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## **PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES**

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## FOREWORD



The UK Council for Graduate Education was established in 1994 to promote the interests of graduate education across all disciplines in British higher education institutions. To this end, the Council promotes a series of activities, workshops, conferences and seminars. It also commissions specialist reports on specific topics.

This, the tenth in its series of reports, represents the outcomes of a Working Group chaired by Jennifer Bone, former Chair of SRHE. The group undertook a survey of professional doctorate provision across UK Higher Education Institutions, and engaged in discussion with colleagues involved in doctoral education both here and abroad. The Council is indebted to all those who were involved in the project and who so generously gave up their time to contribute.

The British Professional Doctorate has developed rapidly – if in a rather unstructured way – as higher education responded to the different research and development needs of specific professions. This gestation coincided with a period in which the PhD itself has been under scrutiny; for example, of its role in the performing and creative arts and in the broader context of training professionals for both industry and the academy.

This Report therefore properly situates the development of Professional Doctorates within the context of the PhD. It consequently provides us with a base from which to develop our understanding of both the award and its specific research-training needs. Doctoral education in all its forms is being carefully examined — and on both sides of the Atlantic — so nothing could be more timely.

*Professor Howard Green*

*March 2002*

*Chair, UK Council for Graduate Education*

## PREFACE



This report reflects—and reflects on—the rapid growth during the past decade of a qualification commonly referred to as the Professional Doctorate. Following an invited seminar in 1999, the UK Council for Graduate Education established a Working Group to undertake a comprehensive survey and analysis, for the purpose of informing the Council's contribution to this aspect of the work of UK universities. Discussion and debate arising from the Harris Report and the related QAA Qualifications Framework, reinforced the timeliness of such a review.

The membership of the Working Group brought to its task wide experience of professional doctorates across a variety of academic and professional specialisms.

Professor Jennifer Bone, (Convenor), *Chair of SRHE*  
Professor Tony Fell, *Bradford University*  
Professor Stephen Hoddell, *UWE & UKCGE Executive*  
Michael Jennings, *Somerset LEA*  
Dr Ingrid Lunt, *Institute of Education, London*  
Professor Stuart Laing, *University of Brighton*  
Professor Derek Portwood, *Middlesex University*  
Johnathan Slack, *Chief Executive, Association of Business Schools*  
Professor Frances Young, *University of Birmingham*

The early stages of the enquiry made apparent the complexity and diversity of current circumstances, from title and definition to regulation. We were grateful to be able to draw upon existing work in this field, notably that of Tom Bourner, Rachel Bowden and Stuart Laing, at the University of Brighton. Members of the Group also undertook further investigation as our deliberations proceeded, for example, through surveys of employers and academic opinion.

## PREFACE



We have aimed to provide a comprehensive report which, without overly burdensome detail, reflects current practice and discussion, and which makes clear the grounds for our conclusions and recommendations. Our deliberations on regulation and credit, in particular the latter, provided the most challenging aspect of the task.

Our thanks are due to the staff of a number of universities who supplied their regulations and who responded to our questions, to employers and others who assisted with the compilation of up to date information, and to those who helped us to refine our thinking through their participation in UKCGE conferences and analogous events. The final report has also been informed by the comments of members of the UKCGE Executive Committee on our draft text.

I would also like to put on personal record my thanks to all members of the Working Group who invested their time and energy in this exercise, despite the demands of their very busy professional lives. Particular thanks are due to Professor Stephen Hoddell who undertook to draft the report, and to his colleagues who provided administrative support and thus helped to ensure that the project reached fruition.

The members of the Working Group recognise that in this area, as in others, time does not stand still in higher education, but we hope that the report will provide a useful contribution to understanding the current scheme and to identifying fruitful directions for the future.

*Jennifer Bone*  
*March 2002*  
*(Pro Vice-Chancellor Emeritus - University of the West of England)*



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Origins of This Report

- 1.1 Since the early 1990s the aggregate size of Higher Education in the UK has been stable overall, but with some sectors growing rapidly. Part-time postgraduate education has been the most notable growth area, and part of this expansion is associated with the development of new types of Doctorates, often referred to as Professional Doctorate. In 1999, the UK Council for Graduate Education identified that there was no coherent picture of what these were, of how they operated, and of how they related to other forms of Doctorate. An invited seminar held in November 1999 examined some of these issues, and led to the establishment of a working group to conduct a more detailed analysis. In the event, this has proved to be a very timely initiative, given the development and publication of the QAA National Qualifications Framework.
- 1.2 This report is the result of the deliberations of the working group. The group has examined a number of aspects of Doctoral level education insofar as these relate to the central issue of Professional Doctorates.

## The Development of Doctoral Education

- 1.3 Doctorates mark the highest level of achievement gained by students within Universities. As such, they have been awarded by Universities since the thirteenth century. For much of their history the practice was to award Doctorates in specific subject areas (Doctor of Law, Doctor of Theology), but in the early nineteenth century a new award, the Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD or DPhil<sup>1</sup>), emerged to recognise dis-

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<sup>1</sup>Both abbreviations are in use. The vast majority of universities use PhD as the standard abbreviation for the Doctor of Philosophy award; for the sake of clarity this abbreviation will be used throughout this report, without the repetitive addition of .. or DPhil.

# INTRODUCTION



inction in research as opposed to distinction in scholarship. From its origins in Germany the PhD spread slowly, and was particularly resisted in British universities. It is salutary to recognise that in the early years of the last century, there were many voices raised in favour of the view that research obstructed the core university activities of scholarship and teaching. The PhD, firmly based in research, was therefore distrusted.

- 1.4 In the latter half of the twentieth century, there was a major change in the attitude to research in Universities. Research has come to be seen as the defining characteristic of academics, so that it has become almost impossible in most universities for academics to be appointed without having first completed a PhD. Possession of a PhD establishes a minimum level of capability in research which is generally a necessary, although certainly not sufficient, condition for appointment to an academic position.
- 1.5 Other important trends have become apparent in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The intellectual demands of a whole range of jobs have grown. Jobs which traditionally recruited school leavers moved to requiring graduate entry, and as a consequence the proportion of each age cohort undertaking university education to graduate level has reached just over 30%. At the same time, the complexity of a number of roles outside academe has grown to the point that these demand levels of formal education comparable to that achieved in doctoral study.
- 1.6 In some subject areas this has led to extensive recruitment of PhD holders into industrial and commercial employment. However, in many other areas the PhD has been rejected as too academic and having insufficient focus on the ability to apply knowledge and skills outside



the field of academic research. The distinction is made clearly visible by a comparison of Chemistry and Engineering. The demands of chemical research in industry are sufficiently close to those of academic research that there has been little problem for industry in using the PhD as a key qualification in recruitment. However, the Parnaby Report (SERC 1991), concluded that the needs of Engineers entering industrial employment at doctoral level were sufficiently different from those of academe to require a different sort of doctoral programme, the Engineering Doctorate. This pattern is important. The alternative forms of doctoral education, of which Professional Doctorates are one example, have been developed as a positive response to an identified need, whether of industry and commerce, or the public sector.

- 1.7 This is, very broadly, the context that has produced the Professional Doctorates over the last ten years. Within a number of subject areas, typically those characterised as professional rather than academic, it has been concluded that the need for doctoral level qualifications is not being met by the traditional PhD, and therefore specific Professional Doctorates have emerged.



### The PhD Tradition

- 2.1 In the UK, the PhD is first and foremost a research based qualification. It is based on a protracted period of research, typically around three to four years, during which time a major research project is executed and reported. A dissertation is written to present both the structure of the research project and the results obtained, and the candidate is examined *viva voce* on the contents of the dissertation.
- 2.2 Until fairly recently, there was little formal guidance available for students on the process of obtaining a PhD. Everything depended on the relationship between the supervisor and the candidate, and this varied between subject areas. In the laboratory sciences, the PhD student was usually a member of a research team, engaged in part of a larger overall research project developed and directed by the supervisor. In the Humanities, this form of team approach would be very much less in evidence; PhD projects might be related to the research interests of the supervisor, but rarely formed an integral part of them.
- 2.3 The success rate of PhD study was for a long time rather mixed. Some departments were achieving completion rates of no more than one third of candidates, not because of failure in the examination, but rather because the dissertation was never written, and the candidate therefore never presented for examination. This led to a much greater focus on training PhD students in the techniques that they needed to deploy in order to complete successfully. There are now few universities that would not regard some element of teaching as an integral part of the PhD experience. This teaching is usually focussed on the development of relevant research skills, together with aspects such as writing and presentation, project management and planning etc. There may also be some core subject material if this is necessary for the completion of the project; however, the skills that are emphasised are typically those of academic research.



- 2.4 The assessment of the PhD is almost invariably based on very broadly stated criteria. This will usually include the requirement that the dissertation should include an original and significant contribution to the research literature in the field of study. There may be an additional requirement that the work be of a quality that makes it suitable for academic publication. The third type of criterion commonly found is that the candidate should be able to demonstrate in depth knowledge of the subject area within which the research is located.
- 2.5 These assessment criteria reveal quite clearly their origins. They set out the basic requirements for appointment as an academic, and there is no doubt that the PhD has had for some time a primary role as the main preparation for a career as a university lecturer.

#### **The PhD by Publication**

- 2.6 It is important to note that there is a variant of the traditional PhD route which is becoming increasingly common, the PhD by publication. To the extent that the criteria outlined in paragraph 2.4 approximate to the common requirements of a PhD, it is clear that the same criteria can be met by presentation of a volume of academic publications, together with a viva voce examination. Many universities now offer such a route to a doctorate, although often restricting the eligibility to those having some form of direct connection with the university.

