

Global Doctoral Consortium

Connecting for quality research related to online, open, flexible and technology enhanced learning

Pilot project description

Introduction

The Global Doctoral Consortium, GDC, is a global initiative aiming to support doctoral students in the research field related to online, open, flexible and technology enhanced learning. The idea is to establish a virtual network and knowledge hub that will support doctoral students in building relationships and sharing research ideas. Furthermore, the GDC will provide insight in the research themes selected by its doctoral students and will connect to the global scientific journal Open Praxis on issues related to publishing of research papers.

Rationale

The overall expanding needs for quality education are indisputable, and concrete actions for global collaboration in the education agenda is demanded. As stated in the Education 2030 Framework for action, chapter III on Implementation modalities:

The research community has an important contribution to make in education development in general and policy dialogue in particular (page 27, point 83)

The research from doctoral students in the area of flexible and technology enhanced learning will pave the way for scientific knowledge of new learning modes, inclusiveness and scalability, all imperative factors in the Education 2030 Agenda.

Background

The Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA) "Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all", provides guidance to countries for the implementation of the new Sustainable Development Goal 4, SDG4. It was drafted to implement the Incheon Declaration and was adopted at the Education 2030 High-Level Meeting at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France on 4 November 2015. The declaration aims to mobilize all stakeholders around the new global education goal and targets, and proposes ways of implementing, coordinating, financing and reviewing the 2030 education agenda—globally, regionally and nationally—to guarantee equal educational opportunity for all.

Target 4.3, point 43, of the Framework for Action, relates specifically to online, open and flexible higher education:

A well-established, properly-regulated tertiary education system supported by technology, Open Educational Resources (OERs) and distance education modalities can increase access, equity, quality and relevance, and narrow the gap between what is taught at tertiary education institutions and what economies and societies demand. (page 16)

The Framework for Action also identifies that scholarship programmes can play a vital role in providing opportunities for young people and adults who would otherwise not be able to afford to continue their

education. (page 23, point 67). Therefore, a strategy outlined in the Framework for Action is to target all scholarship opportunities in a transparent way and towards young women and men from disadvantaged backgrounds who have clear talent, merit and interest.

The Global Doctoral Consortium is a direct response to both targets in point 43 and 67, as it will nurture collaboration and transparency of research in the field, and also raise a scholarship fund to enable doctoral students, in particular from developing countries and disadvantaged backgrounds, to attend high profile events around the globe.

GDC with its target group of researchers in the field of online, open, flexible and technology enhanced learning also responds directly to the Qingdao declaration which was adopted immediately after the Incheon declaration and furthered the commitments to leveraging ICT:

To achieve the goal of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning by 2030, ICT – including mobile learning – must be harnessed to strengthen education systems, knowledge dissemination, information access, quality and effective learning, and more efficient service provision. (Page 1, point 4)

Finally, the UNESCO-ICDE High Level Policy Forum that was held in June 2015, issued the Paris Message which calls on Governments and Intergovernmental Organisations to:

- *Promotion of doctoral student programmes to create opportunities for collaboration, networking and support for participation and visibility in events, networks and projects.*
- *Strengthening global collaboration on R&D relevant to online, open and flexible higher education. (page 3)*

The Global Doctoral Consortium has the potential to become a key action for future quality learning, inclusion and educational leadership as well for innovation in education.

Key benefits

The Doctoral Consortium responds to an identified need for Doctoral Students to facilitate a global exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of online, open, flexible and technology enhanced learning:

- **For doctoral students** it will be an unprecedented opportunity to broaden their network and exchange knowledge as well as experience in the field.
- **For faculties** it will be the opportunity to support and contribute to the guidance offered to Doctoral Students virtually and on site in this area of expertise and to connect to colleagues and partners with similar interests.
- **For ICDE members** the initiative will be the opportunity to keep be updated on the last research trends in the field, broaden their network, take part in the discussion and gain visibility among key partners.
- **For the key partners** of ICDE the initiative will be the opportunity to put in practice what has been defined in the “the Education 2030 Framework for Action” as well as receiving direct feedback from the network and the discussion that will be triggered.
- **For sponsors** the initiative will allow them to actively support a sustainable global initiative that will empower all stakeholders in the field of online, open and flexible education.

