

The 3-Year Fast-Track PhD

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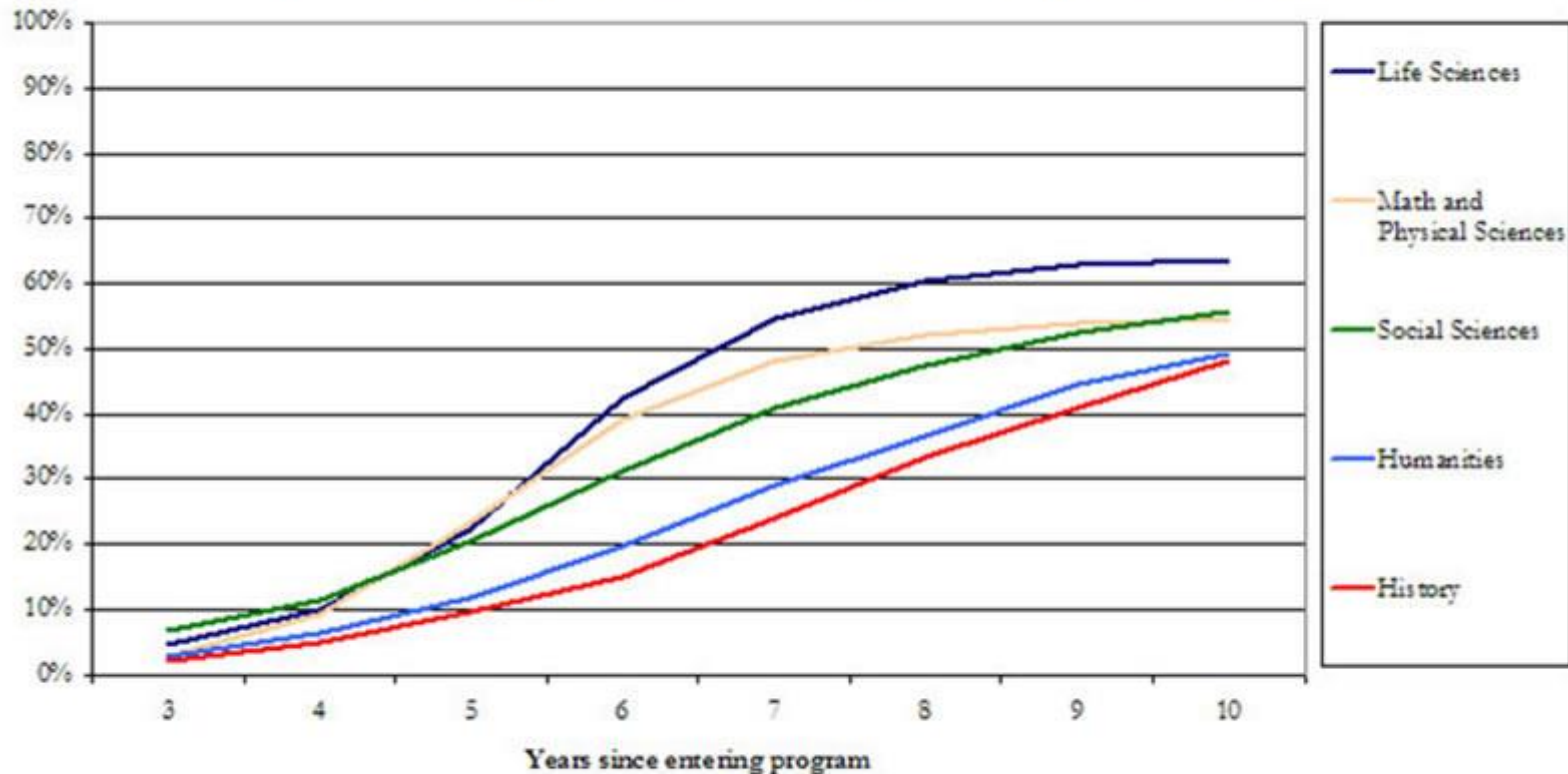
- Candidates with doctoral competencies
- All doctoral completions within 3 years
- High-quality doctoral outcomes useful to society
- Same outcomes for 2nd-language speakers





- Lack of useful PhD outcomes to society
- Worth less than cost to society (~\$500,000/PhD)
- Poor completion rate (60% - but near 100% for those that submit)
- Overrun of time
- New doctors not competent or useful to society

Figure 1: Cumulative Completion Rates for Doctoral Students who Entered Programs 1992 to 94, in History and Broad Fields



Source: Data on broad fields from table in Inside Higher Ed article at <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/07/17/phd>. Numbers for history are close approximations based on slide 8 of the presentation at http://www.phdcompletion.org/resources/SW07_PhDC_BaselineData.ppt. Staff at the project did not respond to a request for the specific numbers.

Background

- **Work study** of PhD research, supervision & examination (tasks, time, critical paths, lost time)
- **Research literature** – PhD study, supervision, education, assessment...
- **Educational theory** - aims, objectives, curricula, learning objectives, performance criteria, assessment modes ..
- **Empirical** observation and testing...

