Higher Doctorates in the UK 2013

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Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the HEIs who contributed to the survey on which this report is based, and in particular to those individual respondents who took the time to answer my follow-up questions and make additional contributions from their institutional perspective. I would also like to thank Ben Massey, UKCGE’s University Liaison and Development Officer for his invaluable technical assistance in setting up the online survey and helping to collate the results.

Summary

Higher doctorate awards are offered by many UK HEIs and yet have received very little attention with respect to comparing procedure, standards and practice, or indeed what purpose they serve and the benefits that flow from them (for the awarding HEI and the academics concerned). This report is the second by the UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) on the subject, and it is noteworthy that in the intervening period since the first publication in 2008, there have been no other reports of this kind that establish the landscape and inform on emergent trends. It became evident in surveying members about higher doctorate awards that a major reason for this is the lack of a strategic role for such awards, coupled with a lack of a strong imperative to change them, particularly given the abundance of other issues that HEIs, quite reasonably, consider to be more pressing. Nevertheless, in the course of planning and executing this survey, it became clear that there is interest in the findings among UKCGE’s membership, precisely because this is a topic that receives little attention. This survey and report, along with its predecessor, therefore has an important role to play in providing the means by which UK HEIs can share information on their higher awards. The perspective that this provides could prove helpful in informing discussions about the future of such awards. The low response rate to the survey however, naturally limits the achievement of this goal. In particular, a key recommendation of this report is that future work in this area focus on developments within the post-1992 institutions, and the role that the higher doctorate may (or may not) play in raising their research standing.
In 2008, Professor Stuart Powell and Nicola Crouch published the first report for the UK Council of Graduate Education (UKCGE) on Higher Doctorates in the UK, in response to expressions of interest from member institutions. The purpose of that report was to map the landscape across the sector with respect to higher doctorates and examine any trends that emerged from a survey of member institutions. The original report concluded that there was a general lack of consensus across the sector in terms of a common understanding of the purpose of higher doctorates and award nomenclature, but that there were some important areas of commonality with respect to eligibility criteria and requirements for submission. Five years on, it is timely to revisit this area, to review trends within the sector and to highlight any changes that have emerged.

Readers should note however that the response rate to the 2013 survey was low (just 26 from a total UKCGE membership of 123 - 21%). This has two important implications – first, that the survey findings cannot be held to be representative of either the UKCGE membership or the higher education sector, and second, comparison between this survey and that of 2008 is problematic and is only valid at best at a general level. The decision to publish the findings despite the low response was made for the benefit of those members who have expressed interest in obtaining information on higher doctorates (however incomplete) from other institutions. Readers are however encouraged to exercise caution in utilising the results of the 2013 survey to inform discussion and decision-making within their own institutions.

1.1 Aims and Scope of this Report

The aims of this report were to provide an update (post-2008) with respect to trends in higher doctorates in the UK, and highlight any significant changes or emerging issues worthy of wider discussion and debate. However, whilst the survey of 2013 has repeated some elements of the original (to facilitate some degree of direct comparison), there is some variance in scope between the two surveys. For example, the survey of 2013 does not explore the boundaries between the higher doctorate by published work and the honorary doctorate (Honoris Causa), or with the professional doctorates, except (in the case of the former) to determine the degree of separation between these two forms of higher doctorate in the regulations and expectations of participating HEIs.

With the above in mind, the scope of this report can be summarised as follows:

- To establish the range of higher doctorate awards offered by UK HEIs, with respect to both the disciplines concerned and the diversity of nomenclature across these awards (with appropriate comparisons with the original survey)
- To establish trends in the numbers of higher doctorates being awarded (with appropriate comparisons with the original survey) and where possible, to explore the underlying issues related to these trends
• To establish the degree to which there is commonality (and/or diversity) in the regulations governing higher doctorates across HEIs, and also in the policies, strategies and perceived benefits associated with these awards
• To understand the key issues associated with higher doctorates that may facilitate either growth in the range of awards (and numbers being awarded), or alternatively lead to a decline in their popularity. This will open the way to discussion regarding the implications of these observed trends and the future of higher doctorates in the UK.

1.2 Definitions and Terms of Reference

The UK higher doctorate has a long history with the first (a DSc) being offered by Durham University in 1882 (Frayling, 1996). Despite having some equivalence with the “Habilitation” post-doctoral awards available in some parts of Europe, it also has some significant differences. A Habilitation degree in Germany, for example, formally determines whether a person is sufficiently suited as a scholar and a teacher to be a university professor in a specific field. Assessment is based on a professorial thesis (or Habilitation thesis), or a body of academic publications submitted by the candidate for review by an academic committee – the award exceeds that of a PhD in that the research must be based on independent scholarship, and the candidate may also be required to document their lecturing activity at a scientific university in a subject relevant to the postdoctoral university degree (Freie Universitat Berlin, 2012; LMU Munich, 2012).

