

Doctoral Programmes in Europe

Nice 7/9 december 2006



WG3: Generic skills training for employability of doctoral candidates and career development both inside and outside academia

I. Topic

Working group 3 will address the importance of the development of generic skills training for doctoral candidates and identify good practice in the provision of generic skills training for doctoral candidates.

II. Starting Point

The Salzburg Recommendations (2005) mention “the promotion of innovative structures to meet the challenge of interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills”.

III. Issues for Discussion

Generic (transferable, transversal, life) skills training in doctoral education has been developing in some countries and universities as a response to the changing nature of the global labour market and the need for higher employability of doctoral candidates in all sectors of the society. It is often seen as an instrument for doctoral candidates’ empowerment, leading to raising awareness of skills they acquire during their doctoral studies and often are not able to identify. Its aim is to prepare the doctoral candidate better for her/his professional career.

Generic skills training may cover a wide variety of different topics and can be offered in different ways – through courses, lectures, workshops or summer schools organised at university, doctoral school or even regional/ national level. Doctoral candidates may prefer more thesis-centred methods of such training (i.e. through “learning by doing” in the course of their research).

Over the last year different examples of good practice in this area both in relation to the topics covered and the methodology used have been presented in various EUA Workshops. Supporting universities in this way is similarly a key responsibility of the UK GRAD programme and a main area in which the UK Council of Graduate Education is very active¹.

¹ UK Council of Graduate Education conference “New Dimensions for Doctoral Programmes in Europe: Training, Employability and the European Knowledge Agenda” held in July 2006 at the EUI in Florence

IV. Workshop Outcomes

- Points of consensus
- Topics for further discussion