information is managed on the ASIGNA platform. The university states that learning resources in the teaching domain are designed to enhance teaching-learning methodologies. The Vice-Rector of Undergraduate Studies offers programmes and resources for teaching improvement, including induction programmes, an inverted teaching diploma, deepening workshops, micro-courses, and internal monitoring of key performance indicators, employment outcomes for graduates, and the number of publications resulting from theses.

QA system for joint programmes

The General Regulations for Doctoral Programmes at UFRO state that joint doctoral programmes are regulated by the General Postgraduate Regulations of both participating universities. For technical and administrative coordination, each institution appoints an authority to facilitate articulation and resolve academic and administrative issues during the agreement's term.

The report details that both UFRO and UACH have established a management system comprising a Programme Director/Coordinator and an Academic Committee. Specifically, the Doctorate in Communication has a Joint Regulation developed in accordance with the internal regulations of both universities. This regulation assigns the responsibility of organising, coordinating, and monitoring the programme to the Academic Committee/Programme Committee.

The committee, as described in the report, includes:

- Two inter-institutional coordinators,
- Two representatives from UFRO,
- Two representatives from UACH,
- One student representative.

The self-evaluation report further clarifies that the committee's main purpose is the technical and administrative coordination of the agreement and the resolution of any academic issues that may arise. The administration of the programme is managed by the directors, who are responsible for ensuring compliance with the curriculum and regulations, developing and monitoring annual academic and budgetary plans, communicating decisions to students, and guiding students throughout their studies.

Experts' evaluation

Based on the provided documentation and also confirmed by the interviews on site, both doctoral programmes are fully aligned with the university's overarching policy and procedures for quality assurance. These policies are grounded in a continuous improvement model and are regularly updated; for example, in 2024 new regulations were introduced to standardize and strengthen quality assurance across all doctoral programmes. This framework ensures that all programmes undergo national accreditation — currently granted until 2028 — and that they remain consistent with the institution's objectives for excellence and internationalisation.

The quality assurance system comprehensively addresses various dimensions, including course and programme evaluations, assessment of student workload, progression, and completion rates. Among the specific tools implemented are biannual satisfaction surveys focusing on teaching and programme-specific aspects, annual meetings with students to discuss programme design and improvements, and detailed analyses of dropout rates, which include individualised breakdowns of reasons such as personal circumstances or external factors like the pandemic. The monitoring of study duration and graduation rates, as well as their alignment with national standards, also forms a crucial part of this system. Furthermore, platforms such as CePLat facilitate the systematic collection and analysis of feedback, thereby supporting data-driven curriculum adjustments.

Responsibilities and targets are clearly defined to ensure effective programme monitoring and revision. Academic committees, which formally include student representation since 2023, oversee the quality of the programmes. These committees establish maximum supervisory loads, guarantee appropriate professor-to-student ratios, and maintain close coordination with graduate affairs units. The established targets focus on timely graduation, compliance with research output requirements (such as the thesis by compendium model), and the maintenance of accreditation standards.

The experts also found that administrative and quality assurance responsibilities for the doctoral programmes are explicitly defined and communicated to students. Governance structures include doctoral boards and academic committees with student representatives, coordination offices responsible for daily academic and administrative management, and ethical committees (such as CEC-UFRO) that oversee research proposals and ensure compliance with national health ministry standards. Additionally, platforms and regular meetings are utilized to enhance transparency and ensure students are well-informed about QA structures.

It can also be confirmed that the implementation of quality assurance procedures has led to concrete actions aimed at continuous improvement. Examples include the revision of teaching methodologies towards more participatory formats, the introduction of new courses based on student feedback (such as academic writing in English), continuous updates to gender equality policies and diversity measures, and enhancements in induction and support processes for international students.

The selection of doctoral research topics, the assessment of research results, and the awarding of degrees strictly adhere to accepted academic standards. All research projects must receive approval from the ethics committee, and thesis defences are rigorously regulated, involving external reviewers to ensure impartiality and academic rigor. The transition to the thesis by compendium model, which requires publications in indexed journals, further reinforces scientific quality and promotes international dissemination of research findings.

Internal and external stakeholders play an active role in the quality assurance processes. Students participate in curriculum reviews and programme development discussions, while alumni provide feedback through meetings and surveys. Employers and external representatives also contribute to programme evaluations and inform curricular updates, as exemplified by initiatives like TrampolinLab, which supports non-academic career pathways. The panel also learned that for the psychology programme the labour market involvement remains challenging (**see Finding 2**). Evaluation results are systematically shared with faculty and students through meetings and official reports, fostering transparency and collective accountability.

Labour market information is gathered through alumni tracking and consultations with employers. Although most graduates continue in academia, some pursue careers in media, policy development, public administration, or cultural management. This information guides curricular adjustments and programme orientation, acknowledging that doctoral education in Chile has traditionally maintained a strong academic focus. Nevertheless, it is advisable to implement a more systematic annual data collection process involving all stakeholders (**Finding 3**).

It should also be commended that robust measures are in place to safeguard academic integrity. These include mandatory ethics approvals for all research (through committees like CEC-UFRO), adherence to codes of good scientific conduct aligned with national standards, and comprehensive policies to prevent intolerance and discrimination, supported by transversal gender equality initiatives. Additionally, explicit guidelines regulate the ethical use of generative artificial intelligence, requiring transparency and compliance with ethical standards.

Finally, statistical data on student progression — including student composition, study duration, completion rates, grade distributions, and exam performance — are systematically analysed. These insights inform programme development, adjustments to admission criteria, and the design of support services. For example, analyses of dropout data have led to refined selection processes and the implementation of targeted support measures during the first year of study.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

3. Learning and assessment of students

Doctoral degree

The form of supervision and/or course structure is adequate and corresponds with the intended learning outcomes.

