



The University of Manchester



# Building the Foundations of Research

## A Vision for the Future of Doctoral Education in Europe

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## Revisiting our Foundations

Origins of EUA-CDE in *The Salzburg Principles* established in 2005 as part of Bologna Process. At core:

- centrality of original research
- widening range of career paths available
- institutions to provide structures and environment necessary for support

Principles hold but world has changed

- time to renew the vision and anticipate what may be on the horizon

## Developing the Vision

- Development process of the vision
  - Key insights from previous EUA-CDE activities 2017-2021 (workshops, annual meetings, thematic peer groups)
  - EUA documents incl. [Universities Without Walls – a Vision for 2030](#)
  - Results of 2017 and 2021 surveys on current challenges in doctoral education
  - Reflections within the EUA-CDE Steering Committee (several SC meetings between October 2021-March 2022)
  - EUA-CDE 2022 Focus Group foresight workshop with members from 24 countries
  - **Draft vision paper**
  - Consultation process on draft document with EUA-CDE membership and EUA Council
  - **Vision paper**

Please identify up to 5 key drivers which you think will shape the structure and content of doctoral education in Europe in the next 5-10 years.

Points

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35



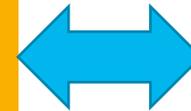
- 5 points for I driver
- 4 points for II driver
- 3 points for III driver
- 2 points for IV driver
- 1 point for V driver

## Trends and Drivers

### Extrinsic

Opportunities, expectations & challenges for doctoral education deriving from a changing world

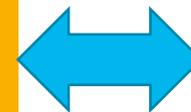
- Digitalisation
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Exchange with Society
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Academic Freedom



### Intrinsic

Changes in the ways in which universities organize themselves to deliver doctoral education

- Diverse Institutional Dynamics
- Ensuring Quality & Fair Assessment
- Skills Fit for Purpose
- Supervision
- Adequate funding



## Pathways to Success

For each driver we

- Characterise the issues it presents
  - Opportunities created
  - Inherent challenges and threats
- Propose Ways Forward
  - Pathways and principles by which doctoral education can progress

## Digitalisation transforming research & doctoral education

- Digitalisation transforming organization, administration & delivery of doctoral education
- Digital skills essential for candidate
- Digital research infrastructures vital for research productivity
- Accelerated by pandemic but new balance being sought
- Digital divide can lead to new inequalities
- Risk to candidates of social isolation & inability to build networks

**1. Doctoral schools serve as a place where the opportunities & challenges of new digital technologies are embraced in the pursuit of research goals and in their own enabling frameworks**

## Sustainable Development Goals

- UN Sustainable Development Goals provide international framework for more sustainable & equitable development of the planet
- Greening, response to climate change & greater engagement with Global South all imperatives for doctoral education
- Caution against excessive focus on thematic areas at expense of fundamental research

**2. Universities should embrace the Sustainable Development Goals as a holistic framework providing a context for and supporting the delivery of doctoral education**

## Exchange with Society

- Doctoral candidates are bridgebuilders between academia, research and society & can serve as the 'glue' in collaborations with business, public or NGO organisations
- Communication is a part of continuous exchange and co-creation of knowledge
- Public exposure of research can expose contested values & beliefs. Early-career researchers are particularly vulnerable to personal attacks in social media or otherwise

**3. Even when not connected to a specific mission, research and education at doctoral level contributes to the resolution of the environmental, demographic, socio-economic, and political challenges that Europe and the world are facing. The path to resolving these challenges may lie in addressing fundamental research questions where the application is not evident at the time.**

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- Diversity increases the quality of doctoral education, bringing various perspectives & experiences to the table
- Access to doctoral education from under-represented groups remains a problem.
- Long duration, caring responsibilities and subsequent precarious employment are all deterrents for under-represented groups

**4. A diverse doctoral education must be sensitive to the different backgrounds that doctoral candidates bring with them. Doctoral education should encourage reflection on and the overcoming of any social, economic or cultural barriers. It should foster a diversity that goes hand in hand with excellence and a shared understanding of research quality.**

## Academic Freedom

- Academic freedom is an inseparable part of doctoral education as it is essential for high quality research.
- Institutional autonomy gives the freedom and flexibility to meet the needs of a diverse doctoral candidates
- Threats to freedom come in direct and less overt attempts to steer the content and direction of research. Doctoral candidates can be particularly vulnerable.

