

## ЯКІСТЬ ОСВІТИ

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### **DOCTORAL STUDENTS AT RISK ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT: QUALITY MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

Academic engagement and support of vulnerable categories of learners is a crucial thematic issue within the EU and globally. In this respect, the research is focused on searching for suitable solutions for gaps in doctoral education capacity strengthening at institutional and national levels in Ukraine, primarily due to underestimating its societal dimensions, and on synchronizing the Ukrainian practices with European policies and standards, including helpful initiatives in integrating resilience and sustainability into its academic, research and engagement activities; creating an inclusive and welcoming culture within academia that encourages respect, support, and mentorship.

The developed educational courses aim to facilitate a cross-sectoral dialogue on solutions for the challenges faced by Ukrainian academia in reforming the doctoral education sector, within the framework of a sustainable, cohesive, and peaceful Europe.

The implementation of the proposed educational courses aims to achieve the following short-term effects: to ensure Ukrainian PhD students' belonging and research engagement, return to stability, and help to alleviate psychological anxiety; to advance doctoral students' research competencies in line with ethical and methodological standards; to minimize the risks of doctoral student attrition; to activate faculty and peer mentorship and professional networking within the academia regarding doctoral students at risk diversity; to diversify the institutional strategies of doctoral students' academic and researcher identity development in war and post-war circumstances.

This will provide a significant context for advancing a new type of academic culture in doctoral education within Ukrainian academia – a culture of university social responsibility that prioritizes human values and addresses the real needs of Ukrainian researchers while providing early-career researcher-friendly support, both academic and professional.

**Key words:** doctoral education, academic culture, doctoral students' academic and researcher identity development, doctoral students at risk.

**Problem statement and research context.** The COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing war in Ukraine have drastically impacted social and educational realities. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia has caused a lot of scholars to leave their home institutions and seek protection in other countries. However, some have stayed in Ukraine and are facing numerous challenges daily. The situation has become more severe as a growing number of higher education and research institutions have been damaged or destroyed. Despite the crisis, the Ukrainian higher education sector needs to maintain resilience and continue to progress. To maintain research excellence and investment attractiveness regionally and globally, fostering innovative and high-quality doctoral research is

crucial for Ukrainian HEIs. However, the risks of losing a generation of scholars due to emigration and refugee flow have been exacerbated. Educational and managerial efforts should be made to provide support to Ukrainian doctoral students who are at risk due to the ongoing war. This includes those who have already been forced to flee Ukraine, as well as early-stage scholars who are still in Ukraine but face the risk of displacement. The support should also be extended to forcibly displaced PhD students within Ukraine, doctoral students in refugee-like situations, and Ukrainian doctoral candidates who have become refugees. The focus should be on struggling doctoral candidates, those with family care responsibilities, and international postgraduate students affiliated with Ukrainian academia.

The recent international research “Towards a Global Core Value System in Doctoral Education” on assessing doctoral-education changes during the last 20 years states that a doctorate degree should not solely focus on the technical aspects of research. Instead, it is important to consider the broader education of the graduate. The graduate should be trained to be socially conscious and aware of ethical and political issues that may arise during their research. Failure to do so can lead to disastrous consequences, as demonstrated by a powerful example of how research involving human subjects can go wrong when ethical and political considerations are ignored (Nerad, et al., 2022).

**Literature review.** Social support and academic engagement are key elements of doctoral education quality studies (Altbach, 2011; Nerad; Bogle; Kohl; O’Carrol, Peters, Scholz, 2022). Societal dimensions of the problem include doctoral well-being; research capacity and self-efficacy (Kokotsaki, 2023); PhD imposter syndrome; doctoral student attrition; and research supervision (Guerin & Green, 2015); professional identity development; isolation feelings in doctoral programs (Lovitts, 2001; Ali & Kohun, 2007; Szadkowski, 2017, 2029).

Academic engagement and support of vulnerable categories of learners is a crucial thematic issue within the EU and globally. The proposed research is framed by the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention (2017); the Paris Ministerial Communiqué (2018); and the Rome Ministerial Communiqué (2020). Since 2022, under the Council of the European Union wide-ranging policies and measures have been put in place to support Ukrainian refugee students, including doctoral candidates, in higher education in Europe (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, EURODOC reports).

The objective of this research is to investigate policies and strategies for integrating and improving efforts within the university community to provide academic support for doctoral candidates who are at risk. Additionally, the study aims to explore ways of aligning these practices with European policies and standards (Eurydice report, 2022, EUA briefing, 2022, InspireEurope Recommendations, 2022).

**Discussion and results.** Added to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (the loss

of regular contacts at the campus, the lack of social interaction, difficulties in accessing laboratories or other research facilities; organizing online training, thesis defense, and supervision; the lack of networking opportunities and doctoral schools underfunding, struggling doctoral candidates’ rates increasing), the war has caused new challenges connected with appropriate addressing the needs of such diverse category of PhD students as postgraduate candidates at risk.

