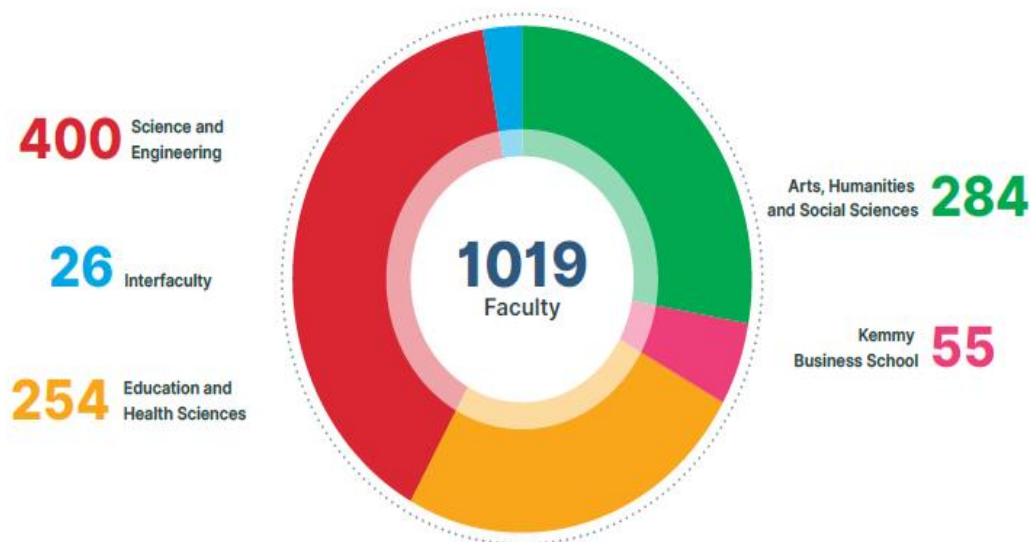# The longevity of the Salzburg Principles: The foundation of effective doctoral education

Ann MacPhail

University of Limerick, Ireland

[with Dylan Scanlon (Deakin University); Katie Robinson, Aishling Flaherty and Mary Fitzpatrick (University of Limerick)
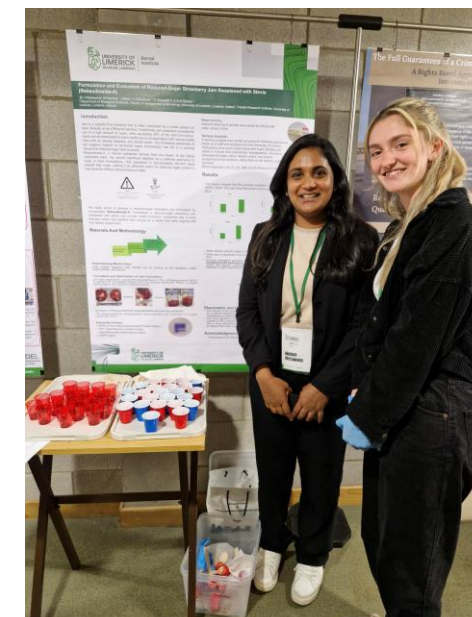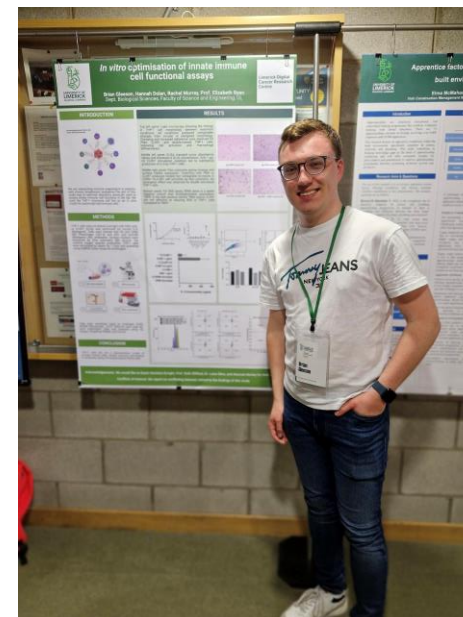
EUA-CDE Annual Meeting, 4-6 June 2025, University of Lausanne

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400 Science and Engineering

26 Interfaculty

254 Education and Health Sciences

1019 Faculty

Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences **284**

Kemmy Business School **55**

63 Research Masters / **846** PhDs / **110** Professional Doctorates

630 EU / **389** Non-EU

565 Female / **454** Male

853 Full-time / **126** Part-time / **40** Distance Education PGRs

National Framework for Doctoral Education

(i)   facilitate consistent excellence in the quality of postgrad education

(ii) enable HEIs to work more closely in the delivery of an improved learner experience and outcome

(iii) maximise the employability of doctoral graduates

(iv) underpin the international standing of the Irish doctoral award.