- Am I good enough?
- Is my research really a PhD?
- Have I reviewed enough literature?
- Are my research methods and analyses ok?
- How can I write such a big thesis?
- I don't feel like a doctor!
- How do I learn professional doctoral skills?
- Will I want to do this for all those years?
- Is my language good enough?
- How can I complete within time?

What delays PhDs?

- Administration delays and errors
- Wrong kind of research project
- Faulty time plan
- Unstructured literature review process (serendipity etc)
- Unstructured/late thesis writing and thesis structure
- Reasoning and justification problems
- Personal crises
- Student skills (reasoning, writing, perspective)
- Unhelpful/contradictory guidance by supervisors

3 Year PhD Time-line

| Task | Time |
|--|------------------------|
| Application | 1 month |
| Candidacy and ethics approved | 4 months |
| Literature review & data collection prep | 5 months |
| Data collection | 4 months |
| Analyses | 5 months |
| Contingency & personal crises | 2 months |
| Holidays | 3 months (4 week/year) |
| Proofing and editing of thesis | 6 months |
| Examination and award | 5 months |
| Total | 36 months (3 years) |

- Weekly meetings with student (48/year)
- Proofreading candidature/ethics
- Supervisor always knows more than student
- Pastoral care
- Face-to-face training in writing, research methods & doctoral attributes from week 1
- Candidacy and thesis writing from week 1
- Proof reading thesis from week 1

- Set up and manage new research projects
- Develop new research and theory (different from their PhD)
- High level reasoning skills
- Collaborate effectively in a variety of team roles
- Good team worker
- Sound administrator
- Accurate and honest budget management
- Develop quotes for work and plan workflows and resources
- Write professional documents and reports that will stand legal scrutiny
- Manage their personal and work lives professionally
- Establish and maintain professional networks
- Make sound professional and ethical judgments
- Be politically and administratively effective

- **Problem-based** research (usually best for PhDs)
- **Single question** research (Why did the Egyptians to build pyramids? – often unsuitable)
- **Blue-sky** research ('What happens if...?' - usually not suitable for PhDs)
- **Hypothesis-testing** research (only for fields with highly-developed and tested body of theory)

Reasoning & Justification

- **Logical** (If A true and B is true then logically C)
- **Casuistic** (e.g. because a trusted researcher reported it on the basis of their research)
- **Deontic** (self-evident, e.g a cup is a cup)
- **Rhetoric** (persuasion through emotion or fallacies. Usually important to **avoid** using rhetorical justification in PhD theses)

Structured lit. review

A common fear of PhD candidates is ‘How do I know if I’ve reviewed enough material?’

Simple structured literature review method (for Google):

- Set Google Preferences - 50 items (scrolls faster)
- Identify and write down appropriate ‘**keywords**’ to search
- Google using these keywords and identify **better keywords** (by reading titles, abstracts, and exec summaries)
- **Repeat** until no longer useful and then use for search
- Review and save relevant documents and copy details into Endnote
- In literature review, describe and justify choice of keywords before reviewing material

Use similar process for library catalogues, journals, databases etc.

- Too much effort and time goes into re-organising and re-writing PhD theses.
- Start writing thesis week 1 (with supervisor proof reading)
- Use pre-defined thesis structure of limited size
- Recommend **Perry '5 Chapter Thesis'**.
- 75000-80000 words (less words is better)

- Structure approved by examiners
- Written in shortest time with minimum content
- Demonstrates doctoral competencies
- Parts suitable for publication (thesis)

5 Ch process

- Define *research problem*
- Review literature - how others have tried to solve research problem
- Identify *research questions* that provide information to resolve research problem
- Choose *methods of data collection and analysis* to answer *research questions*
- Report *Results* of data collection
- Explain how *Results* answer *research questions* and solve *research problem*
- Explain implications

5 Ch Structure

- Ch 1 - Introduction
- Ch 2 - Literature Review
- Ch 3 - Research Methods
- Ch 4 - Report of Data Collection
- Ch 5 - Conclusions & Implications
- References
- Appendices

Administration issues

- Administration is consistently one of the unnecessary causes of delay in PhD completion
- Manage administration timing tightly, and
 - Manage your supervisor managing administration

Timeline 18 month PhD

(very experienced researchers only!)

| Task | Time |
|---|-----------|
| Application | 1 month |
| Candidacy and ethics approved | 2 months |
| Literature review & data collection prep | 2 months |
| Data collection | 2 months |
| Analyses | 3 months |
| Proofing and editing of thesis 70,000 words | 5 months |
| Examination and award | 3 months |
| Total | 18 months |

- ‘Best practices’ supervision
- Choice of research project
- Timeline
- Personal development of candidate
- Doctoral competencies
- Structured literature review and thesis
- The best way to learn reasoning, research methods & writing?
- High-level PhD administration by supervisors

Questions?

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Feedback?

- Please complete the feedback sheets.
- Leave in pile by exit