#### **The Taught Doctorate**

- 2.7 The term 'Taught Doctorate' is most commonly used to refer to a doctorate that includes a significant element which is both taught and subject to formal assessment. Typically, a taught doctorate in the UK will require a substantial research project to be completed and reported, and the assessment of this is subject to criteria usually very similar to those for the traditional supervised PhD. There is no formal prescription for the amount of taught material; however the term is not



normally used for those doctoral programmes where the taught content is restricted to the field of research methods.

#### **The Professional Doctorate**

- 2.8 The Professional Doctorate is a further development of the taught doctorate. In structural terms, it is effectively a form of taught doctorate, but the field of study is that of a professional discipline, rather than academic enquiry and scholarship. In practice, since the greatest pressure for the establishment of doctoral programmes has been within the context of the professional fields, the majority of taught doctorates are Professional Doctorates.
- 2.9 It would be a mistake to assume that, in the context of taught doctorates, teaching is restricted to conventional didactic approaches. While this may certainly form a part of many taught doctorates, the academics who have developed these programmes have been notably imaginative in developing other ways of supporting learning. These recognise that learning at the highest levels may not be best facilitated by conventional teaching, and that other forms of directed and guided study are of considerable value.

#### **The New Route PhD**

- 2.10 The New Route PhD, originally known as the Enhanced PhD, currently being piloted by a consortium of UK universities, is another form of taught doctorate. The Professional Doctorate emerged as a result of a concern in the UK that the PhD was too narrowly focussed on academic careers. The New Route PhD reflects a concern in some international markets that the PhD may, on its own, be inadequate to develop sufficient breadth of subject knowledge for an aspirant academic. The North American PhD is seen as being a more effective model in this respect. Given the need to maintain the flow of international students undertaking their doctoral studies in the UK, it is logi-



cal to develop a version of the PhD which may take a longer time period, and which includes significant amounts of taught material. The motive for the inclusion of additional teaching is therefore wholly different from that in the case of the Professional Doctorate.

### **The Doctor of Medicine (MD)**

- 2.11 The Doctorate of Medicine (MD) occupies a somewhat anomalous position within the whole structure of doctoral qualifications. It is based on a thesis which is undertaken by a qualified medical practitioner, and the scale of the thesis and the criteria by which it is judged are rather variable across universities. At one end of the scale the work required would be far in excess of that required for a PhD, while in other cases it is rather less. There is little consistency in systems of supervision for the MD, and therefore the monitoring of completion rates and of standards are frequently not carried out to the extent that is common for the PhD.



### **The Origins of the Professional Doctorate**

- 3.1 A key motive for the development of Professional Doctorates was based on the concern that the PhD was primarily a preparation for an academic career. Except in some very specific areas<sup>2</sup> and until very recently, the PhD was only rarely expected to act as a specific qualification for entry into employment outside the academic world. However, a number of factors have now combined to make doctoral qualifications of relevance to a wider range of careers.
- 3.2 Firstly, the development of mass higher education has diminished the level of distinction conferred by the possession of a degree. The biggest rise in the participation rate in higher education took place between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s, when the number of 18 year olds entering HE doubled from 15% to about 30% of the cohort. Possession of a first degree no longer confers the same sort of elite status that was the case for earlier generations. It is hardly surprising therefore, that an increasing number of graduates wish to progress to the next step on the qualification ladder.
- 3.3 More significantly, the complexities of employment in the modern world require a high level of intellectual sophistication, and this has generated pressure for higher qualifications. An increasing proportion of employers seeks to recruit those with doctoral qualifications specifically, and these are often the organisations that students see as the best employers. This has therefore significantly raised the profile of the doctorate as a qualification for entry into employment outside the academic world.
- 3.4 However, possibly the most important factor is the view that the distinctive characteristics of doctoral level research are of increasing rel-

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<sup>2</sup>Most notably, Chemistry and Pharmaceuticals



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evance to the challenges faced by a number of non-academic fields. The experience of a doctorate can reasonably be expected to generate a research based approach to solving problems, a systematic way of collecting evidence and an independent and open mind for the analysis and interpretation of evidence. These skills can be very usefully deployed in a number of different contexts, as their value is certainly not confined to the academic world.

- 3.5 Empirically, one of the most obvious distinctions between Professional Doctorates and PhDs is that most of the former are defined in terms of Learning Outcomes. This is an inevitable consequence of the age within which Professional Doctorates have developed. Formulation of explicit learning outcomes for educational programmes became a standard approach during the closing years of the last century, and it is during this time that Professional Doctorates emerged. By contrast the PhD is of a much earlier time. Most old universities will have formulated the regulations governing PhDs in the first half of the twentieth century, and the new universities commonly have regulations based on those developed by CNAA in the early 1970s. As a result there is little use of explicit Learning Outcomes in the formulation of the PhD.
- 3.6 This has some interesting consequences in the context of Professional Doctorates. A Professional Doctorate is, to some extent, expected to measure up to two different yardsticks – one being the defined Learning Outcomes for the award, and the other being the expectation that, as a doctorate, it must measure up to the implicit but uncodified understanding of the level of achievement represented by a PhD.
- 3.7 It is important to recognise that the common thread is that a doctorate was needed which differed from the PhD – but the nature of the differences vary from one subject area to another. In other words, different Professional Doctorates have had different motivations, and



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this has led to some differences in structure. This point may be clarified by a brief examination of three of the main subject areas.

- ≈ *The Engineering Doctorate* resulted from the perceived need to have a high status route for young engineers to enter industrial careers, with a combination of a high level of technical expertise and well developed skills in problem solving and team working. It was intended to operate in full-time mode, and be aimed at recent graduates.
- ≈ *The Education Doctorate* was, in part, a reaction to the problems that have beset the education profession for many years. Traditional education research has been seen as too divorced from the reality of classroom practice, and the Education Doctorate has developed to bring a demonstrably high level of research enquiry to bear within a practical context. This route is particularly relevant for experienced education professionals and is almost invariably undertaken on a part-time basis.
- ≈ *Doctorates in Clinical Psychology* are rather more diverse. Many Universities previously offered courses at Masters level which were accredited by the British Psychological Society as a licence to practice. Most of these courses have now been converted into Doctorates, usually with the expansion of the research requirement within the programme. These programmes build on a first degree in Psychology and focus on aspects of practice such as professional ethics as well as extending a practical knowledge and understanding in Clinical Psychology. Other Doctorates in Clinical Psychology are offered for those in mid-career seeking a high level Continuing Professional Development programme, and are therefore closer in approach to the Education Doctorate.
- 3.8 It is hardly surprising that programmes with such different origins should have adopted rather different forms, and that these are also different from those traditionally associated with the PhD. In at least



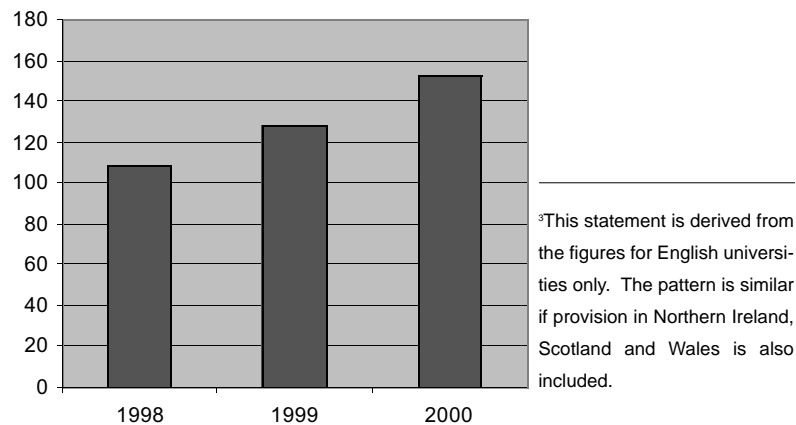
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two of the models listed above, a key design objective was to achieve outcomes that were seen as being missed by conventional PhD programmes.

**The History of Professional Doctorates**

3.9 The history of Professional Doctorates in the UK is a surprisingly brief one. There are a number of different programmes that claim to have been the first in the UK, but it is indisputable that the first examples of Professional Doctorates appeared in the late 1980s. Since then the number has grown rapidly, and the figures<sup>3</sup> for 1998, 1999 and 2000 show that the number is still increasing, at around 20% per year for each of the most recent years (Bourner et al, 2001a). As this has been a period when the overall size of the HE sector has been broadly stable, this represents a fairly dramatic increase.

YEAR	PD PROGRAMMES
1998	109
1999	128
2000	153



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- 3.10 One of the most obvious distinctions between Professional Doctorates and the traditional PhD is that the awards have titles which describe the subject area covered in the doctoral study. The issue of nomenclature of degree awards is rather odd and lacks any systematic basis. Oxford and Cambridge have traditionally not used titles in their first degrees; the vast majority of other universities do use named titles indicating, in very broad terms, the subject area of the award. At postgraduate level it has been traditional for titles to be used for Masters degrees, but the standard form of Doctorate has been for many years the PhD, which has no subject in the title of the award. Professional Doctorates therefore constitute a late, and complicating, entry into an already confused field.
- 3.11 Of course Higher Doctorates have always been designated by subject title, but these are explicitly excluded from the QAA Qualifications Framework, as they are seen to be the exclusive province of individual universities. The numbers of such awards, and the characteristics of those receiving them are such as to preclude any real danger of the sort of confusion which applies to standard doctoral awards. A similar argument applies to Honorary Doctorates.
- 3.12 In this context it is fairly clear that the adoption of specific subject titles such as Doctor of Education (EdD) had, as its primary motivation, the need to make it quite clear that these awards were different from PhDs in the same subject area. As with many such issues, this distinction is reasonably clear to those working within HE, and to a lesser extent to those who are directly involved professionally with such programmes. Outside these groups the significance of the distinction is almost entirely lost, though this is probably not a matter of undue importance. However, it could be regarded as a strong argument for the position taken by a number of Universities that the standard of the Professional Doctorate should be defined by reference to the established standard associated with the PhD. From the perspective of those without detailed inside knowledge of the workings of the HE



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sector, it is probably more important that the standard of doctorates, irrespective of type, should be broadly comparable.

