

EPSNET/EPISTEME DOCTORAL STUDIES PROJECT

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Introduction:

Epsnet decided last year that the area of doctoral studies in political science was suitable for a comparative review of present experience, especially in the light of developments as part of the Bologna process. The idea was contained within the list of projects submitted under the EPISTEME 3 application to Brussels and received a small amount of funding. The first meeting of the group was held in Helsinki (May 21-23, 2004), at which a number of country experiences were reported and some common ideas discussed. This report seeks to provide a brief summary of that meeting and to outline future work.

The main lines of information which the project has sought to cover are outlined below at Appendix 1. At present the project covers the following countries – Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. The author chairs the group, which at present contains the following contributors: Mogens Pedersen (Southern Denmark University); Erkki Berndtson, (University of Helsinki,); Yves Schemel (IEP, Grenoble), Alfio Mastropaolo (University of Turin); Jacques Thomassen (Twente University) and Paul Furlong (University of Cardiff). The group seeks to extend its coverage to include reports on Germany; at least one central European country and possibly Spain.

The Education Directorate of the Commission has sponsored some other projects on doctoral studies, of which the most important is that undertaken under the umbrella of the European Universities Association. This project brings together a number of institutions from within the Association across Europe (some details are available at the EUA website: XXX). The Episteme project is linked into this larger project and will report to the EUA conference on doctoral studies in February 2005.

Epsnet took part in an earlier comparative project covering doctoral studies – the TRENDS project – which collected a considerable amount of information on current practice of institutions in terms of their doctoral programmes in a number of disciplines. Some of the information collected will be incorporated into later reports from this project, which seeks to extend and cover in greater depth some of the issues raised in the TRENDS study.

There has been rapid implementation of the agreed Bologna process in many countries for qualifications up to the M A level. Many countries now offer a 3 year programme leading to a qualification as a B A, and then students can gain an M A after two further years study. But doubts remain about how far students will leave higher education after three years study, especially when what is offered after two further years is seen as the equivalent of presently recognised qualifications – as may

be the case in countries like France and Finland. Doubts must also remain about how comparable a three year BA acquired in such countries will be with three year programmes offered in countries such as England and Ireland, where the BA is the traditional qualification students acquire before leaving higher education. In these latter countries, MA degrees may be solely research based – students producing a written thesis after two years – or may be either a way by which students acquire a professional qualification allowing them to enter a profession other than academe (e.g. planning; social work; accountancy) or offers research training and/or specialisation in particular area of a discipline. For example, in the UK, in the case of political science, one might follow a MRes degree programme designed to provide the level of training expected by a student entering on the thesis stage of a doctoral programme, or something like an MA in Latin American Politics, or Political Theory. Most such MA programmes are of twelve months duration, meaning, for example, UK students could and often do reach the MA level within 4 years.

The issue of 3 +5 for political science relates to the question of whether or not students coming to doctoral studies after a 5 years with an MA will have both the expected generic transferable research skills needed to undertake a doctoral thesis, together with the depth of knowledge across a range of sub-areas in the discipline which entrants to the profession are likely to need if they are to be competent both as researchers and teachers. As we shall see, this issue is particularly relevant in the Bologna context of students leaving higher education after 8 years – in other words essentially completing doctoral studies within three years. Certainly if students are expected to undertake further course work and examination whilst undertaking their doctorates, their ability to complete a doctoral thesis within three years, though as we shall see not impossible, may be placed in doubt.

As we shall see, the experience of different countries largely suggests that similar problems are being faced, but that different countries and institutions are at different points in dealing with them and may find different solutions. We proceed to review example of doctoral programmes in a number of countries.