Students are assessed using accessible criteria, regulations, and procedures, which are made readily available to all participants and which are applied consistently.

Assessment procedures are designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

[ESG 1.3]

Description

The report highlights that the programmes at the Universidad de La Frontera employs a tutoring-based pedagogical approach, which involves personalised accompaniment and supervised monitoring of students' academic progress. The programme emphasises a cooperative learning environment, with the student as the primary agent of their own training. This approach encourages active, independent, and creative roles in the discovery and reconstruction of knowledge, with the teacher acting as a facilitator rather than an authority.

Practical academic activities are integrated into the programme, allowing students to participate in various research laboratories. These activities provide opportunities for learning, participation, and support within different research teams. Additionally, the programme includes a series of Supervised Research courses where students work closely with their advising professors and dissertation advisors. The Thesis Committee, which meets every six months, advises on the student's progress during the Research Advancement Seminar, fostering a close relationship between students and lecturers and facilitating the development of essential research skills.

The programme employs various pedagogical strategies to promote learning, including the search and review of scientific articles, oral presentations, and the preparation of research projects. The curricular structure is designed to provide strong theoretical and conceptual training in the first four semesters, followed by a focus on the execution of the Doctoral Dissertation in the last four semesters. This structure allows students to engage in original research in psychology and explore topics of personal interest.

Participation in different laboratories is considered a valuable learning opportunity, enabling students to deepen their knowledge and complement their work with dissertation advisors. The study plan ensures that the doctoral thesis work is integrated throughout the four-year programme, with Supervised Research courses in the first four semesters and Thesis courses in the last four semesters. Students defend their thesis projects in the Qualifying Examination at the end of the second year, followed by the development and execution of their doctoral thesis.

Universidad de La Frontera reports that its General Doctorate Regulations include provisions to compensate for disadvantages, illness, or absence. The aim, according to the university, is to prevent dropout situations by facilitating postponement or temporary withdrawal from studies and medical leave due to health-related circumstances. In 2022, the university formalised its Equality and Gender Equity Policy in compliance with Chilean legal regulations.

As part of this policy, the university commits to integrating the principles of equality and gender equity into the practices and institutional structures governing university life. The university also states that it incorporates co-responsibility and reconciliation of personal, family, work, student, and academic life into the institutional structure without affecting the fundamental rights of the university community members, particularly their right to privacy, private life, and honour.

The university reports applying gender criteria to academic and work conditions related to access, continuation, and graduation from the university. It also promotes balanced gender representation in academic and administrative structures, as well as in the university's individual and collegial decision-making bodies. According to the university, it focuses on developing an intercultural gender perspective, with special consideration for the Mapuche people. The university is committed to preventing, eradicating, and sanctioning various forms of gender-based violence and discrimination, including sexual harassment, violence, and gender discrimination. Furthermore, the university conducts training activities for members of the university community on gender issues and the consequences of gender-biased behaviours.

Regarding the grading scale, Universidad de La Frontera states that as per Article 33 of the General Doctorate Regulations, "Doctoral students at Universidad de La Frontera will be graded in their curricular activities on a scale of grades ranging from one point zero (1.0) to seven point zero (7.0), with the minimum passing grade being five point zero (5.0)."

6.2 Assessment

Thesis Project and Qualifying Examination

According to the self-evaluation report, the Academic Committee is responsible for guiding and formalising the selection of two Advising Professors/Tutors for each student, one from each university, following the regulations of both institutions. The Thesis Project Evaluation Committee, which prepares for the Qualifying Examination, is composed of at least three members: the advising professors and an external professor chosen from the visiting professors of the Doctoral Programme.

The report outlines that once the Thesis Project curricular activity is approved by the end of the last semester of the second year, the corresponding report is reviewed by the Thesis Project Evaluation Committee. Students must also undertake a Qualifying Examination, for which they must certify the submission of an article for publication in a WoS or Scopus journal during their time in the programme. The Qualifying Examination Evaluation Commission consists of at least five members:

- a) The advising professors, one from each university, who do not evaluate the presentation.
- b) Two professors from the academic staff of the programme, ensuring both theoretical and methodological contributions.
- c) An external professor related to the graduation project's subject.
- d) Representatives of each university's institutional authorities, who act as Ministers of Faith and do not evaluate.
- e) A member of the Academic Committee/Programme Committee, who chairs the Commission without qualification.

The self-evaluation report specifies that upon meeting these requirements, students are designated as Doctoral Candidates. The students then select their Dissertation Professor or Thesis Professor, who may differ from their initial Advising Professors.

The report explains that the thesis characteristics are outlined in the Internal Regulations of the programmes. The thesis, or dissertation, must consist of a compendium of at least three scientific articles published in WoS/Scopus journals, reflecting original and relevant research work derived from the student's doctoral research. These articles should empirically verify hypotheses with a high degree of generalisability. The dissertation must contribute significantly to the universal body of knowledge and can be based on either primary or secondary data.

The regulations stipulate that thesis topics requiring professional qualification in a specific area of psychology can only be developed by students holding a valid psychology degree recognised in Chile. Additionally, the thesis must be part of a broader funded research project, or the student must seek funding from FONDECYT or an equivalent research fund.

An accredited academic may guide no more than two theses simultaneously, though exceptions allowing a third thesis can be made with prior Academic Committee approval. The thesis development process is divided into three stages:

1. In the first stage, encompassing Supervised Research I and II, students gain supervised research experience and familiarity with their advisor's study line.
2. In the second stage, including Supervised Research III and IV, they prepare their doctoral thesis project.
3. In the third stage, covering Thesis I, II, III, and IV, students carry out their doctoral research and write their dissertation.