- 3.13 The early programmes tended to be based on a small number of titles which were fairly common across the Universities that offered them. The main contenders were:
- ≈ Doctor of Education (EdD)
  - ≈ Doctor of Engineering (EngD or DEng)
  - ≈ Doctor of Clinical Psychology (DClinPsych)
  - ≈ Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
- 3.14 Since that time, the development of Professional Doctorates has taken two forms. In parallel with a significant level of growth of use of the existing titles there has been a tendency for new titles to appear, indicating in more detail the precise title area of the award. Examples include the Doctor of Administration and Doctor of Finance, to provide more detail in the area covered by Business Administration, and a proliferation of different specialities in Psychology<sup>4</sup>.
- 3.15 The reasons for this increasing specificity are not immediately obvious. As has already been pointed out, the PhD has served as a Doctoral award for any subject. Those seeking to use PhD awards as a subject specific qualification would need to specify the area of research specialism by giving details of the actual research reported in the PhD dissertation<sup>5</sup>; the level of detail would probably need to be greater than merely the title of the work. For those using the PhD as a qualification indicating transferable skills, the subject area was probably not very important at all.

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<sup>4</sup>In January 1998 the following titles were available: Doctor of Clinical Psychology, Doctor of Psychology, Doctor of Educational Psychology, Doctor of Counselling Psychology, Doctor of Occupational Psychology, Doctor of Clinical Science-Psychotherapy, Doctor of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy.



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- 3.16 These pragmatic arguments have not served to prevent the proliferation of Professional Doctorate titles. There has been a similar growth in the range of titles of undergraduate degrees. To some extent this reflects a perfectly appropriate desire to produce courses that are designed to meet specific market niches. Since the growth of Professional Doctorates is specifically market driven, there is a clear logic for universities, particularly those entering the field late, to identify specific market sectors where there is currently no provision. This will, overall, serve the manpower needs of the economy effectively. What is not clear is whether the diversity of titles is a necessary concomitant of the diversity of courses and market sectors. When all doctorates were PhDs, then there was no pressure for different titles. The availability of variant titles seems to create pressure for increasing diversity.
- 3.17 In at least one case there is a strong argument that this diversity is a matter of a different role and purpose for the award. The Doctorate of Clinical Psychology is frequently used as a qualifying licence to practice, and this carries considerable implications for the content and teaching approaches used in such programmes. The issue of accreditation as a licence to practice (by the British Psychological Society), is technically separate from the structure of the doctorate. The BPS accredits courses when these conform to their specific requirements rather than because they are at doctoral level. However, most universities have chosen to seek accreditation for their Doctorates of Clinical Psychology (Donn et al, 2000).

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<sup>5</sup>There is some disagreement about the choice between the use of the terms 'thesis' and 'dissertation' to refer to the report submitted for the award of a Doctorate. Both are in use, and the term 'dissertation' is more general in that it covers situations where the work submitted is not expressed in terms of a formally defined thesis which is tested. For this reason such works are referred to as 'dissertations' throughout this report – except where (largely in section 4) there are direct quotations from university regulations.



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In this case it is quite clear that in practice the qualification per se has a value in that one context which is totally different from that of other awards; the need for the award to be distinguished by title is therefore clear.

3.18 The key question is whether this diversity of titles serves the interests of HE and of those who seek to make use of the qualifications offered. This is not easily answered. It is possible to argue that as the world of employment becomes more complex, it is necessary to have more subtle distinctions between different qualifications, and that these differences should be represented by different titles. When these qualifications are also, by definition, close to the world of employment, it may be of greater importance to ensure that the distinctions are clear. It would not be desirable to employ someone on the basis of a qualification which misleads about their capabilities. However, that is not a particularly realistic scenario. The differences between the capabilities of different people are probably more significant than the differences between different courses of study, except in the specific cases where there is an issue of licence to practice. Furthermore, it is hardly likely that employment decisions are taken at this level merely on the basis of a superficial examination of the titles of qualifications.

3.19 The disposition of Professional Doctorates between the traditional universities and the new, post-1992, universities is rather surprising. The professional and vocational focus of Professional Doctorates would appear to sit most easily within the former polytechnics, with their overtly vocational missions. However, the figures indicate that the initial impetus was located in the traditional, pre-1992, universities. By 1998 26 out of the 35 traditional universities offered at least one Professional Doctorate compared with only 12 of the new universities. In the following two years, the new universities substantially closed the gap, so that the bulk of the growth between 1998 and 2000 was within this group (all figures from Bourner et al 2001b).

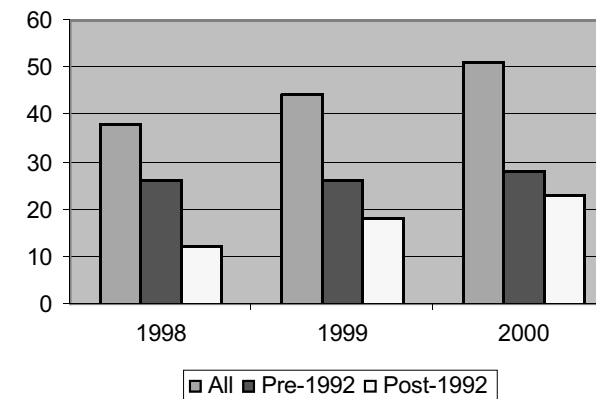


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3.20 The reasons for this somewhat unexpected situation are not wholly clear. It may be attributable to a sense that the new universities needed to consolidate their position as genuine universities, and therefore chose to focus on the awards that are traditionally associated with research led institutions. It may also be due to the need for external professional involvement in these programmes; those with influence in the relevant professions will generally have been educated in the traditional universities, and it takes time for the new universities to establish a comparable level of credibility. That could explain both the slow initial take up of Professional Doctorates within new universities, and the rapid acceleration in the last few years.

**Number of Universities offering at least one Professional Doctorate 1998-2000**

	1998	1999	2000
All	38	44	51
Pre-1992	26	26	28
Post-1992	12	18	23





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- 3.21 There is, or has been, another major obstacle to development of Professional Doctorates within the new universities. Professional Doctorates are, in most cases, cohort based; this is more or less obvious, given that they involve a high level of taught input, although there are additional reasons for this. In general, viability of a programme requires substantial numbers – and a reasonable expectation of continued recruitment over time. A relatively small programme of four years duration, recruiting perhaps twelve students each year will, in normal operation, have 48 students in total. This represents a demand for doctoral level supervision that many of the new universities would have found quite impossible to meet in the early 1990s, and may still present some difficulty. In 1992, most of the new universities inherited regulations for research degrees from CNAAB, and these imposed fairly stringent conditions for the appointment of doctoral level supervisors. In the absence of a substantial tradition of doctoral supervision these conditions would have been difficult to meet.
- 3.22 On the basis of this analysis, the disparity between development in the new and old universities may be less surprising. The recent growth in the numbers of programmes in the new universities could then reflect the developing research maturity of the new universities, and the concomitant ability to supervise relatively large numbers of doctoral level projects.

4 The **STRUCTURE** of the  
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**Research and Teaching**

- 4.1 For most of the time that Universities have offered doctoral degrees these have been, in modern terms, largely taught awards. However, for contemporary academics it is difficult to separate the concept of a doctorate from that of research, but this is a development which is a consequence of the establishment of the PhD as the main form of doctorate, and very much a twentieth century phenomenon. The relative positions of research and teaching within the overall educational experience that leads to the doctoral awards is one that is fundamentally important, particularly given that research achievement is seen generally as the defining characteristic for any doctoral award.
- 4.2 The question of the taught content in doctoral awards is one that is acquiring an increasing significance. Thirty years ago the most common pattern for candidates to embark on a PhD was for this to follow on from a first degree – with typically a requirement that this should be at the level of either first class or upper second class honours. There was also a route which required a taught Masters award as the first step, but this quite often was applied to those students who had achieved lower second class honours.
- 4.3 Over time, there has been a substantial shift away from this model. The precise pattern has depended to some extent on subject area. Within the Social Sciences, it has become unusual for a PhD not to be preceded by a Masters programme. Known as the 'One-plus-Three' model, this has been strongly encouraged by the Economics and Social Research Council (ESRC). The Masters programme will normally include a considerable emphasis on developing the techniques and methods of research — along with some advanced subject based taught content.
- 4.4 A similar approach was proposed in the 1993 White Paper (Office of Science and Technology, 1993) which introduced the concept of the



Master of Research (MRes) award. The purpose of the MRes was quite explicitly to give candidates formal teaching and structured experience of research methods, better to prepare them to undertake PhD research. The idea was a response to the problem of non-completions of doctorates, which in some disciplines was a very common pattern. The MRes has not been a particularly successful initiative. Where the One-plus-Three model is used, it is more common to find that candidates complete a conventionally titled Masters programme, leading to either MA or MSc awards.

