

# HRK

## The Role of Doctoral Programmes

### Universities as Research Institutions

## Traditional Idea of the European University

- **universitas magistrorum et scholarium  
(commilitones)**  
academic cooperation within the institution is a constitutive feature of the university and requires a balance between individual and institutional interests
- **universitas litterarum**  
unity of disciplines and organisational structures (departments, faculties) within one institution enables multi-/trans-/inter-disciplinarity

## European Research University

### Einheit von Forschung und Lehre

(W.v.Humboldt, 1810)

Unity of research and teaching in the university:  
Education and training of young researchers for independent research is best achieved by participation of students and teachers in a joint methodical quest for the new knowledge.

The research university is the initiating institution, its organisational principles provide the guideline and its creative capacity is the key factor of knowledge transfer and thus of innovation and development in the knowledge-based society.

## Doctorate in the Research University

The university of the 21<sup>st</sup> century centres around doctoral education, i.e. methodical research training in an interdisciplinary, cooperative and international setting

The doctorate is (and must remain) the *proprium*, i.e. the defining\* and characteristic property, of the research university (cf. colleges, polytechnics, extra-university research institutions).

\* albeit not in a legal sense, since the term „university“ is not legally protected

## The American Model

Today, US universities seem to provide the best graduate programmes (building on the BA degree), reflecting the egalitarian concept of the best European university tradition (commilitones). This has turned into a tremendous advantage for the USA in the global knowledge society.

The best graduate programmes attract – on a global scale – public and private funding as well as the best qualified scientists, thus reinforcing the attractiveness of the programmes.

## ERA and EHEA

### Linking the European Research Area (ERA) with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA):

- Within EHEA (Bologna process), doctoral training is understood to constitute the *last* (third) cycle of formal education: → stressing the role of research in higher education programmes.
- Within ERA and its research mobility schemes, doctoral training constitutes the *first* phase in the career of researchers: → stressing the role of training in research programmes.

**Both attitudes can and must be made to meet within research universities in order to meet the dual demand of society: new knowledge generated by trained researchers.**

## The challenge

The function of the doctorate is to enable awardees to be qualified for the growing number of research-oriented positions in the labour market within and outside the university. In designing their doctoral training programmes, universities should thus recognise a diversity of requirements: (a) the discipline-specific requirements of the science world and (b) the needs of the various segments of an increasingly diversifying, knowledge-based labour market.

## Quality matters

Because it is (and must remain) the university's **proprium and monopoly** to award doctoral degrees, the university alone is responsible for the quality of its doctorates. While the research done within the doctoral programme may be conducted in cooperation with an external partner (other HEI, non-university research institutions, private enterprises) the quality of the degree programme remains within the responsibility of the university.



## Autonomy is required

Responsibility for content and format of the doctorate is a matter of **university autonomy**.

- Without institutional autonomy (and sufficient funding) no quality of doctoral programmes.
- Autonomy provides opportunities for institutional profile building and quality assurance.
- Selective recruitment of doctoral students combined with specific measures to promote research and young researchers allows to initiate a „continuing process of quality improvement“.

## Diversity requires transparency

Universities should autonomously formulate their own mission and the standards they can achieve (with respect to their resources). On this basis, they need to communicate the criteria by which they want to be classified. In particular, there must be transparency regarding

- admission of candidates for the doctorate
- requirements for the degree

## Minimal requirements

A written doctoral dissertation must be provided as indispensable proof of independent research performance. This constitutes the core of the doctorate.

The doctoral dissertation should be supervised by an experienced researcher who himself/herself must hold a doctoral degree.

The doctoral degree is awarded upon examination of the candidate and the research work as laid down in the dissertation by at least two university professors who were not supervisors (peer review).

## Types of degrees

A doctorate without written proof of the candidate's research competence is not a „doctorate“ in the proper sense. Therefore, the 3rd cycle of the Bologna process must also contain appropriate measures of research assessment (on pain of losing reputation).

However, a different type of doctorates is already in existence and widely accepted: „Professional doctoral degrees“ should also require an accessible (i.e. published) research paper and should - for reasons of transparency – be appropriately named. The research conducted should preferably be produced (at least in part) in an academic setting.

## Graduate Schools

European research universities will (have to) develop doctoral programmes in competition with graduate schools in the USA. In most institutions, this requires additional funding to promote excellency.

The Austrian, Swiss and German Rectors' Conferences have reached agreement on appropriate *guidelines* and *organisational principles*:

## **Organisational guidelines: The structure of doctoral training programmes should**

- provide the environment and facilities to conduct independent research
- ensure the development of methodological, disciplinary and trans-/inter-disciplinary skills and competences
- deliver key qualifications: ability to analyse and to communicate, presentation and publication skills, experience abroad
- limit the duration of the doctoral training required (generally no more than three years)

## **Organisational guidelines: The structure of doctoral training programmes should**

- provide doctoral students with supervision and support through a team of experienced scientists from several fields of knowledge („multiple supervision“)
- carry out joint intermediate assessments of the progress of training and dissertation
- place doctoral training within a formalised framework, e.g. research groups, graduate schools)
- admit domestic and foreign doctoral students competitively and on the basis of transparent criteria

## **Organisational guidelines: The structure of doctoral training programmes should**

- locate the doctorate institutionally and thematically such as to open up new research fields with a view of promoting the interdisciplinary competence of doctoral students
- integrate profile-based, defined curricular sections as a means of delivering methodological, disciplinary and inter-/trans-disciplinary skills, competences and key qualifications
- specifically promote disciplinary and methodological exchange between doctoral students from related disciplines
- ensure more time-limited qualification positions for doctoral students.



A young man with dark hair, wearing a green ribbed sweater, is seated in a lecture hall. He is looking towards the right, resting his chin on his right hand, and holding a pen over an open notebook on his lap. The background shows other students in a dimly lit room with wooden desks.

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**Vielen Dank für Ihre  
Aufmerksamkeit!**