The proposed problem has an educational added value due to its societal dimension – academic engagement and support of vulnerable categories of learners is a crucial thematic issue within the EU and globally. This research is framed by the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention (2017); the Paris Ministerial Communiqué (2018); and the Rome Ministerial Communiqué (2020).

Since 2022, under the Council of the European Union wide-ranging policies and measures have been put in place to support Ukrainian refugee students, including doctoral candidates, in higher education in Europe (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice reports). In this respect, this study can help in broadening the Ukrainian practices regarding implementing early-career researcher social supports and academic rights safeguarding.

In the *Researchers at Risk: Mapping Europe’s Response Report of the InspireEurope Project* it is defined that researchers at risk include researchers, scholars, and scientists who are experiencing threats to their life, liberty, or research career, and those who are or have been forced to flee because of such threats. Some researchers at risk have recognized refugee status, asylum status, or similar protection status. But a higher proportion of researchers seeking the assistance of NGOs specializing in the field of scholar protection are outside the refugee process. These researchers are seeking or holding temporary visas/work permits through visiting research/scholar positions at host universities in Europe or elsewhere, outside their home countries<sup>1</sup>.

The global Scholars at Risk Network (SAR) classifies three broad categories of risk:

<sup>1</sup> EUA – European University Association, 2020. *Researchers at Risk: Mapping Europe’s Response Report of the InspireEurope Project*. Brussels: Inspireurope – Initiative to Support, Promote and Integrate Researchers at Risk in Europe. p. 9.

– Risk due to the content of a scholar’s work, research, or teaching being perceived as threatening by authorities or other groups. When the development of ideas, exchange of information, and expression of new opinions are considered threatening, individual scholars/ researchers are particularly vulnerable.

– Risk because of the individual’s status as an academic or researcher. Because researchers undertake frequent international travel and have international contacts, this gives them a certain professional standing or prominence. This can mean that attacks on one such high-profile scholar are an efficient means of sending a message to others, quickly creating a chilling effect.

– Risk as a result of their peaceful exercise of basic human rights, in particular, the right to freedom of expression or freedom of association.

The research is aimed at studying and implementing academic and professional supports that are friendly to early-career researchers covering various issues such as research capacity in war and post-war circumstances, quality supervision and training, institutional responsibility for supporting early-stage researchers, societal engagement, mental health and well-being, career-tracking, academic freedom, and research autonomy. The aforementioned issues form a comprehensive system of doctoral education development and quality assurance under the EUA Innovation Agenda 2026, EURODOC, and EUA-CDE initiatives and developments.

In light of the need to transform the educational environments of the Ukrainian academia societally, in particular through a better understanding of the experiences of Ukrainian doctoral candidates at risk in war circumstances and the impact of these experiences on PhD students’ researcher and professional identity development, as well as their academic careers, this research aims to answer the following questions: 1) what socially inclusive supports are available within the European and Ukrainian academia? 2) how does quality supervision affect doctoral research capacity strengthening; 3) how does being involved in professional and research peer networking impact the mental health and social well-being of the PhD students and research supervisors; 4) what early-career researcher-friendly supports are available at the community and institutional levels regarding

doctoral candidates at risk need diversity; 5) how the good practices of the European universities may be applied to solve the challenges Ukrainian doctoral students at risk face since 2022 and in the other rebuilding times.

In this respect, the research is **focused** on searching for suitable solutions for **gaps** in doctoral education capacity strengthening at institutional and national levels in Ukraine, primarily due to underestimating its societal dimensions, and on synchronizing the Ukrainian practices with European policies and standards, including helpful initiatives in integrating resilience and sustainability into its academic, research and engagement activities; creating an inclusive and welcoming culture within academia that encourages respect, support, and mentorship.

This provides a significant context for advancing *a new type of academic culture* in doctoral education within Ukrainian academia – a *culture of university social responsibility* that prioritizes human values and addresses the real needs of Ukrainian researchers while providing early-career researcher-friendly support, both academic and professional.

Through our research, we have established connections with various European partner universities, such as the Department of Physical Culture at the Academy of Physical Education and Sport by Jędrzej Sniadecki in Gdansk (Poland), and the Department of East European Studies at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University (Czech Republic). We have also established contacts with regional universities in Ukraine, including the Laboratory of Academic Culture of a Researcher at Sumy Makarenko State University. These connections have allowed us to develop interdisciplinary educational courses (Table 1).

The methodology of creating the course content is based on four interconnected approaches. These approaches include:

– The course content was designed using **a holistic research-based approach**. This allowed for the integration of thematic issues related to the support of doctoral candidates at risk, such as research capacity in war and post-war circumstances, quality supervision and training, institutional responsibility for the support of early-stage researchers, their societal engagement, mental health and well-being, and career-tracking.

