

ORPHEUS 2013. Prague Consensus Document

The title of the conference „Towards international PhD standards“ is based on the recognition that the world is becoming more and more interdependent, which is evident especially in medicine and health sciences. Many health problems have global character and which are not amenable to solution at the level of one country or one continent. Possibilities and challenges for the ORPHEUS policy in a global world are

- strengthening the processes for good doctoral programme development with the global perspectives,
- strengthening institutional partnerships as part of good PhD program development,
- ensuring equity for each member of a partnership.

Conference was concerned that many current collaboration projects resulted in brain drain deepening the gap between more and less developed parts of the world, and preventing utilisation of full human intellectual capital. Conference supported projects enabling brain circulation. The thematic focus for the research should be relevant for host and home institutions. Also the training for the PhD candidates¹ should include awareness of the major global challenges.

Conference found high overlapping interest between the aims of ORPHEUS and those of the EUA-CDE and the European Commission in supporting development and maintenance of quality PhD training. In particular, the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions programme is an important vehicle that can be used to implement further interaction within the ORPHEUS network.

Conference recommended that the ORPHEUS network should be used to provide the platform for networking between institutions and persons in different countries, continents, and sectors. This may take the form of joint degree programmes or dual degree programmes (e.g. the “sandwich” model² and international cotutelle). In addition more informal forms of collaboration are encouraged providing they are supported by the institutions concerned.

Conference recognized the essential contribution of PhD candidates in the development of doctoral education, and looks forward to working with EURODOC and other PhD candidate organisations.

Conference recommended that ORPHEUS should provide a platform for networking between institutions in different countries, continents, and sectors with the aim of conducting collaborative doctoral research. Collaborative doctoral research may range from informal cooperation of individuals to fully integrated institution backed programmes. Collaborative doctoral research may include 'sandwich' programmes and 'co-tutelle' and could, possibly, result in the award of double, multiple or joint degrees by the institutions concerned. Conference welcomed the further

¹ Conference decided that in future PhD students should be referred to as PhD candidates

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_of_Philosophy

development of the ORPHEUS interactive website which will form the basis for establishing a forum for the exchange of ideas in furthering the aims of ORPHEUS and quality development of PhD education. It was

Conference welcomed the input of the European Science Foundation and the Martin Declaration in the further development of PhD training for health professionals.

Conference welcomed the dialogue that was established during the conference with institutions outside of Continental Europe³ which will be used in the further development of the current ORPHEUS standards. There is growing consensus regarding the outcomes of PhD training, in particular that it consists both of scientific excellence and the development of personal skills, such that PhD graduates will be qualified for challenging employment either within or outside of academia. Award of the PhD degree should take into account both the scientific content and the portfolio of scientific activities that the PhD candidate has built up during his or her training. It is important that PhD training includes training in ethics, research integrity, accountability, honesty and awareness of good research attitudes.

Regarding admission conference recommended that there should be focus on competences as well as educational background, in particular documented previous research experience.

The ORPHEUS labelling project was discussed, and although conference recognized that such a project will involve challenges conference agreed that a start be made on the project. It was appreciated that an ORPHEUS label could provide a common language and platform on which to establish networking and to build collaboration.

³ Canada, Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, Kirygistan, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UK, USA