



Doctorate in Ministry (Doctoratus in Ministerium)

Program Overview

The Doctorate in Ministry (D.Min.) at the Universidad Católica Americana (UNICA) is the most advanced professional graduate program, designed for ecclesial leaders, clergy, and pastoral agents who seek to catalyze organizational and missional transformation through rigorous applied research and ministerial scholarship. This Doctorate is positioned at the critical intersection between Advanced Practical Theology and Research Methodology. Its primary objective is to train the doctoral student to cease being a mere practitioner of ministry and to become a research-consultant capable of diagnosing, analyzing, and solving complex ministerial problems (wicked problems) through the generation of evidence-based and theologically sound interventions. The curriculum, rigorously structured over four years and 120 credits, requires 60% dedication (72 credits) to the research component. This concentration ensures the sequential articulation of training in scientific writing, immersion in high-level academic networks, production and dissemination of knowledge (publications), and an advanced ministerial internship. The culmination is the Applied Doctoral Project (Applied D.Min. Project) or Thesis, representing a significant contribution to the praxis of contemporary ecclesial leadership.

The UNICA Doctorate in Ministry trains the intellectual and practical architects of the Church's future, equipping them with the ability to lead with wisdom, competence, and profound prophetic discernment.

Justification

The justification for this Doctorate lies in the ministerial and epistemological imperative of the Church to be an *ecclesia semper reformanda*, capable of confronting sociological and technological disruptions with responses that are both faithful to tradition and pragmatically effective.

The crisis of faith and the deinstitutionalization of religion demand leadership that is theologically informed and empirically validated. The D.Min. is justified by the need for:

1. **Critical and Applied Integration:** To overcome the gap between Theology and Ministerial Praxis. The program ensures that the leader not only possesses doctrinal grounding (foundation) but also applies social scientific methods to evaluate the

P.O. Box 16088, Houston Tx 77222

(correspondence), and 627 Rocky Mountain Dr.,
Houston, TX 77037
contacto@uca-virtual.us



effectiveness of liturgies, pastoral programs, or missional strategies, making reflective practice the center of their vocation.

2. **Evidence-Based Strategic Leadership:** Contemporary ministry requires the management of organizational complexity, ethical crises, and significant budgets. The doctoral student develops the ability for advanced organizational diagnosis and the capacity to make high-impact decisions using data analysis and professional consulting frameworks.
3. **Socialization of Knowledge for the *Corpus Ecclesiae*:** By requiring the production and dissemination of knowledge (publications) and integration into academic networks, the program ensures that the doctoral student's research does not remain cloistered but instead nourishes and elevates the corpus of global ministerial practice, generating best practices for the universal Church. This Doctorate is, in essence, a strategic investment in the ministerial capital of the Church, ensuring leaders who are scholars in faith and experts in action.

Institutional Identity

The Universidad Católica Americana (UNICA) situates its Doctorate in Ministry within the vision of ministerial excellence and scholarship-based *Diakonia*.

Mission

To train ecclesial leaders holding the Doctor of Ministry degree, equipped to conduct high-level applied research, generate innovative solutions to pastoral and organizational challenges, and disseminate knowledge that strengthens the mission of the Church.

Vision

To be the benchmark graduate school in ministry, recognized for the excellence of its Doctoral Projects, leadership in applied theological research, and transformative impact on the life of faith communities.

Values

Scholarship, Service, Prophetic Leadership, Research Rigor, and Transformative Praxis.



Program Technical Sheet

Field	Description
Program Name	Doctorate in Ministry (Doctoratus in Ministerium)
Academic Level	Graduate / Professional Doctorate (D.Min.)
Total Duration	4 years (8 semesters)
Total Credits	120 credits
Research Component	72 credits (60%)
Foundational Component	29 credits (24%)
Free Elective Component	19 credits (16%)
Emphasis	Applied Research, Ecclesial Organizational Leadership
Modality	Virtual, Hybrid, and Advanced Ministerial Residencies
Degree Awarded	Doctor in Ministry — Universidad Católica Americana (UNICA)

Graduate Profile

The UNICA Doctor of Ministry graduate will be an ecclesial leader, consultant, and scholar, capable of:

- Generation of Innovative Solutions:** Conceiving, designing, and implementing original ministerial interventions that respond to complex problems using advanced theoretical and methodological frameworks.
- Mastery of Applied Research:** Applying social and evaluative research methodologies rigorously to diagnose, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of ministerial programs.
- Advanced Strategic Leadership:** Leading large-scale ecclesial, diocesan, or nonprofit organizations by applying principles of strategic management, conflict resolution, and governance.
- Scientific Socialization:** Disseminating research results through peer-reviewed publications and active participation in academic networks, contributing to the corpus of pastoral knowledge.
- Theological Depth:** Articulating ministerial praxis with a solid theological, biblical, and ethical foundation, serving as a scholarly bridge between the theory of faith and ministerial action.



