I've done a coursework masters, now I want to do a doctorate: Can I?

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Overview
- Findings from the ALTC/OLT project
- Short break
- Discussion of the implications at the c/w and doctoral level:
  - Curriculum
  - Pedagogical
  - Administrative
  - Financial etc

What do we know about C/w Masters Enrolments?
Cohorts (Domestic/International)? Funding?

C/w Masters Enrolments
- From 2003-2009 a 36% increase in C/w Masters enrolments—domestic and international (14% decrease in Research Masters and 26% increase in doctoral enrolments) (DEEWR, 2011)
- Domestic-only enrolment has increased about 84% from 2000-2010 (DEEWR, 2011)

Research vs. Coursework (DEEWR, 2010)

C/w Masters Age 2004-2009
- Data suggest that:
  - 20-29 age are likely to be international students
  - 30-39 age are likely to be domestic students
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C/wk enrolment by gender 2004-2009</th>
<th>Significance in Australia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph showing enrolment data" /></td>
<td>• Tuition for domestic students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• C/w Masters Data</strong></td>
<td>– Undergraduate degrees partially funded by Government and by student</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Female enrolments have increased significantly since 2004 whereas male enrolments decreased</td>
<td>– Postgraduate coursework degrees fully funded by student (employer) – and so why the increase?</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Pie chart" /></td>
<td>• Research degrees fully funded by the Government through the (RTS) – so why the decrease in Research Masters?</td>
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**“Traditional” pathways to doctorate**

- First class Honours degree but...Declining interest in Honours degrees in some disciplines
- Research Masters/Mphil

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**As Palmer (2011) suggests**

- “Among other things this suggests that the number of research candidates with prior coursework postgraduate qualifications is substantially higher than that [16%] and these would in many cases have informed selection decisions for admission to the research degree, if not be the principal basis for admission” (p.3)

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**HDR (PhD and Prof Doc) data**

- Mean age at commencement 33 years
- 40% undertaking doctorate part-time (increased by 10% in 2010)
- Given these data what might this mean for doctoral:
  - Entry?
  - Curriculum?
  - Pedagogy?
Introduction of coursework in PhD

• Formal award coursework being introduced into the PhD in various Australian universities, and
  – Rate of interest increasing rapidly
  – Wide range of curriculum, still in flux
• What might all this mean for alignment of Masters and Doctoral courses?

Research Design

• Across four universities interviews with
  – 35 PhD (note not Prof Doc) students who entered with c/w Masters
  – 21 supervisors of PhD candidates who entered with c/w Masters
  – 18 conveners of c/w Masters programs where graduates are known to go onto a PhD

Initial Findings from interviews

• Increasing diversity (across universities and disciplines)
  1. Program types, other than conventional programs
  2. Candidate selection
  3. Candidate and supervisor support
  4. Administrative issues
  5. Future directions

Program types

• Move in universities to increased flexibility for PG students in terms of entry and choice of courses
• Strategies include:
  – combining existing degree programs (e.g. joint Masters/PhD) and designing new programs (e.g. four year PhD) [continued]

Program types cont.

• ‘Packaged student offers’, incorporating flexible doctoral pathways
• Accredited exit points (e.g. Graduate Diplomas)
• ‘Professional’ and ‘Practice’ doctorates
• C/w Masters that allows choice part way through:
  – More research intensive or more c/w

Program types cont.

• Coursework Masters gaining more traction as a pathway to doctorate
• Professional practice is often used by mature-age, professionals, even if applying for a program that is not related to professional practice
• What might this mean for doctoral entry, including Professional Doctorates?
2. Candidate selection

- H1 *equivalence* the standard.
- Equivalence of C/w Masters equals substantial C/w M project at HD plus overall good grades
- C/w Masters entering PhD tend to be high achieving and mature age

Candidate selection cont.

- International Masters generally considered to have sufficient research component
- Majority of PhD students with Masters background are international students
- Two year Masters is attractive to international students particularly in applying for Permanent Residency (PR)

Selection cont.

- Students generally positive about C/w Masters as preparation for PhD; supervisors less positive (mainly lack of research methods)
- Supervisors and coordinators views were that C/w Masters as a pathway to PhD was (still) the exception rather than rule
- Trends to greater integration of work, education and research

Case study: Doctoral students 2005-11

- From Faculty of Arts & Soc Sci at one Go8 university cf C/w Masters and Honours:
  - Attrition rate for Hons higher than C/w Masters
  - C/w M drop out earlier than Honours
  - Higher continuing number C/w Masters (PT)
  - Completion time for C/w Masters < Honours
- Overall C/w M entrants do as well, if not slightly better than Honours entrants

3. Candidate and supervisor support

- Only some universities allow access for C/w Masters students to the same support for HDRs
- Yet, peer and supervisor support identified as most important for student completion & desire to go onto doctorate
- Part-time students tend not to avail themselves of support services

Student and supervisor support (cont)

- Most universities don’t require ‘qualified’ supervisors for C/w Masters (cf requirements for HDR supervisors)
4. Administrative issues
- Most Australian Universities don’t record in their student databases whether a PhD candidate entered with a Coursework or Research Masters
- Is this important?

5. Future directions
- Issues to be addressed…
  - Curriculum e.g.
    - Flexible pathways, alignment and articulation
    - Inclusion of research methods courses and research projects in all/some programs?
    - The role of Prof Docs?
  - Exit strategies (especially with the new AQF)?
  - Selection e.g.
    - What is First Class Honours equivalence in C/w Masters?

Issues cont.
- Pedagogy and supervisor development e.g.
  - Should C/w Masters supervisors of research projects have some form of development?
- Support for C/w Masters students e.g.
  - when doing a research project should they be able to access all the support available to HDRs?
- Administration e.g.
  - What does this mean for policies on entry requirements/scholarships etc?

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