

PH.D OR APPLIED DOCTORATE NOT ALL DOCTORAL DEGREES ARE A PH.D

You've decided to pursue the highest degree possible, a doctorate. Now it's time to choose the type of doctoral degree—research or applied—you'll set out to earn. Although both degrees offer a rigorous educational experience, they are different, both in focus and in content. Read on to find out what distinguishes the two degrees and learn the key factors that will help you choose the right degree for your goals.

 **Colorado Technical University**
ARE YOU IN?



THE BIG DIFFERENCE

Despite an increase in individuals earning a doctoral degree, only an estimated 1% of the U.S. population¹ holds a doctoral degree. If you've decided to join the ranks of that one percent, then you know the commitment. Most doctoral programs take between 3-10 years to complete, and those years are full of academic rigor, so knowing the difference between doctoral degree programs is critical to achieving your goals.

You are probably familiar with the Ph.D. designation, a doctoral degree also known as a Doctor of Philosophy. A Ph.D. can be earned in a variety of fields, from psychology and education to science and engineering. However, there is another doctoral degree—an applied (or professional) doctorate—that you can earn. Degrees like an M.D. (Doctor of Medicine) and a J.D. (Juris Doctor) are commonly recognized applied doctorates, though there are many other fields of study you might pursue.

Ph.D. or Applied Doctorate?

Ph.D. is a research-based degree that asks you to explore, investigate and contemplate.

An applied doctorate is a professional degree that challenges you to grow, integrate and apply what you learn into your profession.



SO WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

The biggest distinction between the Ph.D. and the applied doctorate is focus.

A Ph.D. is considered a research-based degree, whereby you must master a subject completely, and then extend the body of knowledge about the subject. Comparatively, an applied doctorate requires that you also master a subject completely, and then apply what you know—in theory and in practice—in your chosen field. The applied doctorate is a popular choice among seasoned professionals looking to deepen their expertise in a key area of their profession.

HOW TO CHOOSE: PH.D. OR APPLIED DOCTORATE?

Choosing the right degree can feel like a tough choice. But really it comes down to three major questions:

1 | What is my long-term goal?

Before enrolling in any doctoral program, it's important to assess your long-term goals. Start by asking: *How will I use my degree?*

For some careers, a doctoral degree is a minimum requirement. You might also seek the degree simply to gain deeper knowledge about a specific subject area. Whatever your reason, think about how a doctoral degree will help

you achieve the career success you want. For example, do you want to pursue a Ph.D. in Psychology or a Psy.D., which is an applied doctorate in the same field? While both programs offer similar academic rigor, they may be treated differently professionally.

- ▶ **Ph.D.:** When you pursue a Ph.D. you are training for research. It is the standard degree sought by professionals who plan to move into research-based careers, like teaching. In fact, the Ph.D. is usually required to earn a tenured faculty position at most traditional universities and colleges. Of course, a Ph.D. doesn't limit you to a career as a professor. You might also pursue research-based careers in areas such as psychology, education or science.
- ▶ **Scholar Practitioner:** An applied doctorate offers the same status and challenge of a Ph.D., however it is most appropriate for those seeking professional careers, rather than academic. The focus of an applied doctorate is less on research, and more on practicing and applying academic theory in a practical setting. For example, you might pursue a D.M., or **Doctor of Management**, (www.coloradotech.edu/degrees/doctorates/management) degree to enhance your knowledge in the field of business management. The knowledge you gain in the program can have direct application in the work setting, letting you apply theories you learned in an active way.

2 | How do student success metrics compare?

A doctoral degree can give you an advantage professionally, but it doesn't guarantee success. That said, it's still a good idea to research student success metrics, so you're aware of the potential professional advantages before you enroll in either a Ph.D. or applied doctorate program. Here are a few student success metrics to think about:

▶ What are the graduation requirements?

All doctoral programs have a dissertation element that involves months of research and writing to produce quality, publish-ready work. Some programs have residency requirements, which means you'll need to consider geography and your ability to attend face-to-face sessions. Get to know the requirements, so you can make an informed decision about whether you're able to complete them.