National Framework for Doctoral Education

Revised 2023

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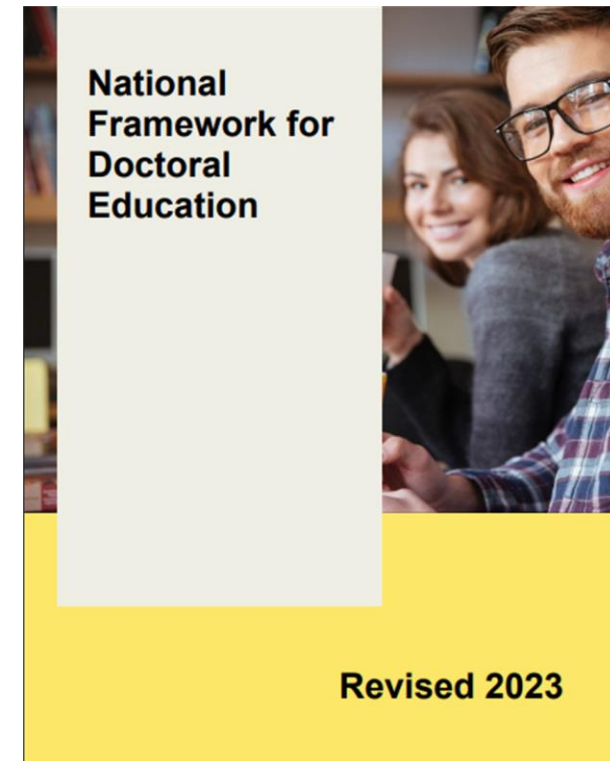
1. Original contribution to knowledge

2. Institutional responsibility

3. Quality of learning environment

4. Access to research and expertise

5. Learning experience

6. Discipline diversity

7. Delivery of supervision and examination

8. Quality of the final outcome

9. Quality assurance

Key principles

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Research aim and design

- Research aim: To describe the extent to which the experiences of Irish PhD candidates aligns with the nine principles underpinning the National Framework for Doctoral Education.

- Research design:

  - Qualitative research design: in-depth interviews and focus groups with 20 PhD candidates at three timepoints across two consecutive academic semesters at an Irish university.

  - Data analyzed in line with Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory approach to coding; a combined inductive-deductive approach.

KP4: Doctoral education occurs in a learning community, providing students access to broad training programs and opportunities to interact with peers both nationally and internationally.

- Peer support was valued.
- Candidates reported mixed experiences of a sense of community in their studies.
- Supervisors, institutional networks and workshops enabled exposure to peer;

'There was a better sense when we were at the university in the structured modules of a level of engagement and you know -- there was great support from the lecturers and there was face-to-face contact which really helped'.

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KP8: Doctoral education is supported by established structures, including principal supervision with a supporting panel, formal progress monitoring, and clearly defined examination processes with external examiners and assessment criteria.

- Candidates highlighted unrecognized gaps in understanding progression reviews and PhD viva, leading to uncertainty about processes and expectations;

"Again it comes back to that whole kind of piece around me being an academic. I am apparently meant to know this stuff and I don't. I have never done a PhD before so I don't know this stuff. I am wondering is there an assumption that sure you should know that but I do not."

Discussion

- Overall, experiences align with national principles of doctoral education.

- Most reported positive learning experiences, deep engagement, supportive supervision, opportunities for training, skill development, and interdisciplinary working.

- Nonetheless, areas for improvement were noted.

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Implications

Three overarching principles of doctoral education;

(1) Purpose and outcome of doctoral education

(2) Supportive learning environment and research infrastructure

(3) Rigorous monitoring, assessment and quality assurance

Originality in Research	Understanding of originality in PhD dissertations has evolved; it encompasses both groundbreaking discoveries and new insights, impacting student engagement and confidence.
Interdisciplinary Collaboration	Encouraging interdisciplinary work enhances student experiences but may face challenges such as communication barriers and differing academic cultures.
Structured Onboarding	Implementing comprehensive onboarding processes can clarify expectations and enhance the doctoral journey, particularly for new students.
Clear Communication	The need for clearer guidelines and resources regarding assessment processes and quality assurance is essential for a fair doctoral experience.
Supervisor Training	Improved training for supervisors is necessary to ensure they provide effective support and maintain transparency in their roles.
Empowerment of Candidates	Enhancing students' understanding of policies and procedures can reduce over-reliance on supervisors and promote independent navigation of their doctoral journey.
Support for Part-Time Students	Addressing the unique challenges faced by part-time candidates is crucial for fostering community and ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities.

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