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Special supplement

Towards Healthy Doctoral Systems in Business Schools

Towards Healthy Doctoral Systems in Business Schools

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Doctoral students in business schools represent the next generation of academics and practitioners. However doctoral programmes are sometimes viewed as Cinderella activities, attracting less attention than other business school activities which have a greater ability to generate significant financial surpluses.

The six articles in this special supplement highlight encouraging examples of how to develop healthy doctoral ecosystems across cities, disciplines, and in supervisory teams to ensure well-being, and the cultivation of trusting relationships and inclusive organisational cultures. During the 2022 Doctoral Programmes Conference, the first held since the COVID-19 lockdowns, key insights were captured by a visual harvester and are discussed and elaborated upon in the following articles.

We look forward to ongoing discussions at EFMD's May 2023 Doctoral Programmes Conference at the Toulouse School of Management.

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Towards healthy doctoral ecosystems – key enabling factors discussed at the 2022 Doctoral Programmes Conference

By
Eva Cools

Towards healthy doctoral ecosystems – key enabling factors discussed at the 2022 Doctoral Programmes Conference

At the 2022 EFMD Doctoral Programmes Conference (DPC), the general theme was the development of healthy doctoral ecosystems and the importance of networks and networking for doctoral graduates and programmes. We focused on different possible permutations of such ecosystems and on boundary conditions that ensure doctoral programmes can run smoothly.

An analogy we like to use is that of a microchip. Just like an ecosystem, there are different key components in a microchip that are linked via conductors. The chip will only function efficiently when all the necessary parts are defined, connected and aligned. During the conference, we looked at the actual and potential elements that can comprise the doctoral ecosystem and to the connections needed for alignment across the system.

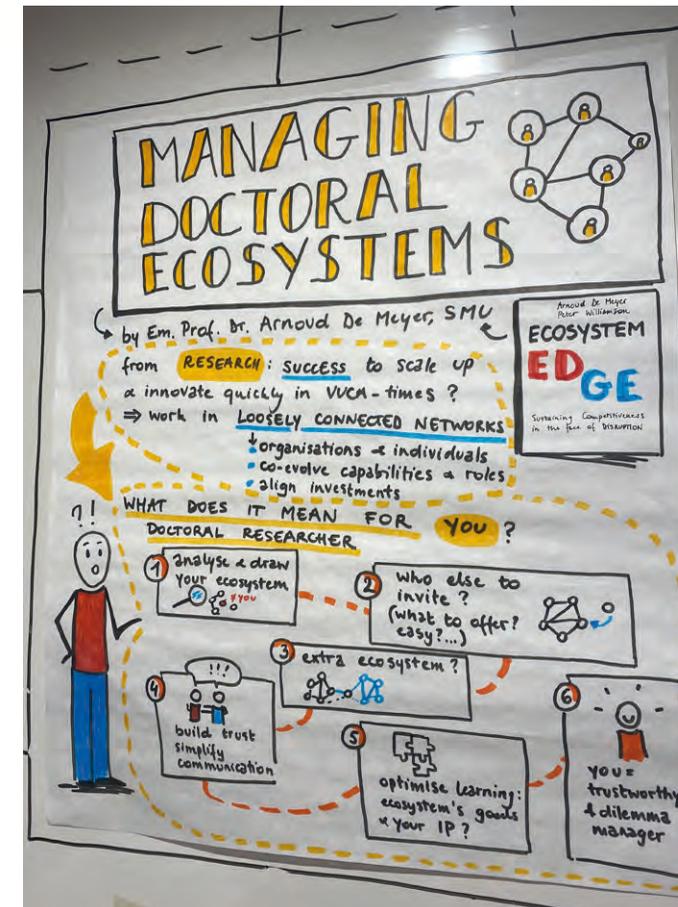
Using the microchip analogy, we visualised the main learnings and messages of the conference on a whiteboard. This way, we took advantage of the physical nature of the conference and co-created the 'doctoral microchip' together with all delegates.

Towards healthy doctoral ecosystems – key enabling factors discussed at the 2022 Doctoral Programmes Conference



Ecosystem thinking

According to the dictionary, an ecosystem (in biological terms) refers to 'a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment.' In more general terms, an ecosystem is 'a complex network or interconnected system.' Referring to Moore (1993), Arnoud De Meyer defines a business ecosystem as 'a network of organisations and individuals that co-evolve their capabilities and roles and align their investments to create additional value and/or improve efficiency' (Global Focus). According to De Meyer, business schools can borrow from the business ecosystem concept to enable faster joint learning, to be flexible in times of change and disruption, and to accelerate innovation. Extending this to doctoral programmes, we looked at how ecosystem thinking could disrupt and innovate the doctoral education landscape, and how both organisations and individuals can work towards a successful implementation.



“ An ecosystem (in biological terms) refers to 'a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment.' ”

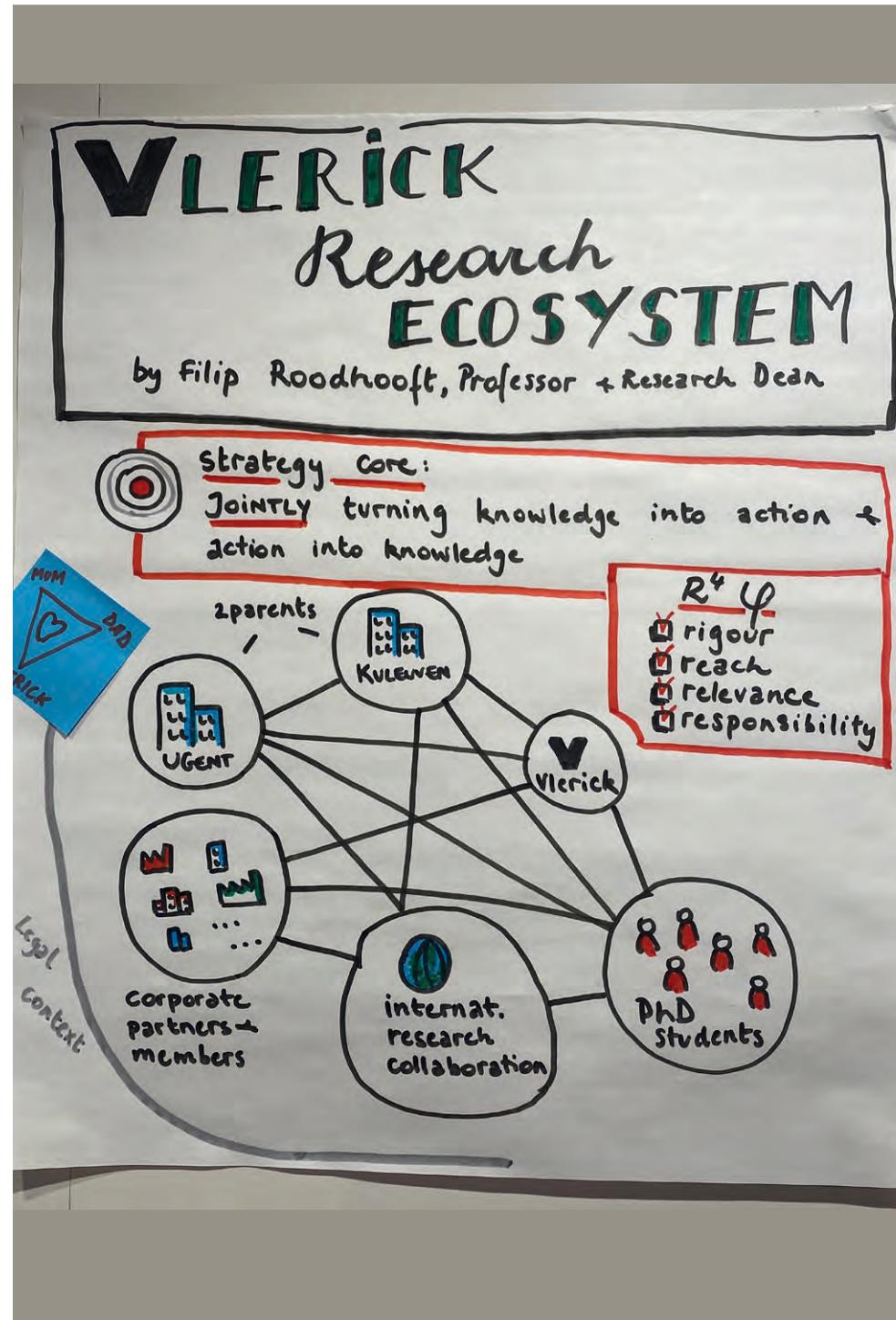
As a teaser to the conference and to enhance our understanding of ecosystems and their potential for doctoral education, Arnoud De Meyer set the scene in an introductory webinar. Before we explored the success factors for building and maintaining healthy doctoral ecosystems at the 2022 DPC conference, it was crucial to get a good view on the partners within, and the requirements of a (doctoral) ecosystem. Inspired by successful loosely coupled business ecosystems, he challenged doctoral students, supervisors, as well as people responsible for doctoral programmes, to consciously draw their doctoral ecosystems and think about missing pieces that could further optimise learning. A well-orchestrated ecosystem differs substantially from a hub-and-spoke model, with trust among its partners as key, so alongside its structure, sufficient attention needs to be given to ensuring appropriate leadership.