Denmark

Denmark was obliged to examine and tackle some of the issues involved at a relatively early stage – ahead of the Bologna agreement - and has moved towards the 3-5-8 system relatively easily. In doing so, and despite some initial scepticism, experience suggests that Danish students have been able to complete doctorates involving a substantial original contribution with a three-year period, and with students required to follow a considerable amount of courses as part of their training. Yet doctoral programmes, in the modern sense of the title, are relatively recent, dating only from around 1990. Before this most scholars followed a career route for the degree as *candidate*, entering the profession as an assistant professor progressing via associate professor to full professor. Part of this route involved the production and defence of a doctoral thesis, a necessary condition for arriving at a full professorship, though this condition was less rigorously applied in the social sciences, including political science. Though the new US style PhD was introduced in 1993, the old style doctorate was not tampered with, at least formally. The new doctorate programme was designed to introduce a formalized training programme, mandatory for all recruits to an academic career. Success in obtaining the PhD meant that a young scholar was

deemed qualified to enter a first position at the university- generally as an un-tenured assistant professor.

The number of students involved in these political science programmes is quite small, currently around the 50 mark, all funded relatively generously from state grants for three years, a factor which helps account for the relatively high completion rates within the three year period. But even these relatively small numbers are unlikely to be accommodated within higher education sector; competition for the scarce positions as assistant professor will be tough in the coming years, if only because up to now most doctoral graduates have found employment in the sector. Programmes are organised within a framework laid down by government decree, so that variations across universities are small. Students have to undergo training, have to produce and defend a thesis, and normally contribute to the department's workload. However, problems of coordination cannot be avoided, if only because there is a problem relating to size, whereby even the larger departments are not able to provide enough variety of training and lack sufficient numbers of qualified supervisors to cover all fields of specialisation. One solution to this problem has been institutional specialisation, whereby a particular institution offers doctorates in one particular area. Another solution, not incompatible with the first, is the creation of a country-wide network, a national research school (established in 2002 and located in Copenhagen University), by means of which a critical mass of doctoral students can be established. This research school has been funded through annual membership fees from participating departments and by an initial three year grant from the Central Danish Research Training Board. The main purpose of the school is to stimulate and coordinate courses.

Commenting on the PhD programme in 1996, an international review team noted the strength of Danish programmes in terms of internationalisation and the integration of many students into larger research programmes. But the team was also critical of excessive workload of students in terms of the teaching and course work requirements placed upon them; the narrow focus of many of the courses; the age of the students and the lack of a clear role for doctoral students in the system overall – all criticisms which are still valid, even if the creation of a national research school has helped address problems of size and diversity.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands has had some similar experience, though persisting high expectations about the originality of the doctoral thesis, particularly amongst supervisors has meant that students have taken longer to complete their dissertation. Part of this feature may reflect the fact that students are largely recruited through tenured full professors who have the exclusive right to nominate candidates for the defence of a thesis. This *promoter* as s/he is known is often the supervisor of the thesis, may well have secured the funding which the student gets, normally as part of a wider project, and is closely involved in the selection of the doctoral committee which approves the thesis and oversees the 'festive ceremony' of the defence of the dissertation.

Currently doctoral programmes are offered in political science by four Dutch universities, with a further nine offering doctorates in public administration. Currently, as with Denmark, there are around 50 full time students working on

doctoral theses in the two areas. Again, following Ministry of Higher Education pressure, different disciplines organised themselves into research schools in the late eighties/early nineties, with both political science and public administration establishing separate research schools. That in political sciences collapsed in the late nineties and merged with the research school of public administration which now covers both disciplines (the Netherlands Institute of Government – NIG). Doctoral students taking their degree at a research school institution are required to take the NIG curriculum designed to train PhD students to become well-qualified researchers with a broad knowledge of the various research tradition in public administration and political science. The curriculum covers the development and use of theory and the conduct of empirical or normative research, together with more applied and specialist components in the form of a combination of courses and tutorials.