In the UK by contrast, the purpose of the higher doctorate is less to qualify the candidate for academic activity as to recognise a substantial and distinguished contribution in original research over a significant period of time, and/or to facilitate promotion to professorial level. As such, the DSc may be sought at the mid-career stage (for promotion purposes) whilst the DLitt is often awarded to experienced academics already in possession of a professorship (QAA, 2011). Thus, any similarity with the Habilitation degree is largely confined (in broad terms) to the requirement to demonstrate the research credentials of the candidate, but at differing career stages, and for quite different purposes.

This report takes as its working definition of higher doctorates that put forward by the original UKCGE report (Powell and Crouch, 2008), adapted slightly to take account also of the differentiation with the professional doctorates:

“A higher doctorate is an award that is at a level above the PhD (or equivalent professional doctorate in the discipline), and that is typically gained not through a defined programme of study but rather by submission of a substantial body of research-based work.”

And to render a still clearer distinction between them:

“…where a PhD has come to indicate mastery of a narrow field (narrow in the sense of representing three years study only), the higher doctorate may be seen as indicating command over a field of study and a sustained contribution to understanding within that field.”
These working definitions will be set against the findings of the survey and any differences to emerge will be discussed.

In addition, this report also distinguishes clearly between the higher doctorate by published works (as implied in the above definitions) and the honorary doctorate (Honoris Causa) which is afforded the same or similar status in some institutions. The focus of this report is specifically on the higher doctorate by published works, except in exploring the extent to which they are differentiated in the regulations of the responding institutions.

2 Survey Methodology

The survey questionnaire was made available to respondents via an online link from the UKCGE site, utilising Smart Survey software. The initial invitation to participate in the survey was directed to the Link person at each of UKCGE’s member institutions, but with the recommendation that individuals at Academic Registrar level or equivalent would be the most appropriate respondents. The survey opened on 29th November 2012 and was originally planned to close on 31st January 2013, but this was extended to the end of February to enable a greater number of responses to be obtained. Reminders were sent to Link members encouraging them to involve their institution in the survey.

The questionnaire explored a number of key themes – the range of awards available (by discipline), the number of awards being made, policy and regulatory issues (for example, eligibility and entry requirements) and the perceived benefits of higher doctorate awards and any issues that arise. A copy of the survey questions is included at the end of the report (Appendix A).

The final number of responses was 26 out of a total of 123 UKCGE member institutions (21%), but of these, 10 stated that their institution did not offer higher doctorates. These respondents were asked to complete the remainder of Section A of the survey only, which dealt with why higher doctorates were not offered, whether they had been in the past and subsequently discontinued, and why this was the case. The number of responses for the remaining survey questions (Sections B and C covering Definitions and Awards Available, and Policy and Regulatory Issues) were in the range 8-16.

Table 1 overleaf illustrates the breakdown of participating institutions according to their affiliation to UK university groupings. The institutional roles represented by the respondents included: Academic or Assistant Registrar (or similar), Head/Director of the Graduate School, Director/Dean of Research or a manager related to PGR programmes.
Table 1 suggests a reasonably even spread of HEIs with respect to institutional affiliation. The post-1992 group is slightly less well represented in the sample of 16 HEIs currently offering higher doctorates, and especially so when its size relative to the other sector groupings is taken into account; the implications of this will be considered in the analysis.

### 3 Survey Results

#### 3.1 Range of Awards and Nomenclature

The respondents were asked to indicate which higher doctorates (from which disciplines) their institutions offer. All 16 of the HEIs offering higher doctorates responded to this question, Table 2. The survey question utilised the award titles identified in the 2008 survey (Powell and Crouch, 2008) as the basis for a list of fixed options. An option of “Other, please specify” enabled HEIs to supply titles and abbreviations of awards not covered in the list – these are indicated with an asterisk (*) in Table 2. One respondent indicated that the abbreviation EngD is used (as opposed to DEng). A second respondent similarly noted that their institution offers an EngD but made clear that it is NOT a higher doctorate, thus providing an example of the confusing nomenclature reported by Powell and Crouch (2008). The number of respondents offering alternative abbreviated titles for the same award is indicated in brackets after the alternative abbreviation. Relevant extracts of the 2008 data is included in Table 2 for comparison.
The survey results for 2013 have some distinct commonalities with the earlier 2008 survey. Most notably, the DSc followed by the DLitt remain the most widely offered higher doctorates. The LLD, DMus and DD similarly occupy the same positions in the rankings for both surveys. Three awards are indicated in the 2013 data that did not appear in the 2008 survey, suggesting that these are recent additions to the awards available. However, this may also be merely a function of differences in the respondent samples between the two surveys.

### 3.2 Number of Awards Made

The respondents were also asked to indicate how many of each type of higher doctorate had been awarded by their institution on average over a ten year period. The data revealed that some responding institutions had made no higher doctorate awards since 2003; this included the most popular awards, i.e., DSc, DLitt, and LLD. The remaining data showed that the average number of higher doctorate awards being made was, at best, one per year. Indeed, the numbers were so small in some cases that some respondents offered a total number of awards over the period instead. These respondents offered total figures since 2003 of between zero and 11 (though some stated that they had less than 10 years data available). The highest numbers were recorded for the DSc, with one institution awarding 11 since 2003, and another making 10 awards. In addition, one institution had awarded six LLD and three DLitt awards since 2003.

