

PHD AND DMIN COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES POLICY

What do a PhD (Doctor of Philosophy), ThD (Doctor of Theology) and a DMin (Doctor of Ministry) have in common and how are they different?

SCD offers all three doctoral degrees, and in many ways they are very similar in quality and expectations:

- To receive a PhD, ThD or DMin, a research candidate has to perform at the same academic level, which is AQF (Australian Qualifications Framework) level 10. There is no difference in scholarship or quality.
- All doctoral degrees require the candidate to identify a significant research question, identify appropriate research methodology, execute a research process to explore the question, and show evidence of capacity to work independently and develop and communicate a sustained scholarly argument.
- There is no difference in volume of learning and work – each typically take 3-4 years full-time (or 6-8 years part-time).
- The PhD and ThD require the equivalent of 80,000 words of work, whereas the DMin requires 60,000 words.
- All three degrees require participation in SCD workshops and seminars to support the student/research candidate's progress.
- PhD, ThD and DMin are all expected to meet the AQF guidelines that specify: "The purpose of the Doctoral Degree is to qualify individuals who apply a substantial body of knowledge to research, investigate and develop new knowledge, in one or more fields of investigation, scholarship or professional practice". (See http://www.aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/14AQF_Doctoral-Degree.pdf)
- All three degrees prepare people to teach and supervise to the highest levels, including supervising other doctoral candidates (for any doctoral degree).
- Those completing any doctoral degree are expected to produce significant and original research – although this will likely extend or expand on the work of others.

There are unique differences between the degrees:

- PhD and ThD belong to the AQF category of Doctoral Degree (Research) and the DMin is a Doctoral Degree (Professional).
- The PhD and ThD are generally seen as preparing people for academic vocations, whereas the DMin is designed to equip practitioners in the practice of their ministry.
- A PhD or ThD is a single 80,000 word thesis, whereas a DMin is two 18 credit point coursework units or research essays (10,000 x 2) and a 60,000 word thesis.
- PhD is the broadest possible program: it can be interdisciplinary, including bridging a theological discipline and another discipline (e.g., sociology and New Testament), and the discipline may indeed be practical theology.
- ThD would generally be focused in one theological discipline or may bridge different theological disciplines (e.g., mission and New Testament), but would not normally be interdisciplinary outside theology. But ThDs can focus on practical theology too.

- DMin is focused in practical theology or related field (liturgy, mission, ethics, pastoral counselling or congregational studies). A DMin is not the only doctoral degree in which a student can pursue practical theology, but DMin's are normally focused on practical matters, albeit perhaps drawing on other disciplines.
- Whereas a PhD or ThD may add to theoretical frameworks and discussions, a DMin may develop a ministry resource or strategy or artefact.
- This means that a pastorally focused interdisciplinary PhD (e.g. leadership paradigms and philosophies contributing to inclusive, cohesive and non-hierarchical communities) or a theologically focused pastoral ThD (e.g. Karl Barth's understanding of ecclesiastical ministry) would need to be discussing, at a theoretical level, the ideologies, philosophies, theologies, methodologies, clinical psychologies or sociologies pertinent to the topic chosen, as well as concerning itself with the practical ministry outcomes of such a study for the betterment of the church and society. The DMin focuses on the latter.
- The PhD, ThD, and the DMin should all contribute newness to the area(s) of research by virtue of their originality of investigative results. However, the originality of the PhD/ThD should be differentiated from the originality of the DMin. In the case of the PhD/ThD, the thesis must make an original contribution to scholarship in the field that it is researching, whether that is by virtue of its methodology and /or its evaluation of the primary or secondary sources (or both). But in the case of the DMin, the thesis should make an original contribution to the analysis of the ministry praxis that it is surveying.

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