

What are effective forms of research training?

Vilis Brukas, Jelgava, Dec 5-6, 2006

Required extent of PhD studies (based on NOVA survey in forestry)

| | Dissertation | | Courses | | Individual studies | | Total | |
|------|--------------|-------|---------|-------|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | ECTS | Years | ECTS | Years | ECTS | Years | ECTS | Years |
| EMU | 180 | 3 | 30 | 0.5 | 30 | 0.5 | 240 | 4 |
| LLU | 156 | ? | 42 | ? | 18 | ? | 216 | 3 |
| LZUU | 180 | 3 | 30 | 0.5 | 30 | 0.5 | 240 | 4 |

Providing Ph.D. courses is a task that each department already carries, but often with the problem that beyond the most general courses, few departments have enough students to fill a course. [...] Polforsk tries especially to tackle the difficult part **of generating strong courses** on particular, more specialised, topics or theories within the discipline. Ultimately, **any Ph.D. student should at least once during the course of her Ph.D. education attend a course that covers the subject/field, she is writing about, and where it is possible to discuss the state-of-the-art within the area of her thesis.** This further serves **to network Ph.D. students early on with those who work on the most closely related theses.** While highly successful in terms of improving this dimension of researcher training by moving from a departmental to a national level, PolForsk soon realised that very **often wider international collaboration about the provision of courses on the highest level is needed,** because their subjects are relevant for too few Danish Ph.D. students if a sufficient degree of specialisation should be achieved.

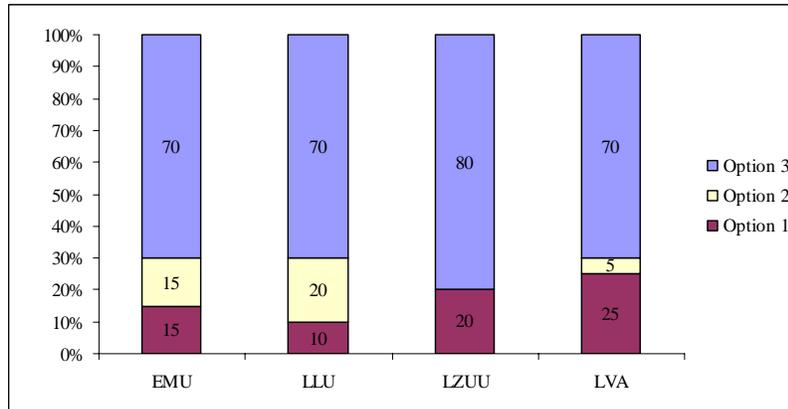
Source: invitation letter by Northern European Political Science Ph.D. Education Network: <http://nepos.net/about>

Why is it good for a PhD student to participate in international PhD courses?

- Meeting top experts in the discipline
- Up-to-date knowledge & methods
 - Intensive learning in team normally is more effective!
- Getting new ideas to own research
- Sometimes getting advice on own research
- Improving professional English
- Building a network!
 - A place for international projects to be born
 - Sharing competencies, perhaps leading to joint papers
 - Etc.

BOVA survey: What is the time share (in percent) of different PhD study forms at your university (in addition to thesis)?

1. (XX%) Intensive courses (defined as 1- 3 week courses with at least 5 students attending and teaching personnel full time involved);
2. (XX%) Other courses (for example: a PhD course lasting one semester with teaching personnel sporadically involved irrespective of number of students);
3. (XX%) Individual studies (defined as individual reading and occasional discussions between a student and the supervisor without organized auditory work);



Reported number of PhD courses in academic year 2006/2007

| | Intensive courses in English | In national language (intensive) |
|------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| EMU | 1 | 0 (5) |
| LLU | 0 | 0 (7) |
| LZUU | 0 | 0 (3) |
| LVA | 0 | 1 (0) |

Nr PhD students: EMU: 165; LLU: 200; LZUU: 83 LVA: 57 Total: 505

Some observations on status at BOVA universities

- International PhD courses almost non-existent
- Intensive courses almost non-existent? Inconsistency in survey responses
- Generally, supply of any kind of PhD courses (17 per year) is low compared to the student base (~ 500)
- Most PhD students don't have a possibility to attend any PhD courses related to the topics of their thesis

Joint BOVA Phd courses of high quality: an opportunity for a better research training?