



UK Council for Graduate Education



Salzburg II consultation response

Vitae is funded by Research Councils UK to embed personal, professional and career development in the research experience in UK higher education institutions.

The UK Council for Doctoral Education is a membership organisation, funded by UK institutions to champion the interests of graduate education.

This consultation was circulated to the Vitae and UKCGE networks. The response has been put together based on the input received from these networks and the views of Vitae staff and UKCGE representatives.

Overall

UK higher education institutions and stakeholder organisations were pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the Salzburg II proposals.

Broadly, colleagues welcomed the statement as a useful supplement to the original Salzburg principles.

An important and consistent suggestion is that the Salzburg II document needs to be linked more clearly to Salzburg I. We **recommend** that the Salzburg I principles are included in an appendix to the new statement.

Institutions also requested that it be clear that these principles are guidelines, rather than any kind of directive.

More explicit recognition of and support for inter/trans-disciplinarity would be helpful.

There were a range of comments about professional doctorates, particularly in relation to the original 10 Salzburg principles. There were comments on the inappropriateness of the underlying assumption that doctoral candidates were all 'young researchers' and at an early stage in their overall career¹. Many people studying for professional doctorates are in fact mid-career professionals. We **recommend** that specific feedback is sought to ensure that Salzburg II addresses the full range of doctoral qualifications.

Research as the basis and the difference

There was agreement that the doctorate should be based on research and that it should nurture flexibility of thought, creativity and intellectual autonomy through a concrete research project, and that this should take place in a research environment with doctoral candidates interacting with academic staff and other researchers.

We **strongly recommend** that the reference to whether the research mindset can be taught should be deleted; while the focus of the doctorate should be on developing the 'research mindset' many of the component skills can be learnt, developed or taught either through the practice of research, or through a conscious learning or training process in another setting. The definition of 'to teach'

¹ Comments were particularly focused on principles 1, 4 and 7, in the original Salzburg I statement. UKCGE would be happy to provide additional focussed input from the perspective of professional doctorates. Please also see [http://www.ukcge.ac.uk/Resources/UKCGE/Documents/PDF/Professional%20Doctorate%20Awards%20in%20the%20UK%20\(2010\).pdf](http://www.ukcge.ac.uk/Resources/UKCGE/Documents/PDF/Professional%20Doctorate%20Awards%20in%20the%20UK%20(2010).pdf)



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includes 'learning by experience'²; on this basis it's clear that the aspect of a research mindset cited [creativity, intellectual autonomy] can be 'taught' through the process of research and other experiences.

We would suggest that there is a need for 'critical mass', but that this could be achieved through collaborations, partnerships and networks, rather than through one single institution which is what appears to be implied.

The meaning of the structure

We agree that doctoral education needs to take place in a highly supportive environment where high quality research is taking place. However, doctoral education is, generally speaking, highly individual and the structures which are in place therefore need to be flexible.

We recognise that diversity is important, but this needs to be seen in the context of attracting the candidates whose intellectual ability and personal characteristics are most appropriate for the post. Furthermore, the recognition of disciplinary differences is important; the social sciences and humanities have less need for centralized research facilities compared to the STEM subjects.

Elements for structuring doctoral education

Critical mass

The views expressed agreed that doctoral education must take place in a high quality research environment. Critical mass can be at institutional, discipline level, or achieved through collaborations and partnerships.

Recruitment and admission

Consultation responses also highlighted the need to ensure that the supervisor/doctoral candidate relationship 'worked' and that admissions guidelines should allow and support individuals to make appropriate choices.

Supervision

Respondents agreed that good supervision is critical. There was a suggestion that doctoral candidates could also have a 'mentor' to support the supervisor/doctoral candidate relationship and to support career development.

Credits

There is **strong agreement** in the UK that the use of credits is not helpful at doctoral level.

Quality

There is agreement about the importance of quality assurance.

Internationalisation

Respondents to the consultation broadly agreed with the statement on internationalisation. However, responses highlighted that it was most important to expose researchers to an international 'culture' through networks, conference attendance etc rather than necessarily a period of 'international mobility'.

There was a request for explicit acknowledgement of the importance and role of internationally distinguished research centres which are already well placed to support universities in relation to internationalisation and graduate schools.

Outcomes

There was agreement on this section.

² http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/view/entry/m_en_gb0847760#DWS-044102
<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/teach>



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Career development

There were a number of responses that felt that this section should be strengthened, for example, 'we are disappointed that the EUA-CDU draft does not place more emphasis on the value of generic skill training which we believe greatly enhances our students' future employability both within and outside academia.'

There were also concerns expressed that because the section is called 'career development' it could be interpreted that all institutions need a careers service. The principle 8 text in the original Salzburg I statement emphasises the role of research departments. In fact, many staff across institutions, including graduate schools for example, provide vital support to doctoral candidates. We recommend that the range of support functions is made more explicit.

We **strongly recommend** that the section focuses more broadly on the acquisition of a package of knowledge and skills that are translatable to a range of future contexts, as well as career development. Given this recommendation, we also suggest that the section is re-named 'professional development'. We would be happy to work with CDE to develop appropriate wording.

Clearing the obstacles

Funding

Whilst there was broad agreement that sustainable funding is very important, it's important to recognise the challenges within this.

Autonomy

The strong acknowledgement of institutional autonomy was welcomed.

Legal framework

It was noted that in establishing an international programme it is important that legal issues are appropriately addressed.

Inter-sectoral mobility

It was noted that this section could include more explicitly working with potential employers and companies involved in joint research with institutions.

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