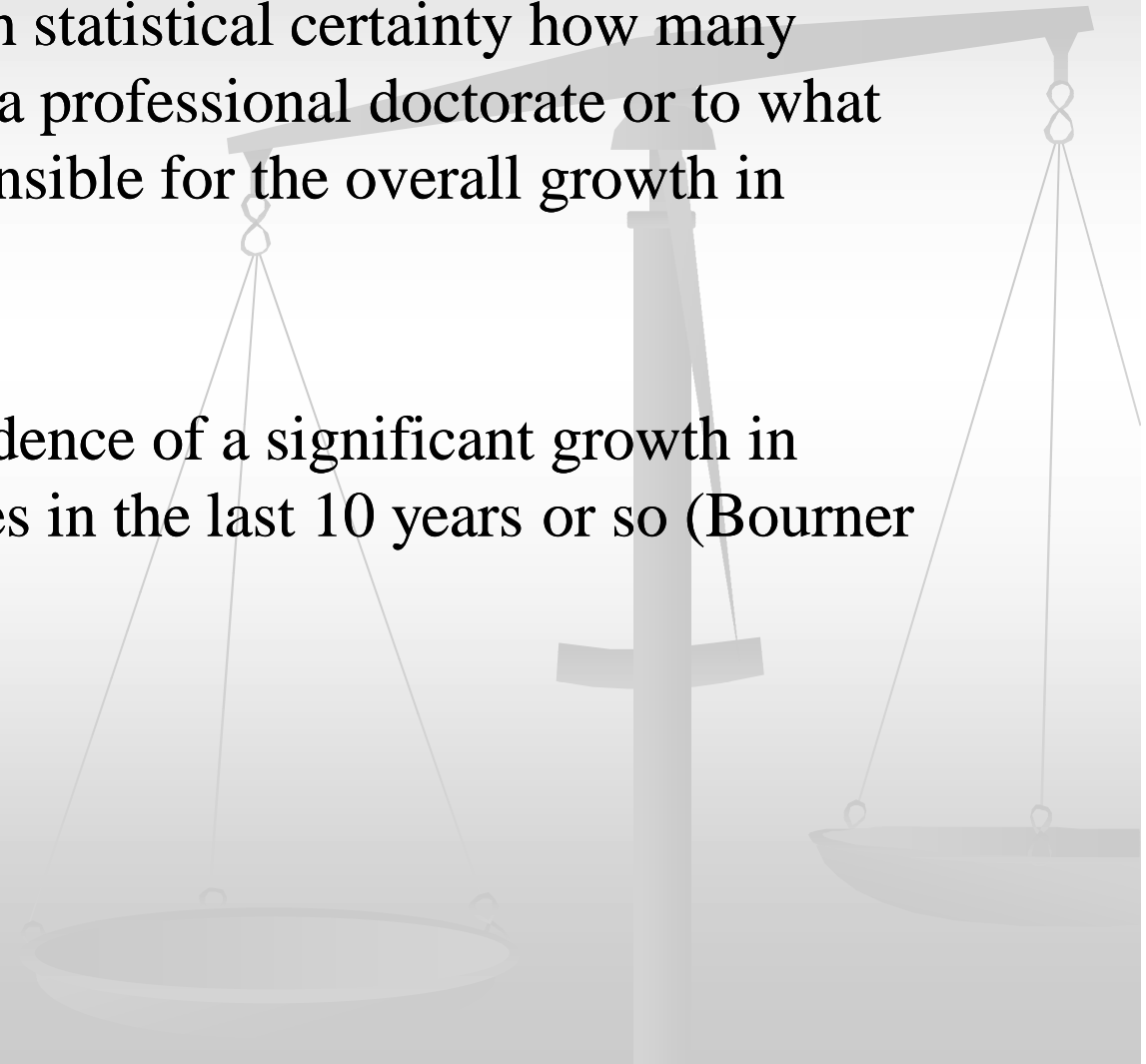


Professional Doctorates:

To do or not to do: The Journey from Conception to Validation

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'a professional doctorate is a programme of advanced study and research, which whilst satisfying the University criteria for the award of a doctorate, is designed to meet the specific needs of a professional group external to the University, and which develops the capability of individuals to work within a professional context'
(UKCGE,2002:62)

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- n Impossible to say with statistical certainty how many students are studying a professional doctorate or to what extent these are responsible for the overall growth in doctoral students
 - n However, there is evidence of a significant growth in professional doctorates in the last 10 years or so (Bourner et al, 2001)