Towards healthy doctoral ecosystems – key enabling factors discussed at the 2022 Doctoral Programmes Conference

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National context, school's strategy, funding mechanisms, etc., all play a key role in the build-up of a doctoral ecosystem

Doctoral ecosystems – one size does not fit all

During the conference, we provided different examples of how a doctoral or knowledge production ecosystem can be shaped, aiming to show that there is no single best configuration. Depending on your institutional strategy and the surrounding regional and national context, your doctoral 'microchip' might look completely different. The numerous speakers and panellists demonstrated clearly that our conference theme 'Towards healthy doctoral ecosystems' had to be plural and that each word in the title was relevant. National context, school's strategy, funding mechanisms, etc., all play a key role in the build-up of a doctoral ecosystem. We saw very diverse examples, ranging from Vlerick Business School (an autonomous school with two parent universities serving as degree granting institutes for the doctoral programmes) to the John Molson School of Business (a loose collaboration of four institutions offering doctoral education, which Vassili Joannidès de Lautour describes in the second article in this supplement), Copenhagen Business School (industrial PhDs), Henley Business School (one of the oldest DBAs) to the outside-in perspective of imec (an industrial and academic ecosystem in nano and digital technology).



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To be future proof, doctoral programmes and research programmes by extension should include the challenges of our time

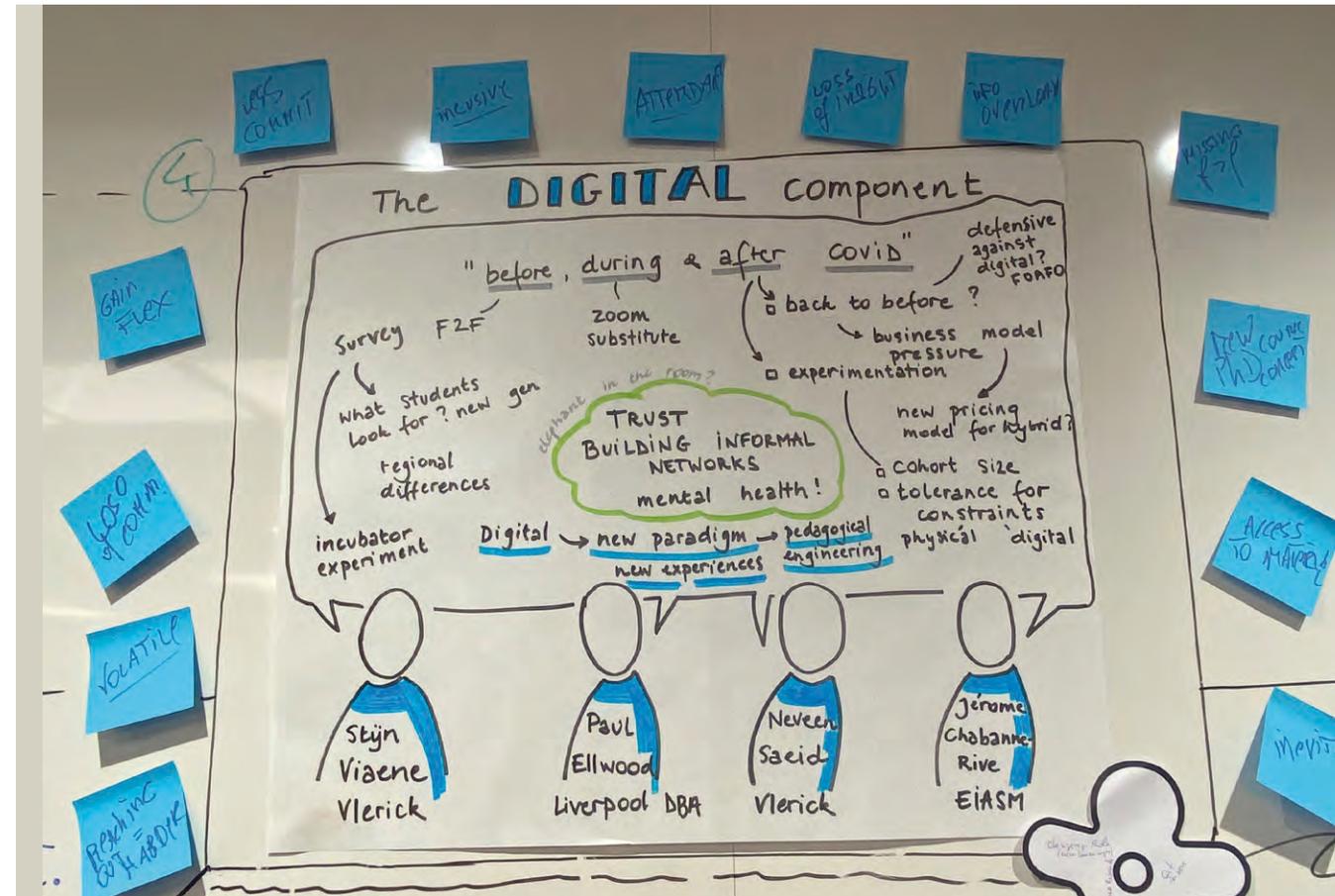
Boundary conditions – how to be fit for purpose?

Apart from the specific configuration of the ecosystem, it is key to focus on the boundary conditions that make doctoral ecosystems healthy. We like to define healthy in a broad sense, e.g. (financially) viable, future-proof, inclusive, value-adding, sustainable, meaningful, responsible, etc..