#### Table 2 Awards Offered across the Survey Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award Title</th>
<th>No. of Responding HEIs (2013) out of 16</th>
<th>No. of Responding HEIs (2008) out of 49</th>
<th>Alternative titles (2013 survey only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Science (DSc)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Letters (DLitt)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Law (LLD)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Music (DMus)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Divinity (DD)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Engineering (DEng)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>EngD (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Medicine (MD)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Technology (DTech)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Education (DEd)*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Social Sciences (DSocSc)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>DSc (Social Sciences) (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Arts (DArts)*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Design (DDes)*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Economics and Social Studies (DSc Econ)*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Medical and Veterinary Surgery (DVMS)*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS)*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey results for 2013 have some distinct commonalities with the earlier 2008 survey. Most notably, the DSc followed by the DLitt remain the most widely offered higher doctorates. The LLD, DMus and DD similarly occupy the same positions in the rankings for both surveys. Three awards are indicated in the 2013 data that did not appear in the 2008 survey, suggesting that these are recent additions to the awards available. However, this may also be merely a function of differences in the respondent samples between the two surveys.
Most respondents (who provided data for this question) indicated that numbers were not only small, but had been static over the ten year period. There were two responses indicating that numbers had been decreasing for certain awards, and two respondents indicated an increase for some awards. In addition, one respondent made the general comment that numbers of higher doctorate awards (at their institution) were increasing, but did not elaborate on whether this was across all awards or for specific disciplines. The data from this section of the analysis has been tabulated and included as Appendix B.

### 3.3 Regulatory Issues

Respondents were asked to provide information on their HEIs’ regulations regarding higher doctorates, specifically what their eligibility criteria are, and the requirements for submission. Respondents were invited to provide a “cut and paste” of the relevant extracts of their regulations, as well as answering specific questions about their eligibility criteria (Questions 12-14) in order to enable a detailed content analysis. It should be noted that not all the extracts submitted contained details of eligibility criteria, and equally not all extracts included details of submission requirements criteria. Tables 3 and 4 summarise the data for eligibility and submission requirements respectively.

#### Table 3  Eligibility Criteria for Entry to a Higher Doctorate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eligibility criteria included in responding institutions’ regulations:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Variants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holders of a degree at the awarding institution</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Of which 4 respondents specified a min. time period post-graduation, e.g., 7 or 10 years. Two HEIs offer a reduced min. time period for holders of Masters or Doctoral degrees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holders of a degree awarded by a UK institution or qualification of equivalent standard</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>One respondent specified a min. time period post-graduation of 7 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A suitable award from an associated or accredited institution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A member of academic staff at the awarding institution</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Of which 3 respondents specified a min. time period post-graduation, e.g., not less than 4 years FT or 6 years PT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person who has carried out research at or in association with the awarding institution, which has led to publications that will form a substantial component of the body of work presented in support of his/her application</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former staff of the awarding institution</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The shaded criteria constitute responses to specific survey questions (Questions 12-14) – 15 out of a possible 16 respondents answered Questions 12 and 13, and 14 respondents (of a possible 16) answered Question 14. The additional (unshaded) criteria, some of which are variants of those specified in Questions 12-14, were identified through a detailed examination of the extracts of regulations supplied by responding institutions. It should also be noted that some regulations state that eligibility depends on either one of a number of criteria, or a combination of criteria being fulfilled; for example, holder of a UK degree of equivalent standing (to the awarding institution) and/or a member of staff for a minimum time period. The results reveal a high degree of commonality around the three core criteria of Graduates of the Awarding Institution, Current Academic Staff and Former Academic Staff, with some variations regarding minimum time periods, or degrees from recognised UK institutions, or institutions (or individuals) with significant collaborative links to the awarding institution.

With respect to submission criteria, Table 4 reveals the results of a detailed content analysis of the extracts of institutional regulations provided by the respondents. 15 of a possible 16 respondents submitted extracts of their regulations, but two respondents submitted extracts that did not specify the submission criteria (only the eligibility requirements).

**Table 4 Submission Criteria for Submission to the Degree**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Submission Criteria</th>
<th>No. of instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work of high distinction which constitutes an original, sustained and significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge (or scholarship) or the application of knowledge through research</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original (published) work of distinction/ high impact journals</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading international authority in the field of study concerned</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original research over a &quot;sustained period&quot;, e.g., not less than seven years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguished, substantial and original contributions to advancements in learning</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading authority in the field of study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial quantity (as well as quality) of publications</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that some responding institutions specify more than one of the above submission criteria, therefore the number of instances in Table 4 totals more than the number of respondents.