The dissertation must follow the guidelines in the "Norms for the Presentation of the Doctoral Thesis Project" document and adhere to the most recent APA Publication Manual for editorial style. Upon completion, the thesis will be independently assessed by the Thesis Evaluation Committee members, who also served on the Qualifying Examination Commission. The evaluation will use a standard guideline and will result in a mark and the categories "passed," "passed with modifications," or "failed." If modifications are required, the candidate must make the necessary changes within 30 days for re-evaluation.

Although the thesis project and dissertation are the student's property, both the student and the dissertation advisor must appear as co-authors in any derived publications or presentations, citing Universidad de La Frontera as the affiliation. This rule also applies to other products resulting from work under the supervision of the dissertation advisor or another lecturer, with the student typically listed as the first author for thesis-derived products.

Doctoral Dissertation

The self-evaluation report indicates that the thesis (or dissertation) is evaluated independently by each member of the Dissertation Evaluation Committee. This assessment involves assigning a mark and conceptual categories of pass, pass with modifications, or fail. The final mark is the simple average of the marks awarded independently by each committee member. It is noted that the assessment of the thesis will not be credited. All publications must acknowledge affiliation with the Joint Doctorate of the Universidad de La Frontera and the Universidad Austral de Chile, along with any other public or private institutions the doctoral student is associated with for funding or research.

The report specifies that the Doctoral Degree Examination involves a public, face-to-face, oral presentation and defence of the thesis before the Doctoral Examination Commission. This commission includes:

- a) The two Advising Professors/Directors, one from each university, who participate with the right to speak.
- b) Two professors from the academic staff of the programme, different from the advising professors.
- c) A visiting professor of the programme.
- d) Members defined by each university as representatives of their institutional authorities.

In the case of double graduation agreements, the composition of the commission is specified in the agreement. Variations may occur for double degree agreements, which will be explicitly detailed in the agreement. To undertake the Doctoral Degree Examination, the doctoral student must have prepared two articles based on their thesis work: one accepted for publication and the other received, adhering to the validation criteria of the Fondecyt Study Group "Sociology and Information Sciences" (ANID).

Obtaining the doctoral degree

Students must pass all curricular activities, publish the required articles, successfully complete the Doctoral Degree Examination, and remain actively enrolled. The final grade is calculated as a simple average of the grades from curricular activities (60%) and the Thesis exam (40%).

According to Resolution Ex. N°2961 of 2023 (UFRO) and Decree N°62 of 2023 (UACH), any difficulties or aspects not covered by these regulations are resolved by the Institutional Coordinator of each University, whose decisions are final. The Academic Committee is responsible for managing academic and administrative processes, evaluating student performance, and handling requests.

UFRO Res. Ex. No. 4210 of 2023 specifies that students must acknowledge their grades for each curricular activity and may request a review if there is disagreement. A "pending" grade may be awarded to students who do not complete all requirements due to justified reasons. Students must regularise this situation within two months of the next semester's start, or they will fail the activity. If the thesis project is rejected, students may apply once to present another project within three months. If the degree examination is failed, students have one opportunity to repeat it within three months.

Decree No. 33 of 2009 of the UACH allows students who fail a subject a second attempt. The Qualifying Examination may be failed once, with a repeat allowed within a semester. If the Degree Examination is approved with modifications, a new version must be submitted within 60 days for re-evaluation.

For compensating disadvantages, illness, or absence, Resolution Ex. No. 4210 of 2023 (UFRO) provides options for postponement of studies for up to two semesters and temporary withdrawal for significant disruptions. Both require formal applications and are subject to approval by the Programme Management and Academic Committee. 13 / 26

Decree No. 33 of 2009 of the UACH allows suspension of activities for justified reasons and cancellation of subjects for force majeure, subject to approval by the Director of the Graduate School and the Director of Postgraduate Studies.

The grading scale at UFRO ranges from 1.0 to 7.0, with a minimum passing grade of 5.0. UACH uses a similar scale for most activities, grading language exams, seminars, research units, qualifying exams, thesis projects, and thesis progress as Pass or Fail.

External evaluators participate in the Doctoral Degree Examination and Qualifying Examination Commissions, being familiarised with the assessment methods well in advance. They contribute to the assessment of the research project and the degree examination, ensuring consistent and rigorous evaluation.

The doctoral dissertation must be a research work, representing a significant theoretical or methodological contribution to communication respectively communication. The dissertation must adhere to the programme's formats and parameters and can be presented as a Compendium of Scientific Articles, approved by the Academic Committee and Inter-institutional Coordinators of each university.

Experts' evaluation

Students in the psychology and communication doctoral programmes are required to go through coursework in both theory and methodology courses. The communication programme was widely known for its focus on qualitative research methods, while the psychology programme was more oriented towards training on quantitative methods. The panel noticed that faculty from both programmes did not acknowledge any sort of collaboration between both programmes, at least regarding offering students in one programme to take research methods classes on the other programme, or vice versa. That might strengthen the offer in research methods courses to students in both programmes.

Students in the psychology programme are required to follow the “compendium of three articles” mode of defending their doctoral degree. Students in the communication programme write a traditional dissertation and are required to publish at least one article in a peer-reviewed journal throughout their time in the programme. The panel considered the model of the psychology programme to be attuned to current trends in other doctoral programmes internationally and encourages the communication programme to rethink their current model, maybe encouraging students to conceive their dissertation as a compendium of three articles or a book manuscript.

Faculty, students and alumni of the psychology programme recognised that the focus of their programme was on academic jobs post-graduation. Some of the communication programme graduates were able to secure jobs outside of academia, while it is unclear to what extent the programme prepared those students with specific skills to succeed in those settings (higher education administration, cultural management, government) (see Finding 3).

