

# **Assessing the quality of the overall training program and outcome of research for higher degrees at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, during the past 6 years**

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## **Introduction**

Doctoral education is meant to create and sustain an intellectual community. It trains another generation of professional researchers and academics. Hence, with the enormous importance of assessing quality of doctoral education comes the need for accountability. It leads to development of strategies to improve the quality of research degrees produced by the institutions and provide a reliable guidance for selection of doctoral programs.

## **Objectives**

To assess the quality of the overall training program and outcome of higher degrees by research, awarded by the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo.

## **Methods**

All PhD and M.Phil candidates who completed their research degrees from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, during the past 6 years were selected as study subjects (n=18). A data form was used to collect information regarding the effective period for completion of higher degrees using past records maintained by the Research and Higher Degrees Committee, Faculty of Medicine. Data was also collected from the candidates via a self-administered questionnaire concerning program characteristics, placement after graduation, publications. Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo.

## **Results**

A total of 14 candidates (78%) responded to the questionnaire. A majority of candidates (over 70%) were satisfied with the overall quality of their program. However, only 50% reported that their research facilities and workspaces were “excellent” or “good”. Moreover, 70% were not satisfied with their computer facilities. More than 70% felt they benefited from the program’s intellectual environment. Almost 79% of the candidates are currently engaged in work similar to the field of their Ph.D/M.Phil degrees. However, only 40% were satisfied with the opportunities available for interaction between research students. Importantly, over 90% have published articles in refereed journals. Interestingly, 57% of candidates were found to be placed in academic positions. In terms of completion of the degree, the effective period for 57% (n=8) of candidates was 6-8 years, for 29% (n=4) it was 4-5 years. Only 14% (n=2) completed their degree within 3-4 years. The average completion time was 6 (range: 3-8) years.

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, the majority of candidates appeared to be satisfied with the overall quality of the program for awarding of higher degrees by research. However, provision of research facilities, workspaces and access to computers was less satisfactory. The outcome of the program was excellent with more than 90% have publications in peer reviewed journals and more than 50% currently placed in academic positions.