It is evident from Table 4 that there is considerable commonality with respect to the focus on work of high distinction that significantly contributes to the advancement of knowledge/scholarship, and the similar criterion of original published work of high distinction and impact. It is noted that the majority of the criteria are research-orientated, with only three respondents specifying any criteria related to learning, suggesting that a distinguished teaching career may not be deemed sufficient to qualify for a higher doctorate. There is also some focus on the international standing of the candidate in their
field, possibly in line with the increasing emphasis in recent years on international standing in the evaluation of academic output.

3.31 Differentiating Higher Doctorates by Published Works and Honoris Causa

The predecessor to this report (Powell and Crouch, 2008) revealed that in many cases the titles and abbreviated titles for higher and honorary doctorates (and in some cases, professional doctorates) are the same, raising the question of how clearly institutions distinguish the higher doctorate by published works and the Honoris Causa award in their regulations. This was beyond the scope of the original report (though the authors were able to draw some general conclusions from their data), but the 2013 survey data did enable a further exploration of this matter.

In response to the survey questions, 11 out of a possible 16 respondents indicated that a clear distinction is made in their institutions’ regulations between higher and honorary doctorates, three respondents indicated that a clear distinction is NOT made, and the remaining two respondents skipped the question. A number of respondents elaborated on their answers, offering further insights into their institutions’ position on higher doctorates. For example, six respondents commented on the nature of the differentiation made between the awards, i.e., that the awards recognised different achievements, that the higher doctorate was awarded on the basis of a formal submission whereas the honorary doctorate is awarded on the basis of nomination to a committee, whilst three respondents pointed explicitly to the higher doctorate award recognising a significant and sustained contribution to knowledge through research. Two respondents indicated that their institutions’ did not offer honorary doctorates, only higher doctorates.

In order to provide an up to date picture regarding the nomenclature for doctorates, identified as confusing and inconsistent by the authors of the 2008 report (Powell and Crouch, 2008), the 2013 survey asked respondents to indicate whether or not the higher doctorate and the honorary doctorate have the same titles and/or abbreviated titles in their institutions. 10 of a possible 16 respondents indicated that the same titles are used for both types of award, five indicated that they were not same, and one skipped the question. This suggests that the issues of nomenclature highlighted by Powell and Crouch (2008) continue to exist.

The additional comments offered by some respondents provide some useful insights into the approaches taken by some institutions to differentiate the two awards – for example, using the PhD title or DUniv. for honorary doctorates and titles differentiated by discipline such as DLitt or DSc for higher doctorates. One respondent commented that the two awards are distinguished simply by adding Honoris Causa for the honorary award. The use of the PhD title for higher doctorates could cause confusion given the obvious conflict between the research degree that begins most research careers, and the higher doctorate generally awarded in the mid- or even late stages of a professional or practitioner’s career. In addition, as has already been seen (Section 3.1), whilst some of the discipline-related titles are fairly distinctive as higher doctorates, simply because they have emerged as the most commonly used titles for the purpose, e.g., DSc and DLitt, confusion with similarly titled professional doctorates could occur, e.g., DEng and EngD.
3.4 Policy, Strategy and the Perceived Benefits of Higher Doctorate Awards

Given the extent to which the outputs of academics and universities are monitored and evaluated in recent times, it was considered appropriate to investigate whether or not UK HEIs have a distinct policy or strategy with respect to higher doctorates, and what the perceived benefits are; for example, whether higher doctorates are used to enhance the reputation of the university, or the individual. The survey revealed in fact that in most of the responding institutions, there is no explicit strategy or policy with respect to higher doctorates – just three out of a possible total of 16 respondents indicated that there is a policy within their institutions, with 11 stating that there was none (or none that they were aware of) and the remaining two skipped the question.

With respect to strategy, the respondents were prompted to indicate whether there might be a strategy at their institutions of higher doctorates being used, for example, as a pathway to promotion to a professorship, or whether it is seen as a way of making a “lifetime achievement” award to cap a distinguished career. Neither option yielded any positive responses, but whilst there evidently is not a great strategic emphasis on higher doctorates within the responding institutions, two respondents indicated that higher doctorates are promoted in some instances. One respondent indicated that the award is being promoted to staff simply because it had been under-used in the last 10 years, whilst another stated that submissions to the award were being promoted as a means of enhancing the university’s research reputation. With respect to the perceived benefits of the higher doctorate award, two respondents indicated that it could enhance the prospects of promotion, and two others suggested that it could be (has been) regarded as an esteem factor in the REF (or previously in the RAE), or could strengthen an application to a learned body such as the Royal Society.

3.5 Fees

The original UKCGE report on higher doctorates (Powell and Crouch, 2008) revealed a wide range of variability in the fees paid by candidates – ranging from £250 to £4100. Again therefore, the 2013 survey provided an opportunity to update this information, Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fee categories</th>
<th>For application</th>
<th>For examination</th>
<th>Total when combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No fee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than £200</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£200-499</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£500-999</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£1000 or greater</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of responses</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fee information was obtained from 12 respondents with a thirteenth replying simply that the fees are not published by their institution and could not therefore be included in Table 5. Respondents were asked to differentiate between fees paid on application and fees paid on examination, and then the totals for each respondent were combined to give an overall figure. Overall, a variation in approach was noted with four institutions charging fees at the application stage with no fees paid on examination, and three institutions charging at the examinations stage but not on application. One institution stated that the fees were combined (£500) and did not indicate at what point the fee is charged – this response was therefore recorded in Table 5 as “no fee” in both the applications and examinations column and was instead recorded in the total when combined column.