For instance, as a complement to CTU's online Doctoral courses, students are required to attend at least five quarterly symposia over the course of their program. At the symposia, students experience in-person instruction, meet with their faculty mentor, and network with fellow doctoral students. Students are required to attend symposium in their first term to develop a strong foundation for their program. Graduation also requires successful defense of a dissertation that requires a literature review and a research proposal.

WHAT OBSTACLES DO STUDENTS COMMONLY FACE & HOW HAVE THEY OVERCOME THEM?

Roughly 1% of the U.S. population¹ successfully completes a doctoral degree. To be a part of this academy, you must identify the potential hurdles you'll face and make a focused plan to complete your goal. There are many reasons why students may not complete their degree—from family issues or medical concerns to simply procrastinating on their dissertation defense. As you consider a doctorate, ask to speak with an admission advisor or program Dean at your chosen university to learn more about the resilience it takes to succeed in their doctoral program. For more, visit CTU's LinkedIn group and ask doctoral students and alums what attributes they believe are critical to achieving this top degree.

8 Out of 10



Doctoral students who attended CTU's symposium reported they were likely or very likely to recommend CTU to a friend or colleague.

Source: CTU Symposium Survey of Spring 2013 Attendees

► Where are the grads now?

Of the students who successfully graduated from the doctoral program you are considering, what types of careers did they move on to pursue? LinkedIn's alumni tool is useful to explore student pathways. Also look to the university to provide insight by speaking with the doctoral program chair or faculty members to learn more about alumni who have moved on to successful careers.

3 | Do you have what it takes?

A doctoral degree is a rigorous academic program which can take three years or more to complete. When considering if the time is right to pursue your degree, think about:

- **Time:** Are you able to commit to extensive study and dissertation development, which will require you to make sacrifices or forego personal activities to be successful?
- **Self-motivation:** A doctoral degree takes a high level of discipline and drive. Are you motivated enough to keep pace with degree requirements, even when it gets tough?
- **Curiosity:** This is especially important if you're pursuing a Ph.D., which requires more research, but also important for applied doctorate degrees. Do you have the ability to explore beyond what is dictated by your instructors to uncover new ways of applying what you've learned to your profession?
- **Adaptability:** The path to a doctoral degree is different than the one you took to your bachelor's or master's degree. Can you tolerate change to chart a new course, especially when it comes to thinking at a higher level?

More Than 93%

of current doctoral students who attended CTU's symposium reported that the in person interactions fostered a strong learning community.

Source: CTU Symposium Survey of Spring 2013

- **Maturity:** A doctoral program can be less structured, giving you more disciplined freedom to pursue your literature review and dissertation proposal. You are responsible for expanding your breadth of knowledge, setting your own goals and determining how you'll meet deadlines. Are you prepared for that level of responsibility, or do you have a support system outside of the faculty members who will help hold you accountable?

THE BOTTOM LINE?

There are distinct paths to a doctorate degree, depending on your career goals. Doctoral degree programs vary dramatically when it comes to classroom experience and program requirements—including GPA and essay requirements for CTU's distinct program. Some universities require full-time on campus attendance, while others like CTU offer a hybrid model so you can work toward your degree online with select opportunities to reap the network building and faculty interaction. Assess your readiness alongside these factors to choose the program that best fits your goals and your life.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT DEGREE FOR YOUR CAREER GOALS

This guide gives you a snapshot of the demands of a doctoral degree program and has hopefully helped you determine the type of doctorate you'll pursue—research or applied. If you choose to take the path of an applied doctorate, CTU offers 15 Doctoral degree programs in Management and Computer Science. A member of our dedicated Doctoral Admissions team is ready to discuss how a CTU Doctoral degree might be the right choice for your future.

If you have questions along the way, we're here to help. Call or visit us online to learn more.

Call: 866.813.1836 ext. 38993

Visit: coloradotech.edu/degrees/doctorates

¹<http://www.petersons.com/graduate-schools/phd-programs-rigorous-educational.aspx>

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