- 4.5 The New Route PhD can be seen as a variant of the One-plus-Three model, in that the volume of taught material is similar to that of a Masters programme. However, the taught content is distributed throughout the programme, rather than being concentrated in the first year of four. The rationale for the introduction of teaching is also rather different. This model of delivery is intended to meet the needs of particular overseas markets where it is felt that the conventional UK PhD compares unfavourably with its US counterpart. This appears to have more to do with the lack of subject coverage in undergraduate degrees than with an explicit need to include formal research training at doctoral level. The ultimate purpose of the New Route PhD is to prepare candidates for positions as academics, requiring broad subject knowledge in addition to research expertise. As most UK Universities now include some elements of research training, it is inevitable that the New Route PhD will do likewise.
- 4.6 Teaching is a feature of virtually all Professional Doctorates. The same mix of subject based teaching and research methods training is typically found in all Professional Doctorates although the relative proportions vary. Indeed, it is quite common for the term 'Taught Doctorate' to be used as synonymous with Professional Doctorate. This is, however, not really an accurate usage. The model of the taught doctorate has wider application than within the relatively restricted range of subjects where Professional Doctorates are rele-



vant, because the subject focus relates directly to issues involved in professional practice.

- 4.7 There are no precise definitions of the distinctions used in the preceding paragraphs. Teaching at the doctoral level is clearly a different process from teaching at undergraduate level; but a precise description of the differences is not readily available. In general, an academic teaching undergraduate students can expect to be presenting material over which he or she has considerable intellectual mastery. This is less true at postgraduate level, and it is an assumption which probably ceases to be tenable at Doctoral level. The challenge of achieving a doctorate would, in most peoples' expectations, include that of being a substantial authority in the relevant subject area, so that the teaching process can no longer be seen as one in which knowledge, skills and understanding are transferred from the teacher to the taught. While it is clear that any such model would represent a dramatic oversimplification of any teaching relationship, it certainly is a model that has some validity in many parts of HE. At Doctoral level however, it is appropriate that quite different models of the teaching process are adopted. Teaching has to become more a matter of guidance and mentoring than a didactic transfer process. It is, therefore, rather closer in many respects to the relationship between supervisor and research student, than it is to that of lecturer and undergraduate student. The boundary between teaching and research blurs at this point.
- 4.8 Most taught doctorates are cohort based. This certainly applies to most Professional Doctorates and is expected to be the case for the emerging New Route PhDs. It is hardly surprising; formal teaching requires significant group sizes in order to be cost-effective, and many institutions use a modular approach, which allows classes forming part of taught Masters programmes to be incorporated into the earlier parts of doctorates.



### **The Nature of the Taught Content**

- 4.9 The reason for moving towards a taught doctorate model to meet the needs of specific professions, is to include taught content which is specifically directed at the professional context. The interpretation of this is different for different fields. It can include anything from advanced subject study, as would form a part of an Engineering Doctorate, to more specifically professional skills such as project management. Many Professional Doctorates involve a greater degree of interdisciplinarity than would be normal for a PhD, simply because the real problems facing professionals frequently demand this sort of approach. This will also have an impact on the nature of the taught content.
- 4.10 In addition to this, there is a requirement for formal teaching of research methods. A key characteristic of a Professional Doctorate is that it should equip candidates to be able to use research methods within their professional life. This demands a sound understanding of a wide range of research methods, because the precise nature of the problems that may need to be tackled is undefined. By contrast, it is not uncommon for PhD students in some disciplines to need knowledge of only a relatively narrow range of research methods.

### **The Use of Credit**

- 4.11 The point has been made that an almost universal characteristic of Professional Doctorates is that there is a significant proportion of taught content. It is widespread practice for these taught elements to be drawn, in part at least, from other postgraduate programmes, particularly at Masters level.
- 4.12 This raises the question of credit. There are good reasons for a move towards credit as the basic structure for building awards in Higher Education. Where Professional Doctorates draw significantly on mod-



ules that form part of Masters level awards, it is very likely that these modules will lead to the award of credit. This will then form the natural basis for defining the amount of taught material that needs to be included in a Professional Doctorate programme.

- 4.13 Credit at Doctoral level raises some rather more complex issues. There is widespread resistance to the idea of using credit as the basis for the PhD (QAA 1999), and there are good reasons for this. Credit is associated with the achievement of learning outcomes, but the majority of UK universities define the PhD in a way which does not refer to such outcomes. The key point in the definition is that there should be a significant original contribution to knowledge. This must, in one sense, provide clear evidence that the candidate has developed certain important skills and abilities – primarily the ability to carry out research and to achieve a successful outcome in a substantial research project. However, the defining criterion of the award is more than the ability to develop these skills and abilities. This contrasts with awards at lower levels, where actual professional output is not a requirement.
- 4.14 It would not be appropriate to attach credit to the outcome of making a significant original contribution to knowledge. It is not a learning outcome, and the language of credit is not therefore relevant. However, one clear difference between the PhD and the Professional Doctorate is that in the case of the latter, there are also some learning outcomes that should be met. While there may in practice be learning outcomes associated with the PhD, these are not usually either explicitly defined or explicitly assessed.
- 4.15 In most discussions of the use of credit at Doctoral level it has been assumed that credit should either be used for the whole award, or not at all. Thus, it is common to find a requirement of 540 credits for a



Professional Doctorate, while there is no credit requirement at all for a PhD. This dichotomy does not appear to reflect accurately the nature of the problem. Given that, in terms of learning outcomes, the difference between the two types of doctorate is that the Professional Doctorate has some explicit learning outcomes and the PhD does not, it is logical that the Professional Doctorate should have some credit requirement. However, there is no obvious reason why this should be 540 credits.

- 4.16 It is important that the research element of a Professional Doctorate should be seen as comparable, in standard if not scale, with that of the supervised PhD. In the eyes of many academics, attaching credit to the research element reduces it to the status of a postgraduate project, without the requirement of a significant original contribution. This forms an additional argument for not requiring that credit be associated with the research element of a Professional Doctorate.
- 4.17 Some examples of Professional Doctorate programmes have explicit learning outcomes associated with all the aspects of the programme, including the research elements. In such cases it may be more appropriate to use credit for all parts of the programme, and it would then be expected that the award of the doctorate would require the achievement of 540 credits. Universities that choose to credit rate the whole programme should be free to do so.
- 4.18 However the logical consequence of these arguments is that an appropriate credit requirement for a Professional Doctorate would be in the range of 120 to 270 credits, depending on the proportion of the total time devoted to the taught elements. The overall requirement for the award of a Professional Doctorate would then be stated in terms of a credit requirement, together with a requirement for a thesis which encapsulates a significant original contribution to knowledge, but is not itself credit rated.



- 4.19 In December 2001, the national credit consortia published their recommendations for an overall credit framework for HE qualifications (CQFW NICATS NUCCAT SEEC 2001). The model proposed for Professional Doctorates is 540 credits in total, of which up to 180 can be at level 7 (equivalent to Masters degree level), while the remaining is at level 8 (defined as Doctoral level). This is substantially different from the model proposed here.
- 4.20 The principle that a proportion of the work undertaken for a Professional Doctorate should be at a level which corresponds to that of a Masters degree is sound. However it seems that credit is properly associated with learning outcomes, and that it is far from obvious that the terminology of learning outcomes is appropriate for describing the defining doctoral level achievement. Within the national credit consortia document, it is clear that the definition of level 8 is qualitatively different from the definitions at all other levels, in that it describes actual achievement rather than capability.
- 4.21 The structure proposed here envisages that the split between the parts of a Professional Doctorate which are credit rated and those that are not, is based on those elements for which there are predefined learning outcomes, and has nothing to do with differential levels. It is for this reason that a very broad range of possible credit values is envisaged, corresponding to the widely varying proportion of particular Professional Doctorate programmes which are defined in terms of learning outcomes.
- 4.22 There are two main ways in which credit can be used, credit accumulation and credit transfer. In the preceding paragraphs it has been argued that credit accumulation should be restricted to the taught parts of a Professional Doctorate. It is worth enquiring whether this restriction on the use of credit poses any problems in the context of credit transfer. Most universities would resist the notion of credit transfer for any parts of the research element of a doctorate. Such work



needs to be completed and assessed holistically in order to ensure that a doctoral standard has been achieved. The model proposed here is not therefore likely to act as a constraint.

### **Generic Professional Doctorates**

- 4.23 Most Professional Doctorates are designed to meet a particular professional need. However there are some notable exceptions to this. A small number of universities offer generic Professional Doctorate programmes, typically with the content being negotiable by the student in order to meet his/her specific professional needs. Such programmes are very different in concept from those aimed at particular professions, and they present rather different challenges to universities. Such programmes usually lead to the award of a Doctorate in Professional Studies (DProf).

### **The Research Element**

- 4.24 One of the main driving forces behind the development of Professional Doctorates, is the view that there is a need for a research based approach to deal with some of the complex problems faced by various professions. The research element is therefore usually carried out in a professional context, and in a way which is relevant to the needs of the individual candidate and of his/her employing organisation.
- 4.25 This has a number of implications for the way in which the research element is constructed. It may be a single piece of work, much in the same way as would be the case for most PhDs, but this is not the only model. Some Professional Doctorates are based on a number of smaller projects, linked by a single theme.



### **The Nature of Originality**

- 4.26 There is a broad acceptance that originality is a key requirement for the award of a doctorate. If this is the case, then the increasingly broad range of types of doctorate requires that we question the concept of originality. Traditionally it has been interpreted in the context of academic research: original research adds to the corpus of academic knowledge. This allows the use of relatively straightforward approaches to the determination of originality, such as the mechanism of refereed publication.
- 4.27 The focus of the PhD is academic research, and therefore the traditional academic tests of originality are relevant. The Professional Doctorate is different: both in terms of field and scope, the research element of a Professional Doctorate is focussed on professional practice, and as such the traditional tests of academic originality may not apply. However it is possible for the work to make an original contribution to the way in which theory is applied, or to the nature of practice within a profession. The aim of the Professional Doctorate is that candidates should be able, subsequently, to make a contribution to their professions of precisely this sort. This is a reasonable definition of the type of originality that should be sought.

