

2005 Eurodoc Conference

Questionnaire Austria

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This document refers to the EURODOC 2005 Questionnaire

http://www.eurodoc.net/activities/eurodoc2005/Eurodoc2005_questionnaire.pdf

Part 1

1.

There have not been any specific changes for PhD candidates as compared to last year. What has recently influenced the situation of PhD candidates was the introduction of a student fee in 2001.

Bologna Process brought more advertence and discussions on doctoral studies, at least on insider level. There is hardly any media coverage, which in turn promotes rumours and uncertainty.

2.

One main improvement for PhD candidates would be social security for all doctoral candidates regardless of their status. It is necessary to acknowledge their work with either scholarships or (preferably) regular employments and to make sure that people can focus on their research (without being forced to engage in part-time jobs and so forth) Yet on the same time, it must remain possible to do the doctorate both in part or full time, appropriate to the specific case.

3.

1) The hottest topic at the moment is social selection. There is the attempt to introduce restriction rules for students who want to continue their master/PhD studies. We are clearly against the selection of PhD students and especially against any selection based on grades or age. We see no need to restrict the access to doctoral programmes, as the general aim is to increase the number of researchers in Europe. On contrary, it is necessary to encourage gifted master studies alumnis to aim for a career in a research position.

(To be not misunderstood: There will always be some sort of selection in application procedures for positions of grants; yet we see no sense to restrict the access to doctoral programmes as such)

4.

Past:

O) Participation at conferences and workgroups, staying in contact with the ministry and other policy makers

Working group at the ministry of higher education

National conference on doctoral studies

Bologna Seminar on Doctoral Studies

O) Compilation and release of a paper of position and various replies and commentaries on papers of other stakeholders.

O) Internal actions to establish, strengthen and propagate the representation of doctoral candidates within the OeH.

Future:

O) Keep contact with the ministry and other policy makers.

O) Urging university authorities to involve doctoral candidates in the implementation of the national and European developments at university and faculty level. Supporting local doctoral students representatives.

O) Activities to enlarge the group of active members and to find successors for the current team.

O) Getting into a real dialogue with funding organisations in order to attain improvements on the following problematic policies and developments:

- * Mandatory mobility prescribed in the “doctoral colleges” of the Science Fund

- * Age restrictions, nontransparent and not externally evaluated application procedure at the Academy of Sciences

- * Exclusive elite network of scholars at the Academy of Sciences

O) Getting into contact with the media as there are a lot of unconfirmed and untrue rumours about the future of the doctoral studies in Austria.

5.

Official positions of the ÖH as a whole have to be endorsed by the national council of the ÖH. Official positions of local university parts of the ÖH are being agreed within the respective board, e.g. local doctoral representation boards. In future official positions of the doctoral section of the ÖH are being agreed within the nationwide doctoral representation board.

6.

We have not made a PhD survey yet because different universities and PhD programmes are rarely linked in Austria and therefore it is hard to communicate. There's no doubt that such a survey would be a good idea and that it would prove useful to communicate the situation and the needs of PhD candidates to the public. Comparable data of other countries would stress the urgency to develop research on an international basis and not to see it as a national agenda only. Perhaps, Eurodoc can provide a questionnaire that can be used (possibly extended and adopted to the national situation) in all European countries for such surveys. By asking PhD candidates all over Europe the same questions (ancillary to national questions), you would have both national and comparable international results.

7.

O) Compilation of a position on tendencies of curricularisation and overstructuring of doctoral programmes, (Our ideas:

We oppose over-structuring of doctoral programmes. The main focus should be led on the dissertation. Doctoral candidates are capable to compile their own study programme that fits on the specific needs in accordance with the supervisor. Summer Schools and Conferences should be considered as equal optional parts of doctoral programmes.

There should be a clear demarcation between research doctorates and other forms of 3rd cycle education, e.g. “professional doctorates”, “taught doctorates”)

O) Compilation of a position on restriction of the access to doctoral programmes, (Our ideas: We see no need to restrict the access to doctoral programmes, as the general aim is to increase the number of researchers in Europe. On contrary, it is necessary to encourage gifted master studies alumnis to aim for a career in a research position.)

further ideas:

O) Creation of subject specific networks within Eurodoc, getting into contact with subject specific university networks such as CESAER (Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research www.cesear.org) and SEFI (European Society for Engineering Education www.sefi.be)

8.

As for the ECTS system, we don't see much need for it at the doctoral level, especially because there is no consistent way of crediting points (intra- and international differences, sometimes different at every single university). The Diploma Supplement might be helpful when someone wants to apply for a job in a foreign country, so we see an advantage in the fact that it makes one's educational background more transparent. Basically, comparability of structures is desirable but not if PhD programmes develop like curricula (timetables, no flexibility, no adaptability).

9. It depends on the content. If the ministers will follow recommendations from the Salzburg Seminar, together with our amendments, we would advocate the insertion of the Doctoral level as the 3rd cycle of the Bologna Process. If the content will be completely different, we will presumably disapprove it.

O) Expectations:

Improvements of the situation of doctoral candidates, as more attention is being laid in the 3rd cycle.