Project period

The initiative will be launched as a pilot project in June 2016 and runs until the end of 2017. On longer terms the ambition is to run the GDC as an ongoing low cost initiative – a virtual sustainable global consortium for doctoral students in the field.

Pilot project goals

- At least 50 students from most regions have been taking part in the doctoral consortium by end 2017.
- To have donated/sponsored 30 000 Euros (300 000 NOK) to fund grants, services, travels and infrastructure.
- The community has facilitated both online and onsite activities (at least 1-3 per semester) in addition to a doctoral student's track during ICDE World Conference in Toronto in 2017.
- A prize winner has been awarded and has presented at the Toronto conference.
- Documentation for deciding on the next steps post 2017 for the GDC.

Targets

- To provide a free, virtual community platform open to all doctoral students in the research field of online, open, flexible and technology enhanced learning.
- To facilitate transparency and insights from ongoing research themes by allowing students to create profiles and describe their project ideas to the community.
- To encourage doctoral students to discuss topics of common interest, to internationalize through virtual and physical events and to build global relationships.
- To open up for feedback and peer evaluation from other researchers in the field.
- To facilitate for joint supervisors across borders
- To facilitate for the dispatch of examiners to regions in need of this competency
- To connect the virtual network to onsite events like the ICDE World Conference. Also regional events initiated by partners and sponsors may partner up to the GDC at any time.
- To raise a scholarship fund to finance participation at onsite events for doctoral students, in particular from developing countries and disadvantaged backgrounds.
- To consider optimal methodologies for virtual collaboration and internationalisation.
- To consider doctoral student exchange between institutions as part of the GDC
- To consider joint calls from institutions in thematic areas
- To consider a separate network for supervisors

Founders and sponsors

Contact has been initiated with a number of institutions and associations for possible founder- and/or partnership. The scientific journal Open Praxis by its editor Inés Gil Jaurena is invited into the project as a core partner on issues related to publishing of research papers.

The confirmed founding partnering institutions of the Global Doctoral Consortium are:

- Asia eUniversity (Malaysia)
- Charles Sturt University (Sydney, Australia)
- Contact North (Canada)
- HBMSU – Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University (United Arab Emirates)
- Lillehammer University College (Norway)
- UNISA (South Africa)

- Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Spain)

Sponsors will be invited to support the GDC with funds/donations and/or in kind in order to secure the project after the pilot period. A sponsorship scheme has been prepared.

Founding partners will secure funding and support throughout the project pilot period 2016-2017.

Organization and running operations

The ICDE secretariat provides infrastructure and the facilitation of the GDC, taking care of administration and practical support. A free ICDE membership will be included for all doctoral students that are accepted in the consortium. The project will be linked to other relevant ICDE activities such as Open Praxis, research and innovation initiatives, events etc.

Other Secretariat services will be fundraising, accounts and grants, and the overall coordination and governance of the pilot project.

A central working group with 2-3 doctoral students, 1-2 faculty and 1 - 2 from ICDE will be given a mandate for the planning, initiation and evaluation of virtual activities and services within the network.