### **Supervision**

- 4.28 There is an obvious difference between the supervision of Professional Doctorate students and their counterparts undertaking conventional PhDs. The subject matter of a PhD is essentially academic research, often with a direct relationship to the research work of the supervisor. Moreover, since the PhD is essentially an individual project, the academic supervisor is involved in the initial discussions about the planning of the research. It is not likely therefore, that a supervisor will take on a student who is working in an area in which the supervisor is not an expert. There are exceptions to this, notably



when it is necessary for a new supervisor to take over during the course of a PhD, but in general terms the argument is sound. If the supervisor does not have the appropriate expertise then the aspirant student will be directed elsewhere, to another supervisor or even another university.

- 4.29 With Professional Doctorates the situation is rather different. It is characteristic that the topic of the research is related to professional practice rather than being rooted in academic concerns. Clearly these can overlap substantially in the types of subject area in which Professional Doctorates are offered, so the dichotomy is not as stark as it may at first sight appear. However there is a potential problem here, and it is made worse because the research topic may well not be selected at the point where a student first enrolls on the programme.
- 4.30 For this reason it is quite common for the supervision role to be rather different. Many Professional Doctorate students wholly or largely conduct research within their employment. It is therefore important that there should be a supervisor within that context, and much of the subject expertise that is needed in the supervision process may well sit with that person, the professional supervisor. The role of the academic is then to ensure that the work has an appropriate research emphasis, and is conducted at the right level, but with less direct influence on what is actually done.
- 4.31 The role of the professional supervisor can be quite challenging. A requirement of work undertaken for an academic award is that the candidate must be able to fail. The normal response of a line manager to a failing project is to intervene in order to ensure success. The professional supervisor must understand that such intervention must be either limited, or must be recorded and notified to the university. There is also an implication for the selection of a suitable project to form the research element of a Professional Doctorate. Projects should give candidates enough freedom of manoeuvre to ensure that



it is their skill, knowledge and ability that determines success or failure.

- 4.32 Universities offering Professional Doctorates need to be aware that the supervision role is complex and that it is not entirely the same as supervision of a PhD. Universities need to prepare their own staff for the academic supervisor role in relation to Professional Doctorate candidates, and should also consider providing training and guidance to the professional supervisors.

#### **Comparison of the Professional Doctorate and the PhD**

- 4.33 One of the difficulties in comparing qualifications is that comparisons are not always based on the same issues. One area in which this happens is based on the difference between comparisons of academic level and academic breadth. These issues are typically made explicit in credit based systems, where the volume of credit is intended to be a measure of the volume of material covered, and the level of credit defines the academic level reached. The general consensus for undergraduate honours degrees now demands a minimum of 360 credits of which at least 100 must be at level HE3, and so on.
- 4.34 The problem arises when comparing Professional Doctorates and PhDs, simply because the Professional Doctorate is frequently credit based, and therefore in some measure assessed by volume, while the PhD has either no formal volume measure at all, or one based on dissertation wordlength. In practice, there is also an unspoken measure of volume based on the amount of elapsed time that a PhD dissertation is expected to take, but this is not immediately comparable with the credit measures used for Professional Doctorates. In fact, many academics find the idea of a volume measure for the PhD to be unacceptable. There is a tradition that work of sufficient standard and originality may, in principle, be presented in five pages. While this may actually be true, it is so only in very exceptional cases, and there is little sense in basing policy on such extremes.



- 4.35 A major difference between Professional Doctorates and PhDs is that the majority of Professional Doctorate programmes are cohort based, while PhDs are generally individual. Like nearly all the distinctions that can be drawn, there are exceptions to this rule; within the sciences it is common for PhDs to be undertaken within a research group, and for there to be significant levels of interaction between the work of one student and that of another. However, this element of teamwork is not the same as the fundamental cohort orientation of a typical EdD programme.
- 4.36 The inclusion within the Professional Doctorate of a substantial taught element is one factor that naturally inclines towards a cohort orientation. This is particularly so if the taught courses are most appropriately taken in a particular order, allowing a build-up in the subject material. The necessity for students to be assessed on their performance in the taught elements generates the need for an examination board – a process which tends to be cohort based.
- 4.37 However this is not the only reason. Most Professional Doctorate programmes seek to both develop and exploit teamworking skills. The development of such skills may well be an explicit objective of the programme, given the importance that teamworking assumes in the development of effective organisations. The use of team based projects allows more realistic problems to be tackled, removing the restriction that a doctoral level project must be of a magnitude that it can be undertaken by one person in three years.



- 5.1 The Professional Doctorate is not, in general, intended to serve as a qualification for those intending to work in the academic world. It is too early in the development of such qualifications to be able to establish whether the Professional Doctorate is actually an effective preparation for work in academe. The intention however was to equip people for high level positions within public sector, industrial and commercial roles. It is interesting that, in pursuit of this purpose, the reaction has been to add into a doctoral experience aspects of personnel management, budgetary planning and management, teamwork and so on. The implicit statement that these are needed in the outside world, but not in universities, must surely represent a rather archaic view of the demands of academic employment.
- 5.2 A survey has been carried out to learn something of the attitudes among employers of those on Professional Doctorate programmes. The results present some interesting insights into the relationship between employers and students, and the Professional Doctorate programmes on which the students are enrolled. The information was provided by the line managers of individual students. As such it represents a middle management view; a senior management perspective may be different.
- 5.3 To place the results of the survey in context it is important to note that the whole Professional Doctorate market is significantly skewed towards the public sector. The EdD represents the largest part of the market, with various Psychology related professions occupying a further big tranche. As a result, a substantial proportion of the total number of Professional Doctorate candidates are employed in either public sector education or in the health service.
- 5.4 Although the programmes have been developed to meet the needs of employing organisations, in the vast majority of cases the idea of undertaking a Professional Doctorate was reported to have originated with the student. It is, of course, probable that in many cases infor-

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mation about the possibility may have been disseminated to employees by the employing organisation; to that extent the idea may have originated with the employer.

- 5.5 In about 40% of cases the employer pays the entire fee. 35% of students pay their own fees, and for just under 20% of students the fee is shared between employer and employee. Although the numbers are not large, there is discernible pattern between subject areas. In the case of Business or technical subjects (DBA, EngD etc.) the employer pays. For the Education Doctorate, a significant minority of students either pay or contribute. In the various Psychology disciplines the student is usually self-funding.
- 5.6 Most employers were satisfied with the amount of information that they received about the course. Moreover a minority of employers felt that they had been able to influence the choice of modules taken by their students. Nearly all employers felt that their organisations were involved in the research aspect of the doctorate; usually this consisted of the research being actually carried out in the organisation.
- 5.7 The benefits perceived by employers included:
- ≈ the development of individual skills, particularly in the area of research
  - ≈ the development of organisational skills, by dissemination from the individual student together with involvement in the programme
  - ≈ retention and motivation of staff
  - ≈ improved skills in management and leadership
  - ≈ improved quality of output/product of the organisation
- 5.8 Most of the employers would repeat the experience of sponsoring students; the reasons for so doing corresponded quite closely to the perceived benefits set out above. In an interesting contrast, one response specifically indicated a preference for the Professional

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Doctorate over the PhD because of its inclusion of project management and co-ordination of the work of others; one response said that in future the organisation would stick to 'proper PhDs'. This pair of responses encapsulates some of the contrasting attitudes to Professional Doctorates observed in other contexts.

- 5.9 One consistently negative aspect that was raised was the problem of the amount of staff time and energy that the course absorbed. However it appeared that the positive aspects outweighed this for most employers. A number of employers also commented adversely on the cost of the programmes; the public sector bias makes this a rather unsurprising observation.
- 5.10 The choice of particular courses was most influenced by location, as might be expected for predominantly part-time courses. The reputation of the university was the second most important factor, followed by the course content.

## 6 SOME ACADEMIC OPINIONS



- 6.1 Amongst academics the Professional Doctorate occupies a somewhat equivocal position. There are two main positions discernible. One is that the Professional Doctorate is not 'a real doctorate' in the sense that this standard is defined by the PhD. This view is often to be found among academics who have little or no experience of Professional Doctorates, frequently from those in more purely academic subject areas where Professional Doctorates are not relevant. Part of the reasoning behind this view may be that the Professional Doctorate was never intended to meet the requirements of an academic career. By that yardstick therefore, it is possible to argue that the Professional Doctorate is different from the more academic PhD. However, it is ultimately in nobody's interest for the Professional Doctorate to be seen as a lesser qualification, for all that it may well be seen as different.
- 6.2 The second view is that the Professional Doctorate must be defined by reference to the PhD as the accepted standard. Since Professional Doctorates include considerable taught elements, many universities have established a wordlength requirement for the dissertation which is substantially less than that required for a PhD. For some academics that is difficult to accept, in that the defining characteristic of a PhD, and by implication, of other Doctorates if they are to be seen as equivalent, is precisely the dissertation element. In some universities, this has resulted in models of Professional Doctorate assessment which require a dissertation and a viva to the same requirements as are imposed on PhDs. This may ensure equivalence of the dissertation; it also effectively places rather greater demands on the Professional Doctorate candidate, who must pass a number of assessed taught elements in addition to a full PhD viva.
- 6.3 Attitudes to Professional Doctorates are also strongly influenced by whether the respondent has a PhD. In a survey of academics across the UK, four questions were asked about the perceived status, challenge and value of Professional Doctorates in comparison with the

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traditional PhD. The results are summarised in the table below; some respondents indicated that they were unable to answer some questions, so the totals do not always add to 100%.