O) Fears:

Some persons will use Bologna Process as an argument to push forward the following points (spuriously or not)

- a) Restriction of access to doctoral studies
- b) Overstructured doctoral programmes (we think that the main focus should be led on the dissertation. Doctoral candidates are capable to compile their own study programme that fits on the specific needs in accordance with the supervisor. Summer Schools and Conferences should be considered as equal optional parts of doctoral programmes.)
- c) Emphasis only in achieving critical mass while financially suppressing small disciplines
- d) Mandatory lower (or upper) limit on the length of doctoral programmes.
- e) Mandatory mobility in Doctoral Programmes.

Points a, b, d can be found for example in a position paper of the ministry and the rectors conference, that refers to the Bologna Process.

10.

In the speeches of the policymakers yes, in reality not. The 3 per cent objective for R&D expenditure is been pushed closer to realization mainly by broadening the definition of research.

11.

In Austria, all PhD candidates are students, and have to pay student fees.

A PhD candidate can be either student only, an employee, a project collaborator or an external. Each status has pros and cons:

As student only, you have a high amount of independence, you are relatively free to choose your research topic yourself and, when doing research, you are your own boss. On the other hand you have no social security and in most cases there is no integration into the department. As a stipendee, the only difference is that you are being paid. Yet there are only very few PhD candidates that are stipendees.

As an employee, you are insured, integrated in your department and you have a place to work plus all devices. Often, you also have to teach and are engaged in other projects that do not relate to your research (and which costs a lot of time).

As a project collaborator, you are somewhere in between: On one hand, you are paid but without the obligation to teach, on the other, you might depend too much on your “investor” and feel uncertain about your future after the project is finished. It depends on the case whether you have social security.

There is no formal pattern on an „external status“ in Austria, it is only an unofficial status, yet it is very unusual in Austria.

12.

Since we argue that there should not be any restriction rules for PhD students, we do not wish for one single status to fit all PhD candidates. We rather think it’s important to adapt the status to the individual situation of any young researcher, since probably not all PhD candidates can be university employees. What should be achieved for everyone, however, is basic social security.

13:

On a first skim over a text we agree on the content of the „Eurodoc supervision and training Charter”.

14.

The regulations for the final doctoral examinations vary from university to university and form faculty to faculty.

In all cases, the examinations are called “Rigorosum” and consist of oral parts only.

In the meantime, the system of a public defensio has prevailed in most faculties, yet partly the old tradition of examinations on general subjects that are more or less related to the dissertation subject has survived. The argumentation behind these additional parts of examination is that a research doctor should have a broader overview on his field, on the other

hand, he/she should already have such an overview at master level, and traditional examinations are not appropriate any more at doctoral level.

In some cases, supervisor, assessors and examiners have to be different persons, in some cases an external, foreign person has to be involved in the defensio, often only "if possible". On the one hand, one tries to make the defensio more transparent, the other hand, external persons often also have a relation and attitude (positive or negative) towards the research group of the supervisor, which influences the examination process.

Apart from the final examinations, there are also examinations on the single lectures. Often, there are no specific courses for doctoral students; doctoral candidates have to choose from lectures from the optional part of master studies. In any case, the examination procedure is the same as for master students.

We did not find any numbers, but based on experiences, we know that the number of persons that fail the final doctoral examinations is very low. Supervisors would lose reputation if their candidates fail, so they encourage them to compete not until they are capable to pass the defensio.

Theses are official publications in Austria, accessible at least via the local University library and the national library ("Nationalbibliothek").

15.

Beforehand, we want to clarify that in Austria, there are only research doctorates in psychology and engineering.

Only in medicine, the "Doctor" is the first grade, it is comparable with a master degree, the master thesis has, although being called dissertation as well, usually no original research content. Yet there is a separate research doctorate in medicine as well.

In all other disciplines, there are only research doctorates, at least formally.

In some disciplines like law, economics, or architecture, we have been reported that the quality of dissertations is partly low; this is mainly due to tradition.

There is not yet any longer doctorate with taught elements that is being classified as such, yet some faculties have established more and partly mandatory courses in the curriculum of the doctoral studies. We oppose such developments, as we think there must be a difference to master studies and doctoral candidates are capable to compile their own study programme that fits on the specific needs in accordance with their supervisor.

It is quite possible to do the doctorate both in part or full time, appropriate to the specific case. There are also some teaching fellowships, yet we recommend that these possibilities to acquire teaching experience should be enlarged in a controlled way (contracts)

16:

There is the idea of one nationwide controlling agency, called AQA (<http://www.aqa.ac.at/>) - they have not started evaluating in areas concerned with doctoral matters, as far as we could find out.

17.

Apart from institutional agreements that vary from university to university, exchange programmes such as ERASMUS and CEEPUS are popular also among PhD candidates. For the US and Australia, young researchers can participate in the joint study programme. Austria

has a good exchange network with Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Aktion Österreich-Ungarn, Aktion Österreich-Tschechien, Aktion Österreich-Slowakei). Another possibility is to apply for a KWA, a scholarship for short-term research in a foreign country, which is the most individual possibility of all. The Austrian ministry of education, science and culture provides scholarships for postgraduate training with an academic degree.

