

## EU-Asia Higher Education Platform (EAHEP)

Workshop on 'Graduate/Doctoral Education in Asia and Europe'

Beijing, China, 8-9 December 2008

### Results from pre-workshop questionnaire

*On 8-9 December 2008, over 40 leaders in graduate study from both Asia and Europe were gathered in Beijing to discuss the development trends in doctoral education, and prospects for enhanced international collaboration. The event was the first of its nature, taking graduate education as a highly topical and relevant issue to higher education/ research advancement in both Europe and Asia. To gather information on the doctoral and graduate schools and departments represented at the workshop, a pre-workshop questionnaire was distributed. Though the sample of institutions attending the event was limited and not necessarily representative, the survey allowed a better vision of some of the similarities and differences between Europe and Asia and provides a first glance into a field of future study.*

*The questionnaire itself is available at [www.eahep.org](http://www.eahep.org) on the workshop page and the individual responses are synthesized into an Excel table for reference.*

#### **Summary:**

The overall impression of the answers to the questionnaire is that despite the geographical scope, there are significant similarities in the organisation of doctoral programmes among the participating institutions. Although many of the answers point to differences at the institutional level, the overall structure is very similar, and there do not appear to be any clear-cut geographical differences.

Almost all institutions have one or more schools or similar separate structures for graduate/doctoral education, and almost all offer a combination of individual tutoring and taught courses within that structure. This combination, however, is handled in different ways. Some answer that courses are obligatory and measured by credits (as the ECTS system); others indicate that courses are 'available', an 'increasing phenomenon' or used only for certain disciplines. The model of a combination of individual tutoring and taught courses, however, remains the same.

Another rather surprising similarity is the uniformity of the qualifications required to enter a doctoral programme. The norm is the MA degree, not the Bachelor, and in most cases where the Bachelor is accepted, it is either limited to certain disciplines or to certain types of Bachelors (such as Honours Bachelor or 'fast track'). Only one institution accepts the Bachelor without further special requirements. This is quite surprising given the emphasis that this topic receives particularly in transatlantic debates. It could seem as if the 'Anglo Saxon' model of recruiting at the Bachelor level is an exception when seen globally.

Concerning generic skills training, the answers are difficult to interpret as it seems that there is a lack of consensus about what generic skills are. Many mention courses that are connected to the concrete

research training and are not strictly speaking generic such as laboratory safety or bioethics. However, almost all institutions have some kind of training mostly through courses in generic skills.

Most institutions register the doctoral candidates at the beginning of their studies, but a strikingly high number does not have a systematic registration after that. Only five institutions answered 'yes' when asked whether candidates are re-registered at one or more times after enrolment.

Lastly, the question of the duration of the PhD is answered in different ways. Some seem to answer the allocated duration or the duration of the grant, while others point at differences between the allocated time and the actual time to degree. However, without recurring registration of all doctoral candidates, many institutions would have difficulties calculating the time to degree, as they would only know how many have begun their studies and ended them successfully, but not have any exact knowledge about how many candidates are effectively working on their thesis and how many have left the institution for other careers.