

Working Document
Guidelines for the Review of Professional Doctoral Programs for Practitioners
University Council on Graduate Study
University of Pittsburgh
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The recipient of a professional doctorate for practitioners must have acquired a complete and thorough understanding of a broad body of knowledge in a particular field so that he or she can speak and act with authority in the field. The professional doctor must be able to take a responsible and independent role in the practice of the profession.

A professional doctoral program for practitioners must provide a coherent program designed to impart the mastery of a substantial and complex body of knowledge that will serve as preparation for leadership and excellence in the practice of the profession. The program must include study of the basic sciences or fundamental methods lying behind the profession. In addition to providing the student with understanding of the theoretical underlying structure and the basic science or scholarship which lead the advancement of the profession, the program must include the most current applied information, which must be offered by faculty at the forefront of the profession. Thus the student must demonstrate mastery of a large body of information covering a broad field of knowledge that is evolving with time.

The student must be given the tools to keep current after graduation as the profession changes. The student should be required to have a deep understanding of research in the applied field and some understanding of research in the basic underlying field. It is essential that the student be able to evaluate, interpret, and apply research.

Structure of the Program

The minimum admission requirements must be the same as for all graduate programs at the University of Pittsburgh. In addition, the student must have completed a defined set of pre-requisites so that all students will enter with required basic knowledge.

The curriculum should provide sufficient course work to enable the student to acquire a broad and thorough knowledge of the field. A comprehensive examination will be used to assess the student's mastery of a substantial and complex body of knowledge.

The curriculum should contain a research component to achieve the goal for the research competence of the graduate. Students should deliver a report based on research that demonstrates both mastery of their subject matter and a high level of communication skills.

The curriculum should contain an internship, a practicum or a clinical component. Each experience should have associated with it clear goals and objectives, a statement of what skills the student should master, a statement of how those skills will be assessed objectively by the academic program and what steps the program will take in response to those assessments. In addition, the program should have an objective way to evaluate the site where internships and/or clinical rotations take place and assure the expertise of those responsible for administering training and instruction.

To attain the depth of knowledge and experience required by someone earning a doctorate, the program should include as a minimum 9 semesters of full-time work. Of this no more than one-third should be internships or clinical work. A student must attain a 3.00 QPA in order to maintain good standing and be graduated.

Recognition of the Degree.

A professional doctorate in a particular field should be recognized by the public, by employers, and by faculty at other universities as a degree of high standing. Graduates will be joining the ranks of a recognized group of professionals. If the program is an accredited program, the standards of the accrediting body for a professional doctorate must be met. Evidence of professional doctorates in the field at peer institutions offering the highest quality programs should be presented.