One respondent indicated that the examination fee was based on the number of examiners - £150 per examiner – if the most common arrangement of three examiners (Powell and Crouch, 2008) is assumed then this would suggest an examination fee of £450, but since this could not be ascertained with any certainty, this respondent’s data was omitted from Table 5, giving a total of 11 instead of 12 responses for each column. One respondent offered information also on how much examiners were paid - £400.

Curiously according to the 2013 survey, the fees charged (the total fee, including application and/or examination as applicable) across institutions showed far greater similarity across the sample, than that recorded in the 2008 survey – for 2013 fees range from £500-£1475, compared to £250 to £4100 in 2008. This difference could reflect changes in how higher doctorates are perceived by institutions (or the extent to which they are being promoted), or reflect changes in the numbers of awards versus the costs of processing the applications and arranging the examinations. But this anomaly may also be simply a consequence of differences in the 2013 and 2008 survey samples.

3.6 The Future of Higher Doctorates, Issues and Obstacles

At the end of the survey, the respondents for institutions currently offering higher doctorates were asked to comment on what the future is for higher doctorates in their institutions, and to make any further comments that they felt were relevant to the topic. The question regarding the future of higher doctorates was answered by 13 of a possible 16 respondents. The question offered a number of fixed responses that respondents could give “yes” or “no” answers to – some respondents chose to skip certain parts of the question giving totals of less than 13 in some cases. Summarising the main findings from the question as a whole: four respondents indicated that they expect the number of awards being made in their institutions to increase (whilst five indicated that they would most likely not increase), two expected the range of higher doctorate awards to expand (whilst seven were not expecting expansion), and eight respondents did not anticipate any significant change regarding their higher doctorates. Consistent with the expectations for change, nine respondents did not anticipate a scaling back in the number of awards being made and eight respondents did not anticipate their higher doctorate awards being phased out.

Comments made by two respondents further emphasised the possibility that the number of awards being made may increase; in one case because of changes in the “postgraduate agenda” at their institution. However, the second indicated that if an increase does not occur then the award may well...
be phased out, and a third respondent indicated that their higher doctorates will be subject to review in the 2013/14 academic year.

With respect to additional comments and issues raised by respondents, two respondents noted that appointing examiners could be challenging for higher doctorates. The specific issues raised in this respect seem to be linked – one noted that despite internal screening, not all applications were successful and the examiners were uncomfortable with this, whilst the other suggested that it was difficult to ensure that the examiners completed the process; possibly because of the former issue of disliking the prospect of not recommending a peer for the award. On a different note, one respondent pointed to the issue of international comparison, questioning whether the higher doctorate is recognised abroad as a distinctive award, over and above the PhD (or professional doctorate equivalent). Given the increasing emphasis on international standing in academia, particularly in research, this would seem to be a pertinent point, which is not helped by the aforementioned issues of confusing and sometimes overlapping nomenclature.

3.7 Number of HEIs Offering/Not Offering Higher Doctorates

As stated in Section 2, the survey revealed that among the total sample of 26 responding institutions, 16 offer higher doctorates and 10 do not. The 10 respondents not currently offering higher doctorates were asked some follow-up questions about why this is the case, whether they had offered higher doctorates in the past, and if so, why the awards were discontinued. For completeness therefore, this section will review the survey findings in this respect.

Of the 10 HEIs that do not offer higher doctorates, two stated that they do not award research degrees and four stated simply that they were “not applicable” or were “not a priority”. The remaining six HEIs offer only honorary degrees (having withdrawn awards of higher doctorates by published works). One of these commented as follows on the reasons for the withdrawal of the published works awards:

- Demand was significantly reduced because higher doctorates are no longer necessary to gain promotion to professor
- Standards were seen to have gone down; higher doctorates were being sought to bolster a weak CV
- Difficult to administer – difficult to recruit examiners willing to take on the responsibility
- Not convinced degree adds value abroad - international comparators differ

Clearly this information cannot be regarded as indicative of other HEIs, but it does suggest that changes in the academic environment may have some impact on these awards. It is also noteworthy that there are some commonalities in this response and those of the 16 responding institutions that do currently offer higher doctorates. For example, the fact that higher doctorates are no longer needed in some cases to gain promotion is in agreement with the findings of Section 3.3 – none of the respondents cited promotion as a reason (or strategy) for encouraging academics to apply for a higher doctorate (though two respondents stated that it may be helpful). Another common issue is the difficulty in recruiting examiners, also highlighted in Section 3.5, as is the issue of international recognition.
4 Discussion

The findings from the 2013 survey suggest that the overall picture regarding higher doctorates in the UK is little changed from 2008, with the main higher doctorate awards remaining the DSc and DLitt, and other awards being offered by relatively few institutions. As a general observation, whilst the issues of confusing nomenclature highlighted in 2008 have not been resolved, the very small numbers of awards being made in most cases suggests that there is most likely little motivation for doing so. Moreover, there is little evidence of a further proliferation of higher doctorate awards to further exacerbate the situation – just three new awards were noted in the 2013 survey relative to 2008.

