

## **Exploring Difference:**

Recruitment, Selection and  
Admission of Doctoral Candidates

Monday 26 April 2010  
British Embassy Berlin

**The workshop series International Dialogue on Education Berlin** is a joint initiative of the British Council Germany, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German-American Fulbright Commission, the Australian Group of Eight and the Canadian Bureau for International Education in Berlin.

Through the contributions of international participants the series aims to enrich the debate on science, research and higher education policy in Germany, to place German perspectives in a global context and to learn from positive examples from other countries.

## Ongoing series

- 1 Exploring Difference –  
Making University Teaching Count, 15 October 2007
- 2 Exploring Difference –  
The Philosophy of Undergraduate Education, 10 April 2008
- 3 Exploring Difference –  
The Challenge of (Post)Graduate Education, 9 October 2008
- 4 Exploring Difference –  
The Challenge of International Branding and Marketing, 30 April 2009
- 5 Exploring Difference –  
Integrating Lifelong Learning into Universities' Missions, 19 October 2009
- 6 Exploring Difference –  
Recruitment, Selection and Admission of Doctoral Candidates, 26 April 2010**
- 7 Exploring Difference –  
Postdoctoral Careers in Global Academia, 11 October 2010

Information on all events is available at [www.daad.de/id-e\\_berlin](http://www.daad.de/id-e_berlin)



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*Programme*

<i>Time</i>	<i>Session</i>
<b>13.00 – 13.30</b>	<b>Registration and Coffee</b>
<b>13.30 – 14.00</b>	<b>Opening Remarks</b> <b>Patrick Hart</b> Director, British Council Germany <b>Christian Bode</b> Secretary General, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)
<b>14.00 – 16.30</b>	<b>Panel Discussion</b> <b>“Exploring Difference: Recruitment, Selection and Admission of Doctoral Candidates”</b>  Speakers <b>Alan Dench</b> Winthrop Professor, Dean, Graduate Research School, The University of Western Australia, Australia <b>Douglas Peers</b> Professor of History, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Associate Vice-President Graduate at York University, Canada <b>Pam Denicolo</b> Director of the Graduate Schools, University of Reading, UK <b>Ahmed T Abdelal</b> Provost, University of Massachusetts Lowell, USA <b>Heike KÜchmeister</b> Managing Director, Potsdam Graduate School, Germany <b>Annette Schmidtman</b> Head of the Division Research Careers, German Research Foundation (DFG), Germany  Chair <b>Jan-Martin Wiarda</b> Senior Editor, DIE ZEIT
<b>16.30 – 17.00</b>	<b>Coffee</b>
<b>17.00 – 18.00</b>	<b>Final Plenary and Discussion</b> Conclusion and future directions for the national debate
<b>18.00 – 20.00</b>	<b>Reception &amp; Buffet</b>

**Exploring Difference:  
Recruitment, Selection and Admission of Doctoral Candidates**

In Germany, the Excellence Initiative and introduction of staged studies through the Bologna process have led to the emergence of even more structured doctoral studies. At the same time, organisational frameworks have greatly diversified as have the goals and purposes of attaining a doctorate.

Additionally, increased international competition for the best doctoral candidates is on the rise. Structured doctoral studies (i.e. embedded into programs, centres, schools, colleges etc.) require more regulation for entrance and admission in comparison with the traditional 'individual' doctorate (with only one supervisor), in order to ensure transparency, reliability and justify claims of quality.

Another aspect to be considered is the growing number of doctoral candidates from diverse scientific and cultural fields: these require clear(er) eligibility criteria, defined rights and obligations, evaluation procedures and progress controls both with the entrance to the doctorate and with the process of attaining a doctorate in order to guarantee optimal support and success.

The sixth conference in the ID-E Berlin series addresses the challenges concerning the transitional phase into graduate training and doctoral promotion. A detailed understanding of the institutional motivations for recruitment, selection and admission procedures will be elicited from participating speakers from Germany, Australia, Canada, the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

Three central questions will guide the conference proceedings.

