

## **Examining the doctorate: international case studies**

While there have been a few studies in individual countries, there has been no attempt to systematically study doctoral examination on a cross-national basis and little is known about the different ways in which institutions and countries have sought to ensure that the awarded degree is comparable in standards. This project seeks to provide answers through case studies of doctoral examinations in 20 countries which collectively are responsible for over 75% of known global doctoral graduations.

All of the contributors have been asked to write case studies based on a common set of topics, namely:

1. Is there a national framework for doctoral examination? (enshrined in legislation and/or set out in codes of practice);
2. How are doctoral degree outcomes defined? (by the state and/or quality watchdogs and/or institutions);
3. What is the structure for doctoral examination? (thesis or thesis plus oral);
4. What are the policies and procedures governing doctoral examination? (rules for submission, appointment of examiners, externality in the system);
5. What is the process for examination? (whether it is a one stage process with thesis examination or a two stage with an oral, whether examiners can refer theses prior to the oral, whether supervisors can attend or take part, whether the oral is the summative examination for a pass, whether it is for grading purposes, or whether it is primarily celebratory);
6. What are the outcomes? (pass, pass with corrections, refer for further work, lesser degree, fail, and if pass whether graded e.g. magna cum laude, summa cum laude);
7. Are there examples of good practice in relation to examining doctorates? (for example institutions which prioritise the needs of candidates in the examination process);
8. Are there debates about doctoral examination and how it might change in the future?; (for example whether supervisors should continue to be allowed to examine or whether orals should be public in the interests of fairness).

Countries common with the institutional-based project include Australia, Brazil, China, India, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, while Kenya which offers a potential comparator to Uganda.

In terms of the linkages between the two projects, the last two topics particularly potentially afford scope for collaboration, i.e. providing institutional examples of good practice in doctoral examination or of the ways in which issues within the system are being reviewed and resolved.

## **The Experience of Examining the PhD**

### ***An international comparative study of processes and standards***

The PhD holders are increasingly mobile, seeking their place of study in another country, and looking for employment in their own or other countries (not only in universities as in the past but also in other spheres such as business or public service).

Yet there is no guarantee that a PhD from University X in Country Y is equivalent in process and standard to a PhD from University P in country Q.

Furthermore, although examiners may have experience of examining in different universities in their own country, they less frequently have experience of examining in other countries and do not know if they have the same expectations as colleagues in other countries have when making decisions.

The purpose of this project is to provide a rich description and comparative analysis of case-studies in different countries and academic traditions to establish to what extent and in what ways there are comparable expectations and standards across countries.

The following is a list of cases and teams:

#### ***Part 1 - Africa***

Chap 1 - Mozambique - University Eduardo Mondlane - Jorge Fringe, Hilária Matavele

Chap 2 - Uganda - Makerere University - Consolata Kabonesa

#### ***Part 2 Asia***

Chap 3 - China - Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou - Zheng Laxiang and Zhang Zichu

Chap 4 - Japan - Tokyo University - Fumiko Takahashi and Kazuaki Iwabuchi

Chap 5 - India - Symbiosis Law School Pune - Shashikala Gurpur, Bindu Ronald, Rupal Rautdesai

Chap 6 - Thailand - Thammasat University, Bangkok - Dumrong Adunyarittigun, Saneh Thongrin, Kamonrat Sriharuksa, Pranee Seenak

#### ***Part 3 South America***

Chap 7 - Argentina - La Plata - Melina Porto and Silvana Barboni

Chap 8 - Brazil - São Paulo - Kai Lehmann

#### ***Part 4 The West***

Chap 9 - Australia - Macquarie University, Sydney - Alice Chik and Juliet Lum

Chap 10 - Britain - Durham - Prue Holmes and Dimitra Kokatsaki

Chap 11 - Bulgaria - Sofia - Maria Stoicheva, and team

Chap 12 - Poland - Krakow - Natasza Styczynska and Marcin Zubek

Chap 13 - Portugal - Aveiro - Helena Sá, Nilza Costa, Diana Oliveira and Susana Pinto

Chap 14 - USA - University of Connecticut - Manuela Wagner and Edith Barrett

The interviews deal with the following topics:

## **EXAMINING**

Selection of examiners; criteria for assessment; different criteria for different disciplines

## **FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION**

Purpose of the final examination

## **STANDARDS**

Expectations/judgements *in your own country, internationally*

## **LANGUAGES**

The use of languages in examining; the ways of responding to the writing of a non-native speaker when evaluating the thesis

## **MULTIDISCIPLINARY/INTERDISCIPLINARY THESES/DISSERTATIONS**

Experience of examining theses/dissertations which cross traditional disciplinary borders

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISING AND EXAMINING**

Experience of this relationship

## **SYMPOSIUM**

We ask each team to work together to prepare a presentation on a theme which would last approximately 30 minutes followed by 30 minutes discussion. Each team would present some of their data on a common theme and suggest discussion points

Possible themes include:

Are there examples of good practice in relation to examining doctorates?

Are there debates about doctoral examination and how it might change in the future?

Is there an agreed minimal standard for a 'pass' and are there grades awarded? How are standards established?

What is the relationship between supervision and examining e.g. in terms of the roles supervisors play?

Teams are also invited to decide on their own theme if they wish and according to local circumstances.

### ***Audience***

All members of both projects will be invited to attend

All interviewees will be invited to attend

Each of the teams presenting at the symposium may invite 2-3 other people.

## **TIMETABLE**

[London time]

DAY 1: Tuesday 26 October 2021

### **MORNING**

8.30-9 Opening

9-10 - Australia : Margaret Kiley & Juliet Lum/ Alice Chik

10-11 China : Shuhua Chen & Zheng Laxiang/ Zhang Zichu

11.30-12.30 India : Narayana Jayaram & Shashikala Gurpur /Bindu Ronald/ Rupal Rautdesai

### **AFTERNOON**

15-16 - USA : Karri Holley & Manuela Wagner /Edith J. Barrett

16-17 - Brasil : Christian Haag Kristensen & Kai Enno Lehmann

DAY 2: Wednesday 27 October 2021

MORNING

9-10 UK : Stan Taylor & Prue Holmes/ Dimitra Kokotsaki

10-11 Poland : Marek Kwiek & Natasza Styczyńska /Marcin Zubek

11.30-12.30 : Kenya & Uganda : Eva Brodin/ Nelson Owur/ Hesborn Wao & Consolata Kabonesa

15-16 European Universities - Maria Stoicheva et al.

16-16.45 Portugal and Mozambique Jorge Jaime dos Santos Fringe / Hilária Joaquim Matavele & Maria Helena Araújo e Sá/ Nilza Costa/ Diana Oliveira/ Susana Pinto

16.45-17.15 Closing

## **SOFIA PROJECT EMAIL ADDRESSES - SYMPOSIUM PRESENTERS**

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## INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDIES SYMPOSIUM PRESENTERS

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### United States

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