Finland

By contrast, the Finnish rapporteurs were generally of the view that Finnish students would take a minimum of four years to complete their doctorates, thus stretching the Bologna timetable by an extra year. Postgraduate education in Finland is currently organised as a two stage system, the first being a *licentiate* consisting of the course work necessary for a doctorate and a thesis which is not required to be published. In some official publications this level is seen as the equivalent of the U.S. PhD degree. The second stage is a doctorate, which requires a published dissertation, somewhat similar to the German *Habilitazione*. Writing such a dissertation has very much been an individual effort, although the situation has changed in recent years. Some such dissertations are re-writings of licentiate dissertations, and others have consisted of published articles.

The most recent changes date from 1995, when the Ministry of Education launched a system of graduate schools, inviting proposals from departments to apply for funds to establish graduate schools with a number of doctoral students, such students being selected and financed for a four year period on the basis of an open competition. The change has meant the effective dropping of the licentiate and a move towards study for a doctorate. The small numbers involved means that doctoral students are integrated into teaching and research positions from the outset, either in an assistantship, effectively a temporary position for a five year period, with the possibility of renewal. This system has fallen into difficulty with an increasing number of doctorates being forced to leave once they have successfully completed their thesis in order to make room for new students. The graduate school was one method seen as possibly overcoming this crisis and assistantships are gradually being replaced by graduate school positions. A third alternative is for a doctoral student to be employed in a research position as part of a funded project, and an increasing number of students are being employed in this way.

One feature of the Finnish system is the number of doctoral students who have a position outside academe. The problem here is that large numbers of students start doctoral studies, but fail to complete – and in a higher education system where the funding is geared to outputs, such students are costly to supervise. Against this, some departments take the view that it is important to have contacts with the outside world

and that having doctoral students who work in the public sector or in the media for example is beneficial, regardless of the costs involved.

Doctoral studies in political science are represented in seven Finnish departments, and whilst in theory there are no restrictions on student choice of subject, the different departments tend to have different specialisations – the exception being Helsinki which is both the most open and the largest political science department. Following the 1995 doctoral school initiative, Tampere University led a successful bid to establish a graduate school in political science covering these seven institutions. The numbers in the school have always been low – 18 financed studentships for each of the first two periods up to 2002, then reduced to 10 for period up to 2006 - the cut being made to produce a switch in funding away from social to natural sciences. The graduate school system has thus proved very competitive between disciplines and thus not very stable. However, the doctoral school has had the advantage of being able to provide training programmes and courses, seminars and support for travel to conferences. The number of full time doctoral students in political science overall in 2002 was around 60 – but Helsinki alone had a further 130 students registered on a part time basis!

The doctoral thesis is normally around 2- 300 pages long and is assessed along lines not dissimilar to those found elsewhere. An initial stage involved a pre-examination by two external assessors, with a final examination and grading by one or more academic opponents a part of the public defence of the dissertation. In practice all dissertations are accepted, because unqualified work is stopped at the pre-examination stage. Students with serious academic aspirations seldom finish their doctorates in less than four years. The status of a Finnish doctorate remains high within the country, but there remain difficulties in having real postgraduate programmes within departments, especially in the light of the small staff numbers and large undergraduate numbers. Even the VAKAVA doctoral school has not really offered any systematic teaching for doctoral studies in the opinion of the Finnish rapporteurs.

The Finnish system is resistant to change, though Bologna provides an impetus towards it. The rapporteurs suggest that the major change will in effect little – most of the resources being used for the M A degree with everything else remaining much the same. The doctoral system, including the graduate schools, will largely remain the same, since there are no plans to change them. One result is that the doctorate will still take four years, will still have to be published, and Finland will have a 3-5-9 system!

