Doctoral Pathway Frequently Asked Questions

What are the different types of doctoral programs in education?

Broadly speaking, there are two types of educational doctoral degrees: a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) and Ed.D. (Doctor of Education). A Ph.D. tends to be more theoretical, while a Ed.D. tends to be more applied. We sometimes refer to a Ph.D. as being an *academic* doctoral degree, while an Ed.D. degree is called a *professional* doctoral degree. Ph.D programs almost always have a thesis component as a culminating assignment. Ed.D. degrees usually have either a thesis or a major project as a culminating assignment.

People tend to be more familiar with Ph.Ds than Ed.D. degrees, although there are some high profile Ed.D degrees around the world (e.g., Harvard has one). You'll find that there are lots of university and college professors who have Ed.Ds rather than Ph.Ds. You'll also find people with Ed.Ds and Ph.Ds working at the Ministry as well as in senior leadership positions at the Board level. Both are prestigious doctoral-level degrees.

Why would I want a Ph.D or an Ed.D?

If you want to be a university professor, you will need a Ph.D. or Ed.D. Many Ontario Colleges are also preferentially hiring instructors with a Ph.D. or Ed.D. An Ed.D. or Ph.D. might make you a stronger candidate if you want to work at the ministry, or at a school board, or as an educational consultant of some kind. Of course, many people pursue a Ph.D. or Ed.D. simply because they like learning and doing research.

How long is a doctoral program?

A Ph.D. program is generally 4-5 years long, taken full-time. In practice, most people take 5 or 6 years to complete a Ph.D. Ed.D degrees seem to be a bit more variable in length. Most are 4-5 years long, but I've seen some Ed.D programs, at other universities, that can be completed in as little as two years, full-time.

Is it true that some Ph.Ds programs are free for students?

Yes, some education Ph.Ds are fully funded for students. This generally means you get your tuition paid by the university and you get a guarantee that you will earn a certain amount of money as a graduate assistant for the first four years of your Ph.D. As you can imagine, there are a limited number of openings for fully-funded Ph.Ds each year, and competition for these Ph.D. spots is fierce.

There are also Ph.D. programs that are not funded. You pay tuition for these Ph.Ds and you're not guaranteed that you'll be hired as a graduate assistant. Generally, these programs are taken by people who have full-jobs outside of the University (e.g., a school teacher or a principal). Ed.D. programs also tend to be taken by educational professionals, like teachers or principals.

Ed.D. programs in Canada are, to the best of my knowledge, always unfunded. There may be some funded Ed.D programs in other countries.

At OISE, we have fully-funded Ph.Ds (which OISE calls Full-time Ph.D.), non-funded Ph.Ds (which OISE calls Flex-time PhDs), and Ed.D. programs. The Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning does not currently offer an Ed.D degree, but we're thinking of adding one.

Have any MT graduates been accepted into a Ph.D. with full funding? Yes.

Why would a University offer a fully-funded Ph.D.? How is that financially feasible for the university?

Financially, it is not a great deal for the university. The Ontario Government offsets some of the costs by providing universities with subsidies for creating Ph.D. spots. However, fully-funded Ph.D. programs, in general, do not bring the university much income, if any. The main motivation for providing full funding to students is to attract top-notch student research talent from across the country. We want to attract students who will work with our professors to conduct high quality research and enhance the university's national and international reputation.

How many Ph.D. spots are available at OISE each year?

In CTL, we have approximately 18-20 full-time Ph.D. spots and 10-12 flex-time Ph.D spots each year. Across OISE there are approximately 60 or so fully funded Ph.D. spots available each year and approximately the same number of flex-mode Ph.D spots.

Do you need a thesis to apply to a doctoral program?

Doctoral programs are looking for evidence that you've conducted research. A thesis is one way of demonstrating that. However, many programs are willing to consider candidates who can offer other evidence of research experience. Some doctoral programs ask you to upload research papers that you've written, or other writing samples. Others doctoral programs require a Qualifying Research Paper (QRP) in lieu of a thesis. If a doctoral program explicitly states that it <u>requires</u> a Masters' thesis, and doesn't accept other evidence of research, then you aren't eligible to apply to that program.

What is a QRP (Qualifying Research Paper)?

If you apply to a Doctoral program and don't have a Master's thesis, you'll likely need to provide evidence of your research experience in other ways. Some programs require a QRP in place of a thesis. A QRP is generally a paper that describes a research study you have conducted. If you're asked to provide a QRP, carefully read the program's requirements for their QRP. You can use one or both of your MT research papers to build the QRP. Some doctoral programs will accept a previously-accepted peer reviewed publication or conference paper as an acceptable QRP.