Students praised faculty in both programmes for their willingness to help them out with different milestones of the learning process in the programme, such as exams, opportunities to collaborate in grants, access to funding to attend conferences, and other related information. Some students and faculty in the communication programme recognised that, at times, the geographical distance between the two hosting institutions made it challenging to learn what those in the other campus were up to. Students in the psychology programme meet once during the semester with the academic coordinator of the programme to express concerns and pose questions to both faculty and administration. While students in the communication programme recognised their individual advisors and mentors as easily accessible, the panel considers the psychology approach a good practice that might also be helpful to implement to students in the communication programme (**Finding 4**).

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

4. Legal status, admission and certification

Doctoral degree

The institution is entitled to award a doctorate.

Consistently applied, pre-defined, and published regulations are in place which cover student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.

[ESG 1.4]

Description

Legal status

According to the Statutes of Universidad de La Frontera, the university grants the academic degrees of Licentiate, Master, and Doctor. The university reports that, in accordance with the General Law of Chilean Education, the doctorate degree is the highest that a university can confer. This degree is awarded to students who hold a Licentiate or Master's degree in the respective discipline and have successfully completed an advanced programme of studies and research. The university states that this degree certifies the holder possesses the capacity and knowledge necessary to conduct original research. Additionally, it requires the preparation, defence, and approval of a thesis, which must involve original research conducted independently, contributing to the relevant discipline.

The university notes that the General Doctorate Regulations govern the offering of programmes with Double Graduation or jointly taught programmes. According to the General Doctorate Regulations, the university defines a regular student as one who has met the admission requirements, formalised their enrolment, and registered for the corresponding curricular activities or courses.

For the PhD programme “Communication”, the Universidad Austral de Chile (UACH) has a specific regulation that the PhD Programme, which leads to the awarding of the Doctor degree, is available to students who have previously earned a Bachelor's or Master's degree in the relevant discipline. The regulation states that, to achieve this degree, a student must complete an advanced programme of studies and research. This programme must certify that the graduate possesses the capacity and knowledge required to conduct original research independently, contributing significantly to the respective discipline.

Admission

a) General admission

According to Universidad de La Frontera, Title IV of the General Doctorate Regulations provides the regulations for "admission to doctoral programmes," with specific requirements outlined by each programme. The university states that Article 17 specifies that applicants must hold a Licentiate or Master's degree in the corresponding disciplinary field to enrol in a Doctorate Programme, unless the application falls under an international agreement or treaty signed by the State of Chile.

Article 18 indicates that within the deadlines specified in the calls for applications, applicants must submit their application for admission to the corresponding Postgraduate Programme Secretariat. The application should include a well-substantiated request for admission to the programme, an original certificate or legalised copy of the Licentiate or Master's degree, an original certificate or legalised photocopy of the corresponding academic transcript/grade report, and two reference letters sent directly to the Programme Director. At least one of these letters must be from an academic at the university where the applicant graduated or from the university or institution where they currently work. Any other background information required by the programme's regulation must also be included.

b) Admission requirements for PhD programme “Communication”

It is stated that two specific regulations at UFRO and UACH regulate the selection process for applicants, which is shared between both universities. It was mentioned that once accepted, half of the students of each cohort are enrolled at Universidad de La Frontera, while the other half are enrolled at Universidad Austral de Chile. According to the regulation, each university is responsible for the administrative aspects of its students. It is stated that each university has the authority to set the tuition fee for the programme autonomously but must consider the amount designated by the Chilean National Agency for Research and Development (ANID) as a reference for students receiving ANID scholarships. It was clarified that all students enrolled in the Doctorate Programme in Communication are regarded as regular students.

The application and admission process, as specified by the Postgraduate Regulations of both universities and standardised in the current Doctoral Regulations (Title V of the Programme Admission), involves a single annual application process in which both universities participate. Applicants must:

- a) Possess a Bachelor's or Master's Degree (or a Professional Degree equivalent to a Bachelor's Degree) in related disciplines.
- b) Submit their application within the stipulated deadlines, along with the required documents.

It was reported that the Academic Committee/Programme Committee uses specific criteria for selection, including:

1. Eligibility prerequisites:

- 1.1. Academic-professional curriculum vitae.
- 1.2. Certificate of Master's degree and/or Bachelor's degree and/or equivalent.
- 1.3. Personal letter stating motivations and intentions.
- 1.4. Transcript of undergraduate and Master's degree grades.
- 1.5. Letters of recommendation from two experienced academics.
- 1.6. Doctoral Research Proposal (based on the FONDECYT de Iniciación form).
- 1.7. Information on financial situation and sources of funding.
- 1.8. Self-report of English language proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels.

2. Selection criteria for admission:

- 2.1. Scientific publications (last ten years): - Number of publications in indexed journals (Wos, Scopus, Erihplus, SciELO) as sole author, first co-author, or corresponding author. - Number of publications in other indexes or databases (Latindex, Dialnet) in similar capacities.
- 2.2. Participation in research projects (last ten years) as responsible or participant.
- 2.3. Structuring and coherence of the research proposal, including project formulation, coherence, and relevance to the doctorate.
- 2.4. Personal interview to assess analytical skills, attitude, and motivation for the doctoral thesis.

The guidelines or rubric used for assessment, as detailed in the Joint Regulations (Art. 18), are published on the Doctorate programme website. The Academic Committee/Programme Committee, along with the Director, assesses the applications separately for each university to ensure equal student enrolment. Reportedly, the decision is communicated to selected applicants, who then formalise their enrolment according to each university's requirements. The committee also determines the Research Line for each student.

c) Admission requirements for PhD programme "Psychology"

The report outlines that the admission requirements for the programme are aligned with the entry profile as specified in Article 6 of the Internal Regulations. It states that applicants for the Doctorate Programme in Psychology must hold a Bachelor's and/or Master's degree in psychology or related disciplines. Candidates are expected to show interest in research and generating scientific knowledge, demonstrate competence in statistics and research methods (at a basic or intermediate level), and have reading comprehension in English. Additionally, they should have teaching and scientific research experience commensurate with their academic degree.

