



A GUIDE TO

Complete Your Doctoral Journey



FRANKLIN
UNIVERSITY

Makes It Possible

Let's address a problem — a big one

**50% of doctoral students drop out
before they finish their degree.**

That's not just a problem. It's a crisis.

Why are so many students dropping out of doctoral programs? Why is failure so common among the most ambitious, driven, passionate students in higher education?

The answer lies in expectations and planning.

The Big Fat Myth About Doctoral Degrees

Many believe that the path to a doctorate is a linear journey—that there's a simple and straight line to cross the finish line.

Take some classes, do some research, write a thing, and then defend it to a panel.



Sadly, many programs feed into that way of thinking by marketing hassle-free doctorates in minimal time to fast-track your success.

And that can seem pretty enticing to busy and ambitious professionals looking to advance their careers or their prestige. But the truth is, it's a mythical way of thinking. And it's a **dangerous** thing to believe.

Unrealistic expectations is a crucial reason why **so many give up before the finish line.**

Thinking about getting your doctorate? It's time for a gut check.

The Hard Truth About Earning Your Doctorate

Here's the truth: Earning a doctorate is a *grind*.

It's a journey. A difficult, fun, taxing, challenging, inspiring, frustrating and rewarding one, to be sure. It involves substantial investments in dollars, time, energy and creativity. It's an undertaking that requires resilience to be successful.

In reality, the journey to a doctorate looks a lot like climbing a mountain.

In this view, we see how the journey begins with a steep, uphill climb. Once you reach that summit, things are a bit smoother for a while. Then comes the really challenging piece—the dissertation—where the mountain practically begs you to quit.

And many do.

THE REALISTIC DOCTORAL JOURNEY



The Defining Moments in the Doctoral Journey

The temptation to quit often happens at key moments in the journey.

As you can see, some students go through the base core of required classes and determine that the program isn't a good fit for them. Maybe they underestimated how involved the basic coursework would be—and decided they would never be able to keep up.

Others give up in the middle of their dissertation research. As many as 50-60% of doctoral students complete their coursework, but never earn their degree. These students are often overwhelmed by the volume of research required. They either haven't leveraged enough resources to help them, or they've not been trained properly.

The highest volume of attrition happens at the peak of the journey, right before the finish. X% of students drop out during their dissertation. They are either unable to articulate it, prove it, or defend it—and they walk away feeling frustrated.

Here's the good news: It doesn't have to be that way.

STAGES OF THE DOCTORAL JOURNEY

INTRO

CORE AND ELECTIVES

RESEARCH

DISSERTATION

DEFENSE

How To Avoid The Temptation To Quit

There are processes and guardrails that you can put in place before you start to give you the best chance at completing your doctorate.

Franklin's doctoral program leaders have witnessed success and burn out firsthand. In their analysis, they've uncovered 5 key metrics that indicate a person's potential to succeed on the doctoral journey.

- **Meaningful Passion**

This is the foundation of your journey. Different from ambition, passion indicates a true desire for the topic of your doctorate. That passion (intrigue, curiosity, and joy) can keep you going when the research is a grinding process, or when pivots are necessary.



- **Well-Rounded Support System**

This is more than your friends and family. To be a successful doctoral student, you'll need to surround yourself with encouragers (friends who re-enforce their commitment to the program), mentors (those who can guide you through research and writing phases of the process), and accountability partners (those who will hold your feet to the fire when it matters).



- **Resource Utilization**

To be a successful student, don't go at it on your own. Utilize different resources in your journey—from research assistants, editors, advisors and technology tools (to help organize tasks and version-control documents).



- **Proper Motivations**

If you're driven by a desire to learn, solve problems, and evolve, you'll likely be successful in a doctoral program. If you're taking the journey solely for a title upgrade or salary bump, you may be prone to experiencing more struggles along the way.



- **Smart Time Management**

If you're pursuing your doctoral degree while trying to maintain a work-life balance, you're not alone. Learning how to say "no" to disruptive schedule additions is key. Even more key is learning how to schedule, protect and manage time to facilitate the work required to earn the degree.



The One Big Thing That Affects Everything

Students can have all the components of success in place and *still* fail to finish their doctorate.

They become overwhelmed by the work, disenfranchised by the outcomes or unengaged in the process. These realities can all boil down to one critical decision: the program they chose didn't set them up for success. It set them up for struggle.

So, the one big thing that matters most when you set out to earn your doctorate: **Selecting the right-fit program.**

We've found there are three key components to determine if a program will help you be successful, or hinder you from the outcomes you want:

- **Curriculum Design**

Look for an institution that tailors the coursework toward the application of theory, and not just the idea of theory. You're more likely to stay engaged through the grind when you are learning concepts that you can apply the next day in the office.

DISSERTATION
METHODOLOGY
MATTERS

DEFENSE

DISSERTATION

RESOURCES
MATTER

RESEARCH

JOURNEY TO COMPLETING
YOUR DOCTORATE

CORE AND ELECTIVES

CURRICULUM
DESIGN
MATTERS

INTRO

- **Support and Resources**

Look for a program that goes the extra mile to support your work. Some programs offer students a personal librarian who can fetch the research and data necessary for your analysis. Ask what resources are available to help you through the process.

- **Dissertation Methodology**

All dissertation processes are not equal. Methodology matters here; some schools draw their process out, others find ways to facilitate success. Asking about the average length of dissertation process is a good metric to assess an institution's methodology. Most programs allow 7 years to complete a degree: the average length of coursework is 3 years (when classes are offered in two terms per year), leaving 4 years for the dissertation. For institutions that offer three terms per year, coursework can be completed faster, leaving more time to finish the dissertation within the 7 year limit.

The Reality of Getting Your Doctorate: It's Hard

This is gut check time.

Earning your doctorate is going to be a grind. It'll be challenging, fun, difficult, rewarding and frustrating—all at the same time. There will be moments when you want to give up, but surrounding yourself with the right tools, processes and guardrails will ensure your success.

Are you prepared for the journey ahead?

7 CRITICAL QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU START A DOCTORAL PROGRAM

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Why am I starting this journey? | <input type="checkbox"/> Who will encourage me along the journey? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What resources do I have to help me stay organized and on track? | <input type="checkbox"/> What system will I use to manage my time? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Who will guide me throughout the process? | <input type="checkbox"/> How will the program I chose support me throughout the doctoral process? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Who will hold me accountable throughout the process? | |

Taking the time to audit your motives, systems and guardrails will ensure that you establish a success-oriented framework before you start the path to a degree.



Take the Doctoral Journey at Franklin University

Here are three reasons why Franklin is the best choice to take your doctoral journey:

Embedded Dissertation

We're focused on your completion plan from day one of your doctoral journey. From the beginning, you'll chip away at your dissertation as part of your coursework, making the process a little less daunting. Our goal is to help you finish your degree within 3 years.

Transfer Friendly

Don't let your hard-earned hours go to waste. Franklin offers you the ability to transfer up to 24 hours of previously earned doctoral coursework.

Community of Support

From your academic advisor and faculty advisor to a network of peers and your own personal librarian – we've got resources in place to help you persevere when you find yourself at a roadblock.



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