Types of Degrees Explained

**Associates degree:** This two-year degree is an Associate of Arts (A.A.) or Associate of Science (A.S.). Some students who earn this degree transfer to a four-year program to earn a bachelor’s degree. Others complete associate degrees to prepare to go straight to work. Community colleges, career colleges and some four-year colleges offer these degrees.

Types of Associate Degrees:

* AA - Liberal Arts, Associates in Arts - this combination of general education and core classes allow you to transfer into a variety of four-year programs.
* AS - Liberal Arts, Associates in Science - this STEM path focuses on completing core math and science courses before transferring to a four-year program in a STEM related field.
* AAS - Associates in Applied Science - specific courses required for the degree in addition to the AAS degree requirements in areas designed to get you ready to go to work.
* AGS - Associates in General Studies - coursework to meet specific educational goals and interests. The AGS degree is generally not designed to meet college transfer requirements.

**Bachelor’s (or Baccalaureate) degree:** This degree requires completing a four- or five-year college program. Most students earn a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Science degree (B.S.). Other types of bachelor’s degrees include the Bachelor of Fine Arts or Bachelor of Architecture degree.

**Certificate:** provide specialized training, concentrated specific work areas, and usually takes less than one year (1, 2 or 3 semesters). Certificates can be completed stand-alone, or in some cases, as the foundation to add on courses to complete a diploma or degree.​

**Diploma:** provide training, usually in one year (3 semester), to prepare you to go to work in a specific field or expand on your skills if you need specialized training to advance your career.

**Graduate Degree:** Graduate degrees are advanced degrees pursued after earning a bachelor’s degree. Examples are a Master of Arts (M.A.) or Master of Science (M.S.) degree. Students generally can earn a master’s degree after two years of study. A doctoral degree (for example, a Ph.D.) requires four or more years of study.

**Joint Degree**: Students can earn a bachelor's plus a graduate or professional degree in less time if they combine them. A student on this track may apply to a graduate program as an undergraduate and begin the graduate program in the fourth year of college. For example, Drake has a joint undergraduate and Juris Doctorate (Law) degree

**Liberal Arts and Career Combination**: In this program — also known as a 3-2 or dual-degree program — students usually complete three years of liberal arts study followed by two years of professional or technical study. In the end, students earn two bachelor’s degrees, usually a B.A. and a B.S.

**Professional Degree:** Students earn professional degrees to become licensed to work in professions like medicine or law. The M.D. degree is an example. Professional programs generally require a college degree before you start them and then at least three years of study to complete.

**Teacher Certification program:** Some colleges let you earn a teacher certification by combining bachelor's degree study with state certification requirements. State requirements vary, but these programs usually feature professional education courses, including student teaching.