## **1. What is a PhD? What does it stand for?**

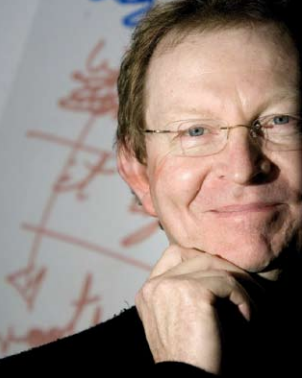
- Should successful candidates be primarily seen as future academic staff or do they serve other purposes (qualified staff for the knowledge intensive economic sector etc)?
- Who develops and polices the criteria for (excellent) doctoral training? How can scientific standards be guaranteed?
- What criteria should define a 'successful' doctorate (especially considering the various models of doctoral training with considerable functional differences: research doctorate, MD etc)?

## **2. What is the institutional mission of graduate education and how is this achieved through recruitment, selection and admission processes and institutional framework conditions?**

- What can institutions do to actively recruit talented doctoral candidates? What are the most suitable formats for marketing and recruitment to doctoral programmes?
- How to ensure or enhance the attractiveness of doctoral programmes? What kind of support is necessary in order to successfully integrate doctoral candidates?

## **3. What is the ideal doctoral candidate, how to select them and who sets the quality standards?**

- Who may, and who may not apply? How accessible should doctoral programmes be?
- What meaning does a Masters degree have (should it be integrated in the doctoral programme or should it act as an eligibility test)? Should access to doctoral programmes only be granted once the graduate has achieved more than a defined 'minimum' (grades etc)?
- How can the 'selection of the best' be balanced with providing a general increase in the number of doctoral candidates?
- Qualitative selection: According to which methods can competence in the subject field, communicative and social abilities be compared and evaluated during competitive recruitment procedures? What is the role of these aptitude tests? How broad or how specialised should the gathered qualifications and competencies be?
- Quantitative Selection: How many doctoral candidates can be supervised within a single programme or graduate school? Who decides about the admission of applicants with more formal (senior) needs for access? How should unsuccessful applicants be dealt with?



## **Alan Dench**

**Alan Dench** is Dean of the Graduate Research School and Winthrop Professor in Linguistics at the University of Western Australia. He has also served as Executive Dean of Arts at UWA and as the Chair of the University's Animal Ethics Committee, and has sat on the Australian Research Council's College of Experts, with particular responsibilities in assessing research in humanities, and social, behavioural and economic sciences.

Dench's principal area of expertise is the primary documentation and description of Australian Aboriginal languages. He has written grammatical descriptions of three languages of the Pilbara region of Western Australia — Panyjima, Martuthunira and Yingkarta — and is working on a detailed description of Nyamal. His current research program, with colleagues in Australia, France, Belgium and the UK, is focussed on the investigation of the semantics of tense, aspect, modality and evidentiality in Australian languages. Dench continues to teach under-

graduate linguistics majors and has supervised a number of higher degree research students, most working on descriptions of endangered indigenous languages of Australia, Indonesia or the wider Indo-Pacific region.

Dench has a Bachelors degree in Anthropology from UWA, and Masters and PhD degrees in Linguistics from The Australian National University. He is currently President of the Australian Linguistics Society, a member of the Executive Committee of the International Society for Historical Linguistics, a member of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

## **Abstract**

The Australian PhD is a three to four year program focussed on the production of a high quality thesis, examined externally by independent assessors of international standing. Australian researchers, many of whom have broad international training, are outward looking. They value, encourage and excel through a truly global research engagement. Candidates for an Australian PhD enjoy the benefits of working in world-class facilities as partners in internationally connected research groups. They also enjoy the benefits of living and working in an exciting, stable and welcoming multicultural community, in a country of great natural beauty and rich biodiversity.