- What did we learn in this regard?
- Attention to well-being, mental health and inclusion are fundamental in the increasingly diverse (in terms of participants, programme delivery, etc.) world of doctoral education. To link to the microchip analogy, it is not enough to have the right components in place, they also have to align and collaborate to produce a healthy and inclusive doctoral ecosystem.
 - To be future proof, doctoral programmes and research programmes by extension should include the challenges of our time (like SDGs, Open Science, interdisciplinarity, broadened research/faculty assessment) to stay relevant and prepare responsible future scholars.
 - Finally, the question of whether the increased digitalisation of doctoral education is a curse or a blessing was certainly the most controversial one of the conference.



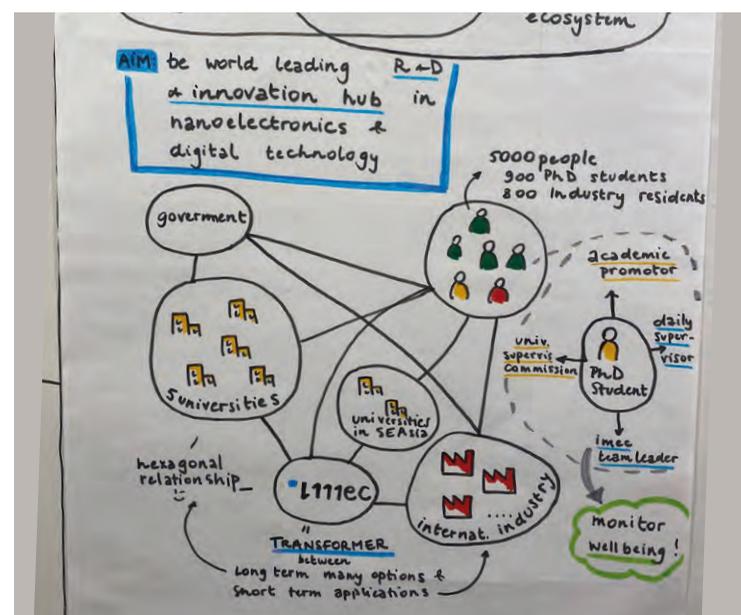
Towards healthy doctoral ecosystems – key enabling factors discussed at the 2022 Doctoral Programmes Conference



- Increased flexibility and the opportunity for all stakeholders to personalise and mould the programme to their needs
- Opportunity to co-create the programme with all stakeholders. Strategically, it is important to examine business models, pricing, and faculty assessment models (teaching allocation, supervision, learning innovation, etc.) behind choices made to ensure the picture holds. In terms of potential boundaries and risks of (too much) digitalisation, the following elements were highlighted:
 - Consider individual preferences
 - Take into account affordability for students, as not everyone has the necessary resources and technology to move online
 - Train faculty, students, and all relevant stakeholders to navigate the new digitised ecosystem.
 - Give attention to informal networking, community-building, engagement and keeping the connection
 - Give attention to mental health and wellbeing as pressure might increase with a more digital way of working
 - How to keep informal sharing, exchange and coaching in an increasingly digital world?
 - Without slack time it seems impossible to make digital shifts.

The impact of digital on doctoral education: a curse or a blessing?

The pandemic gave doctoral programmes, and education institutes in general, the opportunity to find out whether they are followers or forerunners in terms of digital education. Suddenly all activities (courses, seminars, community building, follow-up, etc.) had to take place online. Some schools were already better equipped to do this than others. The pandemic definitely led to experimentation and gave a push to learning innovation that would not have happened at the same speed without this external force.



What became clear during the conference is that there are believers and non-believers (or perhaps more accurately, people who are more sceptical) about the digital evolution in doctoral education. Some people see the benefits of working online, while for others the losses are greater than the gains.

In short, digital transformation has potential in doctoral education if you look at it from an infrastructure perspective and not purely from a technological perspective, as the latter is merely replacing one type of delivery with another without taking the broader picture into account. In terms of potential benefits, institutions might want to look at:

- Increased variation of approaches (online, hybrid and on-campus by design) and the opportunities for pedagogical engineering



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Academic partners in a city-wide doctoral ecosystem

By
Vassili Joannidès de Lautour

Academic partners in a city-wide doctoral ecosystem

The 2022 EFMD Doctoral Programmes Conference held at Vlerick Business School in Brussels focused on the broad theme of doctoral ecosystems. Stakeholders were identified, and their expectations were discussed. Among these stakeholders, one that is often overlooked and taken for granted, caught our attention: other local higher-education institutions. How can a doctoral programme leverage local academic partnerships and interact with peers in the local community? Although many institutions work informally in collaboration with other local partners, how such collaborations are organised remains a relative blind spot in doctoral education management. A particularly interesting and successful case of doctoral collaborations between co-located business schools in one major city for over almost 50 years is the quadripartite PhD programme involving Concordia University, HEC Montréal, McGill University, and UQAM.

Sharing and co-ordinating a joint offering

When the initial agreement binding the four schools in Montréal came into force, the purpose of this collaboration was to grant a joint PhD degree. This objective was attainable provided the four institutions could equitably benefit from public funding. The agreement was revamped when the Québec government ceased its funding, withdrawing public financial support for the programme. Confronted with lower resources, a four-stamp degree could no longer be granted, henceforth each institution would award its own PhD degree to its own students. Nevertheless, encouraged by the achievements of their joint programme, the four historical partners persevered and continued to collaborate.

In its current, revised form, the four schools offer a common course catalogue to the whole Montréal-based PhD student body. A doctoral student can choose whichever courses are of interest to him or her, irrespective of the institution where the student is enrolled, their associated credits are validated. Students can access around 150 distinct modules with little or no redundancy or overlap. One of the aims of such collaboration is to offer the widest possible range of doctoral courses and to attain economies of scale.



Academic partners in a city-wide doctoral ecosystem

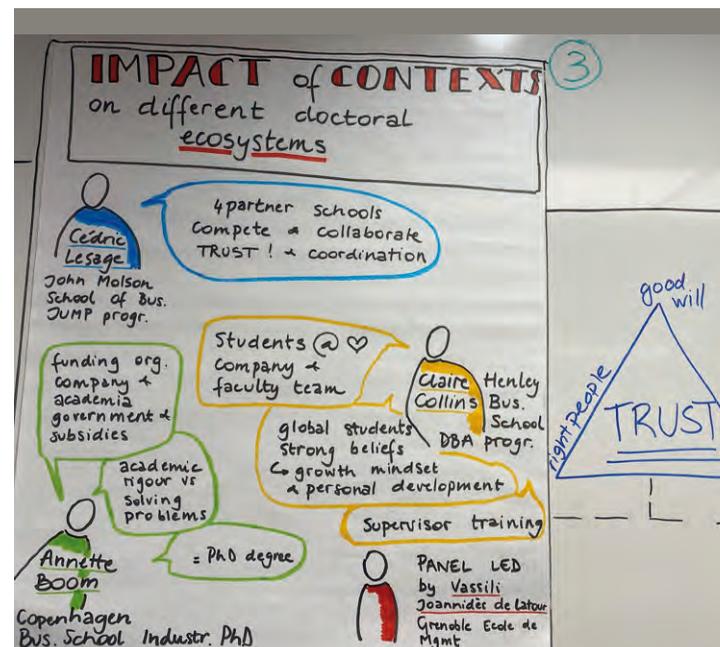


New courses can be created by one of the four partners, provided the other three are informed of this intention in advance. If two or more partners have a similar idea, the same course will not be duplicated but developed jointly. Duplication is averted through collaboration at the course design level while possible inconsistencies or scheduling issues can be foreseen. Collaborations depend on the involvement of academics. Instructors who teach complementary courses at different institutions are positively encouraged to work together on course content and scheduling. Through this grassroots level co-operation, awkward situations can be avoided such as where two complementary courses are scheduled at the same time or concurrently but in two different precincts, making attendance impossible. Instructors also co-operate on course design to circumvent strong overlaps in the case of complementary modules, so that students do not have unnecessary repetitions in the teaching they receive.



