

THE DOCTORATE AS A LIFELONG EXPERIENCE: MATURE DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY “GHEORGHE ASACHI” FROM IASI - ROMANIA

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At international level there is still an ongoing debate on key issues such as *time to degree*, the role of doctoral candidates who are part-time and the *increased time pressure* in doctoral education caused by tight timelines.

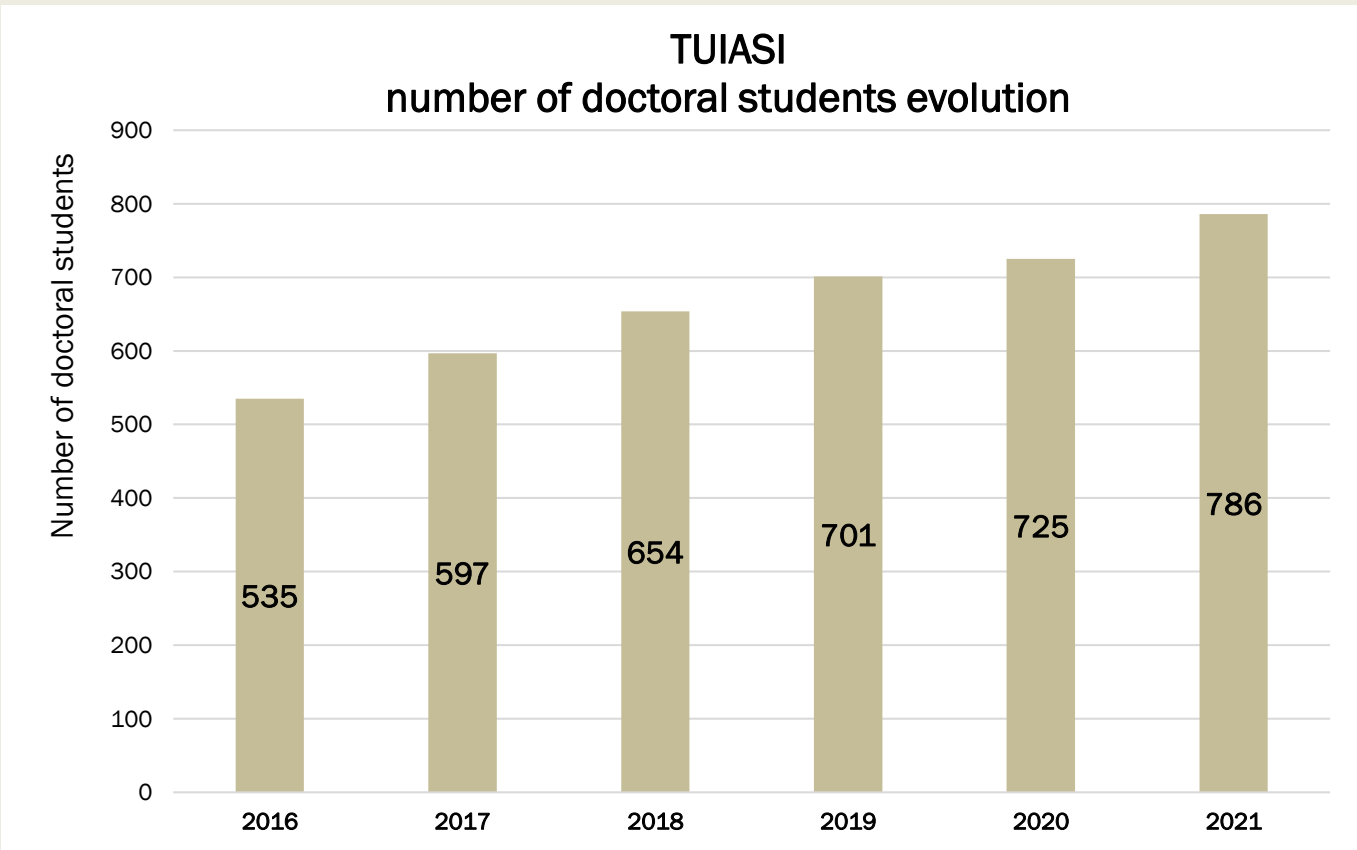
Universities have to take into consideration the **individual circumstances of doctoral candidates**, as well as their needs to gain more relevant transferrable skills while it is important to prioritise and consider time management as a key skill for doctoral students.