Italy

In Italy doctoral programmes have been running for eighteen years, prior to which the system was closer to that found in Germany. When it was introduced, the new system was designed to provide regular training for young scholars, who were, and still are, supposed to undergo the training over the three year period and at the end submit and defend their dissertation, which should be an original contribution. The programme should last three years, but students can take an extra year under certain conditions. To enter the doctoral studies programme, applicants must fill a post by open competition. Until four years ago, this competition was run by the Ministry of Education and Research, with successful candidates obtaining a scholarship aid by the

Ministry for three years. The enabling legislation encouraged doctoral consortia amongst universities, and in the case of political science the sole national doctoral programme was based in Florence for a consortium of six to eight universities, and operated until a few years ago. Under this system dissertations were defended in front of a jury appointed by the Ministry – thus helping to establish something close to a national standard for the profession and its new recruits.

Four years ago the Ministry sought to encourage research and the number of researchers. So the number of doctoral studentships was doubled, but with no extra finance for studentships. At the same time, partly because of this financial situation, and partly because students continued to want to attend their local university, and also because state finance for consortia was withdrawn, the consortia failed. Universities preferred to offer their own doctoral programmes, with the result that there are now five doctoral programmes in political science. Students are still accepted on the basis of open competition, but now each university appoints its own admissions panel and its own dissertation jury. As a result the system has become more local or provincial, with the result that national standards may be endangered, with dissertations being contested and refused very occasionally. But, in the market for jobs, the academic world is less attractive, a career has become more difficult to start, and is worse paid and less prestigious than possibilities elsewhere in the labour market. One interesting development in the context of a European doctoral programme is the Italo-French agreement to encourage double PhD programmes, whereby universities in the two countries can agree to accept a student who carries out research in both countries under joint supervision and with a bi national dissertation jury.

France

The French picture also reveals the relatively short history of doctoral programmes in political science, which were only established in 1974. Equally, the CNRS (French research establishment) had no sub-field in political science until 1982. Because entry into the professions for which political science graduates is not easy, doctorates in political science are mainly seen as channels to a teaching and/or research position in a university, the CNRS or with the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques. One result is that competition for academic jobs is very harsh, and as a consequence doctoral theses are excessively ambitious, with the expectation of publishing “an original contribution to knowledge” in order to enter an academic career. Theses are often overly long (up to 1200 pages without appendices) and frequently take more than three years to complete. For example between 1991-and 2000 the average completion time for completing a political science doctorate was over 5 years. Since state funding is normally only available for three years, students often face hardship over the last years, unless they are able to obtain a temporary teaching position or a post doctoral fellowship abroad. Completed theses are subject initially to evaluation by two externals. Subject to a positive report the thesis is then publicly defended before a committee (frequently with foreign members involved). The defence can last for up to six hours, with a view amongst the French profession that the longer the defence the better the thesis!

Currently 60 universities plus the Institut d’Etudes Politique (IEP) de Paris (FNSP), are able to offer doctorates – in practice 46 do so, though the majority are trained in 15 institutions. To enter into a doctoral programme students will generally have

reached the master's level. In the first year (often the fifth year of study) students follow compulsory courses for up to 18 hours a week, but after that attendance is optional. Doctoral candidates are expected to take part in the collective scientific activities of the research centre to which they are attached, but the extent to which this occurs is variable – some are excellent, others less good. And in some cases students spend too much time on this collective activity (some of which may involve very menial tasks) to the detriment of their own doctoral work.

Even so, there is a large element of over production in terms of the academic labour market - the French correspondent estimates that fewer than 10 institutions offer their doctoral graduates solid opportunities to enter an academic career in France. Few institutions are able to cover the broad spectrum of political science: students thus really seek places where they can obtain a degree of originality in the doctoral programme they seek to follow, with some sub-areas of the discipline being more attractive than others. Specialisation is necessary, especially in terms of the thesis, because of the need for doctoral graduates to seek jobs under the CNRS or FNSP umbrellas.

