

## SETTING STANDARDS FOR EFFICIENCY IN THE PHD

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The theme of this conference is setting standards for the PhD, and obviously that refers first and foremost to quality standards, because in science quality comes first. However, efficiency of the PhD should be considered as well, because of costs in financial terms and – in my view more important – because of costs in human terms. Failure in the PhD is often a personal drama. Having completed a PhD study without a thesis even has its own acronym: ABD, ‘all but dissertation’.

Pursuing a PhD has developed from a lifetime ‘magnum opus’ to the proof of being an independent researcher. Still, this challenge will not be concluded successfully by all, nor will all PhD candidates be able to conclude it within reasonable time. Efficiency in the PhD, therefore, refers to ‘time to degree’ as well as to ‘final completion rate’.

How to define and measure efficiency, how to differentiate between types of PhD candidates, how to improve efficiency without compromising on quality? Based on literature and own research and experience, I will show what kind of statistics are useful and how those statistics are sometimes misused. Finally, I will show how the graduate school where I work managed to bring down time to degree with eight months by changing ‘supervision culture’ and setting clear and feasible standards for the PhD thesis.