Key Academic Terms – Graduate Learners

As a new graduate learner, it may seem as though Capella has its own language. Learning to understand the most common terms can help you adjust to your degree program and enable you to speak the language of graduate-level higher education.

**Capstone project or Integrated action learning project:** This project, completed as part of the final course for graduate learners, allows you to apply the skills and competencies you developed throughout your program (applies to all degree programs except PhD and PsyD).

**CCE:** CCE stands for Course and Credit Evaluation. The admissions office sends you a CCE after they have reviewed your official transcripts. The CCE will reflect transfer credit that was applied to your program at Capella.

**Comprehensive examination:** The comprehensive examination prepares you to move into the final stage of your doctoral program, leading to the eventual completion of the dissertation. The examination provides an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to integrate and synthesize the competencies in the theoretical, research, and best practice literature in your specialization. These competencies represent program outcomes from the area of specialization that you have developed through your doctoral coursework, and can be specifically applied to the area of your dissertation research.

**Course drop:** You may drop a course during the first twelve calendar days of the course without academic penalty. A course drop during this time does not appear on your transcript and does not affect grade point average. Dropping a course may have financial implications.

**Course withdrawal:** A course withdrawal represents withdrawing from a single course for a particular quarter after the 12-day course drop deadline has passed. A course withdrawal will appear on your transcript with a grade of W (Withdrawn), which does not affect grade point average. Withdrawing from a course will have financial implications.

**Degree Completion Plan:** A document that lists the required courses for your degree program.

**Dissertation:** A dissertation is the first primary academic research project that you, as a doctoral learner, complete. The dissertation is intended to demonstrate your ability to build upon existing academic theoretical knowledge, and contribute to the body of knowledge in a specific academic area. A dissertation is usually narrowly focused in scope and methodology.

**First course:** Each learner begins their program with this course. There is a different designated first course in every degree program.

**Graduation and commencement:** Graduation is the process by which learners have their degrees officially conferred after completing all degree requirements. Commencement represents the ceremony in which the accomplishments of Capella graduates and soon-to-be-graduates are recognized.

**Petition-for-credit:** This is the process by which learners attempt to earn academic credit by demonstrating that they have already mastered course competencies through prior professional experience. To petition for credit, go to the [Prior Learning Assessment](#) section of iGuide (applies to undergrad, MS IT, and MS O&M programs only).
**Residential colloquia and Year-in-residence:** Residential colloquia are face-to-face networking and training sessions in which faculty and learners assemble in one location. (Some programs in the School of Psychology require a year-in-residence instead of residential colloquia.) You have opportunities to enhance your critical analysis and research skills, as well as to expand your personal network of learners and faculty. The knowledge you gain aids in your development as a scholar-practitioner and an academic researcher. (Applies to MS HS and MS PSY, PMC, EdD, PhD and PsyD.)

**University withdrawal:** A university withdrawal represents withdrawing from one’s degree program at Capella University.