As a result of the tight labour market for academic posts, and the selection procedures involved in making appointments through what is effectively a number of national competitions, an increasing proportion of doctoral graduates are entering the private sector (est 25% per annum), with an unknown proportion either in menial jobs or unemployed. Though the numbers are low (about 100 political science theses are presented each year), they are still too high for the numbers of jobs available per annum. Furthermore, students who have undertaken their doctorate at certain institutions (FNSP, IEP Grenoble and Paris 1) appear to be more likely to obtain an academic job in the national competition than do others, unless they are outstanding. Students pursuing a doctorate elsewhere must thus find a position at the institution from which they obtained their doctorate – a form of localism not much admired in France.

Reform of doctoral programmes to bring them into line with the Bologna timetable is currently under discussion. The problem will be how to shorten the already long doctorate to fit the timetable. The expectation is that in effect little will change and that in practice theses will be completed after one or two further supplementary years after the eight year cycle.

The United Kingdom

In some respects the UK stands outside what we have seen already, whilst in others it is close to both the Danish and Dutch experience.¹ The UK has the largest number of political scientists in the cases studies here (around 2000) and with the largest number of higher education institutions teaching politics, (over 100, all able to offer doctoral programmes) even though the number of domestic doctoral students is not particularly high. The UK is also a major player in the global market for students, especially at the

¹ The British author still has to complete the written version of his paper. What is presented here is based on the author's oral contribution to the group meeting, and on this author's knowledge of the British case.

postgraduate level: many doctoral students come to the UK to pursue their studies. For example, over half the LSE's student population comes from overseas and non-EU countries, with a significant proportion doing postgraduate work at both masters and doctoral levels. The UK also has fewer problems fitting the Bologna timetable than may be the case in some other countries, since most students complete a three year BA initial qualification, and could even finish a doctorate within a further three years, though normally they would take four years to complete.

As with Denmark and Holland, the idea of the doctorate as a training degree first emerged in the late eighties/early nineties,² with the Economic and Social Research Council taking the lead, concerned as it was with what it saw as the poor submission rate of students it had financed for three years to undertake thesis work. It was also increasingly concerned about the lack of transferable skills, especially numerical ones, amongst social science graduates generally. The training which doctoral students are expected to undertake is now quite specific. It is difficult to underestimate the influence of the ESRC on doctoral studies in the social sciences in the UK. First, institutions have to apply to ESRC for recognition of their programmes – not all receive such recognition. But without it, institutions will not receive many applications to undertake doctoral work. Second, recognition means the successful applicant can apply for an ESRC studentship or that the institution may be awarded such studentships to allocate to applicants – and the ESRC is virtually the only source of state finance for doctoral students. Even recognition does ensure students receive finance – fewer than 50 such awards are given to political science each year, most going to places such as Oxford, LSE, Essex and Strathclyde. Thus most institutions might in a good year receive a single studentship. One result is that most institutions either offer a small number of studentships or else waive tuition fees or provide teaching assistantships as a way of helping doctoral students finance their studies. Most doctoral students would be expected to contribute in some way to the teaching activity of a department, though not for more than six hours a week. Third, the ESRC has been quite prescriptive in terms of what is expected in the training programme, effectively expecting the first year of doctoral studies to provide essentially a Masters' level training in generic research skills. Last, but not least, completion rates play a part in the recognition exercise – failure to have a given percentage (currently 80%) of full time doctoral students finish within a four year period can mean the loss of recognition.

In terms of student numbers, one result of the limited finance available is that in many institutions perhaps the majority of doctoral students follow their studies as part time students, working on their own with a supervisor. This presents a problem when it comes to training, since such students are often undertaking a thesis for the love of and interest in the task, but are reluctant to invest time in activities which they see as marginal or irrelevant to their objectives. In practice, most institutions probably do not enforce training regulations for such students, except where further training will help the student undertake the thesis (e.g. attendance at Essex Summer School).

² Given the cross national collaboration between government agencies in research and quality assurance, this timing is not entirely coincidental. In the EU and Bologna contexts, that such collaboration is on the increase ought to be of concern to academics generally and to political scientists specifically.