**Douglas Peers** has been Professor of History and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Associate Vice-President Graduate at York University since 2007. Previously he was a Professor of History and Associate Dean and Interim Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Calgary. In 2004 he was interim Vice-President (Programs) of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. From 1996 to 2005 he sat on the Board of Directors of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, and from 2005 to the present he has been on the management board of the Aid to Scholarly Publications Program of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. He has also served as a member of the Board of the Alberta Gaming Research Institute. He has recently been elected Vice-President/President-elect of the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies and is a member of the Council of Ontario Universities Quality Assurance Transition/Implementation Task Force.



**Douglas Peers**

He is the author of *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in Early-Nineteenth Century India* (1995), *India Under Colonial Rule, 1700-1885* (2006), co-edited *J.S. Mill's Encounter with India* (1999) and *Negotiating India in the Nineteenth Century* (2000), and published more than twenty articles and chapters on the intellectual, political, medical and cultural dimensions of 19th century India, which have appeared in such journals as *The Historical Journal*, *Social History of Medicine*, *Modern Asian Studies*, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, *International History Review*, *Radical History Review* and *Journal of World History*. With Nandini Gooptu, he is currently co-editing *India and the British Empire*, a companion volume in the Oxford History of the British Empire series.

## **Abstract**

Postgraduate research programs in Canada (PhD, MA, MSc) combine many of the best attributes of American and European practice and convention. Doctoral programs in Canada typically begin with two years or so of rigorous coursework which is then followed by comprehensive or candidacy exams before the student commences work on her/his dissertation. These exams not only test the applicant's command over the material and methodology necessary for his/her particular dissertation topic, but also evaluate the applicant's mastery of complementary or cognate areas, thus striking a balance between depth and breadth. Where our programs differ from American ones, and lean more towards what is emerging in Europe, is in how we have defined and treated master's programs (excluding professional or para-professional master's). There are very few direct-entry PhD programs in Canada (and these are mainly in the sciences). Rather, students are normally expected to complete a master's degree before commencing their doctoral studies which when coupled with a baccalaureate degree makes the Canadian system very much like the Bologna three-cycle structure. Traditionally, most master's programs in Canada were two years in length and consisted of one year of coursework followed by a year to prepare a master's thesis. However, many universities in Canada, particularly in Ontario, have introduced one year master's degrees so as to reduce the number of years that a student can potentially spend in postgraduate study. The major challenges before us, which are not that different from what faces universities everywhere, include reducing attrition and assisting research students to transition to careers in what has proven to be a very volatile economy. A recent study has shown that the Canadian practice of expecting students to complete a master's degree before moving on to a doctorate has kept our attrition rates lower than US data would otherwise suggest. With respect to the latter, graduate schools in Canada are increasingly committed to introducing professional and/or transferable skills as part of the training they offer to their students.



**Pam Denicolo**

**Pam Denicolo**, a chartered psychologist, has had a key role in the development of the University of Reading Graduate School system and in the development of the research student and post-registration professional practice element of the new School of Pharmacy. Her passion for supporting and developing graduate students is also demonstrated through her contributions as Vice Chair to the UK Council for Graduate Education Executive Committee, as chair of the Society for Research into Higher Education Postgraduate Network and Executive Editor of the Guides for Supervisors Series, and as a member of other national committees and working groups which, for example, review and evaluate the impact of the Roberts funded generic skills training, and the concordance of UK universities with the European Code and Charter.

She has supervised more than 50 doctoral students to successful completion, examined many more, and developed and led Research Methods Programmes for social scientists in her current and previous universities. Her research has been oriented by a commitment to understanding the way participants in learning processes construe their roles, situations and activities, through the use and development of Personal Construct Theory approaches and methods. An invited speaker at many international conferences, she has also worked with many universities in the UK and Ireland, Canada, the USA, Australia and South East Asia and those in the Nordic Consortium of Universities, to develop academic staff and procedures for the support, training and assessment of doctoral candidates. She is currently involved with a network of colleagues in developing the Researcher Development Framework and in exploring the concept, and various manifestations, of doctorateness.