**5. Doctoral education should promote a dialogue about the different dimensions of academic freedoms and raise awareness about where any are at risk. It should create an open space for critical debate and the exchange of opposite views, while defending the rights of doctoral candidates to engage in these activities.**

## Diverse institutional dynamics and the role of the Doctoral School

- A diverse taxonomy of doctorates meets a variety of needs but the core principles should be adhered to
- Structured approaches are now predominant though there is a variety of formats
- An emergent specialized professional group promotes prominent and systematic attention from universities
- Support mechanisms are increasingly being extended to post-docs

**6. Doctoral education needs to embrace the variety of formats which have emerged to meet specific needs but at the same time to ensure that the core principles, including the importance of conducting original research, remain integral to all of these. Structured approaches should be used as a means of ensuring that the voice of doctoral education is properly embedded in university structures.**

## Ensuring Quality and Fair Assessment

- A variety of quality assessment mechanisms exist across universities and countries. There should not be a one-size-fits-all approach
- Supervision and the engagement of candidates themselves should also be recognized as a means of quality assurance
- Fair and balanced assessment needs to be maintained during the transition to Open Science

**7. A fit-for-purpose quality assurance system is essential but the overarching goal is the quality of research, not the use of a particular tool. The focus should go beyond administrative processes to also value the education and research content. That should include an understanding of core skills and values such as research ethics and integrity and the adoption of a critical approach to research assessment not confined to publication metrics.**

## Skills Fit for Purpose

- A doctorate equips candidates with crucial skills for research and other career paths but these may not always be fully visible or codified
- Regulations and funding should ensure that training is built into doctoral education
- In setting training requirements institutions should be sensitive to the high workloads of doctoral candidates and ultimately the consequences for well-being and mental health

**8. Doctoral candidates must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the modern demands of research and pursue their chosen career paths. At the same time, they need to map, visualise and verbalise their skills and communicate those capabilities to others. Doctoral education should develop both tacit and explicit skills. Transversal skills should not be seen as an add-on but as a key element of the doctorate, maintaining the essential role of original research as the key feature of doctoral education.**

## Supervision Key but not a Solo Act

- Supervision is central to doctoral education but is becoming more complex
- Single supervisors and teams are now equally prevalent – in all cases there is a joint endeavour between supervisor, supervisee and the environment/school
- Key aspects of supervision need to be agreed in advance and made transparent to avoid and deal with potential conflicts

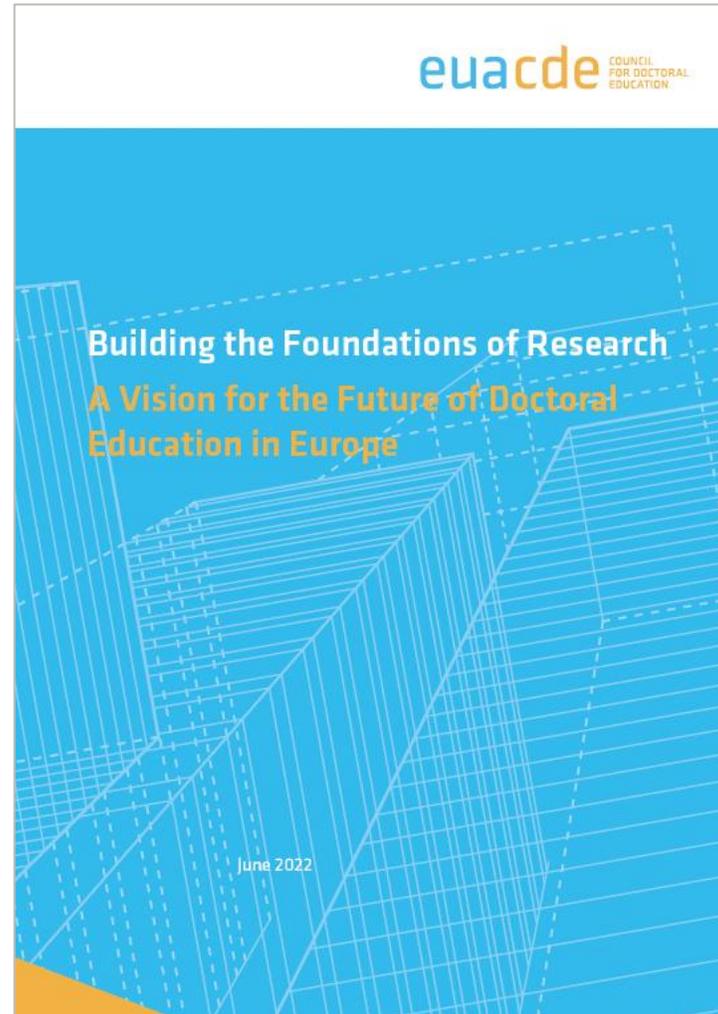
**9. Supervision is crucial. Its form adapts to the needs and resources of an institution. Universities should invest in the training of supervisors, enabling them to embrace their roles fully and ensure that the doctoral school or environment plays its appropriate supportive role.**

## Funding Adequate to Underpin a Successful Outcome

- Successful completion needs appropriate resources underpinned by adequate funding
- There are very substantial differences in the means and level of funding across Europe
- Financial worries are a major cause of stress and mental health issues among candidates
- There is often a mismatch between the time needed to complete a doctorate and the duration of financial support

**10. The level of living support for doctoral candidates needs to take into consideration the relative attractiveness of the careers and the incomes of early-career knowledge workers in other sectors. This means that the work of doctoral candidates should be appropriately rewarded. Duration of funding should be based on a realistic assumption of the duration of a doctorate. An increase in salaries or duration of the doctorate should not, however, be at the expense of the availability of doctoral positions. The increased need to tackle societal challenges with high-quality research demands the availability of such positions, but this should not lead to a reduction in other university services.**

## Ways Forward



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