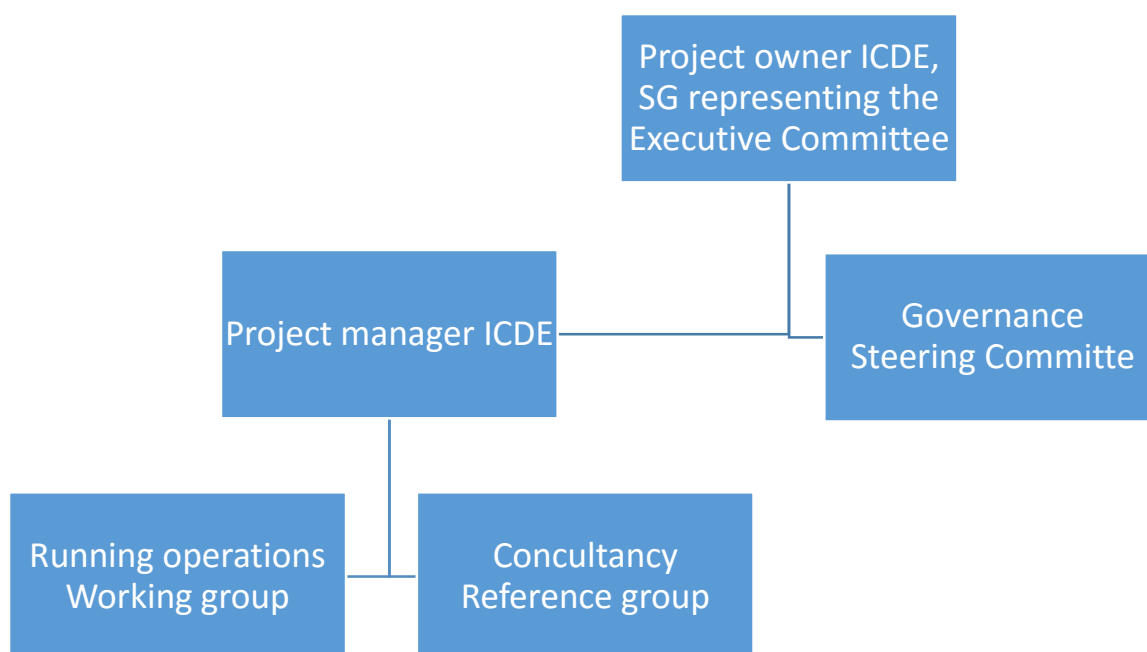
The partnering institutions will be encouraged to activate local working groups consisting of faculty and doctoral students to give input to and review the activities run by the central working group.

Governance

While the project owner is ICDE, a steering committee will oversee the project and decide upon major milestones. The steering committee consists of founders and core sponsors (4 – 8), a representative from the doctoral students and the editor of Open Praxis. 2 - 3 virtual meetings are foreseen annually. Possible meetings at the ICDE President's Summit (Australia, November 2016), ICDE -Symbiosis International Conference (India, March 2017) and the ICDE World Conference in Toronto, October 2017.

A wider, virtual reference group of partners and sponsors will be considered, to enable insight to the research, share the knowledge and support the consortium.

Project map



Budget for the pilot period

Estimated costs for the pilot project is 30 000 EUR distributed as such:

- 50 % to a scholarship fund
- 35 % to cover the secretariat services, including facilitation of network, support of working group, surveillance of the community and infrastructure for the community.
- 15 % to fund travels, meetings and other collaboration costs for key academics.

Distribution of grants in the GDC

Guidelines for application, selection and distribution of grants to be defined and executed by either the steering committee or a dedicated group appointed by mandate by the steering committee.

Activities during the pilot project

Activity	Deadline	Comment
Initial partner meeting	30 April 2016	Founders met 19 April and agreed on the Terms of Reference and the initiative to be launched in June
Pilot project launch	30 June 2016	Virtual project launch by key partners and sponsors
Virtual community established and ready for student enrolment	1 September 2016	ICDE to set up, test and facilitate
Working group established	1 October 2016	
1-3 virtual activities implemented and evaluated	1 January 2017	

GDC track at the ICDE Symbiosis International Conference in India	March 2017	
1-3 virtual activities implemented and evaluated	1 July 2017	
GDC track at ICDE World Conference in Toronto	October 2017	
1-3 virtual activities implemented and evaluated	1 December 2017	
Pilot project evaluated and DC as running service considered with a potential work plan	1 January 2018	

Deliverables

Main deliverable from the pilot project in addition to the evaluation will be a complete proposal for a sustainable global doctoral consortium as an ongoing activity financed by ICDE members and partners.