## **Abstract**

### **The Strengths of the UK PhD system and Challenges to UK Doctoral Studies**

Building on a firm foundation, UK doctoral education has experienced radical development over the last 15 years so that it now meets, and in some cases exceeds, the requirements of the European Charter for Researchers/Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and the Salzburg Principles. All doctoral awarding institutions have developed their own Code of Practice for the Support and Training of Postgraduate Research Students, based on a minimum standard defined by the Quality Assurance Agency, providing a range of routes to the doctoral level within and between institutions. Thus, each doctoral candidate receives individual support tailored to their prior experience and their specific project topic. In addition they are supported in selecting, from a wide range of generic research and professional skills training, a programme to suit their needs within an environment of a critical mass of researchers providing appropriate challenge, peer support and attention to cultural, social and career development issues. The challenge to institutions is to enhance or even maintain that quality of provision during a period of financial constraint and political moves to concentrate research activity.

**Ahmed Abdelal** serves as Provost for the University of Massachusetts at Lowell. In this capacity, he provides leadership and oversight for academic, research, and outreach programs. Prior to joining UMass Lowell, Abdelal served as Provost at Northeastern University (2002-08), and as Dean of Arts and Sciences at Georgia State University (1992-2002).

Abdelal earned his Ph.D. in Microbiology at the University of California, Davis, and carried out post-doctoral research at the same institution and at the Institute for Microbiology at the University of Göttingen, Germany. He is a member of the American Academy for Microbiology, the American Society for Biological Chemists, and the American Society for Industrial Microbiology. His research was supported by grants from NSF, NIH, DOE, and the Georgia Research Alliance. He has made numerous presentations at national meetings on topics in higher education.

At Northeastern, Abdelal provided leadership for developing and implementing a five-year strategic plan that strengthened interdisciplinary research and graduate education in the sciences and engineering with emphasis on emerging fields such as nanotechnology, and in the social sciences with emphasis on policy and urban affairs. Importantly, Abdelal worked successfully with the senior leadership team on advancing the university in 2007 to the top ranking tier by the US News and World Report.

At Georgia State University, Abdelal led the College of Arts and Sciences in developing vibrant interdisciplinary research and service centers spanning the diverse disciplines of Arts and Sciences. Under his leadership, the College increased research funding several fold, and considerably upgraded teaching and research facilities. The college also secured major funding from the Georgia Research Alliance in support of interdisciplinary research and emerging technologies, thus enhancing the role of the University as a key engine for economic development.

Abdelal has served recently on an Advisory Group for the Massachusetts Board for Higher Education, and the UMass System Taskforce on the Life Sciences. Abdelal is also providing leadership for developing an array of Professional Science Master's (PSM) programs across UMass campuses. This new approach to graduate training combines disciplinary training with business fundamentals, communication, and an internship in industry. PSM has been recently advocated in a report by the National Academy of Sciences as an effective approach for workforce development in science applications.

Abdelal provided leadership at both Northeastern and Georgia State, and now UMass Lowell, for establishing partnerships for collaboration across disciplines with international institutions in various world regions.



**Ahmed T Abdelal**

## **Abstract**

Doctoral education in the U.S. offers a broader scope than many European counterparts. American candidates pass a qualifying examination that assesses overall understanding of the disciplinary field that is gained through at least two years of formal coursework. Consequently, graduates are more likely better prepared for academic careers. Europe's emphasis on assessment is recent as a consequence of the Bologna process. The master's degree, which has been historically a step to the Ph.D., is undergoing significant changes at a number of American universities through the development of professional science master's, which incorporates business fundamentals and experiential learning.



