**EdD vs. PhD Degrees**

**Should You Get an EdD or a PhD?**



If you know you want to work in an educational setting, it can be difficult to know which doctorate degree is right for you. They key question to ask yourself is this: What do you want to do in the academic environment you’ll be working in?

If you’re interested in pursuing a career in academia, a PhD (or a Doctorate of Philosophy) might be for you. This degree is theoretically oriented toward researchers and should enable you to do your own research and exploration in a given field of study.

If you want a more hands-on leadership role, a [Doctorate in Education (EdD)](https://teach.com/how-to-become-a-teacher/teacher-education/doctorate-in-education-edd/) might be a better fit for you. This degree is practically oriented toward candidates pursuing leadership roles in education, government agencies and nonprofits. This degree is also designed for candidates in the business world who are responsible for improving organizations through teaching and learning.

But there’s more to it.

**What Is a Doctorate of Education (EdD)?**

An EdD is a terminal degree with a focus on applying research and foundational knowledge to real world organizational, leadership and education issues. EdD programs prepare students for academic, administrative, clinical, professional or research positions in K-12 and higher education, civil service, private organizations or public institutions.

Rather than focusing on developing new research (as with a PhD program), EdD candidates use existing research to inform decisions around specific issues that lead to improved practices within their area(s) of study.

**Who Should Get an EdD?**

A candidate with proven leadership experience who is looking for the next step in their career would be an ideal candidate for an EdD program. EdD programs prepare candidates to solve problems in a variety of settings including colleges and universities, K–12 schools and systems, private firms and/or nonprofits and government organizations.

This means that EdD holders can become executives in school districts, faculty at the university level, training supervisors in large and small businesses or Chief Learning Officers in large corporations.

**EdD Program Requirements**

In order to earn an EdD, most programs require the completion of 60 units. Some programs will give students credit when they have already earned a master’s degree.

**EdD Job Opportunities**

According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm#00-0000), as of May 2013, common job titles and average salaries for EdD graduates include:

* Education Administrators (Elementary and Secondary School): $90,670
* Education Administrators (Postsecondary): $100,600
* Trainers and Development Managers: $107,770
* Social and Community Service Managers: $65,750
* Education Administrators (Preschool and Childcare Center/Program): $52,010

Read more about the [The Doctor of Education program at USC Rossier School of Education](http://requestinfo.rossieronline.usc.edu/index.html?s=teachdotcom&t=edd&utm_source=teachdotcom&utm_medium=link) here.

**What Is a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD)?**

To earn a PhD one must accomplish two things: Complete research to master a subject completely and extend the body of knowledge of that subject. Designed for people who plan on a career devoted to research (conducted anywhere from a university setting to a lab), a PhD is a thorough education in a subject as well as the study of how to approach studying it. More specifically, a PhD for educators might focus on the sociology of education, educational leadership and/or policy, childhood learning/cognitive development, or language and literacy, just to name a few specializations.

Rather than a desire to lead or manage organizations directly, PhD students are often more interested in driving change by contributing their knowledge and understanding in some of the following ways: conducting research that reshapes their field of expertise, altering political agendas or simply training the next generation of teachers to approach their craft from a new angle.

**Who Should Get a PhD?**

Anyone who wants to be involved in a more study-based role (e.g., researchers, sociologists, etc.) instead of managing or overseeing others might want to consider a PhD. Take someone with an interest in childhood development. A PhD candidate may seek to write papers that inform other educators about how children learn, experiment with new learning technology or change policies about how classrooms are run.

**PhD Coursework**

PhD coursework varies from program to program and is designed to provide candidates with an opportunity to specialize in their field of interest. Classes tend to cover all areas of a subject as well as tools you’ll need to do research and work with data (scientific method, statistics, theory). You’ll also be conducting your own projects, research, experiments and/or dissertation as part of earning your degree.

**PhD Program Requirements**

PhD programs often take 4 to 6 years to complete, and require a dissertation or thesis to complete candidacy.

**PhD Job Opportunities**

According to the [BLS](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm#00-0000), as of May 2013, common job titles and average salaries for this degree might include:

* Clinical, Counseling and School Psychologists: $72,710
* Education Teachers, Postsecondary: $65,630
* Survey Researchers: $53,000
* Sociologists: $78,120
* Training and Development Specialists: $60,780