As with most other countries, doctoral supervision remains largely a form of craftsman – apprentice relationship, though one in which formally agreed learning agreements setting out the rights, duties and expectations of both sides play an important part. These will include a means of resolving supervisor-student difficulties, including a change of supervisor if this is for the benefit of the student. A second supervisor may also be appointed in many cases. Theses are expected to be around 80 – 100000 words or about 200 to 250 pages – a reduction on those generally produced in earlier times when theses of 6 or 700 pages were not uncommon. The process of examination involves an external examiner, who has in practice the final decision on whether or not the thesis is acceptable, and an internal examiner, someone other than the supervisor. There is an oral examination, generally of around two hours in length but on occasion longer, which, depending on the institution, may be a public affair. Where it is, however, it is unusual for others to attend, unlike the practice in other parts of Europe. The result of these deliberations are presented in a written report to the institution and can offer either an acceptance of the thesis (pass), or else require some revisions (major or minor) and else a fail. In some cases, a failed PhD student may be offered a Master’s degree by thesis (Mphil) or some similar title) if the work is thought to merit such an award. Dissertations subject to revision have to be re-submitted within a limited time period – generally no more than a year. Most full time doctoral students submit their theses within the four year period allowed, though extensions may be given in exceptional circumstances – especially if these will not result in the institution losing recognition for its programmes by the ESRC.

Though there is some element of over production in terms of the ratio of doctoral students to the number of academic posts available, the British rapporteur did not judge this to be serious. Expansion of undergraduate student numbers means that there have been jobs available in recent years, and the age structure of the profession means that there will continue to be so until around 2010 by which date the generation largely recruited in the late 1960s and early 1970s should have retired.

Given that the Bologna timescale largely fits the UK higher education timescale, the British has largely been complacent or even unaware of its importance. Only recently have they begun to see that it might have some implications for their own timescale. These implications are most important at the postgraduate level, where most Master’s programmes are of only one year’s duration, many of them are oriented towards professional qualifications for entry into a particular kind of employment, or else are essentially specialist qualifications in a sub-area of the discipline. Virtually every institution will have a number of such Masters’ programmes in their political science portfolio, some of them as many as fifteen or twenty. Included in them has to be what is effectively the first year of the four year doctoral programme or MRes (Masters in Research) as it is known. Where full time students enter into doctoral programmes immediately after the B.A. (unless it is a four year programme with a year out abroad or on a placement), Bologna’s 3-5-8 presents no problem, nor should it for those who enter after a one year M.A., especially if this contains the kind of generic skills training which the MRes year is expected to provide. But without some change in line with Bologna, there is some possibility that the British will be out of step with other countries in Europe – in the area as in so many others. Currently most institutions are giving Bologna some consideration, but in the absence of much guidance from the

relevant ministry or from Universities UK (the universities' national organisation) or agencies like the ESRC, not much is currently happening.

Some Emerging Issues:

One of the key issues which emerged during the group discussions was the nature of the doctoral labour market. For whom are PhDs being produced? In the past most doctoral students were expected to join the academic labour force, finding jobs in universities, especially after completing a thesis akin to the German habitazion. But the general and largely universal expansion in the number of doctoral students means that the number of successful doctoral students in political science generally exceeds the number of posts likely to become vacant in the academic arena, even allowing for the foreseen retirement of those academics who entered the profession during the expansion years of the nineteen sixties and seventies. At the same time, both national governments and the European Commission have given research and the production of doctoral students generally a high priority as part of the recognised labour force needs to keep the economy (national or European) competitive. Yet in many cases the nature of the doctoral thesis being written and training provided may not produce a successful doctoral student with the kind of transferable research skills the labour market needs. In some cases the doctorate's skills may be irrelevant in other cases they may lead to the doctorate being over skilled for the kind of work anticipating. Just a political science needs to think about the skills which are developed at the undergraduate and MA levels, so there is a need to think about the generic skills which a good researcher might need in the media, government, the voluntary sector and industry and commerce.