QUESTION	THOSE WITH PHDs		THOSE WITHOUT	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do you consider that a Professional Doctorate and a PhD represent a similar level of academic challenge?	55%	43%	64%	29%
Do you consider that a Professional Doctorate and a PhD confer a similar status on those that hold them?	52%	48%	64%	29%
Do you consider that a Professional Doctorate Qualification would equip someone for a position as an academic in the same way as a PhD would?	38%	57%	71%	21%
Do you consider that a Professional Doctorate would equip someone for doctoral level of understanding and practice in their professional field more adequately than a PhD?	64%	33%	93%	0%

- 6.4 Although the sample is not large, it does appear that those with PhDs have a significantly less positive view of Professional Doctorates than those without PhDs. It is particularly notable that slightly more than 30% of academics with PhDs considered that a Professional Doctorate was less effective than a PhD as a preparation for the target profession.
- 6.5 It was not possible to extend the analysis to extract the views of aca-



demics with Professional Doctorates. There are currently few aca-

demics who have a Professional Doctorate, and the sample did not include any of these. It is also worth noting that only 10% of the respondents had any direct involvement in the delivery of Professional Doctorates; this suggests that the responses are more typical of academics as a whole rather than of the minority involved in delivering such programmes.

- 6.6 The additional comments made in the survey confirmed that there was a general level of uncertainty about what exactly constitutes a Professional Doctorate. The questionnaire did not give a detailed definition, because to do so in a way which did not have an effect on the answers given would have been very difficult. Several comments indicated concern that the inclusion of taught elements implied a dilution of the research element. There were two different implications drawn from this. One was that this difference rendered any comparison of the two impossible; and the other was that this automatically implied a lower standing for the Professional Doctorate.



### The QAA National Qualifications Framework

- 7.1 The Harris Report (Harris, 1996) raised serious concerns about the confused state of postgraduate qualifications in the UK. The bulk of the concern was directed to the position of the Masters level awards, which range from extended undergraduate degrees to research awards (MPhil) which are sometimes at a level close to that expected for a PhD. The theme of confusing use of award titles was reiterated by the Dearing Report, which led the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to undertake the development of a National Qualifications Framework. The scope of awards defined within this framework extends up to doctoral awards at PhD and Professional Doctorate level. Higher (and honorary) doctorates are not included in the framework.
- 7.2 The development of the National Qualifications Framework was not achieved without some controversy. A final version of the Framework was published in February 2001 – in two forms; one covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the other Scotland, reflecting the rather different structure of HE north of the border.
- 7.3 Earlier versions of these documents were rather more prescriptive than the final versions have turned out to be. Clearly, the most important version of the framework is the final one, and the implications of this are given detailed consideration below. However, the intermediate versions indicate something of patterns of thinking about Professional Doctorates among the academics who in the relevant groups. The version published in April 2000 made a very clear distinction between Professional Doctorates and PhDs, in that Professional Doctorates were required to be credit based, while PhDs could not be. That clearly reflected the impact of the inclusion of taught elements in the Professional Doctorate, but ignored the empirical fact that taught elements are becoming increasingly important



within PhD programmes. The credit basis for Professional Doctorates demanded that the entire programme should be at doctoral level; this assumed that the three or four year period of the Professional Doctorate involved no academic progression from Masters level to Doctoral level. At a pragmatic level it created considerable problems for those Professional Doctorate programmes that shared some modules with Masters programmes. This proposal, which turned out to be very unpopular within the universities, encapsulated the idea that the Professional Doctorate must be closely comparable with the PhD – which being based on a single monolithic assessment, must therefore of necessity be considered to be wholly at Doctoral level.

- 7.4 The final version of the frameworks is significantly less detailed. The central concept in the framework is that of the qualification descriptor – which defines the expected outcomes of qualifications in a generic way and which discriminates between qualifications only on the basis of level. The qualification descriptor for doctoral level is set out in an Appendix to this report.
- 7.5 Over and above the qualification descriptor, there are a small number of other statements which have an impact at Doctoral level. These, all taken directly from the QAA documentation, are:
  - ≈ The title ... 'Doctor' should only be used for qualifications that meet in full the expectations of the qualification descriptor at Doctoral level.
  - ≈ Use of the abbreviated titles PhD and DPhil should be restricted to qualifications where assessment is solely by a final dissertation or published work, or by artefact or performance that is accompanied by a written commentary placing it in its academic context.
  - ≈ Titles used for Doctoral qualifications awarded after programmes with a substantial taught element should, normally, include the name of the discipline in the title (eg EdD for Doctor of Education).



- 7.6 In many respects these statements are uncontroversial. They represent a reasonably accurate description of current practice, as described earlier in this report. Programmes that are substantially taught are titled as subject specific doctorates in order to distinguish them from the Doctor of Philosophy, which is assessed exclusively on the basis of research work reported in a dissertation or published work.
- 7.7 This is not particularly surprising. Many features of the earlier drafts of the framework were inspired by a concern to protect the unique characteristics of the PhD. It does, however, create one significant anomaly in the overall framework. It puts the PhD in the unique position of being the one qualification where the framework specifies the educational process and the way that it is assessed. For all other qualifications it is accepted practice to specify the intended educational outcomes and to allow individual institutions to determine the educational process that will achieve those outcomes. Clearly, it is not unreasonable that the PhD should occupy a unique position – it is clearly the pinnacle of achievement in the academic system, and is therefore by definition, unique. However, this is not a particularly desirable approach.
- 7.8 More difficulties start to emerge when the qualification descriptor is examined in more detail. The qualification descriptor requires a number of transferable skills to be developed. Although it is not explicitly stated, it is reasonable to expect that universities should also assess whether these skills have been developed. It is also necessary to ask whether the normal process of carrying out and reporting on research for a PhD will guarantee that the skills required have been developed. It is not obvious that this will be the case.



This therefore raises the possibility that universities will need to develop training programmes in these areas for PhD students, and that these will also need to be formally assessed – a process which is likely to be independent of the current dissertation and viva assessment.<sup>6</sup>

- 7.9 This suggests that implementation of the requirements of the qualification descriptor in the case of a PhD, would require the introduction of those characteristics which specifically debar the award of a PhD and require the award of a named doctorate instead. The problem is not a purely hypothetical one. There are already examples of PhD programmes which contain substantial taught elements, and in one case at least<sup>7</sup> is also cohort based.
- 7.10 The other obvious difficulty is that the perceived problems that gave rise to the development of Professional Doctorates were twofold: firstly the need, for employment related skills to be developed within the programme, and secondly, the need for a focus on practice rather than theory. Implementation of the qualifications framework would eliminate the first of these requirements, since all doctorates would meet this requirement: it fails completely to address the second. The framework would make it perfectly legitimate for a university to develop an Engineering Doctorate which was entirely based in theoretical engineering science – provided it was partly taught. That may be regarded as perfectly acceptable, although it is some way from the purpose of the EngD as originally and currently conceived.

<sup>6</sup>There are also considerable implications for the PhD based on published work. Presumably the nature of the assessment in such cases would have to be expanded to examine the extent to which the candidate could demonstrate achievement of these additional skills.

<sup>7</sup>Lancaster University offers a PhD in Education which would, in many other universities, be essentially indistinguishable from a Professional Doctorate in Education, EdD.



- 7.11 There may also be a concern that the requirement that the assessment of the PhD be 'solely by a final dissertation or published work', could present difficulties for those universities that have intermediate assessment points in their PhD programmes. Many universities operate some version of the MPhil/PhD transfer mechanism; this is demonstrably not 'a final dissertation', yet failure to satisfy examiners in this process would bar further progress to the PhD. It would be unfortunate if the QAA framework were to be seen to offer an interpretation that prevented such intermediate assessments from being made.
- 7.12 Implementation of the framework is, therefore, likely to result in the incorporation of more taught elements into PhD programmes, without these being considered to form part of the final assessment. Given that most Professional Doctorate programmes already include such elements, this would represent a convergence of the two. At the same time the framework would permit the development of taught doctorates which are distinguished from the PhD solely by being substantially taught. The current distinction based on a focus on professional practice would not feature, and as universities are free to determine titles for subject titled doctoral programmes, there would be scope for confusion between similarly named programmes which are practice related or theory related. This appears to be an unsatisfactory state of affairs – since it is precisely such confusions that the framework is intended to minimise.

#### Assessment of Professional Doctorates

- 7.13 It has been pointed out that many PhD programmes involve substantial taught elements. However, it is not common practice for these to be assessed. The examination of the PhD rests solely on the dissertation, and on the performance of the candidate in defending the dissertation in the viva. It is, of course, unlikely that a PhD student who does not complete the required training elements would be allowed to



proceed to submission of a dissertation and a viva voce examination. In one sense therefore, it can be argued that successful completion of the taught elements is a necessary condition for the award of the PhD. However, that is not the formal position in the regulatory structures of most universities.

