The Doctoral Competencies FAQ’s

What is a “doctoral competency”?  
A “competency” is defined as the ability to demonstrate the academic skills, the intellectual acumen, and behaviors associated with the scholar practitioner. There are four doctoral competencies emphasized at the colloquium: Scholar practitioner, critical thinker, researcher, and professional communicator.

As you complete online coursework, each of the three colloquia, and plan for the capstone academic requirements of the comprehensive examination and the dissertation, you are progressively acquiring the doctoral competencies associated with “being a PhD”.

How do competencies relate to my doctoral program?  
The four doctoral competencies are critical components of the foundation for the colloquia and that are linked with your online coursework. To successfully complete the doctoral program, you will need to demonstrate that you can apply the competencies in your coursework, at colloquia, and in the capstone activities.

Developing these competencies typically occurs in two ways: You’ll be building on the skills and abilities you used to complete your master’s degree, and you’ll be acquiring and refining new and sophisticated academic skills and abilities specific to the doctoral program. Being able to demonstrate the doctoral competencies while completing the dissertation verifies that you have the qualities and capabilities to become a member of the academy of scholars who have earned doctoral degrees.

What are the four doctoral competencies?  
There are four doctoral competencies that are the focus of the colloquia experience. While each is described individually, as noted in the illustration, they are developing simultaneously as you progress through your academic coursework and colloquia.

Scholar Practitioner. Refers to a model of professional behavior and capabilities that blends the attributes of scholarship and practice. At colloquia, you will gain direct experience of what it means to be a scholar practitioner as you interact with faculty, peers, and staff; participate in academic and specialization sessions and meetings; reflect on how your professional identity is forming; and gain insights regarding needs for continuing development.

Critical Thinker. Refers to the capacity to think critically by acquiring proficiency in analyzing, evaluating and critiquing information. As a critical thinker completing coursework and participating in colloquium, you no longer passively consume information; rather, as a critical thinker who studies the theory and research in your specialization, you are committed to seeking a deeper understanding of the knowledge, problems, and needs of your field of scholarship.

Researcher. Refers to the skills and knowledge applicable to understanding, using, and conducting research. Researcher competencies include academic skills involved in basic to advanced library research, understanding research methods and design, using research in coursework and at colloquium, and
ultimately, demonstrating the capacity to conduct an independent research project.

**Professional Communicator.** Refers to the competencies associated with developing the scholarly voice applicable to communication with peers, faculty and within the profession. Professional communication includes academic writing, interaction

**At colloquium, how can I work on developing my competencies?**

Advanced preparation and planning for colloquium prior to arrival at colloquium will help you optimize your experience on site. In academic sessions, school and specialization meetings, and interactions with faculty, peers and Capella staff, you have daily opportunities to gain insights into the nature of each competency, develop aspects of the competencies, and continually evaluate and reflect upon how developing these competencies are shaping you toward becoming doctoral.

The final demonstrations of how you’ve developed the doctoral competencies take place during the comprehensive examination and dissertation phases of the doctoral program. In these capstone requirements, you will apply these competencies to successfully complete your doctoral degree.

**How do I know I’m acquiring the doctoral competencies?**

Each learner brings knowledge, expertise, and experience in the competencies from previous education and experience. For the colloquia requirement, we offer self-assessment tools that help you identify your own “starting place” in competency development. Using this personal information and insight, you can then use colloquia self-reflection tools to measure progress and comfort levels in applying the competencies during academic sessions, self-reflection time each day, and while planning your schedule.