Developing Jointly Awarded PhD Programmes
Early experiences

Dr Dorothy Watson, International Office, University of Edinburgh

JOIMAN International Seminar on Joint Degrees
Vilnius, October 2010
Edinburgh Global

The aims of the Internationalisation Strategy include:

- increasing student mobility and exchange
- Developing collaborative degree programmes
Edinburgh Joint PhD Programmes

University-wide
- Universitas 21 Joint PhD Programme
- Franco-Scottish Joint PhD Programme
- Edinburgh-Macquarie University Joint PhD Programme
Edinburgh Joint PhD Programmes

Subject level

- EuroSPIN – a EM2 Joint PhD Programme in Neuroinformatics (NCBS, KTH Stockholm, ALU Freiburg)
- Joint PhD/Dottorato programme in Experimental Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience (Naples and Trieste)
- Joint PhD (EXACT ITN) in Political Studies (University of Cologne & Charles University Prague)
Objectives of Joint PhD Programmes

- to strengthen postgraduate research training and capacity
- to build academic cooperation between partner universities
- to provide more than just a period of study abroad
- to become a more attractive place to study and provide unique opportunities for students to develop as researchers
Research Student Benefits

• international mobility
• encouraging research as a career
• additional research and transferable skills
• access to additional sources of student financial support
• exposure to two different research environments, cultures and sets of resources
• a head start in future career planning, professional development and employment prospects
Institutional Benefits

• enhanced recruitment of excellent graduate students
• international research collaboration
• increased capacity to leverage research funding
• the added value of international networking
Regional Benefits

- knowledge exchange and sharing of research, learning and resources
- recognition of partner University qualifications in other countries
- increased attractiveness of institutions by strengthening national, European and international networks
Terminology Double (co-tutelle) vs Joint

‘A jointly-awarded PhD is a qualification conferred upon a student on completion of a collaborative programme established by the partner institutions’.
Jointly Awarded PhD - definition

- Meets the academic requirements of both universities
- Lead university
- Joint supervision of students between nominated and qualified staff
- A single degree awarded for one PhD thesis
- Parchment(s) issued which indicate that there has been joint supervision
Templates – MOU and MOA’s

- overarching, generic, non-legally binding Memorandum of Understanding
- individual student-specific bilateral Memorandum of Agreement detailing arrangements for: registration, time spent in each institution, finance, social security & insurance, supervision, coursework, IP, examination, graduation.
Challenges

- Legislation
- Selecting partner institutions
- Intellectual property
- Funding
- Academic standards and quality assurance
- Recruitment, selection and admissions of students
- Examination
- Graduation
Legislation

- Some universities are not permitted to award joint degrees
- Some (including Edinburgh) cannot award two degrees for one piece of work (double degree)
Selecting Partners

- equal or similar research status (networks)
- like-minded ethos
- high level standards of quality assurance
Intellectual Property

- IP issues vary widely between institutions
- Must be agreed in advance and stated in the MoA.
Funding

- significant differences between partners
- Edinburgh has devolved funding structure - Colleges have financial autonomy
- must establish a clear understanding of the benefits of joint PhD programmes at grass roots level
- culture change required
- troublesome additional administrative work?
- tough economic climate
- risk of becoming elitist?
- revenue generation is not a primary objective!
Academic Partners and QA

- National and institutional rules differ from country to country
- Need mutual recognition of QA procedures
- Normal rules of the lead institution are applied to the processes of student monitoring and assessment
- Supervisors should hold meeting with the student at least once per year
- Local institutional rules apply with regard to research good practice, health & safety, ethics approval, computing etc.
Recruitment, Selection and Admission of Students

- Joint selection processes preferred
- eligibility criteria
- two application forms for admission
- student-specific MoA must be completed, approved and signed by the student and staff/supervisors
- Visa support
- matriculation procedures of both Universities
Examination

• Arrangements for the PhD examination should be agreed prior to admission

• Lead university hosts and takes responsibility for the arrangements
Graduation

- both logos on a single degree certificate
- separate certificate, one from each partner
- not many graduates yet
Conclusion

- benefits outweigh the challenges
- goal should be to overcome alignment issues
- small number of PhD students will follow this route
Future Developments

• LERU Workshop on Jointly Awarded PhD’s
  30 November 2010, Edinburgh

www.leru.org
Contact details

Dorothy Watson
International Office
University of Edinburgh
dorothy.watson@ed.ac.uk
www.ed.ac.uk/edinburgh-global