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As requested at the Australian National University's research inquiry on Wednesday, 27 August 2008, please find further information on PhDs in Germany below.

The Doctorate in Germany

Income support

The majority of doctoral candidates in Germany (over 70%) is employed at universities as research assistants, financed either by the university itself or through external funding. These positions are either full-time or part-time and limited to 3-5 years, during which time candidates are expected to write their dissertation. A full-time employee earns approximately AUD58,000 depending on age and number of dependant children.

Around 20% of doctoral candidates receive stipends offered by the state or an endowment. These can range between AUD15,000 and AUD36,000 with the majority at around AUD22,000. They are usually available for two years, with a possible extension of one year, or two years for candidates with carer responsibilities.

Many doctoral candidates also support themselves with other jobs or from family income, either for the entire duration of the doctorate, or at least part of it.

Duration

There are no precise statistics on the average length of a doctorate in Germany. In part, this is due to the fact that there are no formal enrolment requirements and as such reliable doctoral enrolment data is not available, and in part because it is difficult to calculate when exactly research assistants commence work on their dissertation.

A study from 2002 indicates that the average duration is approximately 4-5 years. Another study calculates 4.9 years for candidates with a stipend. This number is normally higher for the humanities and social sciences, and lower for the hard sciences. There is currently a strong push in Germany to reduce the length of the doctorate.

It should be noted that in Germany the average length of a degree before commencing a doctorate is well over six years. In addition, a doctorate is generally not viewed as a degree, but as the first job in an academic career. Hence, candidates are considered employees of the university, rather than students. There are no fees.