

Summary Conference Report

Excellence in European Doctoral Education: Innovation and Enhancement Conference

28th and 29th November 2013, Edinburgh



The two-day Excellence in Doctoral Education: Innovation and Enhancement Conference was jointly hosted by the University of Edinburgh and Aarhus University in November 2013. The conference attracted over 50 delegates from 7 different European countries.

The four main conference themes were derived from the work packages of the jointly-led University of Edinburgh and Aarhus University project, Excellence in European Doctoral Education (ExEDE).

Conference Themes

➤ International dimensions to examination, supervision and the doctoral experience
➤ Encouraging and recording personal and professional development activities undertaken within and alongside a doctorate
➤ Employer engagement, including employers not traditionally associated with the recruitment of doctoral graduates
➤ Approaches to training and support for doctoral candidates and supervisors

These themes were addressed by various speakers, discussion groups and interactive workshops. A key objective of the conference was to facilitate opportunities for delegates to engage and interact with these themes and to network and share practice.

Conference Programme in brief

Day One

Key note Speech: 'The PhD in Europe or a European PhD', Dr Conor O' Carroll
Workshop 1: Developing and Managing in-depth joint doctoral programmes: Opportunities and Challenges
Workshop 2: International doctoral supervision: Understandings, misunderstandings and monkeys
Workshop 3: Unpicking Principles of Innovative Doctoral Training
Workshop 4: Joint doctoral programmes: Assessing the impact
Workshop 5: Supervising at a Distance: some approaches

Day Two

Workshop 6: Supporting personal and professional development throughout the PhD
Workshop 7: Perspectives on employer engagement in doctoral programmes
Workshop 8: Interdisciplinarity and doctoral programmes
Interactive Plenary Session: Reflections and Future Thinking

Key recommendations for the sector

Although discussions throughout the two days were wide ranging, a number of key recommendations for the sector were identified:

- (i) To build frameworks (for supervisory arrangements, mobility, researcher support and development) which recognise and support the increasing diversity in research and in researchers.
- (ii) For these frameworks to secure the quality of the research and research training environment whilst providing sufficient flexibility to respond to the varied backgrounds, aspirations and motivations of individual doctoral researchers.
- (iii) To address and support the transition stage from completing a PhD to becoming an independent researcher (in academia and a wide range of other careers).
- (iv) To embrace a broader interpretation of industry and employer engagement with doctoral programmes and to build frameworks which make partnerships between academia and employers easier to set up and develop.
- (v) To develop a common understanding of the core value and purpose of the PhD in Europe, for instance based on strengthening the Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training (PIDT).
- (vi) To invest in the process of developing in-depth international partnerships which ensure long term quality and sustainability.
- (vii) To explore examples of best practice to inform and design well-balanced and advanced international partnerships.

Further information

- To read the full conference report and access further information about the joint University of Edinburgh and Aarhus University project, Excellence in European Doctoral Education (ExEDE project) please visit: <http://www.au.dk/en/doctoralexcellence/doctoralexcellence/>