The selection criteria, along with their respective weightings, are detailed in Article 21 of the Internal Regulations and are available on the Programme's website. Applicants are assessed based on:

- Academic performance in obtaining a Bachelor's and/or Master's Degree in Psychology or a related area (15%).
- Competence in statistics and research methods corresponding to undergraduate training in psychology (20%).
- Competence in reading comprehension in English (15%).
- Participation in scientific research commensurate with their academic degree (20%).
- Teaching experience commensurate with their academic degree (10%).
- Quality of the research proposal (5%).
- Coherence and clarity of purpose in the interest in joining the programme (15%).

The programme has defined this entry profile to address the increasing diversity in applicant backgrounds, with recent years seeing a rise in applications from recent graduates rather than only experienced professionals. Therefore, the selection requirements are adjusted according to the applicant's academic degree, ensuring fairness.

The selection process is formally established and publicised on the programme's website. It involves an annual call for applications in the second semester of each year. Each call includes information about the programme's objectives, characteristics, entry and graduate profiles, recipients, study plan, accreditation, scholarship opportunities, selection criteria, required documentation, selection process stages and deadlines, programme cost, and contact information. Potential applicants should be aware of the possible research lines and corresponding thesis or dissertation opportunities.

Once applications are received, the Academic Committee reviews the documentation. Qualified applicants must then take:

- An examination of statistics and research methods.
- A test on reading comprehension in English.

The programme allows the substitution of these tests with the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) specific to Psychology and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or other equivalent international standardised tests deemed appropriate by the Academic Committee.

Recognition

It has been stated in the self-evaluation report that the PhD programme "Communication" allows the admission of students whose courses, modules, or credits obtained in doctoral programmes at other higher education institutions are recognised. According to the General Regulations for Doctoral Programmes issued by exempt resolution 3834 on 8 September 2017, this procedure at the Universidad de La Frontera requires the applicant to attach the study plan of these subjects and the grades obtained, both duly certified by the competent academic authority, and send them to the programme management. It was stated that the background information would be evaluated by the lecturer responsible for the equivalent subject, and if a favourable report is issued, the programme Director would request approval from the programme's Academic Committee. Upon approval, the validation would be made effective through a resolution sent to the Academic Registration Office and the Vice-Rectorate for Research and Postgraduate Studies. The regulations are available on the Universidad de La Frontera website.

Similarly, it was mentioned that at Universidad Austral de Chile, validation is regulated by the 2009 General Regulations for Doctoral Programmes. This regulation allows for the acceptance of a subject, research unit, or seminar taken either inside or outside Universidad Austral de Chile as equivalent for the doctoral programme. It is reported that the Director of the Graduate School is responsible for the validation and recognition of studies, based on the proposal of the Programme Committee, assigning the corresponding codes and credits and informing the relevant bodies. These regulations can be accessed on the Universidad Austral de Chile website.

Certification

The university notes that graduates of doctoral programmes receive a diploma with their degree, which is associated with the certification process of each programme. This process involves the delivery of a degree certificate or digital degree with an advanced electronic signature, followed by the subsequent delivery of the diploma within 90 working days. Students are informed of this timeline in writing when processing the certificate.

The university reports that there is no specific regulation governing the awarding of diplomas in postgraduate programmes, except for the exception indicated in the regulations for the creation of these programmes, which informs the characteristics they must have.

Graduates may opt for different certificates linked to their time at the university. These include certificates detailing the semesters they were a regular student, the range of dates they were enrolled at the university, academic performance certificates such as grades and transcripts, grade ranking certificates, certificates of hours for the programme studied, and a study plan resolution. This resolution includes the subjects and the number of hours for each and incorporates the regulations of the programme. The certificates are digital, with an advanced electronic signature, which has the same legal backing as a printed document.

Experts' evaluation

The universities provided good data to the panel of experts to assess their admission process and criteria. The panel also found in the interviews that generally the processes of admission and enrolment are communicated transparently. The panel judges the admissions criteria as generally appropriate but strongly recommends to develop a list of assumed competencies and knowledge that incomings are expected to have when entering the programme. This should include necessary prerequisites along the area of knowledge to allow for further deepening in the field and being at the forefront of academic research (**Finding 5**). This might lead to a more defined academic background of students and is seen as helpful to ensure the highest quality of PhD alumni. The general criteria and admissions criteria of both universities are the same.

In both programmes the institutions have included the option of electives for further working on areas that have not been touched upon sufficiently before. This is judged by the students themselves and based on the interviews as a successful strategy. Further modes of including additional learning are not established but are implemented by the students through their individual foci.

An outstandingly strong feature of both programmes is the provision of opportunities of international mobility for their students. Many students report on numerous activities and opportunities for international cooperation and (elongated) stays abroad. As both programmes are PhDs there is no need for learning agreements or further institutionalised processes.

Both universities are nationally accredited and recognised. They are legally entitled to awarding the degree of PhD and provide the necessary documents for the students.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

5. Academic level of supervisory staff

Doctoral degree

The composition (quantity, qualifications, professional and international experience, etc.) of the staff is appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Staff involved with teaching is qualified and competent to do so.

Transparent procedures are in place for the recruitment and development of staff.

[ESG 1.5]

Description

General regulations

According to the university's self-evaluation report, Universidad de La Frontera classifies its staff into two main groups: academic and non-academic. The report explains that academic staff are assigned to either the Regular Academic Body (CAR) or the Non-Regular Academic Body (CANR), with the possibility of being paid or Ad-Honorem.

The university describes the Regular Academic Body as constituting the stable academic staff of the institution. Members of this body are subject to the Academic Career, enter through a tenure-track search, and must possess a doctoral degree as a basic requirement. The Mechanism of Hierarchisation, applied by the Appointments and Promotions Committee, classifies them as Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Full Professor, with salaries associated with their hierarchy and levels A, B, and C for each, except for Instructors.