Above all, **high quality research remains the main task for doctoral education.**



TUIASI:

- one interdisciplinary doctoral school
- 13 doctoral domains (12 engineering + 1 fundamental)
- 139 PhD advisers
- PhD studies structure:
 - budget with scholarship and frequency
 - budget with reduced frequency
 - tax with reduced frequency

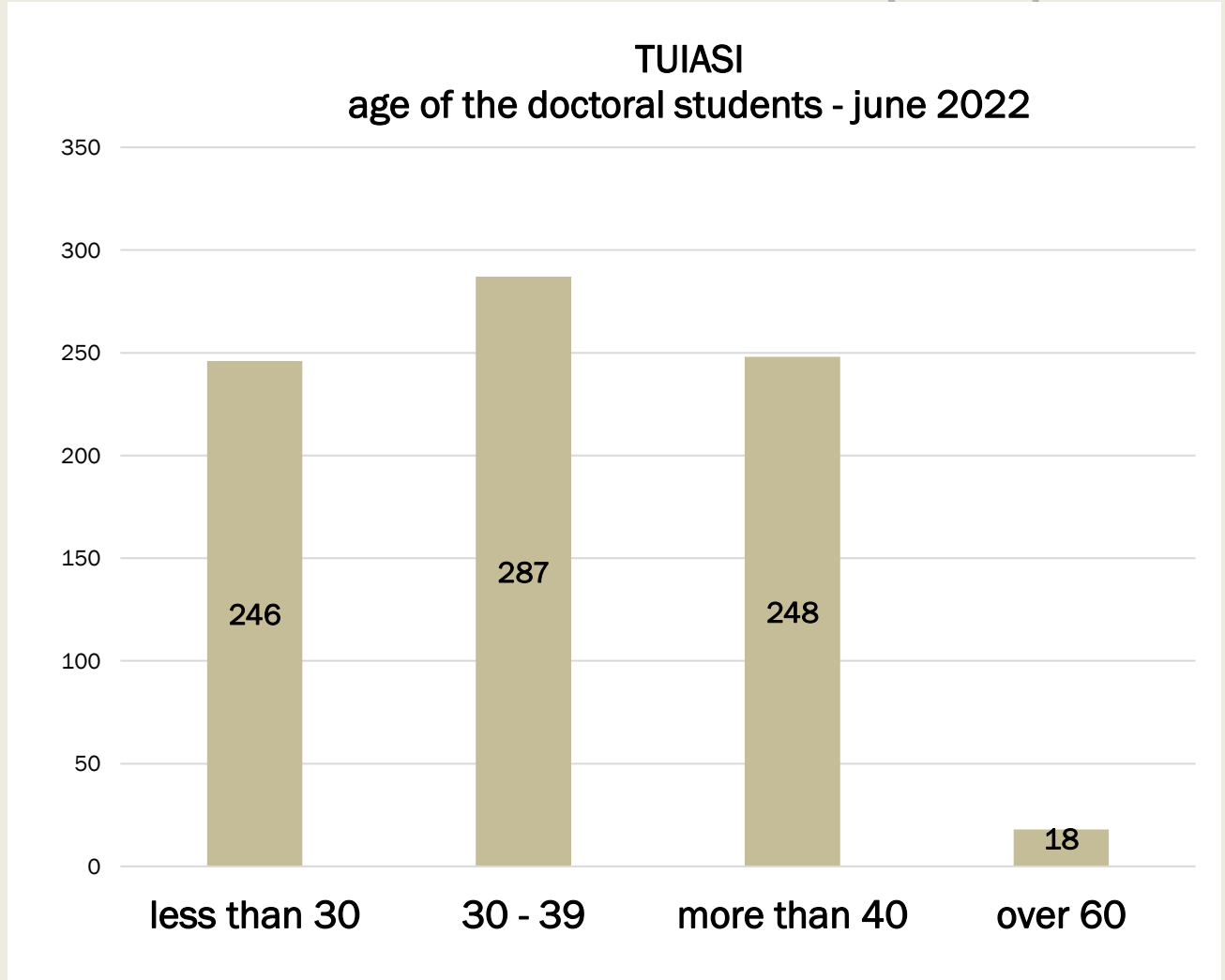




TUIASI:

Main statistics (last 3 years: October 2018 – October 2021):