**Heike Kuchmeister**

**Heike Kuchmeister** has been the director of the Potsdam Graduate School (PoGS) since January 2007.

The PoGS was founded in November 2006 and became a central scientific institution of Potsdam University in March 2009. The establishment of the international, interdisciplinary Potsdam Graduate School was part of the restructuring of the postgraduate education at Potsdam University. Its aim is to improve the quality of the conditions for doctoral students at Potsdam University by instituting transparent procedures and closer subject-related and interdisciplinary support, in order to strengthen the science location and to make it more attractive to young researchers from both Germany and abroad.

Prior to her position at the PoGS, Ms. Kuchmeister served as director of the international Ph.D. Programme “Integrative Plant Science” at the University of Potsdam, and was manager of the joint project

GLOWA Jordan River (with Israel, Palestinian Authorities, Jordan, Germany).

From May 2001 until July 2002 she worked as a scientific officer at the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ).

Her other relevant experience includes work as a scientific manager of the NGO Asociación para la Conservación de la Cuenca Amazónica (ACCA) in Peru and in the USA.

From 1998 until 2000 she was a visiting professor at the Departamento de Botânica, Universidade Federal do Acre in Brazil.

Ms. Kuchmeister studied biology at the Justus Liebig University Giessen and received her Ph.D. in biology from the Justus Liebig University Giessen.



**Annette Schmidtman**

**Annette Schmidtman** studied Biology at the University of Cologne from 1978 – 1984 with special emphasis on Molecular Genetics, Biochemistry and Organic Chemistry. She completed her diploma – during which her 1st child was born - at the University of Essen, Institute of Molecular Biology, in 1986. Her doctoral thesis on oncogenic proteins of Adenoviruses at the same institute was finished in 1990, including a maternal leave due to the birth of her 2nd child. After a one year PostDoc, she started working at the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) as a Program Officer in the Life Sciences’ Division in November 1991. During a parental leave 1995-1999 due to the birth of her 3rd child she worked as a research manager at the University of Hildesheim (1996-1997) and later at the Bureau of the Ethics’ Commission of the Medical Faculty of the University of Göttingen (1997-1998). Having returned to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft in October 1998, she took over the coordination of DFG’s activities in Clinical Research as Program Director in 2000 and was in charge of the new program “Clinical Trials” which was launched together with

the Federal Ministry for Education and Research. Since 2006 she is head of the division “Research Careers, Research Training Groups, Graduate Schools” at the Bonn office of the DFG.

## Opening Remarks

**Patrick Hart** Director of the British Council in Germany whose operational responsibilities include the strategic management of science and education work. Patrick previously worked for the British Council in China, Korea and Taiwan with a short interlude back in the UK. Prior to joining the British Council he worked in universities and other higher educational establishments in the UK and Nigeria following on from his first degree and research in geography and environmental conservation. In Germany he has a wide operational remit, including science, education and examinations.



**Patrick Hart**

**Christian Bode** is the Secretary General of the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst - German Academic Exchange Service - (DAAD) in Bonn. He studied law at Bonn, Berlin and Kiel and gained his Dr. jur. at Bonn University. He joined the Federal Ministry of Education and Science where he became head of the planning group. He was Secretary General of the Westdeutsche Rektorenkonferenz (Association of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions in West Germany) in Bonn and is member of various relevant organisations (including as Vice-President of the Academic Cooperation Association, Brussels). His Awards, titles and decorations include Honorary Doctorate by Birmingham University, Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite, Commendatore Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana and the OBE - Officer of the Order of the British Empire.



**Christian Bode**

## Chair

**Jan-Martin Wiarda**, age 33, is editor-reporter at DIE ZEIT, Germany's most influential weekly newspaper. He reports on higher education issues, school policy and research.

Wiarda is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA) and also attended both the University of Munich and the German School for Journalists (Deutsche Journalistenschule). He has won a number of prestigious awards, most recently the Goethe Award for his reporting in the field of higher education.



**Jan-Martin Wiarda**

