

Standards, criteria and experience: the transferability of doctoral qualifications

Research and scholarship by members of the International Centre for the Comparative Study of Doctoral Education over recent years has led to the conclusion that the variation from country to country and even from university to university in the nature of doctoral studies is wide, despite the growing numbers of doctoral schools in some countries mitigating the variation somewhat.

There are attempts made to harmonise by defining in principle what doctoral education should be, but our empirical research shows that - even within Europe let alone across continents - the doctoral student in one university might have a very different experience from someone working elsewhere on the same topic. Yet the numbers of international students are growing everywhere, not just in North America and Europe.

The variation lies in modes of supervision, structure of study (e.g. with and without coursework), assessment procedures in principle and in practice. For international students and those who wish to 'travel' with their qualification, how the final qualification is received in their home country and beyond is a crucial issue for future employment whether in the academy or more widely, and impacts on their identification with academic cultures and disciplinary 'tribes'.

The network will explore these and other dimensions of doctoral education with the ultimate goal of contributing substantially to the development of comparability and harmonisation, without uniformity.