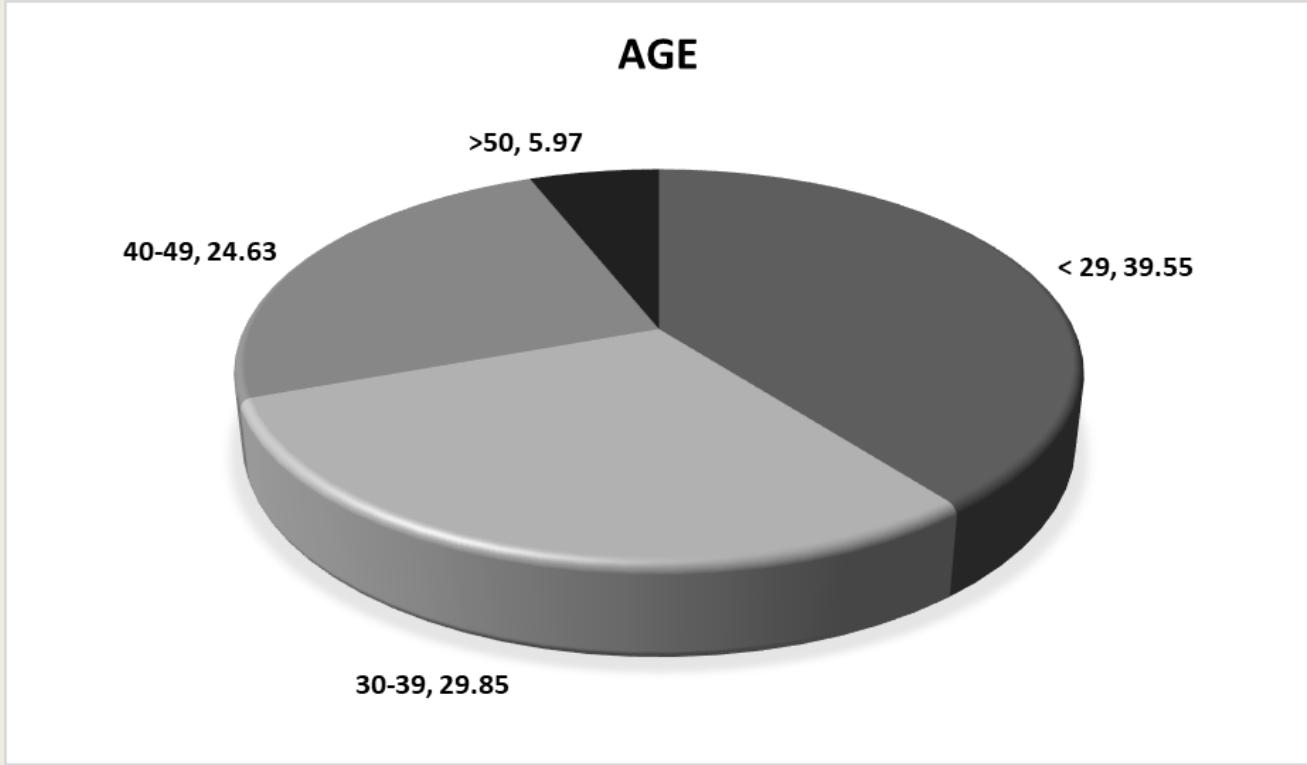
- second doctorate: 79 (almost 10 %)
- over age 30: 535 from 781 at June, 4th 2022 (68.5%)
- medium age: 36.4 years
- around 20 % have more than 10 years since graduating.





TUIASI:

Questionnaire applied in June 2022:
almost 60 % of the doctoral students
who responded are over age 30.

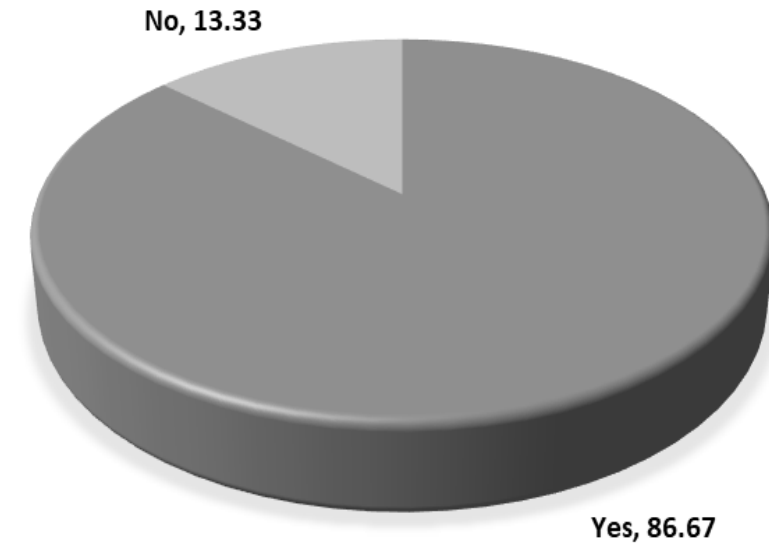




TUIASI:

