



EastAsiaNet International Benchmark for Doctorates (PhDs) in East Asian Studies^{i,ii}

These ideas aim to work towards an international consensus of major issues in PhD training. They certainly will be at odds with practices and rules in some contexts, but the aim is to bring to the fore any impediments to collaboration and to flag up differences so that they can be discussed. They are looking into the future rather than judging the present or past. The first part consists of ideas for “minimal” targets, while the second part describes an “ideal” type PhD degree holder.

A postgraduate research degree in East Asian Studies involves:

1. Prerequisite university level preparation of normally five years full time study, including at least one years' full time training in understanding the history, culture and/or society of at least one East Asian country or region.
 - *This reflects the majority of cases. There are cases of rresearch students who have successfully embarked on their research after four years of preparation in undergraduate (UG) and taught postgraduate (MA) courses. The importance is that they are academically fully prepared and have at least one year of training in dealing with the area of their study. Given the fact that many relevant UG degrees tend to include a propaedeutic language year and/or a year abroad, and that the combination of UG and MA years in perhaps most cases add up to 5 years, this seems a reasonable target.*
2. Prerequisite knowledge of at least one East Asian language at a level appropriate for the research to be undertaken, in addition to a high level of proficiency in English.
 - *The level of an East Asian language should as a minimum be adequate for the research to be undertaken. There are many ways of learning a language, formal and informal. In most cases one should insist that there is a functional grasp of the relevant East Asian language for the purpose of the research. It is assumed that all researchers in East Asian studies should have a high level of English proficiency in order to interact in the international research community. In practice, postgraduates will often have more languages, and universities across the world will have formal additional requirements about knowledge of other languages.*
3. A three-years full-time research period focused on one or several societies and/or cultures in East Asia and based on original empirical sources from that or those society/ies.
 - *In addition to fulfilling all main criteria for postgraduate research, i.e. that it should be an “original contribution to knowledge,” “innovative,” and “publishable” in an academic context, it should take East Asian societies and/or cultures as its object and use original empirical sources (e.g. literature, artefacts, archival sources, field observations, and interviews) from that area.*

4. Opportunities to continuously improve and consolidate proficiency in relevant East Asian language(s).
 - *This is an issue of work environment and informal practices, not a requirement for formal classes. Where local conditions are not conducive to continuous language improvement and consolidation, measures should be put in place to encourage it.*
5. Opportunities to participate in international postgraduate research training together with peers during the two first years of research, including opportunities to present research plans and issues for critique in peer group.
 - *Participation in seminars, summer schools, postgraduate network conferences is an essential part of postgraduate training. The emphasis here is on international collaboration among young scholars in East Asian Studies to avoid such scholars working in isolation or with exclusive contact to young scholars in other subjects.*
6. Specific training in the use of archives, observation, interviews, and media sources in East Asian country/ies and regions relevant to the research, including issues of research ethic and risk assessment.
 - *Generic training courses at most universities tend to overlook the specific problems of the East Asian region. There is a particular responsibility to develop international training in these areas.*
7. Opportunities to collaborate with and receive training from peers and experienced researchers based in and/or originating in East Asian country/ies and regions relevant to the research.
 - *In addition to general opportunities for international research collaboration, there is a particular need to ensure that young scholars gain experience in collaboration with researchers from their target region.*
8. Extensive periods (typically between 6 and 12 months) of research in East Asian country/ies and regions relevant to the research.
 - *In most cases this would be a necessity. For some, e.g. people researching ancient East Asian civilisations and other subjects where the empirical material exists in major libraries, museums and archives outside the region, the need will be different*
9. Opportunities to present preliminary research results at international East Asian area studies conferences.
 - *This is an integral part of postgraduate research training. The emphasis here is that participation in conferences on East Asian Studies (or parts of the region) is essential, not discipline or generic topic conferences.*
10. Opportunities to develop awareness of issues of epistemology, methodology and theory springing from the boundary between disciplines and area studies and to develop ability to collaborate across these boundaries.
 - *This is important where theories, models and approaches of disciplines are poorly developed to deal with East Asian countries. The aim is to ensure that area studies specialists acquire sufficient disciplinary skills and that disciplinary specialists acquire area studies skills that will ensure that theorising, modelling, categorisations, conceptualisations and use of empirical sources are based on critical diligence.*

A holder of a PhD degree in East Asian Studies should ideally:

1. Possess a broad understanding of at least one East Asian Country in its history, culture, politics, social conditions and regional role and be able to teach courses on this to undergraduates.

- *The ideal PhD degree holder will have abroad, strong and critical knowledge of major issues and contexts of his/her country of study, and should be able to discuss it in terms broader than his/her special area of research.*
2. Master at least one East Asian language at a high level, be able to analyse and discuss the language and its use with professional confidence, and be able to teach the use of the language or aspects of its use to undergraduates.
 - *The ideal PhD holder will not only have a very good language proficiency, but will have reflected on it and be able to convey experience of using the language to others without necessarily to be a trained linguist.*
 3. Be able to develop research agendas and carry out independent, original and innovative research informed by advanced theories, using state-of-the-art methodologies and based on empirical evidence in a major area of specialisation, relevant to at least one East Asian country.
 - *These are the ideal mainstream skills achieved through PhD study.*
 4. Have the ability to collaborate internationally on research on at least one country in East Asia, using an East Asian language and English as major vehicles for research communication, and using empirical evidence in an East Asian language as a matter of routine.
 - *This ideal much be achieved through further international collaboration and research exchange.*
 5. Be able to train postgraduate researchers in advanced approaches to at least one country or region in East Asia.
 - *This ideal can only be achieved through training, experience and exchange. Where junior colleagues are not in a position to supervise postgraduate research students independently, they should be involved in supervision and training processes that develop their skills in this respect.*

ⁱ On behalf of EastAsiaNet, the Benchmark was drafted by Prof. Flemming Christiansen (WREAC).

ⁱⁱ This benchmark was adopted by EastAsiaNet at the Meeting in Venice, November 2008.