In contrast, the report outlines that the Non-Regular Academic Body comprises academics who have specific functions on defined-time contracts. These academics are not hierarchized nor subject to the Academic Career. Their salaries are made equivalent to one of the academic hierarchies, and they can be appointed as Emeritus Professor, Researcher, Visiting Professor, Practice Professor, or Assistant, according to the university's statute.

The university also highlights the inclusion of professionals assigned to departments or schools, who collaborate in teaching or research and are encouraged to generate academic turnover. According to the self-evaluation, these professionals must have an academic degree or proven expertise in their discipline. Those who meet the academic profiles defined by the institution and fill departmental vacancies can join the Regular Academic Body through the tenure-track route.

Furthermore, the university mentions that it has internal regulations for linking visiting academics, who are invited to participate in programmes to reinforce knowledge areas lacking consolidated specialists. Visiting professors may co-supervise theses or teach. Their suitability is regulated according to the accreditation regulations of the Postgraduate Academic Body, which establishes criteria and procedures for accreditation for those participating in Doctorate and Master's Programmes.

UFRO' regulations stipulate that visiting professors may assume roles in thesis co-supervision and teaching, provided they hold a doctorate degree and meet the productivity requirements established by the Chilean National Accreditation Commission.

The university also reports offering professional training through the Vice-Rectorate of Undergraduate Studies. This includes access to training that enhances teaching practices, such as reverse classroom diplomas, workshops, micro-courses, and training sessions. A maximum of three hours per week is allocated for teacher training activities, approved by the Department or School Director. Academics engaged in full-time or part-time postgraduate studies will have their professional development hours accredited by the Postgraduate Directorate.

Support and incentives provided by the Research Directorate for academics include research strengthening, such as payment of publication fees in Wos/Scopus journals, additional equipment for projects, and support for new researchers. Formative research activities aim to build new knowledge to enhance undergraduate teaching. Economic incentives are provided for recognising the most-cited articles, scientific productivity, and other achievements.

The university asserts that professional development commissions aim to improve academic training in postgraduate programmes, while study commissions allow academics to attend academic events.

PhD programme Communication

The PhD programme is reported to comprise 30 academic staff members and 11 academic collaborators, all holding Doctorate degrees and meeting the accreditation requirements set by both institutions and the National Accreditation Commission (CNA). Additionally, it is noted that the Programme benefits from the contributions of 30 visiting academics from various universities, as specified in the annexes of the SER.

It has been documented that all teaching staff members are full-time professors at either Universidad Austral de Chile (UACH) or Universidad de La Frontera (UFRO). The Collaborating Professors, totalling 11, conduct research aligned with the Programme's lines and have significant experience in their respective fields. These collaborators are permitted, under current regulations, to engage in teaching and thesis supervision as Co-sponsors.

The requirements for academic staff members, collaborating professors, and visiting lecturers participating in the Programme stipulate that they must hold a Doctorate degree. Their main research activities, key publications, and significant academic engagements over the past five years are detailed in their Curriculum Vitae.

It has been observed that the academics associated with the Programme maintain outstanding track records and scientific productivity, frequently securing external research projects that support the development of their research lines. Between 2018 and 2022, these academics participated as principal researchers or co-researchers in 51 externally funded projects as responsible researchers. The report includes a table showing the number of external competitive projects (FONDECYT and others) active between 2018 and 2022 for these academics.

PhD programme Psychology

The report highlights that the academic staff of the PhD programme "Psychology" at the Universidad de La Frontera comprises 19 members. These members maintain active research lines with national and international collaborations and have authored numerous publications in WoS/Scopus or Scielo. Additionally, their research is funded by external sources such as Fondecyt Regular, Iniciación, Postdoctoral, Fondef, and Fonis.

To join the academic staff, individuals must hold a doctorate and demonstrate a strong academic and research track record, evidenced by research projects and scientific publications. The Postgraduate Academic Department periodically evaluates the academics based on a detailed rubric of productivity requirements, classifying them as either staff or collaborating professors. Staff professors can supervise theses and be responsible for subjects, whereas collaborating professors may participate in subjects as lecturers and form part of thesis committees. This ensures that only qualified individuals supervise theses and manage subjects.

It is also stated that to act as dissertation advisors, academics must be accredited by the Postgraduate Academic Department and be formally integrated into the Doctoral Academic Staff. The thesis evaluation committee requires at least one external academic to ensure diverse perspectives. This committee evaluates the thesis project and oversees the thesis's execution, ensuring the final document meets the programme's standards. External academics must meet the same criteria as internal staff, including having a doctorate and a verifiable academic and research career.

To guarantee the qualifications of external evaluators, they must be accredited as visiting lecturers by the Postgraduate Academic Department, demonstrating compliance with CNA accreditation criteria in Psychology. The report mentions that these lecturers receive training in teaching methodologies and ICT use, provided by the Department of Curricular and Teaching Development, to ensure ongoing curricular updates and the incorporation of new teaching tools.

The report further explains that the Programme Director and Coordination meet with external evaluators to introduce them to the programme's requirements and guide them on their roles and administrative

responsibilities. External evaluators can also receive support for text revisions in English, incentives for published articles, and assistance in project formulation from the Innovation and Technology Transfer Department, as well as support for academic mobility from the Vice-Rectorate for Research and Postgraduate Studies and the Faculty of Education, Social Sciences, and Humanities.

Each sponsoring professor or dissertation advisor supervises their students' work. The internal regulations allow for two dissertation advisors when a thesis involves two different areas of the programme. If a dissertation advisor loses accreditation or their contract expires, another member of the programme will assume the responsibilities, ensuring continuity for the student.