Does a MT degree make me eligible to apply to ALL education-related doctoral programs?

Having a Master's degree (of ANY kind) doesn't mean you will be eligible to apply to all education Ph.D. and Ed.D. programs. You'll only be eligible to apply to some. Many Ph.D. and

Ed.D. programs require a Master's degree *in a particular field*. Carefully read the admissions requirements of each program that interests you. In some cases, you may not have the necessary qualifications to apply.

For example, OISE's APHD department currently offers a "Doctor of Philosophy in Developmental Psychology & Education". They require:

An appropriate honours bachelor's degree (4-year) and Master's degree in Psychology or equivalent with standing equivalent to a University of Toronto A- or better in the Master's degree

Most M.A., M.Ed and MT graduates will not be eligible to apply to this doctoral program. An MT degree would not be considered a "Master's degree in Psychology or equivalent". Neither would a MA degree in (say) Higher Education, or a M.Ed. degree in (say) Social Justice Education. Having a MA, M.Ed., or MT degree does not mean you are automatically qualified to apply for <u>any</u> doctoral level program in education. You'll only be qualified to apply to some.

What qualifications are required in order to apply to a doctoral program?

Admissions requirements vary from program to program. Here are some of the more common requirements:

• Four-year undergraduate degree with a grade-point average above a particular threshold (e.g., B+). Sometimes Ph.D. programs require their applicants to have an undergraduate major in a particular field.

- Master's degree in a relevant field with a grade-point average above a particular threshold (e.g., A-).
- If you are an international student, you will have to demonstrate language proficiency
- Some programs may require professional experience (e.g., x years of teaching experience)
- Some programs may require volunteer experience (e.g., x years of volunteer experience)

What are universities looking for when they assess doctoral applications?

Again, this will vary from program to program. However, in general, I would suggest that the following list of factors are the ones that are most important when applications are assessed (these are not in any particular order):

- Grade point average of the applicant's Master's degree and undergraduate degree.
- Quality of the applicant's Statement of Intent. The Statement of Intent describes the applicant's research interests and frames a potential topic of research.
- The degree to which the applicant's research interests (as presented in the Statement of Intent) align with the research agenda of one of the professors in the faculty (i.e., is there a professor willing to supervise the applicant?).
- Strength of letters of recommendation.
- Evidence of the applicant's writing ability. (Some Universities require you to submit writing samples). Writing would likely be assessed in the Statement of Intent as well.

- Ph.D. programs often look for evidence of prior experience doing research, and Ed.D programs often look for evidence of professional work in the related field.
- Strength of CV e.g., relevant work history, awards, grants received, publications, conferences publications, workshops, relevant job experiences.

Different doctoral programs will have different ways of weighing these factors and deciding who should receive an offer.

Who assesses doctoral applications?

At OISE, the Registrar's Office does an initial analysis to ensure the candidate qualifies in terms of basic prerequisites, like grade point average. Then the applications are sent to the department that offers the program, and a group of professors jointly assess the applications. I expect that other universities work in a similar fashion, but I cannot speak on behalf of other universities.

How can I, as an MT student, increase my chances of getting accepted into a doctoral program?

• Get good grades in your undergraduate and Masters programs.

• Join a research team at OISE and participate in their activities. Learn how research teams work. Get a Graduate Assistantship and do research with a professor. Be sure to record all research-related activity on your CV.

- Strengthen your writing. In my experience, writing ability is a surprisingly important factor.
- Publish or co-publish one or more research papers, if you can. The more the better.
- Present or co-present your research at conferences. The more the better.
- Attend national and/or international academic conferences.
- Attend workshops on research.
- Win SSHRC and/or OGS grants (or other research grants).

Suggestions for preparing your application:

- Highlight the titles of your Year 1 and Year 2 research papers in your CV and Statement of Intent.

- Talk about any research teams you've joined;

- Talk about your experience as a Graduate Assistant or Research Assistant

- Mention somewhere (e.g., in your Statement of Intent) that you took a research literacy course in Year 1 and another research methods course in Year 2.

- Provide links to any web-based articles you've posted on TSPACE, links to educational materials you've developed, etc.

- Choose your referees carefully. It will be important to have at least one academic referee who can discuss your merits as a researcher.

Another suggestion: If you decide to apply to a particular Ph.D. program, it's a good strategy to find one or more professors in that program who are doing research that is similar to your own. Email one of those professors, introduce yourself, attach your CV, and express an interest in having that person supervise you as a doctoral student. If the professor seems open to the

idea of supervising you, say explicitly, somewhere in your Statement of Intent, that you'd like to work with that professor. Also in your Statement of Intent, outline a tentative program of research that aligns with, or extends, the professor's research. Perhaps cite some of the professor's relevant articles. Those kinds of steps will increase the likelihood that the professor in question will receive your application, review it, and consider you as a potential supervisee.

