

Report on the EUA Doctoral Programmes project

Vision

- To achieve the ambitious Lisbon objectives, Europe both seeks and needs to increase the number of researchers and *research related careers*, and doctoral training programmes can be seen as a cornerstone in reaching such a goal

Outline

- The main findings of the Project address three
- issues:
 - the Structure and Organisation of Doctoral Programmes
 - Supervision, Monitoring and Assessment
 - Mobility, European Collaboration and Joint Doctoral Degrees.
- The analysis focuses on connecting these issues with innovations and good practices in university experience across Europe.

Structure and organisation of PhD programmes

- large diversity, across countries, across universities, across faculties of universities
- Administrative management of doctoral programmes at the university (not faculty) level and open access to common regulations on university websites play an important role in the organisation of doctoral programmes and enhances transparency of the whole process.

Structure and organisation of PhD programmes

- Doctoral programmes show considerable differences between disciplines in performing research, linked to different methodologies, scientific tools and ways of analysing the data.
- It is often **disciplinary differences**, and not country, cultural or institutional differences, that require specific approaches.

Structure and organisation of PhD programmes

- Two models:
 - individual study programme based on an informal to formal working alliance between a supervisor and a doctoral candidate (an apprenticeship model)
 - A structured programme organised within research groups or research/graduate/doctoral schools with two phases: a taught phase (mandatory and voluntary courses or modules) and a research phase.
- On the basis of the present study, it would appear that individual doctoral programmes (apprenticeship model) are questioned.
- There is an increasing tendency in many European countries towards structured programmes with doctoral candidates grouped in research/graduate/ doctoral schools

Structure and organisation of PhD programmes

Training in Core and Transferable Skills

- they need to offer a wide choice of courses and modules as a part of structured doctoral programmes scientific training in core research skills
- training in transferable (generic) personal and professional skills and competences

Structure and organisation of PhD programmes

Research Environment

Research Groups, Clusters and Networks

- it is crucial for universities to focus on achieving a critical mass of doctoral candidates, by integrating doctoral candidates into research groups or clusters in this way they become an integral part of the research community, which can enhance their motivation and performance.
- In this sense, doctoral training aims to provide training *by* research, not only *for* research.

Structure and organisation of PhD programmes

Duration of Doctoral Programmes

- **Length of Doctoral Studies**
- **Diversity of Recruitment Practices**
- **Selection of Doctoral Candidates**
- ***Profile and Status of Doctoral candidates***
 - Profile is changing rapidly: Doctoral training programmes are reflecting and tackling this reality through finding the right balance between research, which remains the core element of doctoral education, and the necessary orientation towards a wider labour market.

Supervision, Monitoring and assessment

Qualification Requirements for a supervisor

- Supervision is **critically important** for the quality of experience and training of doctoral candidates.
- To increase the awareness of supervisors' responsibilities, some universities produce **handbooks, guidelines and codes for supervisors**. A viewpoint expressed in the present project suggests that **training for supervisors** should be a mandatory practice for scholars supervising doctoral candidates
- On the issue of the number of doctoral candidates per supervisor, a common average is from **four to six candidates** but there tends to be no specified maximum limit.
- Many universities have introduced models of **double, joint or panel supervision** which are considered as more open and transparent allowing the doctoral candidate to consult and seek advice from others in addition to her/his main supervisor.

Supervision, Monitoring and assessment

monitoring and assessment

- Good practices used at several universities are:
- Regular meetings between the candidate and the supervisor
 - Regular review stages,
 - Feedback from the candidate on the doctoral programme, training and supervision in forms of assessment and evaluation.
- The project showed that student logs and websites, which have been successfully introduced at several Universities

Supervision, Monitoring and assessment *requirements for the PhD*

- an original piece of research work and placement of it in the context of the theoretical knowledge and the literature in the field
- The required number of articles in peer reviewed journals varies from one to five.
- The defence of the thesis is usually public
- Two to three reviewers who submit written reviews.
- The defence itself consists of the candidate's presentation of main points of his/her research work and thesis, followed by an open discussion between the defence committee and the candidate.

Mobility, European Collaboration and Joint Doctoral Degrees

- provide appropriate mobility mechanisms to enhance the relevant research experience of their doctoral candidates, **but there are still numerous obstacles of a legal, administrative, financial, personal and cultural character that limit mobility throughout Europe**
- Successful mobility is based on close and well-organised international and inter-institutional cooperation.
- inter-**sectorial** mobility
- **Joint doctoral degree programmes**

Summary

- Individual study programmes (“apprenticeship model”) are questioned as being appropriate to meet the new multiple challenges of research training for careers in a competitive labour market, with an increasing tendency in many European countries towards structured programmes with doctoral candidates grouped in research/graduate/ doctoral schools.

Summary

- but there are still numerous obstacles of a legal, administrative, financial, personal and cultural character that limit mobility throughout Europe.
- Issues focused upon in the Project include **international mobility and inter-institutional collaboration**

Summary: conclusions

- Doctoral programmes are considered to be a crucial source of a new generation of researchers and to serve as the main bridge between the European Higher Education and Research Areas
- They are increasingly introducing courses and modules offering transferable skills training and preparing candidates for the careers in various sectors

Summary: conclusions

- The present project, in common with the experience of other studies, points to the need for more systematic collection of data on doctorate completion rates and career outcomes. For the future implementation of reforms in doctoral programmes to be carried out effectively, the collection and analysis of such “key indicator” data will be essential in measuring the success of structured doctoral programmes in achieving policy objectives.