A joint programme in the service of a large student population

As four major and internationally renowned institutions collaborate to deliver a high-quality doctoral programme, it is reasonable to expect a substantial number of participants on the programme. Overall, approximately 100 academic staff members contribute to the joint PhD programme by teaching, supervising, and/or reviewing theses. All these individuals serve a large doctoral student population as shown opposite.



Institution	Total number of PhD students	Intake size
Concordia	80	15
HEC	120	15
McGill	80	15
UQAM	50	10
Total	±300	±60

Formal joint governance

Although this quadripartite PhD programme rests upon mutual adjustment at grassroots level, it is overseen by a joint governance body with (in)formal supervisory roles.

As the four partners share the same programme and the same course catalogue, it goes without saying that the very first governance mechanism relates to admissions. Students attending a course in one institution must be considered eligible. Therefore, the four schools set common admission criteria such as master's degree marks, GMAT scores and English proficiency levels. Practically, students apply to one of the four institutions based on being awarded its specific degree upon completion. Each school receives and processes individual applications and shortlist applicants who meet the admission criteria. The shortlist is shared with the other three partners in the coalition. A joint admissions board examines the four shortlists and grants final approval for enrolment.

“ Through this grassroots level co-operation, awkward situations can be avoided such as where two complementary courses are scheduled at the same time or concurrently

Once students are enrolled on the PhD programme in Montréal, a joint Review Committee regularly assesses their progress. In this forum, doubts or concerns regarding certain students can be raised and collectively addressed. Such situations can relate to the student's actual capability of successfully completing the programme, in which case alternative solutions are sought. It is also possible that a current student feels uncomfortable in the institution where he or she is enrolled and needs to be transferred to another within or, at worst, outside the coalition.

Informal experience sharing forum

The quadripartite PhD programme in Montréal operates successfully not just because of formal governance structures but foremost because it offers a unique forum for experience sharing. PhD academic directors from the four institutions, together with any other involved academic and professional staff members can exchange information around all sorts of issues. *Ad hoc* or more structural solutions to problems can be found. The most eloquent hot topic in the past few years has unsurprisingly been programme functioning and PhD candidates' well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdowns.

Informal governance of the quadripartite PhD programme is not just a matter for academic or professional staff. In their capacity as core stakeholders of this coalition, PhD candidates and alumni contribute to the joint experience. Admittedly, each institution has its own PhD candidate union and alumni association, both of which represent their concerns before their home institution. They also congregate annually to address common problems, thereby acting in parallel with their senior counterparts.

Academic partners in a city-wide doctoral ecosystem



Competition for resources and sustaining a clear identity

Notwithstanding extensive formal and informal collaboration around the shared doctoral programme in Montréal, the four institutions remain competitors. With the termination of funding from the Québec government, competition for resources amongst the four business schools in Montréal has intensified. Henceforth they have been competing not only for finances, but also for academics and students.

Importantly, each of the four partners retains its sovereignty over granting the PhD and thereby expanding its own alumni network. The latter is especially important for the four schools since graduate placement counts in international rankings. Attracting the best student to one's programme increases the likelihood of graduates working in the most prestigious institutions and thereby nourishing a business school's reputation. Unsurprisingly, the four schools work hard to maintain their distinct characteristics and identities within the coalition. In particular, the two francophone schools, HEC Montréal and UQAM, sustain their linguistic uniqueness in an anglophone world, attracting students that Concordia or McGill could not have reached. Conversely, the two Anglophone schools cultivate their linguistic specificity in a francophone province where the needs of English speakers (who represent a minority) need to be met.



Doctoral collaboration: key success factors

Due to its longevity, the joint doctoral programme in Montréal has developed its own identity, with common goals superseding any individual institution's own interests.

The Montréal doctoral collaboration involves two anglophone and two francophone business schools. It offers, therefore, the latter greater international visibility in an English-speaking region. Surrounded by anglophone Western Canada and the United States, francophone HEC Montréal and UQAM could otherwise be academically isolated. Not only are language, culture, and identity significant factors driving this collaborative programme, but having such a powerful neighbour and competitor as the



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The Montréal doctoral collaboration involves two anglophone and two francophone business schools

United States also plays an important role. Other countries which are smaller than their neighbours, such as Austria compared with Germany, New Zealand next to Australia, or Vietnam which neighbours the People's Republic of China, may potentially support such alliances.

Such collaborations are possible thanks to favourable national institutional and regulatory environments. First, I argue that academic competitiveness and university rankings which discourage collaborations should not be central to higher education policy, as in Australia and in the United Kingdom. When universities are evaluated solely on their individual academic performance there may be fewer possibilities for deep collaborations. Second, competition should not be associated with institutional rivalry, with the risk of the stronger institution draining the power of their weaker counterparts. Such collaboration would be difficult (yet not impossible) in a country like France, which is characterised by a dual system where state-owned universities and Grandes Écoles are frequently accused of unfair competition.

Overall, willingness to collaborate for the benefit of the community is the most important success factor for this type of doctoral collaboration between competitors in the same city. The sustained success of the coalition in Montréal relies on multiple actors' common interests and commitment to this unique doctoral consortium.

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Four dimensions of an interdisciplinary doctoral ecosystem

By
Nico Pizzolato

Four dimensions of an interdisciplinary doctoral ecosystem



How do we create doctoral ecosystems that foster an interdisciplinary identity in researchers, whatever their home discipline or department? While the case for interdisciplinarity is well-rehearsed in theory, developing a way for it to inform researcher development at doctoral level is not an easy feat. Here, I outline four conceptual dimensions across which an interdisciplinary intervention can be initiated, based on the experience in my own institution, the Business School at Middlesex University.

Such an attempt at conceptualisation is necessary because not much attention has been given, in the vast literature on interdisciplinarity in higher education, to the processes of creating interdisciplinary culture and identity within traditional universities structured in a disciplinary way. Usually organised in academic and administrative siloes, universities confront multiple sources of resistance, as well as opportunities, when trying to set up interdisciplinary initiatives, walking a fine line between disrupting and continuing to receive institutional support.

Four dimensions of an interdisciplinary doctoral ecosystem

Our Business School boasts three doctoral programmes – a PhD, a DBA, a DProf (Transdisciplinary) – that are articulated below. The presence of three different programmes brings to the research community a diverse ensemble of nearly 200 students who come from varying cultural, demographics, and professional backgrounds. This is a pool of individuals who research in different disciplines and professional sectors, and, in the case of the DProf, across them. In this context, the strategy has been to avoid pushing for large structural changes in the design and delivery of the programmes, but rather to introduce interdisciplinarity in what can be described as an ‘interstitial way’ (Lindvig, Lyall and Meagher 2019) – that is with incremental activities such as workshops, events, learning resources and in some cases co-supervision, that fosters interdisciplinarity without clearly labelling it as such. In fact, students themselves are resistant to the label of interdisciplinary, as it is not easy to make the connection with their own goals in the programme.