Further evidence that there is little change with respect to higher doctorates was evident from the numbers of awards made over the past 10 years, and projections for future awards. The responding institutions reported either zero or very small numbers of awards being made, and the numbers were largely static over this period. Furthermore, the sample was divided in terms of whether or not the range available and numbers of awards being made in the future would expand or contract, and many of those responding to this survey question did not anticipate any major change. Despite the low numbers of awards being made, most of the respondents did not anticipate a scaling back or phasing out of higher doctorates at their institutions.

These findings would seem to be a reflection of the low strategic priority given to these awards. This is understandable given that many institutions perceive little benefit from them except as a possible enhancement to the standing of the university, or the esteem and promotion prospects of the individual academic. Indeed, one interesting finding is that a higher doctorate is not needed to achieve promotion to professor (though it may help). Similarly, such an award would most likely not to be recognised internationally, though conversely international standing may increase a candidate’s chances of success when being considered for an award. Thus, unless an institution resolves to use higher doctorate awards to encourage a high standard of academic achievement and research of high international standing, there would seem to be little incentive for HEIs to actively promote higher doctorates to their academic staff. Moreover, it could be argued that most academic staff, by nature, are likely to be sufficiently self-motivated to achieve academic success and international standing regardless, and for those that are not, the REF (and a HEI’s ambitions in that respect) would seem to provide sufficient additional encouragement. Thus, the higher doctorate does not seem to have a clear strategic purpose. That HEIs do not plan to scale back or phase out higher doctorates might best be explained by the fact that the low numbers do not provide sufficient imperative to do so, particularly if the fees set for the awards are sufficient to cover the added administrative and academic time required to process and examine the applicants.

One significant area of commonality to emerge is with respect to eligibility and submission requirements. Higher doctorates are predominantly available to academics of the awarding institution, those holding degrees from the awarding institution and former staff. In terms of submission criteria, the focus is predominantly on a high standard of scholarly research, high quality, high impact...
publications and international research standing. Again, whilst this aligns with the research ambitions/standing of the awarding institutions, the higher doctorate is not a key mechanism in achieving such goals.

Given the focus on research, it might be anticipated that differences in approach or policy may arise between the research intensive and the younger, less research intensive universities. Despite the original sample of 26 HEIs showing a reasonable spread across the Russell Group, 1994 Group and pre- and post-1992 HEIs, once the sample had been reduced to the 16 institutions that currently offer higher doctorates, the sample was skewed slightly more in favour of the research intensive, pre-1992 institutions. The post-1992 group is by far the largest in the sector and whilst all affiliations are under-represented in this small survey sample, the post-1992 group is especially so. However, this may simply reflect the nature of the group, with fewer of these HEIs offering higher doctorates. The survey did not therefore allow conclusions to be drawn on the extent to which higher doctorates are offered by the post-1992 universities and whether or not those that do, do so for particular reasons, for example, to raise their research standing. It remains however a possibility that the higher doctorate may yet have a role to play in supporting such ambitions. It is recommended therefore that a future survey of higher doctorates should pay particular attention to collecting data from the post-1992 institutions in order to develop a clearer and more meaningful picture of developments there.

5 Conclusions

The 2013 survey of higher doctorates suggests that the range and number of awards being made in the last ten years, and predicted for the future, is largely static. The small numbers of awards being made seem to reflect the lack of a strategic role for higher doctorates within HEIs, and the fact that such an award is not an essential step in an academic’s promotional path. Arguably, there is little logic in creating a strategic role for higher doctorates since a HEI’s ambitions to achieve ever better research standing (and to motivate its academics in that regard) can be achieved in other ways. But equally, there is little incentive to scale back or terminate these awards, despite inherent problems with the examination process.

Certain important commonalities emerged among the HEIs in the 2013 survey, i.e., the criteria for eligibility and application, and the incentives (or lack of) in offering/applying for a higher doctorate, suggest that the overall picture presented here may be more widely representative. However, the slight skewing of the data toward the research intensive universities may have limited the overall picture. It is recommended therefore that a future survey in this area should be designed with particular attention to capturing the perspective of the post-1992 universities.
References

Frayling, C., “Practice-based Doctorates in the Creative and Performing Arts and Design”, for UKCGE, 1996


Ludwig-Maximilians Universität (LMU) München, *About the Postdoctoral Work (Habilitation)*, available online at: [http://www.en.uni-muenchen.de/scholars/postdocs/habilitationen/index.html](http://www.en.uni-muenchen.de/scholars/postdocs/habilitationen/index.html), accessed on 7 November 2012


UKCGE Membership Survey 2012 – Higher Doctorates

This survey of UKCGE’s member institutions is designed to help us establish an overview of Higher Doctorate awards offered by UK HEIs. It is anticipated that given the nature of the survey, the respondent from each member institution should be at Academic Registrar level (or equivalent).

