



2nd Global Conference on Multidisciplinary Academic Research
(GCMAR-2019), Bali, Indonesia
ISBN: 978-0-6482404-8-8
Asia Pacific Institute of Advanced Research (APIAR)
www.apiar.org.au

MALAYSIAN DOCTORAL DEGREE PATHWAYS: A REFLECTION

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to review the Malaysian Qualification Framework (MQF) 2.0 on the doctoral degree definition, standing, pathways and the standards applicable. This is in order to assess international comparability and possible attainment of doctoral degree learning outcomes to produce knowledge workers who are able to contribute new knowledge to the industry to enhance innovation and economic growth and prosperity. The method is to review the MQF MQF doctoral standing, pathways, standards and learning outcomes which will be contrasted with international benchmarks. The doctoral standards and the MQF 2.0 will also be reviewed for consistency. It is suggested that the MQF have a common doctoral level for new knowledge learning outcome and graduate attributes to create the knowledge worker. This however is utilised through three differentiated pathways research (Phd), mixed mode and coursework (doctoral) with differentiated assessment and standing of the doctoral degree. The coursework mode particularly raises the issue of quality assurance and ability to fulfil the desired outcome. This is especially so when with provision of three routes, only the PhD route termed as research. The MQF2.0 has a common level descriptor across all doctorates predicated on research (including new knowledge) as seen in para 87 and 88 of the Standards. The common one standard level research outcomes cutting across all doctorates is evident under Appendix 2. But the question is whether this is compromised by the differentiated assessment and mode particularly via a coursework doctoral degree as evident in the Standards. It is suggested that the three pathways departs from international practices. The usage of the terminology academic doctorate (PhD) and professional doctorate is seemingly conflicted with international usage and the coursework doctoral degree arguably a deviation from international benchmarks and bereft of the outcome required of a doctoral degree. This is an early paper attempting to review the doctoral degree under the MQF 2.0. It is also an attempt to link postgraduate doctoral education and the production of knowledge workers relevant to the industrial, digital age and beyond. It is an invitation for the relevant authorities to review the MQF 2.0 with due regard to the functionality, purpose, broadening of concept, standing and assessment (quality assurance) of dual PhD namely academic and professional doctoral degrees. This is to assure that the doctoral degrees are benchmarked to international practices including catering to the needs of industry for creation of new knowledge and innovation in industry environment that translates to a vibrant economy under the equivalent routes of academic and professional (professional work environment).

Keywords: Malaysian Qualification Framework 2.0 (MQF 2.0), Malaysian Standards on Masters and Doctoral Degrees, Research Degrees, Academic Doctorate, Professional Doctorate, Knowledge Worker, Industry Driven and Quality Assurance and Research Outcomes.