Looking back at the transformations of these programmes in the past five years at Middlesex University, I can distil four dimensions in which interdisciplinarity has incrementally been introduced in the School’s (and the University’s) doctoral ecosystem. I outline some of the ‘interstitial’ initiatives – activities introduced at department level or school-level training and development programmes – run in the School across different programmes and how they map to the dimensions below.



1. Relationality. Fostering interdisciplinary encounters and dialogue between individuals with different disciplinary formations, both among faculty members and among doctoral students and practitioner-researchers. This is about people. This idea recalls the principle of relational sociology (Donati, 2010) which posits that the social world is a network of interactions and ties, of numerous types and on various scales, between actors who are themselves formed in those interactions. For instance, we know from the literature how interdisciplinarity often springs from serendipitous encounters, so an idea underlying the practice in our institution is to move from casual encounters to actively promoting diverse student/staff groups as a springboard for interdisciplinarity activities. An example of this are Communities of Practice fora and research clusters that are cross-departmental and cross-discipline. Also, students meet in an annual research conference, at a doctoral away day and in a cross-faculty ‘kickstarting series’ where they mix and match in panels or classes irrespective of their discipline.



We know from the literature how interdisciplinarity often springs from serendipitous encounters

2. Situatedness: the creation of interpersonal and communal intellectual contexts conducive to interdisciplinary exchange.

This is about space. Learning occurs in interaction and *in situ* (Lattuca, 2002). Without a space where different people can come together there is no seed for interdisciplinarity. The disciplinary structure of universities has created a certain topography, where knowledge on campus is distributed in compartments, or rather departmental and school buildings where faculty members and students mix only among their own. This has often been replicated in the shift to online learning. Thus, this principle requires the selection of physical spaces and the design of virtual spaces where everybody feels invited without feeling they are entering a disciplinary citadel. An example of how we do this is the conscious selection of seminar and workshop venues that are intended to be inclusive, not located in any single department, but in a ‘neutral’ part of the campus. In the virtual spaces, this translates in the creation of sessions co-hosted by academics from different disciplines, exposing students to different discourses and styles.



Four dimensions of an interdisciplinary doctoral ecosystem



3. Contamination: the engagement with the texts and tools drawn from several disciplines. Here, I am referring to a mixture of approaches, theories, vocabulary, methods, and methodologies that start to intermingle together when doctoral students are exposed to them. Examples are when management students get exposed to autoethnography; when they start to approach their writing with the framework of a creative writer; when an international business scholar meets action research. Our DProf (Transdisciplinary) is based on this pedagogical premise, but this principle can be applied, in an interstitial way, also to PhDs. For instance, there are examples of sessions on creative approaches to writing, social justice or from the media that would not often figure in such programmes but that push participants beyond the boundaries of their discipline. In terms of researcher development, these methods and theories are integrated in a creative way within a research design that otherwise would have remained within the canon of the discipline.

4. Transformation: the appropriation of new intellectual tools is a transformative action. This involves the act of synthesising different disciplinary knowledge to produce original, creative ideas and futures. This part occurs in the actual research work and outcomes of the students. While not all the doctoral research conducted in our Business School is transformative in this way or can be deemed interdisciplinary, some research does achieve this.

Usually, neither students nor staff join doctoral programmes from a position of interdisciplinarity, so transforming monodisciplinary doctoral ecosystems requires a work of *learning* interdisciplinarity. This learning in my view occurs through initiatives that foster the four dimensions of relationality, situatedness, contamination and transformation that I have outlined above. An incremental strategy to such learning is sometimes the most viable one within the structure of current academia.

PHD	DBA	DPROF (TRANSDISCIPLINARY)
Research projects: usually discipline-based.	Research projects: practice-based, usually in one professional field.	Research projects: practice-based, cross-disciplinary, interprofessional.
Supervision: departmental and cross-departmental.	Supervision: informed by both academic and industry contribution.	Supervision: informed by both academic and industry contribution.
Methodologies: across quantitative and qualitative spectrum and mixed methods	Methodology: action research	Methodology: diverse and customised; often abductive research design, emerging nature.
Outcome: contribution to academic knowledge; thesis, in different formats (traditional or article-based); sometimes recommendations for industry.	Outcome: organisational change through research; thesis in format of a report of the action research process.	Outcome: change of student's own professional practice; critical contribution to industry trends and to change-making; sometimes an artefact + critical commentary.
Training: both disciplinary and cross-disciplinary.	Training: reflection on practice, practitioner research issues, methods.	Training: reflection on practice, complexity, system thinking, theories and methods from across disciplines.

SESSION TITLE	DIMENSION	FOCUS
Oblique strategies for (non) academic futures	Relationality, situatedness	To consider a range of futures related to our research and development as a researcher.
Think like a journalist: publishing your research outside academia	Contamination	Rethinking our role as communicators using the journalists' tools.
Un/Doing Social Justice: engaging in an ethical academic practice	Contamination, transformation	Whose knowledge counts? Who is excluded and included in the knowledge we create? How to translate ethical research into ethical practice.
What is (my) epistemology?	Contamination	How do we question our assumptions about ways of knowing? How does our epistemology inform disciplinary and interdisciplinary research.
Creative storytelling for academics	Contamination	Rethinking role and process of writing for academia.
(Interdisciplinary) Research World Café	Relationality, Situatedness	Discussion format about different interdisciplinary themes with quick rotation among table and intermingling with students from different schools.
Doctoral Journeys: directions & detours	Relationality	Online discussion forum with participants from different disciplines, both students and supervisors.
Writing and Criticality café (DProf)	Relationality, Contamination	Using readings from different genres to develop writing style and critical engagement; develop style that bridges academia and practice.
Becoming a Transdisciplinary practitioner (DProf)	Contamination	Discussion on transdisciplinary skills and traits, starting from the work of Tanya Augsborg and Nicolescu.



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Mental Health and the well-being of postgraduate researchers and supervisory staff

By
Fariba Darabi and **Scott Foster**

Mental Health and the well-being of postgraduate researchers and supervisory staff

There are so many tangible benefits for institutions in providing support for their doctoral community, including supervisors. Many institutions have seen a rise in the number of mental health and well-being cases, but those that have an active strategy in place and have progressively enacted specific services to support their PGRs (postgraduate research students) and supervisory staff have been able to support and minimise associated negative effects. Yet, for institutions dealing with mental health and well-being challenges for their supervisory staff and PGRs it is proving to be difficult, especially considering that often, scholars researching students' well-being do not differentiate between undergraduate and postgraduate students or do not distinguish between masters, doctoral, and professional students.

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...scholars researching students' well-being do not differentiate between undergraduate and postgraduate students...



Mental Health and the well-being of postgraduate researchers and supervisory staff



Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to contribute to their community. It is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities (World Health Organization, 2018). Well-being is the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity. It includes having good mental health, high life satisfaction, a sense of meaning or purpose, and the ability to manage stress (Davis, 2019). A London School of Economics impact blog (Hazell and Berry, 2022) notes that '42% of PhD students say they have considered taking a break in studies for mental health reasons, and 14% actually did'.

