

**University Policy 3.01.10****Advanced Doctoral Learners****Policy Revision Approval Date: November 18, 2011****Policy Revision Effective Date: January 1, 2012****Procedure Approval Date: March 31, 2020****Procedure Effective Date: July 1, 2020****POLICY STATEMENT**

Capella University requires that all doctoral learners successfully complete all didactic coursework, residencies, and comprehensive examination courses prior to conducting dissertation or doctoral capstone research. Capella University requires that all doctoral learners successfully complete the dissertation or doctoral capstone requirements of their program for degree conferral. The advanced doctoral phase is considered complete when learners successfully meet all of the designated requirements within the time frames established by the university. Learners are required to maintain good academic standing as defined in university policy *3.01.04 Academic Standing*. All doctoral learners are expected to remain continuously registered once they begin the advanced doctoral phase of their program, registering every quarter for the appropriate course in accordance with the advanced doctoral course sequence. Doctoral learners must complete the requirements for their program listed in Capella's *University Catalog* and the *Capella University Doctoral Manual*.

**RATIONALE**

Capella University recognizes that the completion of a doctoral degree requires the demonstration of unique competencies not present in other degree levels. This policy outlines and defines the procedures and requirements of these program components necessary for doctoral degree conferral.

**DEFINITIONS****Advanced Doctoral Phase**

The advanced doctoral phase begins after a learner has completed all didactic coursework and residencies. An advanced doctoral learner's requirements include any remaining courses in the comprehensive examination, dissertation, or doctoral capstone course sequence, and any additional program requirements as published in the *University Catalog*.

**Didactic Coursework**

Didactic coursework refers to academic courses that focus predominantly on instruction of theories, facts, and competencies.

**Inactivity**

A learner is considered "inactive" during any academic quarter in which they are not registered in any Capella course (including non-credit courses, residencies, etc.).

## PROCEDURES

### I. Comprehensive Examination Requirements

- A. It is expected that learners will require no more than one quarter to complete their comprehensive examination course requirements.
- B. A comprehensive examination course is considered complete when learners successfully complete all of its requirements and they have been reported complete by the assigned faculty member.
- C. Failure to successfully complete the comprehensive examination within the stated time frame will result in a Not Satisfactory (“NS”) grade.
- D. An “NS” grade indicates failure of the comprehensive examination and failure to maintain good academic standing, and may result in a comprehensive examination retake or administrative withdrawal from the university. Learners should refer to the *Capella University Doctoral Manual* and university policy 3.01.04 *Academic Standing* for additional information.

### II. Dissertation and Doctoral Capstone Requirements

- A. The advanced doctoral phase is considered complete when learners successfully complete all of the designated dissertation or doctoral capstone requirements.
- B. A Not Satisfactory (“NS”) grade or a “Non-Performance” competency evaluation indicates a learner’s failure of the dissertation or doctoral capstone and failure to maintain good academic standing, and may result in administrative withdrawal from the university. Learners should refer to the *Capella University Doctoral Manual, Dissertation Manual*, and university policy 3.01.04 *Academic Standing* for additional information.

### III. PhD Learners Change of Program Options

- A. Prior to initiating a degree program change, PhD learners are encouraged to consult with academic advising to discuss options and considerations for the change.
- B. PhD Advanced Doctoral Learners at the Comprehensive Examination
  1. PhD learners who have not begun or completed their comprehensive examination requirements may request a change of degree under university policies 2.02.07 *Changing Academic Program* and 3.01.04 *Academic Standing*.
  2. PhD learners who fail to complete their comprehensive examination requirements but are otherwise in good standing with Capella University may request a change of degree to a predetermined, aligned master’s degree program, through the change of degree process described in university policies 2.02.07 *Changing Academic Program* and 3.01.04 *Academic Standing*. PhD learners who elect to change to the predetermined master’s degree option will be required to complete the master’s-level capstone(s) to be eligible for conferral of the master’s degree.
  3. PhD learners who request a change of degree to the predetermined, aligned master’s degree program are not eligible for readmission to any doctoral program at Capella University.
- C. PhD Advanced Doctoral Learners at the Dissertation

1. PhD learners who have not begun or completed their dissertation requirements may request a change of degree under university policies *2.02.07 Changing Academic Program* and *3.01.04 Academic Standing*.
  2. PhD learners who fail to complete their dissertation requirements but have passed their comprehensive examination and are otherwise in good standing with Capella University may request a change of degree to a predetermined, aligned master's degree program, through the change of degree process, under university policies *2.02.07 Changing Academic Program* and *3.01.04 Academic Standing*. Learners who elect to change to the predetermined option may be eligible for conferral of the master's degree.
  3. PhD learners who request a change of degree to the predetermined, aligned master's degree program are not eligible for readmission to any doctoral program at Capella University.
- D. PhD learners with a conferred master's degree from Capella University may not request a change of degree to a conferred master's degree program. Learners who have previously earned a Capella University master's degree from Capella University will be ineligible for conferral of a duplicate second degree.

#### IV. Inactivity and Advanced Doctoral Learners

- A. Doctoral learners do not have access to their dissertation or doctoral capstone courseroom during quarters in which they are not registered in a dissertation or doctoral capstone course.
- B. Doctoral learners may access support services such as Academic Advising, Financing Support, Disability Services, Doctoral Affairs, and Military Support during quarters in which they are not registered in a dissertation or doctoral capstone course.
- C. Doctoral learners who have not registered for a dissertation or doctoral capstone course for two quarters may have their mentor reassigned by the school and may need to request a new mentor.
- D. Doctoral learners must be registered in dissertation, doctoral capstone, or program-specific advanced doctoral courses throughout the quarter in which they complete their degree requirements.

#### V. Institutional Review Board (IRB) Considerations for Advanced Doctoral Learners

- A. Data collected without IRB approval may not be used in a dissertation or doctoral capstone.
- B. IRB approval will be suspended during quarters in which learners are not registered in dissertation, doctoral capstone, or program-specific advanced doctoral courses; therefore, learners are not permitted to engage in recruitment activities, direct interaction with participants, data collection, or analysis of identifiable data.

#### VI. All procedures in this policy apply to learners in GuidedPath and FlexPath programs.

### **POLICY OWNER**

Academic Owner: Office of Research and Scholarship

Operations Owner: Doctoral Affairs

**RELATED DOCUMENTS**

University policy 2.02.07 Changing Academic Program

University policy 3.01.04 Academic Standing

University policy 3.03.01 Human Research Protections

*Capella University Doctoral Manual*

*Dissertation Manual*

*University Catalog*

*HRP Standard Operating Procedures*

**REVISION HISTORY**

Original Policy Approval Date: 11-18-2011

Revision Dates: 1-1-13; 10-31-13; 6-30-16; 8-23-18; 3-31-20

Administrative edits as result of ongoing review: 4-17-12; 7-28-14; 12-1-14; 8-17-15; 1-1-19; 7-1-20