Section A - Respondent Information:

1. Please give the name of your institution
2. Please tell us what position you occupy within your institution
3. Does your institution currently offer Higher Doctorate awards? Please note that our interest is in higher doctorates by published works, not Honorary Doctorates (Honoris Causa). If the answer is “yes” please proceed immediately to Section B of the survey. If the answer is “no”, please complete the remaining Section A questions only.
4. Is there any particular reason why your institution does not offer Higher Doctorates?
5. Has your institution ever offered Higher Doctorates in the past? If so, what were they, why were they discontinued and when?

Section B – Definitions and Awards Available:

6. What are the main requirements for admission to a Higher Doctorate at your institution? If appropriate, “cut and paste” the relevant statement from your institution’s regulations.
7. Does your institution make a clear distinction in its regulations between Higher Doctorates by Published Works (not be confused with the PhD by Published Works), and Honorary Doctorates (Honoris Causa)? If so, are both types of award considered by your institution to be of equivalent standing? Please offer further explanation if appropriate.
8. Please indicate which of the following Higher Doctorate awards are currently available within your institution (please ignore any PhD or Professional Doctorate awards offered by your institution that happen to have the same title/abbreviated title):

   a. Doctor of Divinity (DD)       f. Doctor of Music (DMus)
   b. Doctor of Engineering (DEng)  g. Doctor of Science (DSc)
   c. Doctor of Law (LLD)          h. Doctor of Social Sciences (DSocSc)
   d. Doctor of Letters (DLitt)    i. Doctor of Technology (DTech)
   e. Doctor of Medicine (MD)      j. Other (please specify):

9. Does your institution offer any of the above awards, but with a different abbreviated title, e.g., DScTech instead of DTech? If so, please give details below.
10. Where your institution offers both Higher and Honorary Doctorates, are the titles and abbreviated titles the same for both? Please indicate any differences below.

11. Please indicate in the table below, how many Higher Doctorate awards of each type have been made per year (on average), in the last 10 years, and please indicate whether the numbers have been increasing, decreasing or static over that time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Award</th>
<th>Average number of awards per year (over 10 years)* **</th>
<th>Increasing/ Decreasing/ Static?</th>
<th>Numbers exclude Honorary Doctorates (Honoris Causa)?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Divinity (DD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Engineering (DEng)</td>
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<td>Doctor of Law (LLD)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Letters (DLitt)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Medicine (MD)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Doctor of Music (DMus)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctor of Science (DSc)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Social Sciences (DSocSc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Technology (DTech)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please enter “N/A” where award is not offered by your institution
**If no data is available, or numbers are only estimates, please indicate by “no data” or “approx.” plus number

Section C – Policy and Regulatory Issues:

12. Please indicate in the table below which eligibility requirements apply at your institution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eligibility Requirements:</th>
<th>Please indicate “yes” or “no”</th>
<th>Please provide relevant details, e.g., number of years at the university</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduates of the awarding institution (and collaborating partners)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current academic staff (and graduate of another recognised degree awarding institution)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former academic staff (and graduate of another recognised degree awarding institution)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. How much does your institution charge in fees for:
   a. Making an application
   b. For the examination

14. Does your institution have a policy of encouraging its academics to apply for a Higher Doctorate? If yes, what are the reasons for this? How does the institution benefit?

15. Please indicate whether your institution has a particular strategy with respect to the stage of an academic’s career at which these Higher Doctorates are intended to be awarded? For example:
   a. Mid-career academics, as a pathway to a professorship
   b. A “lifetime achievement” award on the basis of a distinguished academic career
   c. There is no specific strategy
   d. Varies depending on the discipline/faculty (please give details below)
   e. Other (please specify)

16. Are there any particular benefits (that you are aware of) to the individual academic from receiving one these awards? Does it for example, “open doors” with respect to certain learned societies? Please give details below:

17. What is the future for Higher Doctorates in your institution? Do you anticipate:
   a. An increasing number of recipients of existing awards?
   b. An expansion of the number of awards on offer?
   c. No change?
   d. If anything, a scaling back of the number of recipients each year?
   e. A phasing out of certain or all higher doctorate awards?

For any of the above options, please give details as applicable:

18. Do you have any other comments to make on Higher Doctorates at your institution, or more widely in the sector (including where appropriate, comments about Honorary Doctorates), that have not been covered by the questions above?

