Students typically complete their PhD in civil, environmental, and architectural engineering within 4 to 6 years, depending on whether they enter the program with a master’s degree. It is possible for highly qualified students to enter the PhD program directly without a master's degree.

The primary focus of a PhD student is to perform novel research and support their faculty advisor. At the time of admission, PhD students must have a faculty advisor who agrees to accept the student into their research program and mentor their academic progress. PhD students are supported through research and teaching assistantships and are also encouraged to apply for their own sources of funding.

For more information, visit the department’s Graduate Studies (http://www.colorado.edu/ceae/prospective-students/graduate-studies) webpage.

Requirements
The PhD requires 30 semester hours of course work, plus 30 hours of dissertation credit. PhD students are also required to successfully complete a preliminary exam, a comprehensive exam and a final dissertation defense.

Preliminary Examination
Each doctoral student shall take a preliminary examination as determined by the faculty of the specialty area in which the student is enrolled, normally not later than 12 months from the time the student is first enrolled in the doctoral program. The student must pass this examination in order to continue in the doctoral program.

Comprehensive Examination
The comprehensive examination shall consist of a written and an oral examination. The exam may not be attempted until the student’s last semester of formal course work. At the comprehensive examination, the student shall present a plan for the dissertation research to the advisory committee for approval. Failure to pass the comprehensive examination may be remedied by repeating the examination after an interval of not less than four months.

PhD Dissertation
Students must write a dissertation based on original research conducted under the supervision of a graduate faculty member. The dissertation must fulfill all Graduate School requirements. After the dissertation is completed, an oral final examination on the dissertation and related topics is conducted by the student’s doctoral committee.

Time Limit
All degree requirements must be completed within six years of the date of commencing course work.