- 7.14 Assessment of the PhD differs substantially from that used for other academic awards in other respects. The examination is conducted by two examiners (usually one internal and one external), and their decision is usually final. The formal position may vary from this, in that some universities require that a committee confirm the actual awards. However, it is hardly a realistic possibility for such committees to overturn the consensus view of the two examiners. In practice therefore, the decision is very much more a personal matter than is the case for most other university awards, which are subject to the deliberations of an Examination Board.
- 7.15 Professional Doctorates tend to be closer to the norm for other university awards. The results of the taught elements are presented to an Examination Board, which may also receive the report of the examiners who conduct the viva. The precise roles of the different players in the assessment process vary across the sector, but two broad models are discernible. The first, driven by a perception that a Professional Doctorate must be demonstrably equivalent to a PhD, gives the final decision to the examiners of the thesis. Assessment of the taught elements has a role, but it represents a preliminary hurdle that candidates must pass in order to earn the right to present a thesis. The second model, driven by a view that the Professional Doctorate should be seen as a designed and holistic award, requires that all the individual assessments, including the outcome of the thesis examination, are presented to an Examining Board.
- 7.16 In one sense, this is more an operational matter than one of differing assessment practice. It is inconceivable that an examining board



would make the decision to award a Professional Doctorate to a candidate whose thesis and viva performance had been considered to be unsatisfactory. Under either approach presentation of a satisfactory thesis remains a necessary condition for the award of a Professional Doctorate. The difference is more one of emphasis, although not entirely so. It might appear that the second, holistic model would attach greater importance to the taught elements within the programme than would the first, thesis orientated model. In practice this is not likely to be the case. An examining board presented with the outcome of a viva examination indicating that the candidate had produced a good quality thesis and defended it effectively, would be more likely to overlook some deficiencies in the assessment of the taught elements.

#### **The Role of the External Examiner**

- 7.17 External examiners for taught programmes have a very different role from that of external examiners for research degrees. The Professional Doctorate model, incorporating both elements, presents therefore a particular challenge. As might be expected, there are different approaches in use, reflecting the differences of emphasis that universities place on the taught and research elements. The issue is fairly closely related to that of the balance between an Examining Board and the thesis and viva process; this is not surprising, since these are derived from the traditional taught and research models respectively.
- 7.18 Broadly speaking the research based model involves appointment of an individual external examiner for the thesis, selected on the basis of possession of the research expertise within the subject area of the thesis. The external examiner role is then largely indistinguishable from that of the traditional PhD external examiner. This generates some issues for the relationship between the thesis external examiner and the taught programme external.



- 7.19 These issues could be resolved by the appointment of a panel, consisting of external examiners from the Examining Board of the taught element. One member of this panel, chosen for expertise in the appropriate subject area, would act as the thesis external examiner.

#### Assessment Regulations

- 7.20 In considering the assessment of Professional Doctorates there are a number of relevant factors that need to be taken into account. These are:
- ≈ The QAA National Qualifications Framework – specifically the qualification descriptor for doctoral level qualifications
  - ≈ The need to ensure that different doctoral qualifications are comparable in standard and in the academic challenge they present
  - ≈ The formal inclusion of taught material in Professional Doctorates, and the need to base decisions about the award of the doctorate on the overall performance of the candidate.
- 7.21 Many universities use a credit based approach to meet these different requirements. This allows the formal attachment of credit to the assessment of the individual taught elements, and to the acquisition of generic employment related skills. This is widespread practice and most universities have few difficulties in defining and operating systems that specify and use credit in this way.
- 7.22 Usually, credit is awarded to record the achievement of learning outcomes, but this would be inappropriate for the PhD, as the specifications for learning outcomes are not used. This does, however, create some problems of comparability. Most universities are concerned that Professional Doctorates should be demonstrably comparable in stan-



dard with the traditional PhD, but are unable to use the credit mechanism to provide evidence of such comparability.

#### Progression

- 7.23 There is a lack of clarity about the appropriate way to incorporate progression into a Professional Doctorate programme. The issue is in fact one that has an impact on all Doctorates, and is likely to be of increasing significance in the future. Once it is accepted that Doctorates include an element of teaching, then the question of progression is one that needs to be resolved.
- 7.24 One approach is to assume that the taught elements are assessed, and that the results of that assessment are used to determine whether a student may progress to the stage of carrying out research, and of writing and submitting a dissertation. This preserves the formal similarity with the traditional PhD model, in that the award of the qualification is based solely on the final assessment of the dissertation, whilst also ensuring that students who do not successfully complete the taught elements cannot gain the qualification.
- 7.25 The alternative model is to operate an Examining Board which receives and considers the results of all the assessments, covering both taught and research elements. This makes the distinction between the Professional Doctorate and the PhD much more apparent.
- 7.26 In the absence of any classification of the results of Doctorates, it can be argued that the formal outcome of the two models is essentially the same. However, there is a potential difference in the case of students whose performance is close to the threshold for a pass. While it is most unlikely that any university would be prepared to allow good performance in the taught elements to compensate for a poor disserta-



tion, it is quite possible that the reverse could take place. An Examining Board approach could therefore be of some potential benefit to students. However, the more serious argument is that, if it is accepted that a Doctoral qualification demands a range of different skills and abilities to be demonstrated, there is a case for an Examining Board to consider the extent to which this has been achieved.

### Assessment Regulations - Examples

- 7.27 The following paragraphs present examples of the assessment regulations of a number of different UK Universities, drawn from both the pre-1992 and post-1992 sectors.<sup>8</sup> Nearly all regulations define the requirements of a doctoral dissertation in terms of a report of a substantial research enquiry making a significant original contribution to knowledge. The one exception to this is noted below (paragraph 7.48). There are not many other general conclusions that can be reached about the characteristics of doctoral assessment regulations, except possibly that they show surprising diversity.
- 7.28 There are a number of universities where the regulations for various forms of Professional Doctorate diverge very little from those for the PhD. There is a reference to a supervised study element in many of these regulations, but this applies equally to the PhD, and in neither case is there any explicit indication of how this is assessed. (See: Universities A & E)
- 7.29 There are other examples where the Professional Doctorate regulations do require a quite explicit study programme, but the dissertation requirement is, in regulatory terms, unchanged from that for the PhD.

<sup>8</sup>Universities A, B, C, F, G & J are pre-1992 institutions; Universities D, E & H are post-1992 institutions.



Since the usual specification for the scale of the dissertation is a maximum wordlength, it may be that local practice is to expect a shorter dissertation in these situations; this is difficult to establish from the regulations alone. (See: Universities B, F & J). Other universities are quite explicit in setting regulations in which the expectations of the dissertation are reduced in recognition of the inclusion of the taught elements and their associated assessment. (See: University C). The last identifiable group is that of those universities where there is no indication in the regulations that there are any Professional Doctorate awards. (See: Universities G & H)

- 7.30 The benchmark for clarity is probably University C; but one has to wonder whether, in the regulations for the MSc in Surgical Dentistry, the requirement for an oral examination might not be misconstrued.

### UNIVERSITY A

- 7.31 The University has specific regulations for both EdD and DBA. These specify that 'the programme of study for the Doctor of ... shall be one of supervised study following an approved Scheme of Studies and a research enquiry'. The regulations make no statement at all about assessment, other than in relation to the submission of a dissertation and the consequent viva. However, the viva has specifically a wider remit than the research enquiry reported in the dissertation; the candidate is required to have 'passed a viva voce examination conducted by the examiners on the broader aspects of the field of research in addition to the subject of the thesis'.
- 7.32 The EdD regulations allow for the research enquiry element to be satisfied by the presentation of a portfolio of four publications. This is not allowed for the DBA. The regulations contain no indication of a wordlength requirement.



UNIVERSITY B

7.33 The Ordinances of University B allow for the PhD, together with Doctor of Engineering (EngD), Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), and Doctor of Medicine (DM). Of these the PhD, the DBA and the DM are all subject to the same basic regulation, which states that ‘the Degree ... shall connote recognition of successful completion ... of a supervised course of study which shall consist (solely or chiefly) of a programme of research ... the results of which have been satisfactorily embodied in a thesis.’ For the EngD, the ‘examination and assessment for the taught programme shall be conducted on the same basis as for an MSc course...’. The difference is merely that the examiners’ final recommendation determines whether the candidate continues on the course of study for the EngD, rather than whether the candidate receives the award of the MSc. Once the candidate has passed this point, the remainder of the EngD is assessed by the thesis, on regulations which are essentially the same as the PhD regulations.

UNIVERSITY C

7.34 One of the most clearly articulated sets of regulations is that of University C. The PhD is clearly distinguished from what are referred to as Taught Professional Doctorates. The table on the following page summarises the differences:



	<b>PhD</b>	<b>EdD</b>	<b>DClinPsychol</b>	<b>EngD</b>
<i>Admission Requirements</i>	Good Honours degree	Master’s level award in Education or Social Sciences (or equivalent)	Good Honours degree in Psychology plus some experience	Good Honours degree in Computing or Electronics
<i>Taught Elements</i>	None	3 modules per year for each of first two years	List of modules specified	180 credits drawn from MSc programme
<i>Assessment of taught aspects</i>	n/a	5000 word assignment for each module	Four examinations; Two small-scale research projects; Four case study reports	Assessed as in requirements for MSc programme
<i>Dissertation requirement</i>	May not exceed 100,000 words (except with permission)	45,000 to 55,000 word dissertation	30,000 word dissertation in addition to the reports above (5,000 words each)	May not exceed 80,000 words and 400 pages
<i>Oral Examination</i>	Required	Required—mainly on dissertation but may cover any part of course	Required—mainly on dissertation but may cover any part of course	Required—can cover dissertation or any part of training programme

UNIVERSITY D

7.35 The Doctorate in Professional Practice by Learning Contract (ProfD), is one of the most innovative doctoral programmes in the sector. Candidates agree a Learning Contract, which is made up of a number of individual Learning Goals. Assessment of each of these is made once the candidate considers that s/he can provide evidence that the learning goal has been achieved, and credit points are awarded if it is established that the goal has been achieved.



- 7.36 The Doctoral award requires 540 credits, and is subject to an overall assessment by oral examination of the entire learning contract. A further unusual feature is that the level of achievement in each goal is assessed on a grade point scale from 1 to 16, with grade points 14-16 being reported to the candidate as a grade A. A candidate who achieves an overall grade of at least 14 receives the award of ProfD with Distinction.

