

Proposed Minimum Standards for the Doctorate Degree in Psychology in Europe

October 2010

Preamble:

The main purpose of setting minimum standards is to enhance pan-European consistency in the conduct of PhD programs in Psychology, since greater comparability would ensure a consistent quality in research and post-graduate training and enhance graduates' mobility opportunities. Thus, the ultimate criterion is to create the conditions for mobility, but linked to the basic competences required of PhD candidates, supervisors, and PhD dissertation committee members and assessors. The committee recognizes that the route to the PhD, and approval process, will vary across countries, for example according to whether regulations are prescribed by ministries or individual academic institutions.

1. Minimum supervision requirements should be specified in each program.
2. PhD students must have masters training in research methods prior to starting, or at least have equivalent training built in to the early PhD period.
3. Supervision must be provided by a qualified psychologist or small team of qualified experts over a period of at least 2 years.
4. Training should be provided in advanced research methods and statistics (including advanced quantitative and qualitative methods). The training should go above and beyond the methods used by the student in the course of his/her own research, and may be specified to include specific domains of multivariate statistics, such as structural equation modeling.
5. Training should be provided in ethics, especially research ethics including the procedures for submitting projects to ethics committees for approval.
6. The postgraduate trainee should have experience and understanding of the processes involved in preparing scientific papers and posters, addressing meetings, presenting data, and making grant applications to funding bodies. They should have experience relating to peer-review and publishing.

7. The content of the dissertation should be substantial, developing and advancing the research area concerned, and worth publishing in international peer-reviewed journals and/or books. The scientific quality of the thesis should be the primary acceptance criterion, which may be reflected either by the contemporaneous publication of parts of the thesis as papers in international peer-reviewed journals (or other substantial outputs), or the likely publishability of materials, as judged by an external examiner or defense committee.
8. The PhD dissertation should be open to external check. Therefore, the standards for external examination and quality check for the process should be specified in each program and an expert from another institution (an “external examiner”) should be involved (as an examiner or member of the defense committee) to provide an independent assessment of whether the candidate has reached an acceptable standard of knowledge, achievement, and skill in their main area of research.
9. PhD students should have experience in teaching undergraduate students, and assessing and evaluating course outcomes, in preparation for a future potential role in university teaching and research supervision.
10. A summary or abstract of the dissertation should be published in English in addition to the candidate’s national language, and in other selected languages as appropriate.

Note that collaborative doctoral programs and/or joint degrees are strongly encouraged to maximally benefit from the strengths of each country/program across Europe.

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