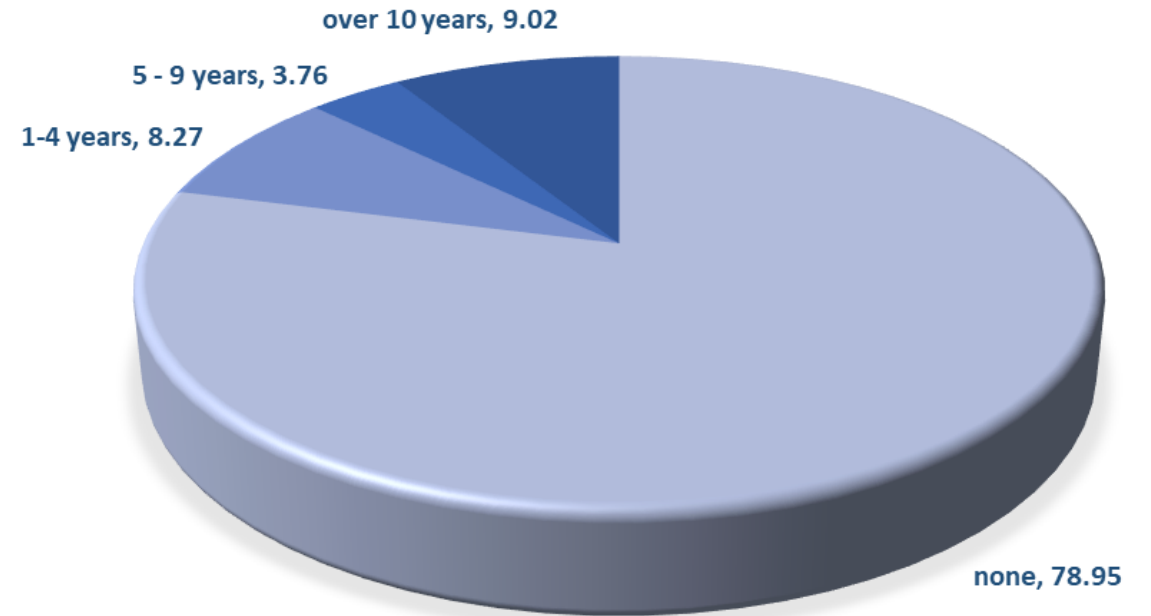
Questionnaire applied in June 2022:
87 % of the doctoral students are
working during PhD.

AT THIS MOMENT, DO YOU HAVE A JOB?





GAP BETWEEN MASTER AND BACHELOR



TUIASI:

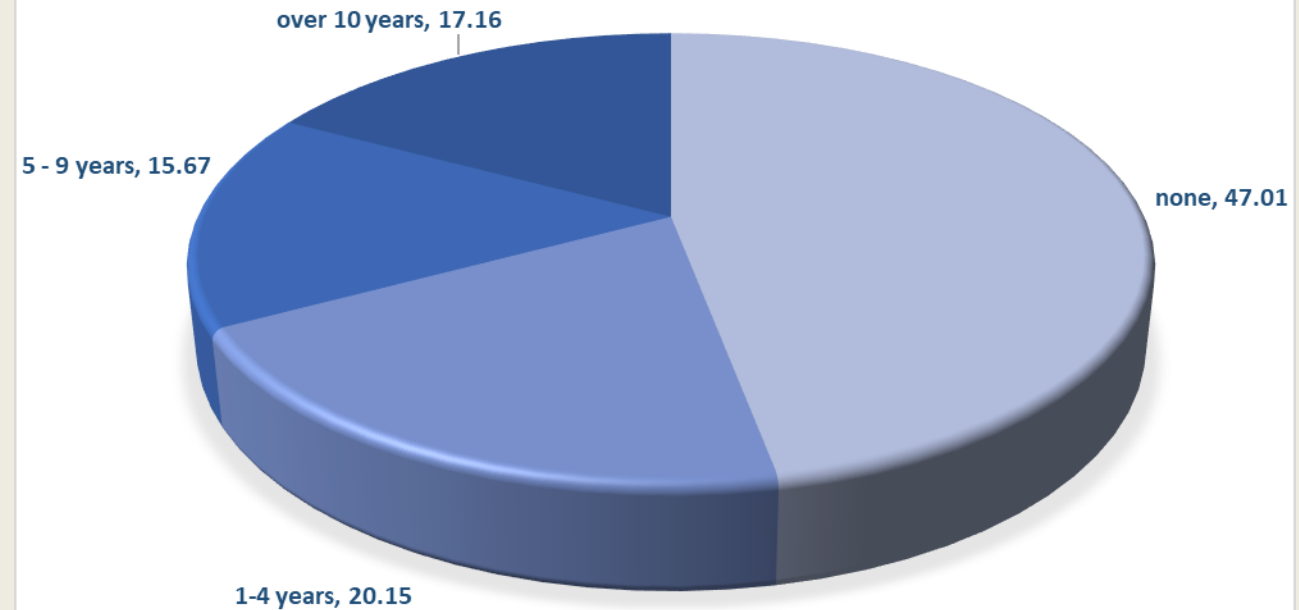
Questionnaire applied in June 2022: despite the age, almost 80 % have no gap between bachelor and master studies.



TUIASI:

Questionnaire applied in June 2022:
despite the age, almost 50 % have no
gap in studies after graduating master
and bachelor.
Nevertheless, around 10 % have a gap
of more than 10 years.

GAP BETWEEN DOCTORAL AND MASTER STUDIES



What was the reason to choose doctoral studies?

- *Getting new knowledge to be used complementary in my current job*
- *Aspire to an academic / research career*
- *Better career path*
- *It is the normal professional development*
- *It was mandatory for my job*
- *Passion / Curiosity / Personal development*
- *Felt like this was a new challenge*
- *New horizons*
- *Getting the most from my life*
- *It is like a dream come true*
- *Learning new things*

What means PhD for you?

- *New opportunities*
- *A big jump in career*
- *Knowledge validation*
- *Self-improvement*
- *Proud*
- *Time for myself*
- *A better future*
- *THE BEST WAY TO EXPRESS MYSELF*
- *“The chance to check my technical hypothesis!”*
- *“Thinking big in an ocean of possibilities!”*
- *“The chance to get out of the box!”*

Difficulties of mature doctoral students :

- *little or lack of sufficient time to perform high quality research*
- *less understanding of current research trends and conditions to publish/perform research*
- *work overload*
- *possible medical condition*
- *little or lack of motivation*
- *little or lack of perspectives for further career development*
- *“it is different from what I imagined”*

Few advantages when working with mature doctoral students:

- *mature thinking*
- *will to perform quality research*
- *they are more experienced in performing research*
- *they are more organized in research*
- *the motivation is higher, as well as the will to succeed*

Challenges when working with mature doctoral students:

- *if the gap between master studies and doctoral ones is large, the main difficulty is to set the candidate “on track” to deal with a proper documentation*
- *little/low motivation on career development (also can be an advantage when the PhD is required for the job)*
- *different personal situations interference (little kids, parents, wife/husband etc)*
- *age, itself, is not a drawback for doctoral advisers*

Quality assurance impact:

- *it is not the case in Romania*

Career path impact:

- *it is not the case*
- *career path is differently perceived at different ages by doctoral students*

What offers TUIASI as support for mature doctoral students:

- *online trainings during the whole period (not only for the first year)*
- *possibility to work remote when the presence is not strictly required in the lab (i.e. experimental phase)*
- *different doctoral studies breaks supported by documents*
- *reduced frequency doctoral studies*

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- *Do we need a specific strategy for mature PhD students?*
- *Are there any “best practices”?*
- *Different approaches when talking about “mature candidates”*
 - *gap between master studies and doctoral ones*
 - *age*

Universities need to think how to address these groups and how to adapt doctoral programmes accordingly.

2022 EUA-CDE ANNUAL MEETING

Time and timing in doctoral education

Hosted by University of Manchester
22-24 June 2022 | Manchester, UK

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