This requirement also reflects a second issue for concern – namely what is expected of the doctoral student in terms of output and training. Is the doctoral thesis still expected to be a major original contribution to knowledge? If not, how much originality is expected? Or has it become largely a training degree, not just to enter the academic profession, but also to give doctoral students generic transferable skills they can apply in different sectors of the labour market as researchers, with the thesis demonstrating ability in some if not all of those skills? Again the experience of the group varied, with the British perhaps having moved furthest towards the latter model and with the Dutch perhaps retaining the expectation, amongst supervisors at least, that the thesis should be a major original contribution to knowledge. And in terms of training, what is expected of the student? Clearly oral and written skills are demanded, in that the student has to produce and defend a thesis. Ability in languages is important in terms of cross-national comparative research, since the student is likely to want to read original documents and may need to conduct interviews or undertake survey work in a foreign country. A level of numeracy is essential if the student is to undertake survey work or to utilise quantitative data. Broad training in a range of basic research skills (some of which may be acquired at lower levels), whilst attendance at summer schools in research methods(e.g. Essex, Lille or Michigan) or the growing number of doctoral summer schools in specialist parts of the discipline might also be desirable. Putting together a programme of training, some provided in house some provided by other means, in the form of a learning agreement or contract with the doctoral student at the outset of the doctoral programme may well be necessary and desirable. Such a contract might preferably also contain a statement of

the rights and duties of both supervisor and student, so that both are safeguarded against possible abuse.

Another issue that came up in the group for discussion was the question of a European doctorate in political science and how one might move towards such a thing. Some issues are easy to resolve, such as which institution might give such an award – the student's home institution would be the degree awarding body. Others are more complicated. For example, one would have to overcome national resistance towards such a development, especially if there were any sense that standards were being compromised. One way forward might be either through cross national partnerships between two or more institutions, and two or more countries. The European Commission's training and mobility programme provides an example of how such a consortium might work. Then there is the example of Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Bordeaux which has joint degree programmes with Turin in Italy as well as Stuttgart in Germany up to an including the doctoral level, whilst Grenoble has a number of similar arrangements. There are also examples of a growing number of cross national consortia. Here at least three issues need further consideration – are such consortia only to include the 'good and the great' (eg Oxford, LSE, Leiden, FNSP, Mannheim) or are a 'thousand seedlings to be allowed to flourish.' If the former, is there not the possibility that some excellent places will be excluded (for whatever reasons) and would not such a grouping either lead to some in-breeding or stasis, resulting in decline over time? If the latter, how are standards to be safeguarded, notwithstanding the possibility of having theses examined and defended before multi-national juries drawn from a panel of 'qualified doctoral examiners' – and who would determine who these latter actually are? Perhaps there is a role here for national associations in proposing a number of possible examiners to such a panel, but there might still be difficulties.

The third issue concerns the nature of the doctorate and the training it is expected to provide. Whilst the UK has moved some way in this direction, not without considerable battles amongst the profession, there is currently little agreement amongst the profession even in specific countries as to what is the function of a doctorate, and what would be the curriculum of a doctoral programme would be – as the examples of the Netherlands and Italy reveal.

There remains a final issue – what should be the role of national associations and bodies like EpsNet or the ECPR in discussions on Bologna and doctoral studies in political science. Maybe the national associations, as they did with the 3 –5 part of the Bologna timescale, should offer some guidelines on basic requirements and good practice, in consultation with other bodies and member institutions. Maybe EpsNet and ECPR should work together to produce guideline documents, especially on such matters as training requirements; supervision arrangements and practice, cross national doctoral collaboration and on accreditation, credit accumulation and transfer requirements. ECPR were invited to take part in this exercise, but declined to do so.

The group hope to continue it s work after the final versions of papers (ideally with the extra contributions from those countries mentioned earlier) and discussion of the common issues at the end of September, especially in terms of offering guidelines on good practice in collaborative cross-national doctoral work. All offers of assistance and suggestions for further development are welcome.