UNIVERSITY E

- 7.37 Each Professional Doctoral Degree is the responsibility of the University Research Degrees Committee acting on behalf of the Academic Board. Each has three external examiners appointed for a period of three years by the Committee. All examiners for a given professional doctorate are involved in the assessment of student progress at the end of each year of the degree. The final oral examination of each candidate is conducted by at least one of the appointed examiners and one internal examiner who has not been one of the candidate's supervisors.
- 7.38 Each degree has a Subject Board of Examiners consisting of the three external examiners and all staff involved in the degree. The Subject Board meets at the end of each year, except the final year and makes a recommendation on the progress of each student. The recommendation is considered by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee, acting as a Principal Board of Examiners under powers devolved to it by the University Research Degrees Committee. The Principal Board takes a final decision on each student, and the decision is received by the University Research Degrees Committee.
- 7.39 The examination team for a student's final oral examination team is approved by the University Research Degrees Committee and examiners' reports and recommendations on the dissertation and oral examination are received directly by the same committee. This procedure is identical to that for MPhil and PhD degrees.



UNIVERSITY F

- 7.40 The University has three separate sets of regulations governing the PhD, the EdD and the DClinPsych. The PhD regulations require that the candidate 'undertake the approved course of advanced study and research under the supervision of a member of staff ...', and should 'give evidence of satisfactory progress by such means as the head of department ... may prescribe'.
- 7.41 The regulations for the Doctor of Education award contain exactly the same words, but then give much more explicit statements about the advanced study element. The regulation is reproduced in full:

36. The approved programme of advanced study in article 33 will involve undertaking taught modules totalling 160 credits from the list of approved modular courses, except in the case of candidates accepted under article 34(d) of Ordinance X,. Candidates must complete a minimum of 40 credits in research methods and a minimum of 60 credits in the specialist field. 20 credits in research methods and 20 credits in the specialist field may be a negotiated module. 20 credits must be taken as a negotiated study which will be directly related to the thesis. 40 credits may be taken from any area to complete the total of 160 credits required from taught modules.

- 7.42 The regulations for the Doctor of Clinical Psychology are similar, except that the programme of advanced study is not specified in credit terms.



UNIVERSITY G

- 7.43 There are no specific Professional Doctorates in place (other than the MD). The PhD regulations include a requirement for a training programme in research to be completed. The stated assessment requirement is that, 'Every candidate shall be required to complete the Research Training Programme to the satisfaction of the Director of Graduate Training'.
- 7.44 A regulation governs the maximum length for a thesis. 'A PhD thesis should be as concise as possible, and in no circumstances may a thesis be submitted should the number of words exceed 100,000, including footnotes and appendices, without written permission being obtained from a candidate's supervisor and the Head of Department concerned.'

UNIVERSITY H

- 7.45 There are no Professional Doctorates specified in the regulations (September 1999). However the PhD regulations include a statement that ' a candidate for the Degree of PhD ... may undertake an integrated programme which includes a programme of postgraduate study. Such a programme ... shall not occupy more than a third of the total period of registration ... and ... shall be subject to formal assessment.' A candidate is not permitted to proceed to the thesis/viva stage of examination until the 'course work examiners are satisfied with the candidate's performance.'



UNIVERSITY J

- 7.46 The regulations of the University include provision for:
  - ≈ the PhD, which is by research only,
  - ≈ Doctoral degrees by Examination and Thesis (DClinPsy, EdD and DNursSci)
  - ≈ Engineering Doctorate (EngD).
- 7.47 The assessment requirements for each of these degrees are summarised in the following table:

	<i>PhD</i>	<i>Doctoral Degree by Examination and Thesis</i>	<i>Engineering Doctorate</i>
<i>Taught Elements</i>	None	A taught scheme of study, including.. approved professional or industrial practice	
<i>Assessment of taught elements</i>	n/a	Examinations of advanced character prescribed by the relevant Department	Examinations of advanced character prescribed by the Programme Director
<i>Thesis</i>	Up to 100,000 words	Up to 100,000 words	Up to 100,000 words

- 7.48 There is one single regulation for the submission and assessment of theses, and this is invoked by the regulations for each of the specific types of doctorate. University J has no statement anywhere in the regulations indicating any form of criteria of assessment of theses.

## 8 CONCLUSIONS *and* RECOMMENDATIONS



### The Nature of Professional Doctorates

- 8.1 Professional Doctorates are an increasingly important part of Higher Education, and need to be understood as distinct from the more traditional form of doctorate, exemplified by the PhD. Professional Doctorates serve particular professional communities, and as such, they are defined to include the achievement of learning outcomes that are specifically needed within these professions.
- 8.2 As Doctorates they are also research degrees, and need to match up to the standard University requirement for a research doctorate, that the candidate completes research leading to a significant and original contribution. It is particularly important that the field of this contribution may be distinctively different from the PhD, which is usually concerned with knowledge based research, while the Professional Doctorate is more likely to include research into the nature of professional practice. However this distinction is not an absolute one.
- 8.3 The nature of the Professional Doctorate is summarised in the following definition:

**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.**

- 8.4 It is characteristic of a Professional Doctorate that it is in part defined in terms of learning outcomes, and this has a number of consequences:

## CONCLUSIONS *and* RECOMMENDATIONS



- ≈ A Professional Doctorate programme leads to an award with a title which is descriptive of the professional field that it serves.
- ≈ A Professional Doctorate programme should be subject to validation as a programme, in order that a University can assure itself that the defined learning outcomes are appropriate, and that the programme is structured in such a way as to ensure that the learning outcomes can be achieved. Such validation processes should involve external representatives of the target profession.
- ≈ Professional Doctorate programmes will generally include elements of directed study which are intended to support the achievement of the defined learning outcomes. This is sometimes referred to as the taught element, but this should not be taken to imply that this necessarily involves traditional didactic teaching.
- ≈ The regulations governing Professional Doctorates, should ensure that the award is made on the basis of achievement of both learning outcomes and the successful completion of the research element.
- ≈ Professional Doctorates should be treated as courses within University management processes, and should therefore have student representation at appropriate levels, and should be subject to the normal periodic monitoring processes to ensure quality of operation.
- 8.5 The use of credit in Professional Doctorates is a complex issue. Credit is appropriate for those parts of Professional Doctorate programmes which are defined in terms of learning outcomes. However, in the absence of any very satisfactory way of defining doctoral level credit, there is no convincing argument for a requirement that the research element of Professional Doctorates be credit rated. Universities may choose to use credit as a metric for the relative amount of work that is needed within the various parts of a Professional Doctorate, but the value of using credit in the full sense is less apparent.



- 8.6 The credit rating of the directed learning part of a Professional Doctorate programme would normally be between 120 and 270 credits, and this credit will be at a level which is at least level M. If the research elements of the programme are also credit rated, then the total for a Professional Doctorate programme should be 540 credits. However, Universities may choose to use other ways of defining the volume of work expected for the research component.
- 8.7 Universities should recognise that Professional Doctorates are sufficiently different from traditional PhDs, for there to be distinctive staff development needs associated with them. These should also embrace those external members of the target profession involved in professional supervision of candidates.
- 8.8 The nature of external professional involvement will vary. In many cases, the most obvious involvement of the profession with the delivery of the programme, is that the research which leads to the thesis or dissertation, is conducted either within the context of professional employment or in a close collaborative relationship. Given the significance of the research element in any doctoral programme, this is of considerable importance. It is also common to find that there is external professional involvement in the delivery of taught elements of Professional Doctorates.

#### Regulatory Structures

- 8.9 There is considerable variation between universities in terms of the regulations that have been adopted for Professional Doctorates. In some cases, the regulations are a simple adaptation of the existing PhD regulations, while in others a more formal redefinition has been attempted. Such diversity is typical of the UK HE sector, and is one of its strengths. However, it does appear that some universities have not systematically addressed the question of appropriate regulations



which set out the difference between the Professional Doctorate and the PhD.

- 8.10 The primary requirement of such regulations is that they should ensure that the essential academic demand of the Professional Doctorate is clearly established, but without being excessively prescriptive in terms of the detail of how the Professional Doctorate is implemented. Each different Professional Doctorate programme is intended to meet the specific requirements of a particular profession, and as such, it is both inevitable and right that the details of different programmes will differ. A university regulatory structure which defines Professional Doctorates too rigidly would tend to limit this necessary flexibility. Universities have been imaginative and innovative in the way they have set up Professional Doctorates, and this should be encouraged.
- 8.11 Regulations should attempt to ensure that the workload demanded by different forms of doctorate is appropriate, and broadly comparable. The choice between doing a PhD in Education and an Education Doctorate should be based on the objectives of the two programmes, and not on any perceptions of differences in the workload.

#### The Future

- 8.12 Professional Doctorates have evolved in response to a clear need in support of a variety of different professions. Critical to this development, has been the need for these professions to incorporate research into the set of skills used by professional practitioners. This need is only likely to grow, and with it the demand for Professional Doctorates. Universities in the UK have been creative in their responses to this need, and have generated a number of well valued programmes that are meeting the needs of the professions. It is important that this should continue, and it can therefore be expected that this form of Doctorate will continue to grow in importance.



## APPENDIX—EXTRACT *from*

### QAA NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

#### DESCRIPTOR FOR QUALIFICATIONS AT DOCTORAL LEVEL

*Doctorates are awarded to students who have demonstrated:*

- i the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
- ii a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
- iii the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
- iv a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

*Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:*

- a make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- b continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches;

*and will have:*

- c the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

*Source: QAA 2001*



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