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This rise in understanding of the impact of mental health and well-being on higher education researchers has been well documented

This rise in understanding of the impact of mental health and well-being on higher education researchers and use of services among undergraduate students has been well documented over recent years. Yet very little is known about the well-being needs and experiences of predominantly mature graduate students and the impact it has upon them, especially PGRs. This is further highlighted by the data from the UK which points out that 1 in 4 people experience a common well-being challenge with around half of all long-term sickness being due to mental health and, more concerning for the PGRs, 70-75% of people not receiving any treatment (MHFA, 2020).

Studies conducted by Barreiro *et al.*, (2018) and Levecque *et al.*, (2017) suggest that PGRs around the world are continually experiencing varying levels of mental health and well-being challenges, including very high levels of anxiety and psychological distress. Alongside increasing demands from PGRs and institutional pressures, mental health issues amongst supervisory staff are also increasing.



Research conducted by McCray and Richard (2021) highlight that, despite a growing interest in the understanding of the PGRs lived experiences, there is still little known or acknowledged regarding business and management PGRs and how they manage their own mental well-being in a complex and challenging environment. It has been debated by researchers and supervisory staff about what supervision actually includes and whether or not the supervisory relationship in itself may cause undue mental health challenges and stress and if so, in what ways? Furthermore, how can supervision be enhanced to respond better to the mental health needs for all?

At EFMD's Doctoral Development Conference in 2022, we ran two world cafés, to understand the perspective of doctoral programme directors, managers, and PGR administrators about their experiences in supporting the mental health and well-being of PGRs in their institutions. Questions debated considered the mechanisms within institutions to support PGRs' mental health and well-being; internal processes, if any, that are in place to identify early warning signs; the services that are available when things go wrong and whether these need to be signposted/escalated; how to encourage PGRs to use the services; whose responsibility is it if PGRs did not seek help; and what was being done to support our supervisors?

The key points that contributors at the two world cafés shared were around two cross-institutional themes: (1) the identification of the needs and issues, and (2) potential actions to improve the mental health and well-being of both PGRs and supervisory staff.

Mental Health and the well-being of postgraduate researchers and supervisory staff



Mental health and well-being needs, issues, and actions

Discussions revealed big disparities between institutions throughout Europe, including the UK, regarding how such strategic mental health and well-being initiatives to **identify needs and issues** are delivered. Some institutions lacked processes and procedures in place, often due to shortages of resources. Others were relatively well resourced. Whatever the current resourcing level, participants emphasised the need for a clear strategy and associated processes in all institutions to ensure that appropriate operational practices were in place to support, and crucially, sufficient mental health and well-being experts available to meet needs in a timely manner.

A number of institutions already had clear **processes and procedures** in place to support PGRs. For some these were formalised in mental health and well-being centres where professional advice was available for all students and staff who needed them. However, for example during the COVID-19 outbreak, when the demand for such services increased, it led to a long waiting list for both PGRs and staff to be seen by

mental health and well-being experts. In some institutions PGRs appeared to be 'forgotten' compared with other student groups rather than treated equally. Despite this, there were examples where a supervisor referred the PGR to those services and regardless of a long waiting time, the outcome was positive. In such cases the PGR's mental health and subsequently their well-being improved, and they continued with their study. Support for all stakeholders including supervisors, programme directors, PGR administrators was also recognised as being needed.

Action in the form of training to support supervisors was, in many institutions, lacking. Participants highlighted that training needed to be enhanced for both existing and new supervisors to ensure that they remained up-to-date with the key challenges faced by their PGRs. This comprised both recognising potential issues as they were exhibited by their PGRs, awareness of the resources available to them and whom to speak to in the first instance. It was recognised that this required resources, clear processes, and procedures within the institution. Without these correct frameworks in place to guide both supervisors and PGRs, the contributors felt it unlikely that changes would be effective. To this end, a well-being app might be considered where the PGRs and supervisory staff could both easily navigate and access the resources including those offered by a mental health and well-being expert.

Participants highlighted that building and maintaining trust between supervisor and supervisee in their relationship was key to supporting the mental health and well-being of PGRs. Without trust, supervisees were unlikely to share their feelings with supervisors, thereby allowing mental health issues to be left unidentified at early stages. PGRs should have the same support available as undergraduate or postgraduate taught students.



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Building and maintaining trust in doctoral supervisor/supervisee relationships

By
Mark N.K. Saunders and Marion Fortin

Building and maintaining trust in doctoral supervisor/supervisee relationships



For doctoral candidates, working towards their doctoral degree is a personal journey, which can be rather long and lonely – but ideally the doctoral supervisor will be there to offer support along the way. The relationship between candidate and supervisor is not simply that of learner/teacher, but often involves joint projects, shared co-authorships, and mentoring, even beyond the doctoral degree. In some national contexts the doctoral supervisor is referred to as ‘advisor’ and, for supervisors in Germany, the literal translation of the terms ‘Doktorvater’ or ‘Doktormutter’ is father or mother of the doctorate. Irrespective of the term that is used, there is agreement that this is an important relationship that sometimes can even be decisive for whether a doctoral student thrives in or abandons the doctoral programme (Louden *et al.*, 2020). At the 2022 EFMD Doctoral Programmes Conference, we conducted an interactive world café on this topic using the lens of ‘trust’ to explore understandings of this dyadic relationship.

Trust is the willingness of an individual (the trustor) to be vulnerable to another on whom they rely (the trustee), based on positive expectations, and where a risk is present (Mayer *et al.*, 1995). For example, when we delegate work or share a secret with someone, we take a risk (they may not undertake the work to the required standard, or they may betray our secret). Perceived trustworthiness is based on judgments of ability (perceived competence of the trustee), benevolence (belief that the trustee has positive intentions towards the trustor), and integrity (belief the trustee will adhere to acceptable standards and values). Trust has been described as a critical component of effective mentoring relationships (Leck & Orser, 2013). In dyadic supervisory relationships, both supervisors and supervisees are trustors of the other, their willingness to become vulnerable being influenced by perceptions of the other’s trustworthiness. This draws upon what, as trustors, each already knows about the other’s ability, integrity, and benevolence, and can evolve over time as they work together. As trustors, each, through their behaviours, needs to demonstrate their trust of the other, whilst as trustees, each needs to demonstrate through their actions that they are worthy of being trusted. Congruence of actions of both demonstrating trust and trustworthiness are therefore crucial for both supervisees and supervisors.