The programme benefits from the institutional resources offered by the university through the People Development Division, including training and development opportunities for both academic and administrative staff. The university regulation outlines the role of an Academic Coordinator of Doctoral Programmes to support coordination and organisation. The Academic Coordinator aids in communication between students and academics, addressing regulatory questions and facilitating the development of subjects.

Support services and research environments are integral to the programme's success, ensuring that both staff and students have the necessary resources and support to achieve their academic and research goals.

Experts' evaluation

The academic supervisory staff engaged in the PhD programs at both universities demonstrate a high level of qualification and experience, ensuring the provision of expert guidance and rigorous academic oversight. The supervisors hold advanced academic degrees—predominantly at the doctoral level—and maintain active engagement in research and scholarly publication, which reinforces the intellectual environment of the programs. Many are recognized for their contributions to their respective fields, and their expertise aligns closely with the thematic and methodological demands of the doctoral research undertaken. This breadth and depth of academic competence enable them to provide substantive, discipline-specific mentorship while fostering the development of independent research skills among doctoral candidates.

In addition to their strong academic profiles, both institutions have established robust systems for the ongoing professional development of their academic staff. These include structured opportunities for participation in specialized training courses, workshops, conferences, and international academic exchanges. Staff members are encouraged to pursue further education and research collaboration, often supported by institutional funding or competitive grants, thereby ensuring continuous updating of their pedagogical approaches, research methodologies, and subject-specific knowledge. The availability and active promotion of such opportunities reflect a strategic commitment to the enhancement of academic quality and innovation in doctoral supervision.

Overall, the quality of the academic supervisory staff, combined with the systematic provision of further education possibilities, constitutes a significant strength of the PhD programs. This combination not only sustains high academic standards but also fosters a dynamic and forward-looking scholarly environment, which benefits both supervisors and doctoral candidates alike.

For the PhD in Communication it can be highlighted that most staff are experts in qualitative research methods, anthropological research, and critical-cultural studies. On the other hand, the *PhD in Psychology* offers a staff portfolio recognized for their strong emphasis on quantitative research methodologies, advanced statistical analysis, and experimental approaches. With no surprise the panel recommends that the programmes further promote cross-collaboration when it comes to methodological education and promotion (**Finding 6**). Such collaboration would enhance the availability of courses and training opportunities focused on qualitative and mixed-methods research, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive and versatile academic preparation for doctoral students.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

6. Support and research environment

Doctoral degree

Guidance and support are available for students which include advice on achieving a successful completion of their studies.

Appropriate facilities and resources are available for learning and research activities.

[ESG 1.6]

Description

General learning resources

The Universidad de La Frontera provides laboratory space and equipment for student research, supported by the BIOREN-UFRO centre established in 2009, which houses instruments such as flow cytometers, microscopes, and sequencing platforms. Trained technical staff operate these facilities.

The university offers access to a wide range of electronic journals and databases via its library system, including JSTOR, Scopus, and Web of Science. The physical library network spans several campuses and holds over 130,000 printed volumes and hundreds of thousands of e-resources. Library services include interlibrary loans and training in resource use.

Students have access to literature across research areas, with specific title counts reported for disciplines such as psychology, communication, and anthropology. The library infrastructure comprises five buildings and over 6,000 square meters of space.

PhD programme Communication

This programme accesses digital collections such as Digitalia Hispánica, SpringerLink, and Wiley. It participates in three indexed journals and collaborates with Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Students benefit from agreements with foreign universities enabling co-tutorship and double degrees. Research stays are possible at 11 international institutions. Participation in national conferences is common, with some financial support provided.

Ethical review processes are required for thesis projects, and students contribute to teaching and outreach activities. Collaboration agreements support applied research and public engagement.

PhD programme Psychology

Resources include access to e-books, journals, and databases relevant to psychology. The infrastructure includes classrooms, labs, and virtual learning platforms.

Students receive training in quantitative research methods and engage in research projects. Conference attendance is supported, and internships are facilitated through external funding.

The programme emphasizes ethics, international cooperation, and teaching experience. A double-degree agreement with Universidad del Norte (Colombia) is under development.

Support

The Postgraduate Academic Directorate provides information sessions on administrative matters. The university offers tuition fee exemptions and other internal scholarships. Students can access laptops and support for conference attendance.

Internationalisation is encouraged through internships and exchange agreements. Co-tutorships with external academics are required in the Communication programme.

Teaching and outreach activities are included as part of the curriculum, with some collaboration involving state and civil society organisations.

Scholarships

Scholarships are mainly funded through ANID's National Doctoral Scholarship, covering tuition and maintenance. Additional institutional scholarships (e.g. maintenance, thesis completion, connectivity) are available, subject to budget and academic performance.

ANID awards approximately 900 scholarships annually, and Universidad de La Frontera students receive a portion of these.

Research environment

An internationalisation policy guides activities across the university. Initiatives include short courses through the Postgraduate Summer School and industry internships under FRO 19101. These efforts aim to build skills and establish professional links.

The PhD in Psychology targets global psychosocial issues and provides training in advanced statistical methods. Students are involved in funded projects and supported in publishing and presenting research.

Internships at institutions such as UCLA and Twente University are supported through scholarships. Ethical approval processes are in place for all thesis research.

Graduates often pursue academic roles or secure national research grants. Teaching experience is embedded in the curriculum, and participation in ethical research is mandatory.

Experts' evaluation

As the panel found confirmed in the interviews, the programmes provide all necessary documents like course and module descriptions online to the students. This includes all necessary further information on assessment, learning and teaching. The courses are equipped with credit points leading to a numerically transparent communication of intended workload. Due to the programmes being PhDs, the number of courses is rather low, which means there are no anticipated or communicated problems with overlaps by the students. Both programmes appear to be very well equipped with resources leading to an excellent support of students. There are co-working areas, well equipped library resources and necessary physical room for individual and joint work, as well as laboratories available.