Where did they come from and where are they going

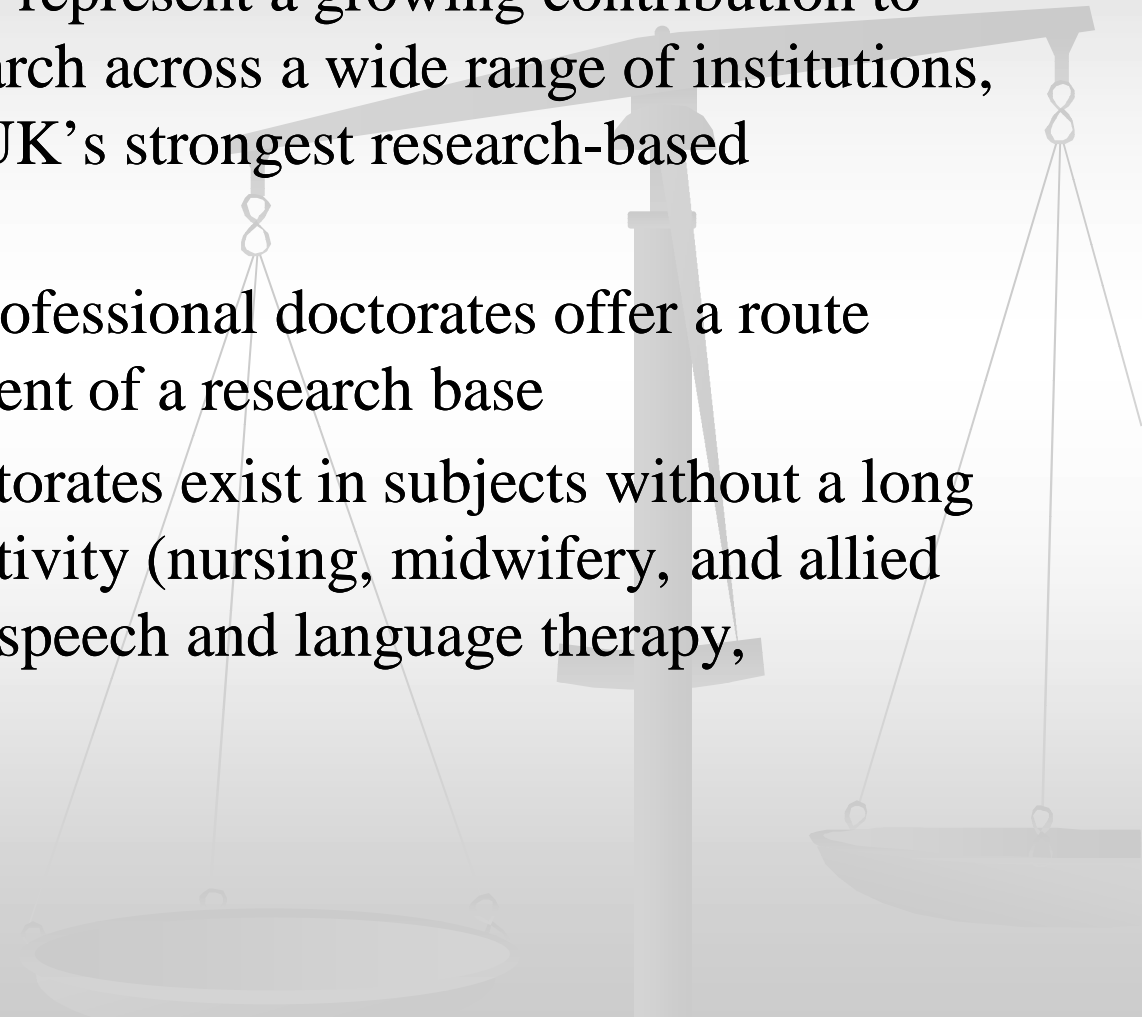
- n Professional doctorates are found in UK universities throughout the UK but originated in the pre-1992 sector
- n However, much of the growth in professional doctorates has been in the post 1992 sector
- n One interpretation would be that pre 1992 universities have the strongest research base, while the newer universities have a more vocational bias and applied research emphasis

Changing Face of Postgraduate Students

- n Key aspect of increasing diversity of research students is the emergence of the `professional doctorate`
- n National statistics for research student numbers do not distinguish between “traditional” doctoral degrees (PhD or DPhil) and professional doctorates

Professional Doctorates for their own sake: maybe not!