Table 1

**Interdisciplinary educational courses' thematic issues**

<b>1<sup>st</sup> course (training session) “European Standards of High-Quality Disciplinary Research”</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> course (workshop) “Quality of Supervision: Negotiation and Ethics in the Doctoral Journey”</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> course (discussion session) “Institutional Support of Doctoral Candidates' Research Capacity: EU Approaches and Trends”</b>
<p>The advanced interdisciplinary course is organized through the training session format and focuses on the practice of research applied aspects. The course contains the following topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Development of doctoral education in Europe: quality training and research standards.</li> <li>2. The European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Postdoctoral Researchers (EURODOC) as an important player in the doctoral education sector. Safeguarding doctoral candidates' academic rights.</li> <li>3. Research ethics as a core value of doctoral research. A robust culture of academic and scientific integrity.</li> <li>4. Research methodology and design quality applied aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– research design and operationalization of concepts;</li> <li>– problem statement, purpose statement, research question;</li> <li>– qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodology concepts and tools;</li> <li>– experimental and quasi-experimental research;</li> <li>survey research requirements and strategies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Academic writing quality standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– data commentary,</li> <li>– writing summaries and paraphrases,</li> <li>– writing critiques,</li> <li>– constructing a research paper,</li> <li>– manuscript editing,</li> <li>– constructive critique and peer review,</li> <li>– overcoming writer's block.</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Transversal skills for a high quality research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Research data management.</li> <li>– Open science. European Open Science Cloud.</li> <li>– Scientific communication.</li> <li>– Research self-efficacy.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>Project management.</p>	<p>The course consists of the following topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. European University Association surveys and studies on the quality of doctoral training and supervision.</li> <li>2. European quality practices in the support, provision, and management of research supervision.</li> <li>3. Research supervisor eligibility, accreditation, and registration at European universities.</li> <li>4. European good practices in joint-supervision. Alternative approaches to postgraduate supervision.</li> <li>5. Perspectives in online doctoral supervision.</li> <li>6. Professional networking on research supervision in the EU.</li> <li>7. Research supervisory styles, roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>8. Research integrity and ethics in doctoral training and supervision.</li> <li>9. Mental health essentials for academic supervisors.</li> <li>10. Emotional aspects of the research work and supervision: imposter syndrome, frustration, and coping strategies.</li> <li>11. Academic freedom and feeling of autonomy in training, research, and supervision.</li> <li>12. Supervisory management of doctoral student diversity: supervision of part-time students, distance learning students, students with family care responsibilities, displaced students and refugees, minority groups, students with disabilities.</li> <li>13. Strategies for advising international doctoral students.</li> <li>14. Research supervision as a factor of PhD satisfaction and completion rates.</li> <li>15. Pathways for dealing with problems in supervision. The risks of doctoral student attrition. Conflict management.</li> <li>16. Supervision pedagogies: narrative strategies.</li> </ol>	<p>The course consists of the following topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. European policies and standards of quality doctoral education programmes.</li> <li>2. Doctoral training and activities management. Mandatory and optional transversal skills training.</li> <li>3. Internal and external Quality Assurance of doctoral education.</li> <li>4. Doctoral education assessment indicators.</li> <li>5. Strategic capacity of the institution: doctoral education issues.</li> <li>6. Organisational structures of doctoral education in Europe.</li> <li>7. European institutional governance models and approaches around doctoral candidates support and engagement.</li> <li>8. Institutional responsibility for the support of early-stage researchers.</li> <li>9. Societal engagement of doctoral candidates. Mental health and well-being of doctoral candidates: institutional issues.</li> <li>10. European policy instruments and institutional measures of doctoral candidates at risk support.</li> <li>11. Cultural changes in European universities in the context of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention.</li> <li>12. Career development as a strategic issue of doctoral education in Europe. Career tracking of doctoral candidates.</li> <li>13. Institutional support of national and international early-stage researchers' mobility. Internationalisation.</li> <li>14. Rules, guidelines and innovative practices of doctoral supervision.</li> <li>15. Financial support of doctoral candidates.</li> <li>16. Digital transformation: doctoral candidates' research capacity support issues. Digitalization of the administration of doctoral schools.</li> <li>17. Postdoctoral support of PhD candidates.</li> <li>18. Research excellence and attractive institutional environment: The League of European Research Universities (LERU) innovative practices.</li> </ol>

– The comparative approach is crucial to enhance training courses, activities, and events with European policy instruments, quality standards, and practice excellence.

– The inclusive approach ensures the effective involvement of various groups such as doctoral

candidates at risk, diverse student populations, research supervisors, mentors, designers of doctoral programs, and managers of doctoral schools. This involvement takes place during innovative training courses, doctoral online networking, and various project events.