2022

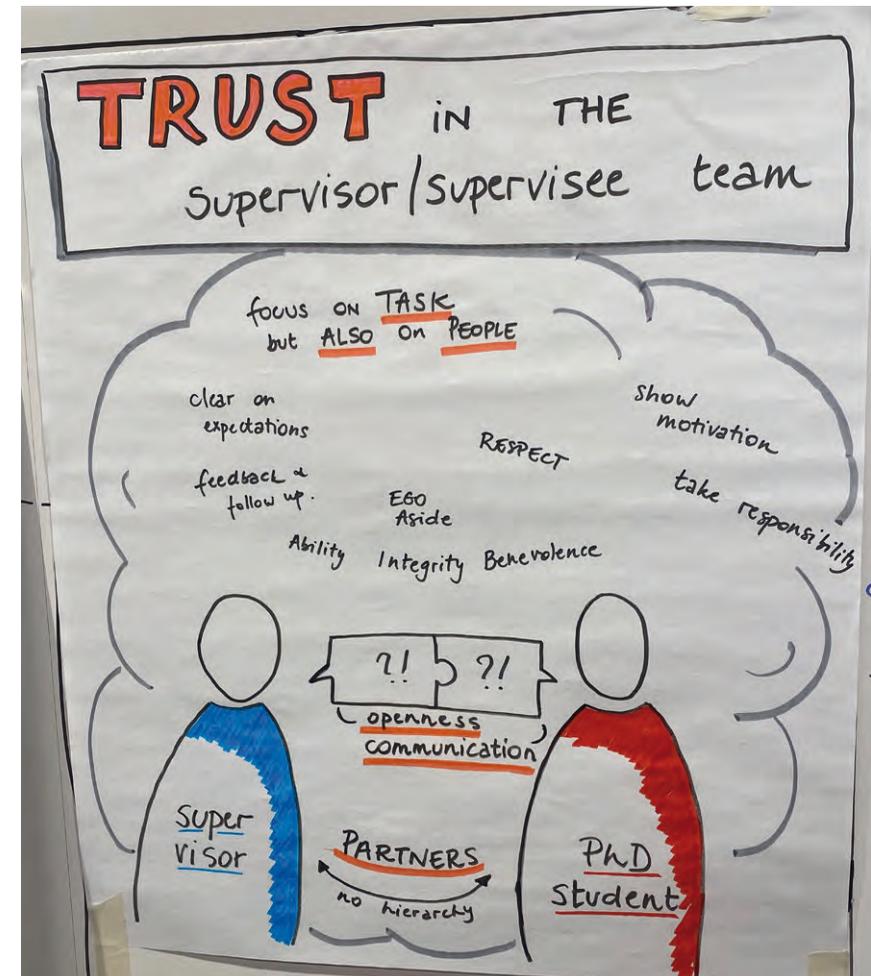
At the 2022 EFMD Doctoral Programmes Conference, we conducted an interactive world café on this topic using the lens of ‘trust’

Building and maintaining trust in doctoral supervisor/supervisee relationships

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Supervisors signal their trustworthiness to their supervisees through visible signs of ability, integrity, and benevolence

As part of the world café, conference delegates explored four aspects of establishing trust in the supervisor/supervisee team. These related to how supervisors and how supervisees each signal to the other that they are trustworthy; and how each demonstrates through their actions their trust of the other.

Supervisors signal their trustworthiness to their supervisees through visible signs of ability, integrity, and benevolence. Ability may first be gauged by the supervisee based on the supervisor’s research publications. Other signals of ability can include their experience, for example indicated by the number of students supervised to successful completion, as well as informal comments made by current and former supervisees. Integrity is signalled through ensuring a transparent and open supervision experience, whereby expectations are disclosed clearly. Our participants discussed how far this disclosure should include sharing one’s philosophy of supervision (e.g., reviewer versus mentor). At the very least, the supervisor would need to demonstrate respect. Finally, benevolence may initially be more difficult to gauge for the student, and in general benevolence judgments tend to take



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Participants discussed the importance of trusting the student by empowering the student to take important decisions

Supervisors demonstrate their trust in their supervisees through their actions. Do they truly give the doctoral candidate a choice, ensuring they have time and space to make their points and react well to disagreement? Ideally, supervisors will inspire their students to do even better than themselves! By showing that they themselves are sometimes not sure, the supervisors can demonstrate their willingness to be vulnerable. The same is true for letting the student decide how much of their personal life they wish or do not wish to share with them – sometimes a supervisor may need to accept, for example, not to know all the detail of why a deadline was missed. In the context of doctorates by publication, trust can also be signalled by the supervisor inviting supervisees into their network and supporting co-authoring of a paper with colleagues without the supervisor. Furthermore, trust is demonstrated by sharing opportunities with the supervisee. Finally, the participants of our world café discussed the importance of trusting the student by empowering the student to take important decisions, which would however remain dependent on the supervisee being able to defend their position with clear critical arguments.

longer to form (see also Schoorman, Mayer & Davis, 2007). An important initial signal is that the supervisor will be open to the supervisee’s preferred direction and show interest in getting to know the supervisee. Throughout the doctoral journey, benevolence will typically be signalled in moments that matter – will the supervisor be available in those moments, show empathy and give enough time? However, it may sometimes be difficult to gauge what is the ideal degree of engaging in personal conversation versus keeping communication at a professional level, and clearly the answers to this question will be influenced by culture and personal preferences.

Building and maintaining trust in doctoral supervisor/supervisee relationships



Signalling supervisor-supervisee trustworthiness and trust

The first impression of supervisees' trustworthiness arises during the recruitment process, when supervisors assess the students' ability. Throughout the supervision process, supervisees then signal their trustworthiness through the integrity of their actions. These include being open and honest about their work with the supervisor, respecting deadlines and through presenting their best work, respecting their supervisor's time, taking responsibility for their studies and being accountable for their work. Given the power imbalance, supervisors may be somewhat less focussed upon looking for signals of benevolence of their supervisees than vice versa (Nienaber *et al.*, 2015). Yet, given benevolence judgments have been shown to be strongly linked with affect, perceived benevolence is linked with a generally positive relationship. The precise boundaries may differ from one supervisory team to another, striking a balance between being open yet not dumping every problem on supervisors.

Supervisees demonstrate their trust in their supervisors by being open about their abilities and admitting their weaknesses in a timely manner. When making themselves vulnerable, such as by asking for advice and talking openly about all aspects of their research, they do so with a critical mind; working in partnership with their supervisor. Our discussions revealed that expectations may differ regarding how far students should consider their supervisor's advice. At the very least, they should be open to listening to the advice. However, making counterarguments and asking uncomfortable questions of the supervisor is also an act of trust. Trust of course continues to be demonstrated after the degree is completed, through ongoing interactions with the supervisor and recommendations to potential supervisees.



In conclusion, a trusting supervisory team is the responsibility of both the supervisor and the supervisee. Within this relationship both need to demonstrate through their actions that they are trustworthy and, crucially that they trust the other. Our discussions revealed that there is not one ideal style of supervisor-supervisee collaboration – rather that it is important to meta-communicate regarding mutual expectations before engaging in supervision and continue these discussions throughout the doctoral journey. Our limited time did not allow us to also discuss the characteristics of the doctoral programme and university environment that will have a positive effect on trust, for example through propagating strong norms of integrity as well as institutionalised feedback mechanisms. This is an interesting topic for another world café.



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Building diverse and inclusive doctoral ecosystems

By
Julie Davies and Karol Vieker

Building diverse and inclusive doctoral ecosystems



Doctoral candidates may be some of the most vulnerable students in business schools. They can be at the mercy of supervisory relationships, isolated, and anxious about completion deadlines, finances, and their next career steps. On the one hand, doctoral students are the lifeblood for the academic faculty talent pipeline. In countries like Sweden, doctoral students are salaried employees who work on an equal basis with other staff. On the other hand, in business schools there are large numbers of undergraduates and more profitable sources of tuition fee income. Doctoral education can seem like a Cinderella activity – marginalised and overlooked. Moreover, the cost-of-living crisis means that minimum stipends need to be raised for PhD candidates to cope with rising inflation as we have seen at the University of Chicago.

