Excellence in European Doctoral Training – a collaborative approach

Jeremy Bradshaw (University of Edinburgh) & Johnny Laursen (Aarhus University)
Outline

• Background
• Pilot study approach
• Challenges and learning so far
• What’s next
Background

- European policy in doctoral training
- International collaboration in doctoral education
- High Level Dialogue on Excellence in European Doctoral Education (Aarhus, September 2012)
High Level Dialogue on Excellence in European Doctoral Education
Aarhus University & University of Edinburgh

• Explicit international dimension to examination, supervision & doctoral experience
• Centrality of high quality independent research in active & vibrant research environment - basis for the award of a doctoral degree
• Key output to be the researcher themselves
• Explicit focus on personal & professional development throughout PhD and production of doctoral supplement
• Innovative approaches to training & support for doctoral candidates (particular focus on employability and mobility)
• Strengthen approaches to employer engagement (e.g. placements)
• Address the support & training needs of doctoral supervisors

www.au.dk/en/doctoralexcellence/doctoralexcellence/highleveldialogue
Pilot Study Approach

• Project team: working across the two institutions, with a focus on practice sharing and problem solving
• 6 joint doctoral grants
• Work packages:
  – International dimensions to examination, supervision and the doctoral experience
  – Design and development of a doctoral supplement to cover broader activities, training and experiences with a particular focus on employability & mobility
  – Employer engagement, including employers not traditionally associated with the recruitment of doctoral graduates
  – Approaches to training and support for doctoral candidates and supervisors
  – Dissemination and promotion
Challenges and learning so far

• Benefits of a practice/enhancement approach to the development of joint doctorate agreements

• Surfacing effective practices
  – Employment placements
  – Researcher led
  – International supervision and examination

• Focussing on the researcher as the key output

• Exploring approaches to recognising and supporting broader dimensions of the doctoral experience (the doctoral supplement)
Support for PhD Supervisors at the University of Edinburgh

Benefits:

- Coordinated approach to supervisor support which recognises and employs the expertise of stakeholders across the university;
- Facilitates the sharing of practice and encourages interaction by supervisors in the process;
- Places the supervisor role in the wider context of policy and agendas impacting the research environment.
International COMPASS Programme for Postgraduate Researchers

Considering pursuing a career in academia after your PhD?

This interactive session focuses on the academic job market in the UK. It offers you the opportunity to discuss your ideas and questions with other international postgraduate researchers and staff from the Careers Service.
EASTBIO DTP – main features

• 4 year PhD
• Enhanced training
  – Structured programme from which each student will develop individual programme (specialist & generic skills)
• PIPS (Professional Internship for PhD Students)
• Largest award in UK, coordinated by Edinburgh
• Blue skies research and 3 priority areas: Food security, Bioenergy & industrial biotechnology, Basic bioscience underpinning health
Transferable skills course at AU

• As a continuation of LEADER, AU has decided to offer a PhD transferable skills course (5 ECTS credits) in June 2013.
• The title of the course is “Research, Career, and Innovation - Developing your future career as a PhD”.
• 35 internal students
• The course programme is divided into four modules with focus on different areas:
  – Module A: Presentation, Communication and Argumentation
  – Module B: Creating Value from Knowledge
  – Module C: Organisational Skills and Science in Policy Making
  – Module D: Research Management Training
The PhD House at AU

- Academic and social environment
- One stop service
- Dormitory for international doctoral students
- Adjacent to Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies
What’s next?

• Pilot Project
  – Identification of existing best practice
  – New methods of supporting doctoral education
  – Links to the changing landscape in doctoral education
• First cohort of candidates
• Impact within institutions and further work
• Pilot project dissemination
• Potential partners and associates
• Key messages for policy makers and funders
Excellence in European Doctoral Training - towards a common understanding

In 2012, the European research agenda will be redefined and further developed with a strong focus on excellence in Horizons 2020. Research of the highest quality is a core element in supporting growth and job creation in Europe. However, an important subset of this issue is yet to be addressed: Excellence in doctoral training.

Research excellence and doctoral training are closely intertwined, and in the process of strengthening the quality of European research, it is indispensable to consider how best to develop the next generation of researchers.

Therefore Aarhus University and the University of Edinburgh have taken the initiative to start a debate on Excellence in European Doctoral Training. Read more here.

www.doctoralexcellence.dk