

DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTORAL STUDIES: LEARNING THE BEST PRACTICES

Melita Kovacevic

EUA-CDE Steering Committee Chair

Former Vice-Rector for Research and Technology

University of Zagreb

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Topics

- Doctoral School framework and setting up
- Doctoral student selection and admission procedures
- Requirements for doctoral curricula
- Main procedures of doctoral programmes
- Doctoral defence procedures
- Doctoral school quality assurance procedures

Doctoral School framework and setting up

Doctoral School - form of **structured doctoral training** established at different institutional and functional levels, depending on the current development and experiences in doctoral education and the objectives to be achieved

In Europe, a **huge variety** can be found in terms of size, academic content, institutional setting, national and local traditions, foundation histories and incentives.

There is **no general answer** to the question of which' model is appropriate in which situation!

But: in most cases, doctoral school is a **strategic and service "umbrella"** for all doctoral programmes included. This model of doctoral schools provides a **common strategy and central services** of the university.

Preferred way of establishing g doctoral school is by **gradual accession** of doctoral studies currently offered at the university.

Doctoral student selection and admission procedures

The situation varies across Europe, but most universities have **written regulations** and procedures for admission of doctoral candidates

Enrolment is mostly based on a public call for application via strong competition for limited places in doctoral schools and research labs *or/and* for stipends.

Enrolment quotas are mostly determined on the basis of availability of research, teaching and mentorship capacities of the doctoral school

The **criteria for evaluating** the applicants usually include: graduate study grades, interest shown in scientific or artistic research, publications, references by teachers and potential mentors, and a research topic proposal.

In most universities, interview with the applicant is an obligatory part of the enrolment procedure in order to demonstrate ability for outstanding research topics and research skills.

Requirements for doctoral curricula

Doctoral curricula within the doctoral school should meet the following requirements:

- Scientific disciplines/areas/fields wide enough to take advantage of the interdisciplinary potential of the university and **achieve sustainability** of doctoral education
- **Interdisciplinary collaboration**, opening of research and teaching capacity to other doctoral programmes within the doctoral school
- Suggesting research areas and **research topics related to current national and international research projects**
- **High-level criteria for scientific publications** thematically related to doctoral research
- **Research seminars, workshops and discussion groups**, designed for the purpose of developing research work, critical thinking, acquisition of methodology and acquisition of generic skills.

Main procedures of doctoral programmes

- The **central component** of a doctoral study programme is scientific or artistic research and creativity.
- Doctoral programme training **enhances scientific knowledge** in the field of the doctoral project and/or it expands knowledge where it connects with other disciplines and societal challenges.
- **It is recommended that teaching in the form of courses** does not exceed 20 per cent of the overall load expected by the study programme, measured in terms of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).
- In some institutions, doctoral candidates have **heavy teaching loads** – this can influence the effectiveness and the quality of their dissertations, so should be limited!

Main procedures of doctoral programmes

- The doctoral candidate is required to have **at least one scholarly work** (internationally reviewed and thematically related to the doctoral research) published or accepted for publication.
- In order to be **awarded a doctorate degree**, doctoral candidate are required both to pass the various course examinations that form part of the postgraduate programme and to produce an acceptable academic dissertation.

Doctoral defence procedures

- The doctoral candidate can have the dissertation defence, after the positive evaluation of the dissertation evaluation committee.
- The **dissertation defence is public** and may be undertaken in a language other than the language of the country the university is located, as prescribed locally.
- In some countries, the supervisor participates in the dissertation defence procedure, but **cannot participate** in the passing of the evaluation.
- The dissertation defence committee brings forward an evaluation after the defence. The defence evaluation can be *has defended* or *has not defended*. The evaluation is passed with a majority vote of the members of the dissertation defence committee.

Doctoral school quality assurance procedures

- The governing body of the doctoral school is required to:
 - **Provide detailed record on the research work** and other fulfilled study obligations of each doctoral candidate, including an obligations plan
 - consider the **work load** and achievement of the supervisor
 - **keep a record** on the number of doctoral candidates currently enrolled and the number of those who have defended their dissertations for each supervisor.
- The supervisor is required to submit an **annual report** on the work of the doctoral candidate to the Doctoral study council.
- The doctoral candidate is required to **submit a report** on his or her work (possibly including a research presentation) to the Doctoral study council.
- The Doctoral study council performs a **self-evaluation** each year on the basis of the annual reports of supervisors and doctoral candidates.

The result of a good doctoral education is not a good doctoral thesis
but **good new doctor.**