18.

Young researchers are well aware of their possibilities to go abroad but unfortunately this is a money matter: Scholarships are too low to afford a living, especially when one has to pay rent for his/her own flat in your home country, too. So, doing research abroad is still a luxurious undertaking. Therefore, we demand equal opportunities for all students to afford going abroad instead of only promoting the benefit of exchange programmes.

19.

EU-Programmes: ERASMUS, CEEPUS, TEMPUS, Marie Curie,
Others: Aktion Österreich-Ungarn/Tschechien/Slowakei (see above, 17), partnerships for scientific exchange with several European universities, individual funding from your home university.

There are no figures available about the popularity of the programmes.

20.

EU-Programmes: ERASMUS, CEEPUS, TEMPUS, Marie Curie,
Concerning grants for PhD programmes in Austria, no general judgment can be made since eligibility depends on many factors like the duration of stay or the PhD programme itself. Again, there are no figures available about the popularity of the programmes.

21.

As an example, an Italian programme with participation of the University of Vienna is mentioned here: "European PhD on social representations and communication" (discipline: Psychology, field: Social Psychology). Participants attain summer university each year and have three scientific advisors, each doing research at another European university. (link: <http://www.europhd.psi.uniroma1.it/>)

22.

We are only partially aware of these papers, the only information we have stem from the eurodoc list.

In our opinion, it is essential that the recruitment process is transparent and appropriate for the intended remit. For example if a person is intended to held lectures also, she/he should also proof didactical qualifications and his/her will to work with students.

23.

In a position paper, the Austrian ministry and the rectors conference already announced their will to implement the European Researchers Charter.

We think that a brief overview of the main contents, translated in all official European languages, would be necessary to promote the content of the European Researchers Charter.

24:

There not enough experience as the whole Austrian doctoral system used to ignore questions like career paths, fair contracting, etc. Due to the European discussions, these questions just

start to be posed right now. We believe that participation (of all university members), transparency and evaluation have to be raised enormously throughout the Austrian academic system. This in particular concerns all subjects issued in this question.

25.

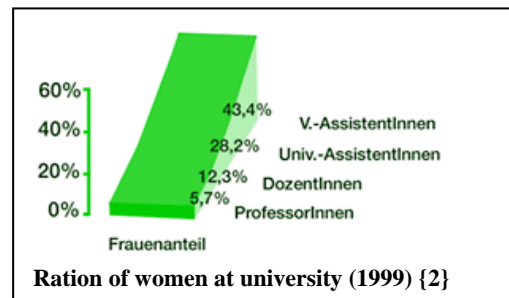
As an example, the University of Vienna has established a project centre with a focus on equal opportunities for women. It set up a mentoring project, which gives 40 women the chance to get training, coaching and to engage in career development for two years. Target group are PhD candidates, post-docs and “Habilitandinnen”. 12 scientific employees of the University of Vienna can apply for a 2-year-curriculum on career development – here, opening this service for a broader audience would be a good idea! On a lower level, the project centre also organizes trainings on scientific working skills and coaching for PhD candidates and even for students working on their master theses.

At PhD level, it would help much if one improves the conditions in order to make a researchers career more attractive for women, especially social security should be provided for every doctoral candidate, (especially maternal leave).

26.

In the study {1} it is indicated that there is not much difference in the on the gender distribution in research positions in other sectors that academia.

Numbers show an imbalance between men and women making career at university. While the ration of female students raised from 1970 to 1996 to 1999 from 26% to 47% to 50%, the ratio of university assistants with habilitation raised only from 12% to 22% to 28,2 % and the ratio of (associate) professors from 3% to 6% to 7,9 %. According to {2} No Austrian university has a female rector.



Position	Percentage (%)
University assistants	42,9 %
University assistants with habil	23,9 %
Professors	27,3 %
Professors with chair	20,0 %

1) Wissenschaftlerinnen in der außeruniversitären Forschung

Ulrike Papouschek, Ulli Pastner
 Hardcover, 312 Seiten, erschienen im Juli 2002,
 Euro 22,-, ISBN 3-85224-040-9

2) "Politikrelevante Hochschulforschung: Frauen in Wissenschaft und Forschung

"Forschungsschwerpunkt BMBWK,
<http://wwwapp.bmbwk.gv.at/womenscience>

Part 2

1:

15 scientific universities and 6 universities of arts in collaboration with the scientific universities.

Quelle: Bakkalaureats- und Magisterstudien an den Universitäten in Österreich

(Stand: Studienjahr 2004/05):

http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/12100/uebers_ord.pdf

2:

3:

5:

2 years nominal length, yet this is subject to change.

It is quite possible to do the doctorate both in part or full time, appropriate to the specific case.

6:

7:

We have not found any relevant figures, there is no intermediate degree.

8.

Doctoral candidates are registered as students at University level.

9.

Yes, they are students. Normally, the fee is 363,3 EUR

Foreign Students of some countries (non EU) have to pay 726 EUR

20:

As the membership in the OeH is mandatory for all students, all doctoral candidates of all Austrian universities are members of our association (about 15500), we are about 7 active members of the doctoral section of the OeH.