

Tracking of graduate degree holders in Europe

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1. Why tracking?

- A decade of reforms in Europe, more students at master and doctoral level, greater diversity
- Greater emphasis on learning outcomes, skills and competences, and employability – also outside of academia for doctoral holders
- Pressure to demonstrate impact and results
- EUA carried out 3 projects on the the topic
 - ✓ ‘Tracking Learners and Graduates Progression Paths’ –Track-It
 - ✓ Quality Assurance in Doctoral Education – ARDE
 - ✓ Doc-CAREERS – 2 projects (2008 and 2013)

2. - Tracking: for what purposes?

- The development of indicators helps to improve institutional and system level performance
- The data collected:
 - ✓ Contributes to strategic policy development at institutional level
 - ✓ Can also be used for institutional research purposes
 - ✓ Feeds into QA/accreditation process

Can also be helpful for:

- Identifying 'blind spots', e.g. International student mobility, lifelong learners etc.; and students at risk
- Providing information on graduate/doctoral level employability or/and drop outs

3.- How widespread is graduate tracking?

- In 28 of 31 HE systems surveyed some HEIs reported tracking graduate careers; in 7 countries all HEIs track their graduates
- These are recent developments: approaches, methodologies and technical possibilities are still being developed
- Graduate tracking requires considerable resources to ensure good response rates, more structured relations with employers & better synergies with fledgling alumni services
- Monitoring careers of doctoral holders depends on the existence of structured doctoral programmes

4. *In summary*

Graduate tracking

- No tracking between the first and the second cycle
- Graduate tracking requires substantial resources to ensure good response rates
- Link to alumni relations – also new for European universities

Tracking of doctoral candidates

- Depends on the existence of structured doctoral programmes
- Under development
- Long experience only in the UK: tracking of doctorate holder careers

5. - Tracking of Doctoral Degree holders

- Growing in importance as greater numbers of doctoral holders find employment outside of academia
- Becoming an important means of monitoring career development and also possible (mis)match between training, career profiles and skills needs
- Responsibility lies with the growing number of Graduate/Doctoral Schools in Europe
- Important for universities and funding bodies – not only EUA but also the ESF has published a study >perspective funding organisations
- OECD has also just produced a thorough analysis of careers of doctoral holders > labour market and mobility statistics

6. Main project results: Career Development and Tracking

- Growth in career development services that also use surveys as a feedback mechanism, e.g. UK Postgraduate Research Experience Survey – but measures satisfaction vis-à-vis expectations
- Employer feedback also mentioned as good practice especially in the context of growing collaborative university /private sector (often national) initiatives
- 30% of respondents (112) reported using ‘careers of doctorate holders’ as an indicators in internal & external evaluations – risks lie in sample size
- Only 23% do systematic tracking & only 12 univs had been doing tracking for 4 + years after graduation

7. Outcomes from collaboratives schemes

- Growth in the numbers of collaborative PhD projects & programmes between academia and industry in recent years thro' the development of new support schemes
- Some 50% of doctoral degree holders work outside academia
- Consensus that doctoral holders from collaborative schemes are more employable in the business sector than those from traditional programmes because of
 - ✓ Their ability to be 'bilingual', bridging the academic and business sectors and cultures
 - ✓ The development of 'transferable skills'

8. Additional feedback from focus groups

- Systematic tracking is challenging, costly and time-consuming
- Many rely on social networks such as LinkedIn to keep in touch with alumni
- Tracking is often linked to the establishment of Alumni relations, relatively new for European universities
- Tracking as a performance indicator can be risky in all but the largest institutions given the size of the cohort
- EUA's 3 projects underlined the value of tracking as a feedback mechanism for institutions in strategic decision-making rather than a performance indicator

Thank you for your attention

www.eua.be/eua-projects

- TRACK-IT – Tracking Learners and Graduates Progression Paths
- DOC-CAREERS and DOC CAREERS II
- ARDE – Accountable Research Environments for Doctoral Education