



# Forward Together: New Degrees, New Programs

Implications for NWCCU Accreditation

Quotes are from the *NWCCU Substantive Change Manual, 2018*



Western Oregon  
UNIVERSITY

Two new degree programs recently recommended by the Graduate Committee:

- Doctorate in Physical Therapy
- Ed.D In Interpreting Studies

These are defined by NWCCU as **professional doctoral degrees**, which emphasize “application of knowledge in the field. Normally requires three or more years of carefully prescribed graduate level coursework.”  
(NWCCU Substantive Change Manual)



These programs would be WOU's **first programs** at this degree level and, as a major substantive change, requires a **comprehensive review of the institution** by an NWCCU panel and staff. This review may include pre-implementation or post-implementation **site visits**.



In our **self-evaluation**, we must:

- “demonstrate an understanding of the distinctive character of doctoral education<sup>1</sup>, support a doctoral culture while maintaining institutional capacity<sup>2</sup>, and sustain appropriate systems of educational effectiveness<sup>3</sup> at the highest level of graduate education. “
  1. Definition of doctoral degree as distinct from Master’s degree.
  2. Resources & policies appropriate to doctoral programs while maintaining integrity of existing offerings.
  3. Established assessment and continuous improvement of degrees and programs.



In our **self-evaluation**, we must:

- “define the nature and significance of the doctoral degree for the institution and provide a comprehensive analysis of institutional capacity to support student learning at this advanced level. The analysis must be presented in the context of institutional capacity<sup>1</sup> and the educational effectiveness<sup>2</sup> of existing degree levels.”
  1. Have we planned for and identified the resources to offer doctoral programs and appropriately maintain existing programs?
  2. Have we demonstrated our effectiveness in delivering existing degrees?



## Questions for a campus conversation regarding our readiness:

Is this aligned with our institutional purposes and educational objectives?

- “An institution engaged at this level is making a conscious commitment to create an institutional culture that is supportive of research and professional practice. It is appropriate for an institution to ask itself how this culture fits within the existing institutional mission.”



## Questions for a campus conversation regarding our readiness:

Do we have resources (i.e., faculty, information resources, infrastructure) to support doctoral education?

- “The intellectual interaction between doctoral students and faculty is distinctive and central in doctoral education. Institutions need to consider whether the program has the faculty, information resources, and organizational support services to meet the requirements of the advanced degree.”



## Questions for a campus conversation regarding our readiness:

Do we currently have quality assurance systems that can support doctoral programs?

- “Institutions need to demonstrate that quality assurance systems are aligned with the expectations of a doctoral-level education, and are fully integrated with the existing academic culture.”





Moving to a new degree level is one of the most important decisions an institution makes.

Once established and demonstrated, readiness – culture, capacity, commitment, mission-alignment – can support more advanced-degree program development (master's and doctorate).

This is a vital part of WOU's future.

Forward together.