You don't necessarily have to do all of these things to get an offer. However, remember that doctoral programs, like any other program, are highly competitive. These are some of the things you can to do to score higher than the other applicants.

What are some of the different admission requirements for Ph.D programs at OISE? Can you provide some examples?

We've provided three examples below. These examples are for the purpose of highlighting some of the points shared above. If you are interested in applying to one of these doctoral programs, you should read admission requirements directly on each department's website.

Example #1: Department: Social Justice Education

http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/sje/Programs/Admissions_and_Program_Requirements.html

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Social Justice Education

The Ph.D. degree program is designed to provide opportunities for advanced study, original research, and theoretical analysis.

Minimum Admission Requirements

The department welcomes applicants with diverse but relevant backgrounds. Applicants are admitted under the General Regulations of the School of Graduate Studies. Ph.D. students who are admitted without sufficient previous study in a humanities, social science, or a cognate discipline may be required to take additional courses.

Applicants are required to submit the following documents. Incomplete applications may be subject to processing delays or rejection:

- a careful statement of intellectual interests and concerns relevant to the humanities, or social sciences, and social justice in education, as well as reasons for undertaking a program in the department, including a statement of preference for one or more faculty members whose research is best matched to the student's research interests
- two letters of reference, preferably from university instructors with whom the applicant has studied or worked
- a sample of written work that demonstrates engagement with the humanities, or social sciences, and social justice in education

Applicants to the flexible-time Ph.D. option are accepted under the same admission requirements as applicants to the full-time Ph.D. option. However, in addition, applicants to the

flexible-time Ph.D. should demonstrate that they are active professionals engaged in activities relevant to their proposed program of study.

Example 1 Comments: This example requires a sample of written work and does not specify that the submission be a thesis.

Example #2: Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development

http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/aphd/Home/Future_Students/Doctoral_Degrees/EdD_Counsellin g_and_Psychotherapy/index.html

Doctor of Education (Ed.D) in Counselling & Psychotherapy

Minimum Admission Requirements:

- An appropriate 4-year bachelor's degree of any background or discipline from a recognized university, with standing grade equivalent to a University of Toronto B+ or better in the final year or over senior courses
 - Please see <u>"Calculating academic Requirements"</u> for more information
- A master's degree in counselling from the University of Toronto with a standing of B+ or better, or its equivalent from a recognized university.
- Eligible Degrees:
 - Master of Arts Clinical and Counselling Psychology
 - Master of Education Counselling and Psychotherapy
 - Master of Education Guidance and Counselling
- Successful professional experience as a counsellor in an educational setting or in a related position
- Paid work experience or volunteer experience in a variety of contexts can meet this requirement. Viable institutions in which to gain experience include working or volunteering with include distress centres, shelters, helplines, hospices, clinics and specialized community programs and networks.
 - Working in commercial settings such as businesses, banks, travel agencies, etc. would not be considered relevant, even though the work might involve contact with the public.
- Students who have not done a master's thesis will be required to submit a Qualifying Research Paper. See more info under "Apply"

Example 2 Comments: The Ed.D. in Counselling and Psychotherapy program is an example of a doctoral degree for which you are not eligible to apply (unless you have one of the Master's degrees noted above). Applicants who do not have a master's thesis are expected to submit a "Qualifying Research Paper", which is discussed above.

Example #3: Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Department

http://cmsnew.oise.utoronto.ca/cstdphd/How_To_Apply.html

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development

Your complete application should include the following:

- Online application
- Postsecondary transcripts
- Resumé
- Statement of intent
- Academic writing sample
- Reference letters
- Evidence of English language proficiency, if applicable.

Academic Writing Sample:

Please upload your master's thesis or a sample of single-authored scholarly writing. The following samples are acceptable:

- Master's thesis
- Major paper
- Refereed article
- Refereed conference paper
- Conference proceedings publication
- Book chapter
- Research paper

Criteria for the writing sample include the following:

- The sample must be single-authored
- The writing sample must demonstrate quality writing i.e., logical, clear and well written
- The sample must be academically rigorous
- It must be a theoretical or empirical study
- It must demonstrate the ability to analyze and synthesize concepts, ideas and/or data
- The sample must contain a solid bibliography

Example 3 Comments: This last example is from CTL, the same department in which the MT program resides. As is noted above, there are a variety of different kinds of writing samples that can be submitted as part of the application package to the Ph.D. As Angela shared in her email last week, the MT program aims to provide TCs with a variety of opportunities to develop a product that could be suitable for submission as a writing sample.