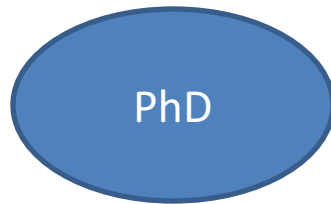


Entry to practice  
Doctor of Physiotherapy  
Programmes  
(DPT)

Dr Cliona O'Sullivan, MISCOP  
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# Doctoral level education

- What does this mean in a European context?



- Focus of this discussion is professional doctorate for entry to practice
- **Scotland-(entry to practice), Lebanon-(post professional).**

# Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

- Bachelor- Master- Doctoral Cycles (First, second and third cycles)
- No defined credit award for the third or Doctoral Cycle
- Level 8 European Qualifications Framework
- Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:
  - have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and **mastery of the skills and methods of research** associated with that field;
  - have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial **process of research** with scholarly integrity;
  - have made a contribution through **original research** that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;
  - are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of **new and complex ideas**;
  - can **communicate** with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of **expertise**;
  - can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, **technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society**.

# Development of Doctoral Outcomes at National Level

(National Qualifications Framework-Example from Ireland)

- “Through the process of doctoral education, the student is provided with opportunities to develop a range of skills to a very advanced level. These skills relate both to the research process itself and to broader professional training and development”

- [National Framework for Doctoral Education, Ireland](#)

## GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

- Research skills and awareness
- Ethics and social understanding
- Communication skills;
- Personal effectiveness/development
- Team-working and leadership
- Career management
- Entrepreneurship and innovation.

# Doctoral Level Entry to Practice in Physiotherapy

- Need to marry entry level competencies and graduate attributes at national level to the education cycle



WCPT guideline for physical therapist professional entry level education

Country Specific as per Professional Body or Physiotherapy Regulator

?

Bachelors

Masters

Doctoral

# What are the professional influences?

- May depend on:
  - How well established the profession is in a particular country?
    - Promotes the profession, improve the level of education, encourages professional autonomy
  - The need to broaden options for entry to practice
    - Not to replace BSc or MSc but to offer different entry to practice routes
    - Afford graduates the opportunity to graduate with professional clinical skills AND advanced research and other professional skills
  - Strengthens clinical research capacity within the profession
    - Strengthen the link between clinical practice and research
    - Drives clinical research and evidence base for practice
  - The key challenges to the profession in a particular country
    - E.g. direct access, protection of title
  - Who funds physiotherapy education in a particular country

# What are the socio-economic influences?

- Universities want to attract the best students
- Internationalisation of universities
- Financial implications
  - Education costs increase
  - Debt burden of graduates
  - Salary reward?
- Potential mismatch between market needs and graduate skillset
  - May be difficult to get graduates to work in remote/challenging areas.

# What are the population health influences?

- As a profession, we can have a significant impact on population health
  - Aging population
  - Chronic disease
  - Disability
- Valued member of the health service and MDT
- Vulnerable when constriction of health system occurs
- Stronger skillset in leadership, management and advocacy needed



# Benefits and Risks

- The individual physiotherapist
  - Improved research skills and other graduate attributes
  - Gives graduates a broader skillset to lead and be effective in ever evolving health systems
  - Improved professional status.
  - But...
    - Debt burden
    - May inhibit people undertaking some physiotherapy roles
- The profession
  - Complements the breadth and depth of our profession
  - Promotes the profession and autonomous practice
  - Strengthens evidence base
  - Improves the standard of education
  - But...
    - We may lose 'ground' on our traditional scope of practice
- The patient
  - Gives confidence and trust
  - Competent clinical physiotherapist with strong research skills and other graduate attributes
  - But...
    - It is not a substitute for clinical experience

# The future...

What are the graduate attributes that you want for physiotherapists in your country?

Bachelor of  
Physiotherapy  
(3/4 years)  
  
Entry to practice  
Physiotherapy  
Education

Master in Physiotherapy  
  
2 years  
  
(Entry to Practice  
Physiotherapy Education)

Relevant BSc Degree for  
Prior Learning  
  
(3/4 Years)

Doctor of Physiotherapy  
3-4 years  
(Entry to practice or  
post professional  
Physiotherapy  
Education)

Relevant BSc Degree for  
Prior Learning  
  
(4 Years)

# What does will a physiotherapist do?

## Doctoral Level Graduate Attributes

- Research skills and awareness
  - Ethics and social understanding
  - Communication skills;
  - Personal effectiveness/development
  - Team-working and leadership
  - Career management
  - Entrepreneurship and innovation
- Many factors to consider
  - Benefits and risks
  - For some countries it may be necessary to have doctorally trained physiotherapists to address healthcare challenges

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