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Appendix 1: EpsNet/EPISTEME Doctoral Studies Project Outline.

DOCTORAL STUDIES PROJECT FOR EPISTEME/EPSNET

FRAMEWORK FOR REPORT

MIKE GOLDSMITH

Listed below is the range of topics which ideally one would like to see covered in the various country reports and on the specific institution. I recognise that we may not be able to cover all the topics listed completely. However, though I would hope we can achieve some measure of comparability, what matters most is the accuracy of the country and institution details, and each author's interpretation of the problems doctoral studies currently face and would face as the implementation of the agreed Bologna 3-5-8 proposals continues.

As the statement following the Berlin meeting in September meeting of the relevant parties linked to Bologna indicates, doctoral studies now features higher up the agenda than before, and our work would be particularly timely in the light of such developments. Not only are there the issues of the 3-5-8 timetable to be addressed, but also questions of quality assurance, assessment and of a European doctorate (in political science in our case) to be considered.

Country Reports:

1. Brief history of development of doctoral studies. How is the doctorate seen. Is it an original contribution to knowledge, a training degree, or essential for entry to academic career. Does this expectation vary between institutions within the same country?
2. Do all institutions offer doctorates? How is the right to award doctorates decided? Number of institutions offering doctorates. Estimated numbers of current doctoral students and trends over time (last 10 years). Is it possible to give proportions of full and part time students?
3. Are doctoral studies organised on a national basis, or by institutions themselves or is there some kind of joint arrangement? If there is a national scheme please give details.
4. Do institutions specialise in specific research areas for doctoral studies or do they cover the broad spectrum of political science?
5. What is the expected length of time that a doctoral student might take to complete? What proportion of doctoral students complete within this time and how are rules enforced?
6. How are doctoral students financed – national scheme; local institutional arrangement, private funding....

7. What are the prior requirements for entry into doctoral studies generally? Do institutions provide for taught coursework as part of their doctoral programmes? Is it generally a requirement for students to follow such courses? Is there provision for students to attend doctoral summer schools or other short course provision?
8. Brief description of arrangements for supervision, monitoring of progress and assessment of thesis. In regard to latter what sort of examination is held – oral or written. How large is the board for an oral examination? What is its membership? Are foreign members permitted?
9. What are the main implications and issues of the proposed 3 year doctorate, implicit in the 3 -5 -8 time scale suggested?
10. What problems do you think would be posed by a move towards European doctorates?
11. Do doctoral programmes encourage cross national research and training collaboration? How extensively does such collaboration occur?

Institutional Doctoral Programme in Political Science:

What is wanted here is a reasonably detailed description of your own institution's doctoral programme in political science. When was it established, how has it developed, current numbers of students. Much can probably be taken out of the information provided in your institutional prospectus and the scheme regulations, copies of which could be attached as an appendix. Additional information would be welcome on the following issues:

1. How are doctoral subjects chosen? Do students choose the subject themselves or do they work on specific projects related to the supervisor's interests?
2. How are supervisors allocated?
3. Discussion of the supervisor/student relationship – e.g. frequency of meetings; resolution of difficulties; role of supervisor; expectations of student performance (e.g. is there a written agreement on supervisor/student expectations of each other).
4. What is the expected length of thesis (words), if any?
5. How far students complete on time? Main reasons for drop out or failure to complete.
6. How are theses examined – a brief description/discussion of the process involved.
7. How far are doctoral candidates encouraged to work outside their own country? What arrangements are in place for joint supervision in such cases etc.
8. What problems does the Bologna process pose for your institution's political science doctoral programme.

I am sure each author can suggest other topics we should cover, or can take up specific national or institutional issues, but if most can say something about the issues listed here, we would have a basis for taking forward discussions when we meet.

Mike Goldsmith.