Curriculum by Semester (4 Years — 120 Credits)

Semester	Code	Course	Credits	Component	Prerequisites / Articulated Requirements
1	DMI-701	Epistemology of Practical Theology	6	Foundation	None
	DMI-702	Doctoral Research Seminar I: Problematization	6	Research	None
	DMI-703	Biblical Theology for Leadership	3	Foundation	None
Total					15
2	DMI-704	Applied Moral Theology and Pastoral Bioethics	6	Foundation	DMI-701
	DMI-705	Doctoral Research Seminar II: Literature Review	6	Research	DMI-702
	DMI-706	Applied Qualitative Research Methodology	3	Foundation	None
Total					15
3	DMI-801	Transformational Leadership and Ecclesial Governance	6	Foundation	DMI-704
	DMI-802	Doctoral Research Seminar III: Protocol and Design	6	Research	DMI-705 (Protocol Development)
	DMI-803	Emerging Study I: The Church in Digital Culture	3	Free Elective	Graduate Level
Total					15
4	DMI-804	Advanced Pastoral Psychology and Crisis Counseling	5	Foundation	DMI-801
	DMI-805	Doctoral Research Seminar IV: Instruments and Ethics	6	Research	DMI-802 (Protocol Approval)
	DMI-806	Emerging Study II: Behavioral Economics and Charity	4	Free Elective	Graduate Level
Total					15
5	DMI-901	Doctoral Research Seminar V: Field Work	6	Research	DMI-805 (Intervention Start)
	DMI-902	Emerging Study III: Sociology of Global Religion	5	Free Elective	Graduate Level
	DMI-903	Advanced Ministerial Internship (National/International)	4	Research	Completion of 70% of Foundation
Total					15
6	DMI-904	Doctoral Research Seminar VI: Networks and Dissemination	6	Research	DMI-901 (Results Draft)
	DMI-905	Knowledge Production and Dissemination (Publications)	6	Research	Linked to Peer-Reviewed Publication
	DMI-906	Emerging Study IV: Interdisciplinary Elective	3	Free Elective	Graduate Level
Total					15



7	DMI-907	Doctoral Research Seminar VII: Scientific Writing	6	Research	DMI-904 (Thesis Linkage)
	DMI-908	Emerging Study V: Transdisciplinary Elective	4	Free Elective	Graduate Level
	DMI-909	Doctoral Project I: Final Draft Development	5	Research	Project Draft (70% completed)
Total			15		
8	DMI-910	Doctoral Project II: Final Review and Public Defense	15	Research	DMI-909 (Director Approval)
Total			15		

Credit Distribution by Component

Component	Credits (C)	Percentage (%)
Research	72 C	60%
Foundation	29 C	24%
Free Electives (Emerging)	19 C	16%
Total	120 C	100%

Research Component Articulation (60% - 72 Credits)

The research component is designed as an inescapable and sequential progression, ensuring that the D.Min. is a degree in applied research of the highest caliber:

1. Sequential Seminars (42 Credits):

- DMI-702 (Problematization): Focused on identifying and justifying a complex ministerial problem.
- DMI-705 (Literature Review): Establishes the state of the art of the problem, bridging theological and social literature.
- DMI-802 (Protocol and Design): Preparation and defense of the Doctoral Protocol (Intervention Design, Methodology, Sample).
- DMI-907 (Scientific Writing): Intensive training in the style, voice, and structure required for academic publication and final drafting of the Doctoral Project.

2. Internship and Networks (4 + 6 Credits):

- DMI-903 (Advanced Ministerial Internship): Requires a research or advanced consulting residency (4 credits) in a major diocese, international NGO, or reference ministerial institution, applying the theoretical framework of the doctoral research.



- DMI-904 (Networks and Dissemination) + DMI-905 (Publications): This segment demands active participation in academic networks and, as a graduation requirement, the acceptance or publication of at least one peer-reviewed scientific article (preferably in a prestigious journal) disseminating the findings of ministerial research.

3. Applied Doctoral Project (20 Credits):

- DMI-909 and DMI-910 complete the process, dedicated exclusively to field intervention, evaluative analysis of results, and final drafting of the Doctoral Project. The project must demonstrate the application of the scientific method and the generation of a transformative and replicable solution.

Free Elective Component (16% - 19 Credits)

The Emerging Studies component promotes the doctoral student's transdisciplinary vision, enabling the exploration of critical areas for modern ministerial leadership:

- **Inter/Transdisciplinary Focus:** These courses (e.g., DMI-806 Behavioral Economics and Charity, DMI-803 Digital Culture) compel the doctoral student to integrate external disciplines (economics, sociology, technology) into ministerial analysis, ensuring that the ecclesial leader understands the cultural and systemic forces that impact the congregation and mission.
- **Adaptability:** The free elective credits are dynamic and adjusted annually to reflect cutting-edge research trends that directly affect ministry (e.g., artificial intelligence in pastoral accompaniment, neuroscience in virtue formation).