

Organisation, conditions and regulations of doctoral training

Bologna Seminar "Doctoral Studies in the European Higher Education Area"

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Organisation of Doctoral Education (DE)

- **Trend towards structures: structured programmes and doctoral/ research/ graduate schools**
 - ✓ Structured programmes: may be organised within a faculty or a department, but contain components of structure
 - ✓ Doctoral/ graduate/ research schools: independent organisational units with a clear effective administration, strong leadership and specific funding supporting this structure (diverse models)
 - **Aim:** to achieve critical mass, stimulate research environment, enhance interdisciplinarity and interinstitutional collaboration, improve TTD, improve quality while keeping diversity
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Components of structured DE

- Structured DE has a transparent process of access, recruitment, selection, admission and registration (conditions available online)
- It consists of educational (taught) phase and research phase
 - ✓ but: RESEARCH is the MAIN component of DE, educational part is supportive and should be only an added value („structure“ does not necessarily mean numerous compulsory courses and even exams, but it should offer a number of optional courses in science and in transferable skills – each doctoral candidate can select what is best for him/her)

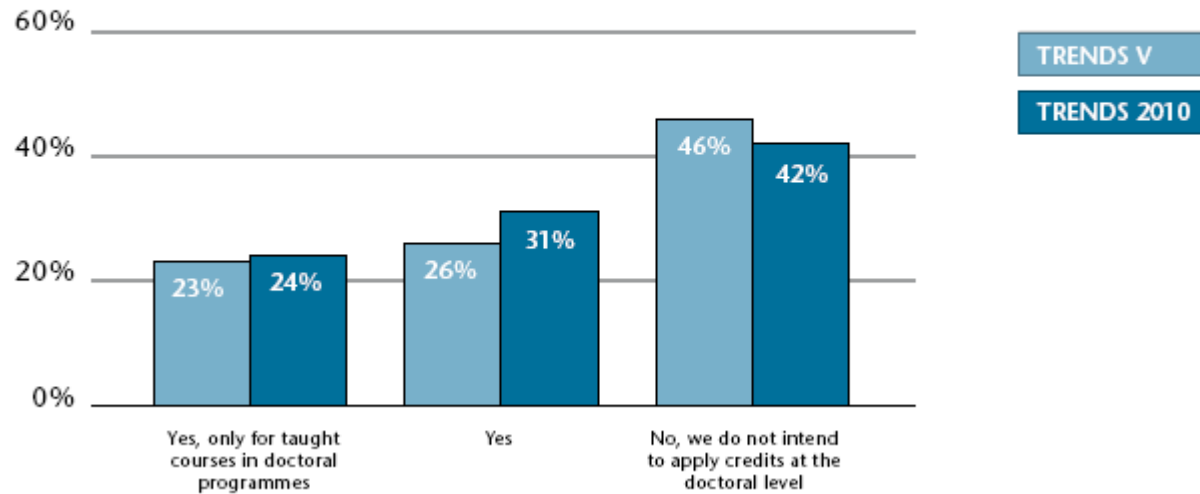
Components of structured DE (cont.)

- It is based on clear institutional regulations/ codes of practice defining rights and duties of the institution, the supervisor and the doctoral candidate, including the contract btw the three parties
 - It „takes care“ of supervision (multiple s.; supervisors' training)
 - It has a well-functioning monitoring system (e.g. progress reports)
 - It supports internationalisation and mobility (of candidates and staff)
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The role of credits in structured DE

- Since 2003 when EUA started the debate on DE, credits/ ECTS have provoked passionate „pro and con“ discussions – no consensus ever
- Salzburg I Conclusions did not mention credits (for the same reason – open question)
- Credits/ECTS as a tool of measurement of student workload – well applied in 1st and 2nd cycles, but in the 3rd cycle?
- The use of credits/ECTS is mainly questionable for the research part of DE – how to measure research?

Table 17. Q22. If your institution has a credit system, is it also used at the doctoral level?



Trends 2010 (5 % error margin)

Credits/ECTS misunderstandings

- The credit system in DE (and even in the first two cycles) is not the same in all Bologna countries (46)
 - Different number of different credits is used for different activities in different countries and universities – for this reason it is difficult to use credits in DE for recognition in case of mobility
 - Open questions:
 - ✓ What are credits in DE used for (courses, exams, research components – conferences, papers, mobility, thesis?)
 - ✓ What are benefits / disadvantages of credits/ ECTS in DE?
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Credits/ ECTS in Salzburg II (2010)

- Credits/ ECTS may be useful in doctoral programmes mainly in the taught components of DE, especially when related to cross-institutional and international (joint) doctoral programmes
 - However, an increasing number of HEIs seem to question or to give up the credit system in DE (following their experience with credits/ ECTS) due to incompatibility and difficulties in measuring research performance and its outcomes
 - To use or not to use? Each HEIs has to decide – depends on different missions and specialisations of HEIs and their DE
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Credits/ ECTS in Salzburg II (2010) – cont.

- High quality DE needs a stimulating research environment driven by enthusiasm, curiosity and creativity, and should not be motivated by the collection of credits.
 - Applying a credit system in DE is not a necessary precondition for establishing structured programmes or doctoral/ graduate/ research schools.
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DE Outcomes

- DE as the third cycle of the Bologna process = the first phase of the early stage researcher's career
 - DE differs from the first two cycles: core component of DE is the advancement of knowledge through original research
 - Individual progression and development is central when dealing with outcomes in DE
 - Dublin Descriptors - a valuable guide for the outcomes in DE
 - The main outcome in DE: the early stage researcher and his/her contribution to the society through knowledge, competences and skills learnt by undertaking research
 - The main outcome of his/her research: the thesis
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Mobility in DE

- Mobility = part of an internationalisation process and a tool towards achieving the ERA and EHEA
 - Support of international and intersectorial mobility and internationalisation of DE: an important component of university strategies
 - ✓ Collaborative and joint doctoral programmes (with clearly defined mobility plans and policies)
 - ✓ Internationalisation inside universities: recruiting more international staff, organisation of int. summer schools and conferences; using new technologies for e-learning or teleconferences, etc.
 - ✓ Collaboration with industry (industrial doctorates; intersectorial mobility)
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Mobility in DE (cont.)

- Mobility: an added value for career development of ESRs
 - Mobility should not be seen as not a goal in itself, but as a strategic tool leading to the wider research experience of doctoral candidates and to better collaboration and networking of institutions
 - HEIs, doctoral programmes/ schools should provide support mechanisms for mobility of their candidates
 - Mobility as brain circulation (partnerships) rather than brain drain
 - Limitations: remaining obstacles, funding and 3-year time limit for doctorates
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Conclusion

- DE in Europe: in a process of a reform described as a mini-revolution
 - DE in Europe is characterised by a large diversity in organisation that should be supported
 - DE in the Bologna process: One goal (high quality DE), different routes (flexible routes tailored for and by each institution)
 - It is important to avoid any overregulation in doctoral education. The third cycle is significantly different from the first and second cycles.
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Thank you for your attention