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***Paper Title:* Beyond programme evaluation: How do you measure the impacts and outcomes of your professional doctorate programme in health and social care?**

***Session Type:* Interactive Workshop**

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Abstract

Background

The strengths of professional doctorates lie in the fact that their popularity, development and diversity continues to grow. Professional doctorates cover a wide range of sectors: health and social care, education, engineering, business and administration to name but a few. In parallel with the rapidly expanding growth in professional doctorate programmes is the debate surrounding their relative impact and outcomes for individuals, knowledge production, knowledge economy (Smith 2013, Edwards, 2009, Rolfe and Davies 2009, Fenge 2009, Fink and Cowan 2006), practice, employment and the workforce.

We would suggest that the future of professional doctorates hinges on addressing some fundamental and significant challenges. Firstly, professional doctorates need to demonstrate that they are responsive to and representative of employers, professional disciplines and student's requirements. Secondly, their sustainability will depend on investment and demand. This will ultimately be associated with evidencing the impact and outcomes of existing programmes. Such outcomes could include for example, capturing the student experience and achievement(s), career progression, quality improvement within professional practice and the workplace.

The weakness of existing professional doctorate programmes is the lack of strategic planning in programme design structures and curriculum which focus on both internal and external evaluation (United Kingdom Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) 2015). Internal evaluation is mainly concerned with targeting and measuring recruitment, retention, and progression data; obtained from module, programme and programme board information and student feedback. External evaluation we suggest should focus on capturing and evidencing the wider impact and outcomes of the programme. This may include for example, knowledge production, transfer and enhancing/improving individual and professional practice and the workplace.

The professional doctorate evaluation deficit is acknowledged in recent reports and literature.

“Although the PD is grounded in professional practice, there is little robust evidence of impact on professional practice and changes in the workplace. More research could usefully be done to explore these impacts (Careers Research and Advisory Center 2016, p67)”.

Similarly, the UK Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2015) *'Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice'* consultation document highlights the importance of demonstrating the impact and outcomes of higher education programmes on several fronts. Initially informing students, employers and professional organisations of the standards, quality and outcomes of a given education and research programme. Subsequently, to focus higher educational institutions, with regard to:

"How outcomes could be published in an easily understood format for prospective students and other stakeholders" (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2015, p24).

This workshop brings together the diverse international, multidisciplinary supervisor and student perspectives to inform a larger study that explores outcome evaluation of professional doctorate programmes. Ethical approval will be sought prior to the workshop and participants will provide informed consent for the workshop data to be included in the larger study.

Aims This interactive workshop aims to elicit the views, opinions and perceptions of attendees surrounding the following questions:

How do you currently measure the impact and outcome of your professional doctorate programme(s)?

What tools, frameworks, benchmarks, guidelines do you know currently exist?

How could we better measure the impact and outcome of professional doctorate programme(s)?

Key workshop issues

Currently there exists a lack of structure and consensus around evaluating the broader personal, professional and practice impacts of professional doctorate programmes.

Conclusion Given the limited available evidence and challenges surrounding measuring the impact and outcome of professional doctorates we would like to suggest the establishment of a national/international working group. The remit of such group could be to explore, debate and devise guidance, benchmarks and criteria to demonstrate the impact and outcomes of professional doctorates for health and social care programmes in the future.

References

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