– The digital approach is to be implemented through the integration of technology in diverse activities: training sessions, summer school series, workshops, webinars, doctoral online network.

The educational course “European Standards of High-Quality Disciplinary Research” is aimed at supporting early career researchers’ methodological capacity, especially those in struggling-like situations, and sharing European and Ukrainian good practices in advancing doctoral candidates’ research competencies in line with ethical and methodological standards.

The purpose of the course “Quality of Supervision: Negotiation and Ethics in the Doctoral Journey” is to enrich doctoral students and academic supervisors’ practices of productive interaction based on mutual trust, support, and equality; discuss the pleasures and risks of supervision; present European online resources for improving research supervision and training.

The upcoming discussion session titled “Institutional Support of Doctoral Candidates’ Research Capacity: EU Approaches and Trends” will focus on various policies and measures related to the functioning of the Ukrainian doctoral education sector under martial law. The session will also shed light on the steps taken for modernization in line with Euro integration priorities.

The proposed educational courses aim to facilitate a cross-sectoral dialogue on solutions for the challenges faced by Ukrainian academia in reforming the doctoral education sector, within the framework of a sustainable, cohesive, and peaceful Europe.

**Conclusions.** The implementation of the proposed educational courses aims to achieve the fol-

lowing short-term effects: to ensure Ukrainian PhD students’ belonging and research engagement, return to stability, and help to alleviate psychological anxiety; to advance doctoral students’ research competencies in line with ethical and methodological standards; to minimize the risks of doctoral student attrition; to activate faculty and peer mentorship and professional networking within the academia regarding doctoral students at risk diversity; to diversify the institutional strategies of doctoral students’ academic and researcher identity development in war and post-war circumstances.

The medium-term effects include: establishing a longer-term mechanism of the doctoral students at risk successful completion rates; diversification of the university resilience strategies in crisis circumstances regarding doctoral education issues; broadening the understanding of the social dimensions of doctoral training and supervision in line with the European universities’ strategic priorities; enriching the national doctoral education sector reforming strategies with EU best practices; strengthening Ukrainian academia research capacity within the institutional and national levels.

The long-term effects of the project are as follows: strengthening the resilience and recovery capacity of Ukrainian academia under the Education 4.0-Ukrainian Sunrise Concept Plan; promoting innovative and high-quality doctoral research as a key factor in enhancing the research excellence and investment attractiveness of Ukrainian HEIs regionally and globally; sharing best policy instruments and practices for doctoral education through cross-national exchange within the context of the “sustainable, cohesive, and peaceful Europe” agenda.

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**АКАДЕМІЧНА ТА ПРОФЕСІЙНА ПІДТРИМКА ЗДОБУВАЧІВ СТУПЕНЯ  
ДОКТОРА ФІЛОСОФІЇ У КОНТЕКСТІ УПРАВЛІННЯ ЯКІСТЮ  
ДОКТОРСЬКОЇ ОСВІТИ В УМОВАХ ВІЙНИ**

Академічне залучення та підтримка вразливих категорій учасників освітнього процесу є ключовим питанням освітньої політики у ЄС та в усьому світі. У цьому контексті дослідження зосереджено на пошуку відповідних рішень щодо прогалин у зміцненні спроможності докторської освіти на інституційному та національному рівнях в Україні, насамперед через недооцінювання її суспільних вимірів, а також на синхронізації українських практик з європейською політикою та стандартами. Важливо здійснити наукові та прикладні рефлексії корисних ініціатив у зарубіжних країнах щодо інтеграції цінностей стійкості та сталості в академічний, дослідницький супровід молодих науковців, покращити їх залученість через розвиток інклюзивної та привітної культури в академічному середовищі, яка заохочує повагу, підтримку та наставництво.

У контексті євроінтеграційних стратегій реформування української системи підготовки докторів філософії авторами розроблено зміст вибіркових освітніх курсів, що, передбачається, сприятиме міжгалузевому діалогу в рамках адженди сталої, згуртованої та мирної Європи. Це забезпечить важливий контекст для просування нового типу академічної культури в українському академічному середовищі – культури соціальної відповідальності університету, яка надає пріоритет людським цінностям і враховує реальні потреби молодих дослідників, забезпечує їх академічну та соціальну підтримку у кризових обставинах професійного та особистого життя. Все більш гостро постають питання соціальної підтримки вразливих категорій здобувачів освіти докторського рівня – біженців, внутрішньо-переміщених осіб, студентів, що залишилися на територіях, близьких до зони бойових дій, докторантів у кризових життєвих ситуаціях та інші категорії.

**Ключові слова:** докторська освіта, академічна культура, розвиток академічної та дослідницької ідентичності молодих дослідників, вчені у кризових ситуаціях.