Structuring Doctoral Education
Conclusions and recommendations

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How and why to achieve critical mass

Why?

✓ The lonely researcher is history
✓ We need to build a doctoral community based on the institutional priorities in research – build on strength
✓ Critical mass has the potential research quality
✓ Increases motivation of the doctoral candidates
✓ Leads to higher productivity
✓ Increases accountability
✓ Better possibilities for funding
✓ Increases the depth of the individual research
Critical mass II

How?

- Critical mass and research intensity can be attained using different strategies
- A question of content rather than numbers
- Building networks and clusters
- Using inter- and intra-disciplinary co-operation
- Regional, national and international strategies
How to balance the tasks of doctoral candidates

The core component of doctoral education is research

- Research practice should significantly prevail over coursework
- The research project should build the capacity of autonomous research
- Original research corresponding to and being communicated according to the criteria of the discipline

Coursework

- Deepens knowledge, advanced methodologies and exposing to the research discussions
- Opportunities for career developments
- Should make sense for the individual research and career projects
- Minimum and maximum requirements
Tasks of the doctoral candidates II

- Teaching/research assistentships
  - Clear contractual and balanced arrangement
  - Activities should be part of professional development – not only for financing or dependent on research agendas outside the candidate’s own research
  - Part of high-level academic education

- Status of the doctoral candidate
  - Recognised as an early stage researcher
  - Should contain clear rights and duties
What needs to be structured?

- Making faculty take responsibility and ownership
  - Developing awareness of supervisors
  - Professional development of faculty

- Looking at output and outcomes
  - Structures to improve completion
  - Financial support is important to improve completion rates
  - Part time arrangements
  - Securing a wide spectrum of competencies developed through research

- Data collection
  - Monitoring progress
What needs to be structured? II

Nurture support structures for a research culture

- Extending support for research capacity and infrastructure for all disciplines
- Developing continuous self-assessment
The role of structured programmes at different institutional levels

Who decides what – and where?

- Government regulations – should recognise university autonomy
- Universities should independently develop strategies and standards for doctoral education based on the research strategy of the institution
- Including freedom to choose to implement credit systems or similar
- Limit the number of different doctorates

- Do not overregulate at the top – do not underregulate at the bottom

Diversity of models according to university culture

- Providing transparent supporting structures
- Have clear decision processes
- Universities must be accountable based on self-evaluation
How to balance creativity and structure

- There is no contradiction between creativity and structures
- Excellence comes with excitement
- Structures must be flexible to foster creativity as a process and originality
- Admission should take into account the creative potential of the candidate
- Finding an individual balance between research and coursework

✓ Keep the same balance for supervisors
Building a Research Community

- The research community should be self-organised
  - Open to society and to other stakeholders

- Structuring the community
  - Physical space to accommodate informal communication
  - Events
  - Build bridges to MA and postdoc level
  - Problem-based approach to inter-disciplinary communities

- Building collective identity and recognising the community and organisation of doctoral candidates
  - Part of institutional strategies and included in self-assessment

- Dedicated and sustainable funding for community building
Thank you for your attention

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