OECD WORKSHOP ON “REDUCING THE PRECARITY OF RESEARCHERS’ CAREERS”

Perspectives from Universities

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Content

1. The EUA-CDE
2. Postdoctoral researchers: The grey area
3. Doctoral Schools
4. Reform of research assessment and open science
Introducing EUA-CDE

- **Membership service** of the European University Association (EUA)
- **The largest** European Doctoral Education Network (doc & postdoc) bringing together academic leaders and professionals from 256 European universities
- **Drives** doctoral education policies and promotes cooperation and exchange of good practices on issues of common interest
- **Identifies** and monitors the trends in doctoral education, inside and outside Europe
- **Organises** regularly events, addressing fundamental and emerging topics of doctoral education and publishes surveys and policy paper

**Recent themes**
- Research integrity
- Open science and the digital transformation
- Inter-institutional collaboration in doctoral education
- Career development and tracking
- Doctoral candidates’ wellbeing/mental health
- Societal dimension of doctoral education (incl. SDG)
What is a postdoc?

... A ‘postdoc’ is a temporary position awarded in academe, industry, a nonprofit organization, or government primarily for **gaining additional education and training in research.** (National Science Foundation)

postdoctoral research position is a fixed-term, paid position which usually involves **working on a research project** for which an academic (the Principal Investigator) has applied for funding. ... A postdoctoral research position can be, though by no means has to be, a stepping stone on the route to an academic career (University of Bath)
The grey area

- **Limited knowledge** concerning the growing population of postdoctoral researchers
- **Need for career tracking** of doctoral graduates
- **Uncertainty** of postdoc career prospects
- Lack of recognition as **specific staff category**
- Significant **differences** between employment contract, recruitment procedure, career path, tasks and responsibilities between countries (and institutions and disciplines)
Context

- Rising number of doctoral graduates and a rising number of postdoctoral researchers, limited number of positions within academia.
- Lack of basic funding.
- “a career in academia is the only option”. All other options (in particular the employment in the private sector) are considered as second-best options.
- Assessment and training usually uniquely focussing on career in academia.
Context

• **Lack of exit strategies** for individuals that are not successful in obtaining an academic career are not clear
• Certain **lack of appreciation of research skills** within society
• From transition period to **permadoc**
• As a consequence, economic precarity and mental health issues
Context

**European level**

2004 EURAXESS


2010 Human Resources Strategy for Researchers

2011 European Framework for Researchers Careers

**National level**

2008 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (UK)

2018 Revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (UK)
The rise of structured doctoral education in Europe

Institutions establish diverse, often parallel structures for doctoral education …

To what extent is doctoral education in your institution organised as…?

- Doctoral education is organised in programmes
- Doctoral education is managed through an organisational unit doctoral school
- Doctoral education is managed through an inter-organisational unit
- Doctoral education is led by individual supervisors

... based on the different levels of University governance (university, faculty, discipline)

To what extent is doctoral education in your institution organised at or around …?

- To a great extent/always
- To some extent
- Not at all/to a small extent

Bar chart showing the extent of doctoral education organised:
- The disciplinary level:
  - 0% to 10%: To a great extent
  - 10% to 30%: To some extent
  - 30% to 100%: Not at all/to a small extent
- The faculty level:
  - 0% to 10%: To a great extent
  - 10% to 30%: To some extent
  - 30% to 100%: Not at all/to a small extent
- Themes or societal challenges:
  - 0% to 10%: To a great extent
  - 10% to 30%: To some extent
  - 30% to 100%: Not at all/to a small extent
and (mainly) seen as future academic and scholars,

To what extent is doctoral education in your institution conceived as preparing the future generation of...

- Academics/scholars
- Researchers outside of academia
- Leaders/managers
- Highly skilled knowledge workers

but also increasingly seen as the research professionals of tomorrow.

To what extent is doctoral education in your institution conceived as preparing the future generation of...

- Academics/scholars
- Researchers outside of academia
- Leaders/managers
- Highly skilled knowledge workers

They focus on research competencies

In your institution, how important are the following elements of doctoral training?

- Specific research competencies
- Generic academic competencies
- Knowledge valorisation
- Teaching competencies
- Management and leadership competencies

(Extremely) important
(Somewhat) important
(Somewhat) unimportant

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
but also acquire transversal competencies.

In your institution, how important are the following elements of doctoral training?

- Specific research competencies
- Generic academic competencies
- Knowledge valorisation
- Teaching competencies
- Management and leadership competencies

What can doctoral schools provide?

- Professional staff
- Meeting place
- Knowledge exchange
- Skills training
- Professional development (in and outside of academia)
- Outreach beyond academia
Need to directly address postdoctoral researchers (researchers experience, age, etc.)
The funding challenge

To what extent are the following issues currently considered a strategic priority in doctoral education within your institution?

- Funding of doctoral education
- Research ethics
- Attracting doctoral candidates from abroad
- Career development of doctoral candidates
- Open Access / Open Science
- Gender equality
- Health/wellbeing of doctoral candidates
- Increasing the number of doctoral candidates
- University-business cooperation within...
- Societal engagement of doctoral candidates

Options:
- To a great extent/always
- To some extent
- Not at all/to a small extent
Open science and the reform of academic reward systems
Objective
Gather and share a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of research assessment practices in European universities, as well as plans to review these evaluation approaches, specifically in the transition to Open Science

Participation
• 260 valid institutional responses
• 32 European countries
Which types of academic work matter most for research careers?

![Image of bar chart showing the importance of different types of academic work for research careers.](https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/research%20assessment%20in%20the%20transition%20to%20open%20science.pdf)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Academic Work</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Of Little Importance</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research publications</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attracting external research funding</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research impact and knowledge transfer</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching activities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td></td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research collaborations within academia</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Research collaborations outside academia</td>
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<td>Research supervision activities</td>
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<td>Social outreach and knowledge transfer</td>
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<td>Other types of research output</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open Science and Open Access</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

![Image of bar chart showing the percentage of respondents for each type of academic work.](https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/research%20assessment%20in%20the%20transition%20to%20open%20science.pdf)
How is academic work evaluated for the purpose of research careers?

Metrics measuring research output based on number of publications and citations

Thank you for your attention

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