

WHAT IS A DOCTORATE FOR?



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WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A DOCTORATE PROGRAMME?

Does it represent the attainment of scholarly excellence, a pinnacle of personal achievement, advanced professional development, or a passport to an academic career?



DOES IT PRODUCE:

☪ a 'researching professional' or

☪ a 'professional researcher', or

☪ an advanced practitioner?



IS THE AWARD OF A DOCTORATE RECOGNITION OF PRODUCT OR PROCESS?

The doctoral process may be a research training, or personal/ professional/ practice development, but is the thesis the doctoral product, or is the person the product ?



SO WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF A 'DOCTOR'?

☪ critical thinking, reflexive self-awareness, extensive specialist knowledge, research skills, and scholarship. Anything else?

☪ Are these skills transferable?



WHO IS A DOCTORATE FOR?

☛ Stakeholders include the students themselves, their employers, their colleagues, their professions, the public, and of course the universities.



STUDENTS HAVE

- ☞ a range of personal and professional motives.
- ☞ career aims, seeking to augment their practice expertise with research skills.
- ☞ a desire to enhance their practice.
- ☞ their ego's need for self-esteem, and achieve a parity of status with other professionals in their field.
- ☞ an intrinsic enjoyment of learning and personal challenge.
- ☞ a role as paying customers, and rightly expect value for money from their universities.



EMPLOYERS

- ☛ are interested in developing and enhancing their services, and usually need assurance that the planned research is likely to benefit the organisation in some way.
- ☛ expect some return for their investment, and may like the idea of their employees possessing transferable research skills.
- ☛ staff development within the organisation may attract high calibre recruits
- ☛ risk losing employees once qualified and having 'outgrown' their jobs.
- ☛ in-house CPD courses are cheaper and may appear more relevant and practical.



COLLEAGUES

- ⌘ may reasonably expect some pay-off from the research.
- ⌘ need compensation for the increased workload that might be incurred by the student's university attendance.
- ⌘ become co-researchers in a collaborative project and thus gain a sense of ownership of the research, or at least enjoy some 'reflected glory'.
- ⌘ possible resentment or envy of their colleague's absence or success, leading to unpleasant workplace tensions.



PROFESSIONAL BODIES VALUE

- ⌘ the development of new knowledge related to practice;
- ⌘ a future evidence base for practice.
- ⌘ enhanced occupational status and recognition.
- ⌘ specialist practitioners and leaders of tomorrow.
- ⌘ However, professional doctorates are still not recognised as research degrees by certain funding bodies in the UK, and this issue is a real concern for students who plan to seek post-doctoral funding.



THE PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

- ☞ **understanding and expectations varies considerably.**
- ☞ **a lofty intellectual achievement, and associate this award with the world of academia.**
- ☞ **may not assume that doctoral work will have a practical impact on public services like education and health care.**
- ☞ **doctorates may provide social mobility and career enhancement, and could be regarded as denoting an accessible elite.**



UNIVERSITIES

- ☪ have vested interests in doctorates.
- ☪ value research activity which attracts income, and enhances research profiles of schools and faculties.
- ☪ doctorates in the UK, however, do not generate any significant income through course fees.
- ☪ status of doctoral programmes can provide prestige to departments and can attract both staff and students
- ☪ act as gate-keepers to advanced study, and thus have been regarded as the guardians of academic standards



SECOND GENERATION PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES

- ⌘ Increased importance attached to practice-based research, collaboration with the work place, as well as portfolio approaches to assessment.**
- ⌘ Partnership between the university and the world of practice**
- ⌘ Mode 2 knowledge production is based within the workplace, is context-driven, problem-focused, heterogeneous and transdisciplinary, and therefore challenges the traditional disciplinary boundaries and power base of the universities.**



THE FUTURE

- ⌘ **What forces are driving the rapid development of professional doctorates, and in whose interests are they?**
- ⌘ **Do professional doctorates produce more versatile, reflexive and resourceful researchers than the typical PhD programme?**
- ⌘ **Should all doctorates be ‘research degrees’ ?
Should any doctorate be awarded without evidence of ‘original and significant’ research?**



SOME FINAL QUESTIONS

- ⌘ Do we need critical, reflexive scholars or advanced practitioners and can't professional doctorates provide both?
- ⌘ If career progression and senior appointments are now linked to doctoral qualifications, this could this lead to the potential 'dumbing down' of programmes, 'academic inflation', and a demand for 'quick and easy' doctorates?
- ⌘ Although a professional doctorate is different, can it be seen as equivalent in status and rigour to the traditional PhD ?



**SORRY FOR ALL THE UNANSWERED
QUESTIONS!**

Thank you for listening!