   Thank you very much for taking the time to participate.
### Survey Data Relating to the Number of Higher Degree Awards Made since 2003:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award Title</th>
<th>Average number per year since 2003</th>
<th>Total number of awards since 2003</th>
<th>Trend in numbers since 2003</th>
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<td>E=1*</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E=static</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H=static</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Engineering (DEng)</td>
<td>A=0</td>
<td></td>
<td>A=static</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H=static</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Law (LLD)</td>
<td>A=0</td>
<td>C=0</td>
<td>A=static</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E=2*</td>
<td>H=1</td>
<td>E=decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G=6</td>
<td></td>
<td>H=static</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Letters (DLitt)</td>
<td>A=0</td>
<td>C=0</td>
<td>A=static</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D=0</td>
<td>E=2*</td>
<td>D=increasing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>H=1</td>
<td>I=&lt;1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>J=0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>F=1</td>
<td>G=3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>L=5 (since 2009 only)</td>
<td>I=static</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>E=static</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctor of Technology (DTech)</td>
<td>A=0</td>
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<td>A=static</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F=1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

*Numbers provided include *Honoris Causa* awards
Explanatory Notes:
Data from individual HEIs is coded in the table above, i.e., Respondents A-L. The respondents were originally asked to provide the average number of each type of higher doctorate award made over a ten year period, but in practice, the numbers were so small that in some cases respondents offered a total number of awards over the period – these figures are indicated in a separate column in the table. Recognising that some institutions may not differentiate (in the records) higher doctorates by published works from Honoris Causa awards, respondents were asked to specify whether or not the numbers supplied included the latter - these figures are marked by an asterisk*. 
Appendix C  List of UKCGE Member Institutions
(as of September 2013)

Full Members

University of Aberdeen
Aberystwyth University
Al Maktoum Institute
Anglia Ruskin University
Arts University Bournemouth
Aston University
Bangor University
University of Bath
Bath Spa University
University of Bedfordshire
Birmingham City University
University of Birmingham
Bishop Grosseteste University
University of Bolton
Bournemouth University
University of Bradford
University of Brighton
University of Bristol
Brunel University
Buckinghamshire New University
University of Cambridge
Canterbury Christ Church University
Cardiff Metropolitan University
Cardiff University
University of Central Lancashire
University of Chester
University of Chichester
Cranfield University
University of Cumbria
De Montfort University
University of Derby
University of Dundee
Durham University
University of East Anglia
University of East London
Edge Hill University
Edinburgh Napier University
University of Edinburgh
University of Essex
University of Exeter
University College Falmouth
Glasgow Caledonian University
The Glasgow School of Art
University of Glasgow
Glyndŵr University
University of Greenwich
Harper Adams University
University of Hertfordshire
University of Huddersfield
University of Hull
Imperial College London
Institute of Cancer Research
Institute of Education
University of Kent
King’s College London
Kingston University
Lancaster University
Leeds Metropolitan University
University of Leeds
University of Leicester
University of Limerick
Liverpool John Moores University
University of Liverpool
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
London South Bank University
Loughborough University
Mary Immaculate College
Manchester Metropolitan University
University of Manchester
Middlesex University
National Institute for Medical Research
University of Newcastle
The University of Northampton
Northumbria University
Nottingham Trent University
University of Nottingham
The Open University
University of Oxford
University College Plymouth St Mark and St John
University of Plymouth
University of Portsmouth
Queen’s University Belfast
Ravensbourne College of Design & Communication
University of Reading
Roehampton University
Royal College of Art
Royal Holloway, University of London
The Royal Veterinary College
St George’s, University of London
University of Salford
Scottish Marine Institute (incorporating UHI)
Sheffield Hallam University
University of South Wales
University of Southampton
University of St Andrews
Staffordshire University
University of Stirling
University of Strathclyde
University of Sunderland
University of Surrey
University of Sussex
Swansea University
Teesside University
UHI Millennium Institute
University Campus Suffolk
University College London
University for the Creative Arts
University of Sheffield
University of Wales Institute Cardiff
University of Wales, Newport
University of Warwick
University of the West of England
University of West London
University of the West of Scotland
University of Westminster
University of Winchester
University of Wolverhampton
University of Worcester
York St John University
University of York
University of Ulster at Jordanstown
Associate Members

AUT University, Australia  
Biochemical Society  
The British Library  
British Sociological Association  
British School of Osteopathy  
Canadian Association for Graduate Studies  
Cork Institute of Technology  
Higher Education Academy  
The Islamic College  
Markfield Institute of Higher Education  
National Union of Students  
RMIT University, Australia  
Royal Conservatoire Scotland  
Royal Society of Chemistry  
School of Advanced Study, University of London  
Scottish Agricultural College  
University of the West Indies
## Published titles

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<td>The Award of the Degree of PhD on the Basis of Published Work in the UK (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-9525751-9-1</td>
<td>Quality and Standards of Postgraduate Research Degrees (1996)</td>
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<td>Practice-Based Doctorates in the Creative and Performing Arts and Design (1997)</td>
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<td>0-952-5751-3-2</td>
<td>The status of published work in submissions for doctoral degrees in European Universities (1998)</td>
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<td>0-952-5751-4-0</td>
<td>Preparing Postgraduates to Teach in Higher Education (1999)</td>
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