The universities provide extensive institutional and individualised guidance, which is arranged partly by the faculty and partly by university. All students are accompanied by an academic supervisor, and it is simultaneously ensured that no more than two students are supervised by one member of faculty. For the programmes, a mandatory meeting is set up once per semester. Financial support and scholarships are an integral part of the PhD programmes and students must try to apply for scholarship by themselves while knowing that an institutional safety net is available in case of non-success. Internships are strongly encouraged, and many opportunities are utilised by students nationally and internationally.

Many students reported of being able to have elongated stays abroad or present their works at international conferences. This is vividly supported by the universities by granting travel grants and financial support for any kind of academic need. Students are encouraged to make use of the variety of (master level) electives, which provides them with the valuable opportunity to create an individual profile tailored to their own needs and plans (see comment above). As the PhD qualification calls for the ability to internationally recognized scholar activity, the programme should further push their students towards broadening their language skills, with offering students the chance to engage with academic writing in a language outside of Spanish (**Finding 7**).

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

7. Public information

Doctoral degree

Impartial and objective, up-to-date information regarding the programme and its qualifications is published regularly. This published information is appropriate for and available to relevant stakeholders.

[ESG 1.8]

Description

According to the self-evaluation report, the Postgraduate Academic Directorate (DAP) conducts communication campaigns to disseminate academic offerings through digital media, including platforms such as META (Instagram and Facebook), LinkedIn (Lead Form), Programmatic, Google Search, and YouTube. The university has provided a campaign spot for postgraduate studies, available on social media.

The report mentions that there is currently a pilot platform for candidate applications for programmes in the admission stages, accessible at UFRO Postgraduate Applications on the homepage. The Postgraduate Academic Directorate's website provides detailed information about the programmes, including descriptions, graduate profiles, curriculums, research lines, faculty, admission requirements, national accreditation, contact information, and the official website of each postgraduate programme. This information is regularly updated and disseminated during the respective admission periods.

Experts' evaluation

Both PhD programmes have informative and updated exclusive web pages (<https://www.doctoradoencomunicacion.cl/> ; <https://doctoradopsicologia.ufro.cl/>). From an expert's point of view, all relevant information for the public, external stakeholders, and students can be found there in a detailed and clear form.

For each programme the focus of content, the duration of the programme as well as the study and semester schedule are presented. Mandatory and elective modules, as well as (for psychology) an overview of the 6 psychological laboratories are documented. For the learning outcomes the general and specific programme objectives are clearly stated. Learning outcomes are emphasized, whereby the profile of the graduates refers primarily to an academic career. The possibility of double graduation with international partner universities is also highlighted.

The information also covers selection and admission: The website provides detailed information on selection criteria, required documents and diplomas, application deadlines, and steps in the selection procedure. The

provided information also addresses research fields, participation in congresses and publication activities are presented. Academic management of the programmes, professors and visiting professors are shown.

Furthermore, the website also shares information on the awarded qualification awarded and national (CNA-Chile) and international accreditations awarded are shown in updated form. In addition, more specific information can be found on social media channels such as Instagram and YouTube. For example, each psychological laboratory has its own channel.

From the expert panels point of view both programmes reflect the region's unique local and indigenous cultural background. This unique feature and strength of eth programmes could be emphasized more in public information to make the PhD programmes more attractive and competitive (**Finding 8**).

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

V. Recommendation of the panel of experts

The panel of experts recommends accrediting the study programmes "Communication (PhD)" (in cooperation with Universidad Austral de Chile) and "Psychology (PhD)", offered by Universidad de La Frontera, without conditions.

Commendation:

The expert panel commends the Universidad de La Frontera and its partner institution for the high calibre of academic supervisory staff engaged in the doctoral programmes in Communication and Psychology, whose advanced qualifications, active research engagement, and alignment with programme themes ensure rigorous and discipline-specific mentorship. The sustained scientific productivity and significant external funding achievements of these supervisors foster a rich intellectual environment that supports the development of independent researchers. Furthermore, the panel highlights the unique character of each programme, which successfully integrates regional relevance with broader cultural dimensions. The PhD in Communication distinguishes itself through its intentional focus on qualitative research methods and critical-cultural perspectives, enabling doctoral candidates to address themes rooted in the cultural, social, and indigenous contexts of southern Chile while engaging in global academic debates. Similarly, the PhD in Psychology reflects the region's specific societal needs by combining rigorous quantitative research approaches with an awareness of cultural psychology, thereby preparing graduates to contribute to both scientific advancement and culturally responsive practice. This capacity to ground advanced research training in the realities of the local environment, while maintaining strong links to culture and international scholarly discourse, represents a distinctive strength of both programmes.

Findings:

1. In the psychology programme, the inclusion of qualitative research should be promoted for a more comprehensive methodological basis.
2. In the psychology programme, the involvement of the labour market in continuous programme development should be systematised and publicly available curricular documentation should be improved.
3. A more systematic annual data collection process involving all stakeholders, particularly graduates and the labour market is encouraged.

4. To enable exchange on teaching and learning practice from psychology programme to meet once during the semester with the academic coordinator should also be implemented in the communication programme.
5. Recognizing the broadness of entry qualifications the universities should develop a transparent expectation on the necessary entry criteria – in the form of knowledge, skills, competencies - for the relevant field of study.
6. Cross programme collaboration is recommended in the field of education and their methods.
7. The programmes should further push and support their students towards broadening their language skills, with offering students the chance to engage with academic writing in a language different from Spanish.
8. Both programmes reflect the region's unique local and indigenous cultural background, a fact that should be emphasised more in public information to make the PhD programmes more attractive and competitive, both in Chile as well as internationally.