In this challenging context, how are doctoral ecosystems supporting the diversity, inclusion, and well-being of doctoral students? Bogers and his colleagues (2019: 2) define a successful ecosystem as ‘an interdependent network of self-interested actors jointly creating value’ in ways that no single actor could do. What networks, support systems, and interdependencies can enable doctoral students in business school ecosystems to feel a sense of belonging and flourish?

Building diverse and inclusive doctoral ecosystems

2015

The Stockholm School of Economics (SSE) has employed a full-time Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager since 2015



An interesting relatively recent development is the creation of dedicated chief diversity officers (CDOs) in business schools. For instance, the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE) has employed a full-time Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager since 2015. An inaugural Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer was appointed at Harvard Business School in 2021. Wharton announced the appointment of an inaugural chief diversity, equity, and inclusion officer in 2022. The creation of CDO roles indicates the need to help doctoral students' mental health and feelings of inclusion in business school ecosystems.

In this article, we summarize the learnings of the closing keynote of the 2022 EFMD Doctoral Programmes Conference. We first define key terms and provide an overview of inclusive initiatives in higher education generally and business schools in particular. We then explain a norm critical approach to understanding the predicaments of doctoral students. Finally, we offer practical tips to operationalise this framework.

DEIB/EDI - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging/Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability (ERS) considerations related to inclusion, diversity, and representativeness are clearly important in EFMD programme accreditation standards and criteria. For example, in terms of programme access and admissions criteria to ensure diversity in students' profiles and in topics covered in courses.

Vernā Myers commented that 'diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.' Importantly, 'equity' is about being on the party planning committee. It is about being able to choose the music for the party. Moreover, 'belonging' is feeling free to dance how you want. To draw on another analogy, if equality is about everyone owning a pair of shoes, diversity is about everyone wearing a different shoe type, equity is about everyone getting a pair of shoes that fit. Furthermore, acceptance is understanding that we all wear different kinds of shoes. Finally, belonging is wearing whatever shoes you want without fear of judgement.



In the context of business schools, we assume this approach means that candidates for doctoral programmes must be sourced from diverse socio-economic, ethnic groups and backgrounds. However, being invited to embark on doctoral studies suggests that under-represented students are involved only on the terms which the person issuing the invitation determines. This means that a minority student on a doctoral programme must comply with established social norms and expectations. For doctoral students to feel that they really belong, they must be empowered to create relationships and common goals which represent their own cultures and aspirations.

Gender equality plans and Athena SWAN

There are several inspiring initiatives that business schools can draw on to address UN sustainable development goals such as reduced inequalities and quality education in relation to doctoral programmes. The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe means that universities from Member States and Associated Countries wishing to participate in the Horizon Europe funding programme for research and innovation must have a GEP in place. The Athena SWAN Charter is a framework used globally to support and transform gender equality within higher education and research. It is a structured evaluation methodology used at university and business school levels to change their policies and practices to increase gender equality. One of Athena SWAN's 10 key principles is to commit to removing the obstacles faced by women, in particular at major points in their career development and progression such as during the transition from PhD into a sustainable academic career.



Building diverse and inclusive doctoral ecosystems

From what we have observed in business schools, it is not just a matter of celebrating women doctoral students and their supervisors on International Women's Day annually. DEIB must be embedded in systems and daily practices to ensure inclusive business school cultures and doctoral programmes. DEIB is business critical to develop staff and students and to address the precarity and inequalities we have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Anecdotally, we suspect that business school doctoral programmes reflect disparities seen in the FT global MBA rankings where only 31% of MBA advisory board members are women and women MBA graduates lag behind men in salary and career progression.

Work in progress

So, where do we look for positive examples? Although Nordic nations are generally viewed as world-leading on gender equality, Sweden has decided to allocate permanent funding for county administrative boards to combat men's violence against women at regional and local levels. Sweden has enacted laws to protect women from discrimination, harassment, and online violence to implement the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Harassment and gender-based violence and multiple forms of discrimination are a concern. In March 2022, a Horizon 2020 *Certification-Award Systems to Promote Gender Equality in Research* (CASPER) project recommended four scenarios to be considered. The EU Horizon 2020 project which finishes in 2024 entitled *Transparent and Resilient Gender Equality Through Integrated*



Monitoring Planning and Implementation (TARGETED MPI) is tackling gender inequality in business and management schools by fostering gender equality in research/academic careers, ensuring gender balance in decision-making processes and bodies, and integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation content. Athens University of Economics and Business, Stockholm School of Economics, Lancaster University, the American University of Beirut and Vrije Universiteit Brussel are research partners in this project, evaluating GEP evaluating methodologies.

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DEIB must be embedded in systems and daily practices to ensure inclusive business school cultures and doctoral programmes”



Norm critical approaches

We suggest that one way to prevent inequalities for healthy business school doctoral systems is to adopt norm critical approaches. Norm criticism is both a tool for analysing and understanding norms (e.g., of whiteness, heteronormativity, patriarchy) and power structures as well as for challenging and dismantling norms, i.e., unwritten, unspoken rules. Norm critical perspectives raise awareness of privileges, power imbalances, and the exclusion that some norms create. They are also a way to challenge power structures and to tackle marginalisation of groups in society and organisations.

On business school doctoral programmes, norm critical approaches can be used to create safer spaces to address power imbalances, misconceptions, and suppression which norms create by tackling EDI as a systemic issue. This is essential to create safer spaces where the power imbalances, misconceptions, and suppression that norms create can be tackled as a systemic and not a personal issue. Intersectionality is about how the different strands of social identity interrelate. Multiple discrimination refers to a person who is a member of multiple vulnerable groups and how they might be discriminated against because of multiple characteristics. Focus groups which we have conducted with business school doctoral students have indicated that their self-esteem can be severely dented by rude behaviours and bullying in research meetings which are felt like personal attacks rather than lively intellectual debates. Critical thinking expected from doctoral students should not equate to incivility as we grapple with culture wars.



Building diverse and inclusive doctoral ecosystems

Practical actions

Business school accreditation criteria underpinned by the UN's sustainable development goals of gender equality and reduced inequalities must be underpinned by practical actions. We suggest the following as practical everyday guidelines:

- (1) Mind your choice of words and your behaviour – be aware of how they may be (mis)interpreted by others. But do dare to make and admit mistakes.
- (2) Set a positive example and clearly show that you do not tolerate discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or bullying of any kind.
- (3) Map your physical and online environments to ensure they are accessible from physical and neurodiversity perspectives and not reinforcing stereotypes and/or exclusive norms.
- (4) Know the law and your organisation's policies. Ensure that the policies include clear information on how to report wrongdoing and microaggressions, as well as how to change doctoral supervisors if necessary.

Conclusion

If you see all male panels being organised, business school brochures presenting images of active men and passive women, and doctoral/research seminars where individuals rather than ideas are being attacked, call out the various types of belligerent, benevolent, ambivalent, and oblivious sexism in business schools which Yarrow and Emily have identified recently in *Gender, Work & Organization*. Remember that if you are reading this you have knowledge, power, privilege, and that you can make a difference! You are already at the party. You can show genuine respect by inviting, involving, and delegating power to under-represented doctoral programme students and faculty members in business schools. In this way, with others you will be able to shape business and management ecosystems where networks of relations between members with interdependent goals add value for all.



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