- n A means to increasing the number of research students
- n Development of new markets in certain subject areas
- n For older research-based universities students fulfil research mission and strengthen research base in certain subject areas
- n By opening up new sources of research students older universities have used professional doctorates to reinforce their research activity

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- n Professional doctorates represent a growing contribution to UK post graduate research across a wide range of institutions, including most of the UK's strongest research-based universities
 - n For new universities professional doctorates offer a route towards the establishment of a research base
 - n Many professional doctorates exist in subjects without a long tradition of research activity (nursing, midwifery, and allied health professions e.g. speech and language therapy, audiology)

What does the Professional Doctorate offer?

The University:-

- n Helps consolidate links with key stakeholders
- n In some subject areas the professional doctorate has become the accepted, sometimes exclusive route into a particular profession (clinical psychology)
- n The professional doctorate may be a mark of prestige in a subject area (engineering)
- n There maybe financial incentives for offering a professional doctorate

The Doctoral Student:-

- n Professional doctorate normally combines instructional work with a research project**
- n Professional doctorates maybe delivered on a cohort basis**
- n Mode of study more suitable for senior practitioners**
- n More likely to be funded and more likely to be supported by practice colleagues**

The Employer:-

- n The development of individual skills, particularly in the area of research
- n The development of organisational skills, by dissemination from the individual student together with involvement in the programme
- n Retention and motivation of staff
- n Improved skills in management and leadership
- n Improved quality of output/product of the organisation

The challenge of integrating professional and academic knowledge

- n Professional doctorate students may be compromised by the `insider` nature of their research
- n In professional practice research is a seductive word, conveying the use of considered and thoughtful intelligence to analysing problems and seeking ways of moving forward
- n Many practitioners choose an action research approach, which may lose criticality as practitioners lose autonomy
- n The most difficult boundary in higher education is that between practice and research
- n Yet it is this boundary that professional doctorate students are expected to navigate successfully

Quality and Standards

- n PhD represents the `gold standard` therefore any “new” programme seen as inferior (many academics and staff in the UK hold this view)
- n Different routes to the same endpoint
- n Professional doctorate awarded for work of an equal standard to the PhD
- n Professional doctorates required to demonstrate a contribution to knowledge *and* a contribution to professional practice
- n The title `Doctor` should only be used for qualifications that meet in full the expectations of the qualification descriptor at Doctoral level

Development of the Doctorate in Health Science (DHSci)

Philosophical considerations

- n Learning community
- n Recognition of practice experience as prerequisite for research professionals (not professional researchers)
- n Positive effort to support practitioners in pursuit of knowledge
- n Repositioning of applied knowledge

Structural considerations

- n PhD did not meet the needs of practitioners
- n Part time study
- n Structured research skills training
- n Healthcare Workforce Deanery funded
- n Support in practice

The DHSci at DMU

- n Is awarded to students who have demonstrated: (*abridged*)
 - 1) Creation of new knowledge, through original research to extend the *forefront of the discipline*
 - 2) A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge, which is at the *forefront of an academic discipline*
 - 3) General ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the *forefront of the discipline*
 - 4) A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research

Programme Structure

Phase One – taught research modules - *120 level 5 credits*

n - *Research Designs in Health* (30 credits)

n - *Research Dilemmas and Strategies* (30 credits)

n - *Making Sense of Quantitative and Qualitative Data*
(30 credits)

n - *Advanced Statistics and Data Analysis*
(15 credits)

n - *Research into Practice*
(15 credits)

Phase Two – thesis by independent research

50,000 words and viva voce (420 credits)

Scholarly Portfolio

- n Travels with the student throughout the programme
- n Focuses support and progress of study
- n Incorporates supervision and annual review
- n Encapsulates PDP and discussion of individual training needs
- n Records progress of independent research
- n Prepares student for thesis presentation and Viva Voce

Professional Doctorates - to do or not to do?

Watch this space!

- n DHSci programme secured 5 funded places from Health Care Workforce Deanery (HWD)
- n Programme fees = approx £11,500 per student (4 – 6 years part time study)
- n 4 students registered 2008/9, 3 students registered 2009/10
- n Nursing, Public Health Nursing, Biomedical Science, Occupational Therapy, Audiology
- n Challenge now to supervise to completion within 6 years
- n Celebrate the graduation of first Doctors of Health Science 2012/2014

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