

***POLICY***

Amended Policy

See Also:

Approved by the Board of Governors  
October 18, 1990  
Amended July 18, 1991 and April 11, 2002**POL-1990-06-A ACADEMIC DEGREES****1. Purpose**

To establish broad educational policy for the respective councils of trustees, administrations, and faculties of the universities of the State System of Higher Education governing criteria and definitions for earned academic degrees. (The policy does not address professional certification standards or definitions, except as they may coincide with degrees.)

**2. Degree Designations**

An academic degree is an earned degree. Degree designations used within the State System of Higher Education may include the following:

**1. Associate Degrees**

Associate degrees indicate that the holder has developed proficiencies sufficient to prepare for upper division collegiate work or to enter directly into a specific occupation. Associate degrees are awarded only for completion of a coherent program of study designed for a specific purpose. They reflect satisfactory achievement of a minimum of 60 semester hours of credit, in two parts--a general education component and an area of concentration or major component.

**a. Associate in Arts (A.A.):**

An Associate in Arts degree program is designed specifically for transfer into baccalaureate degree programs in the arts, humanities, social or behavioral science fields, or in professional fields based upon these disciplines. The general education component of Associate in Arts degrees comprises at least half of total credits earned.

**b. Associate in Science (A.S.):**

An Associate in Science degree program is designed primarily for transfer into baccalaureate degree programs in one of the mathematical, biological, or physical sciences, or into one of the professional fields with these disciplines as its base. The general education component for Associate in Science degrees comprises no less than one-third of the curriculum, exclusive of mathematics and science courses.

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**c. Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.):**

An Associate in Applied Science degree program is designed to prepare students for immediate employment or career entry, and usually not for transfer into baccalaureate degree programs. The general education component for Associate in Applied Science degrees includes no less than one fourth of the curriculum. When intended for transfer, the general education component should approximate the A.A. or A.S. requirement.

**d. Other Associate Degrees:**

Specialized associate degrees may be authorized within certain professions; some are career entry, non-transfer degrees, and others meet A.A. or A.S. criteria and lead to transfer. Examples include the Associate in Science of Nursing (A.S.N.), and Associate in Engineering Technology (A.E.T.).

**2. Baccalaureate Degrees**

Baccalaureate degrees require 120 semester credit hours unless (1) otherwise required by statute, regulation, or accreditation, and (2) approved by the Board of Governors, upon recommendation of the chancellor. Baccalaureate degrees consist of two principal components, general education and study in depth, which taken together, are designed to prepare the student for a productive career, involved citizenship, and continuous growth:

- general education, consisting of a broad program of study in the liberal arts and sciences, such that at least 40 percent of the total baccalaureate degree requirements are met in the areas of humanities, fine arts, communication, social and behavioral sciences, mathematics, and the natural sciences;
- major program, consisting of at least 25 percent of the total program of study in an academic disciplinary or interdisciplinary program.

The remainder of the curriculum may consist of course work related to the major, advanced course work in the liberal arts and sciences, or electives, but at least 40 percent of the total baccalaureate degree requirements must consist of upper level, advanced coursework (i.e., courses intended for students beyond the sophomore level).

**Note:** Definitions of lower level and upper level coursework are institutional, and may or may not be inherent in course numbers. The object is to assure that at least two-fifths of a student's studies occur at the junior/senior level of difficulty. During

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program review, the program unit is expected to review its curriculum against this general standard.

**a. Bachelor of Arts (B.A.):**

The Bachelor of Arts degree is the traditional preparatory degree for graduate study and the common degree in the arts and humanities, but used through the liberal arts and sciences. The major program does not exceed one-third of the total degree program; elective course selection is encouraged; and foreign language competency is encouraged and may be required.

Bachelor of Arts degrees emphasize breadth and depth of study, and encourage aesthetic, ethical, and intercultural inquiry.

**b. Bachelor of Science (B.S.):**

The Bachelor of Science degree serves as preparation for graduate study in mathematics, the natural sciences, and many of the behavioral and social sciences, and as a career entry degree, as well. It generally represents a longer, more structured major program, and more direct orientation toward professional preparation than the Bachelor of Arts degree. Major requirements and related courses may comprise up to one-half of the credits required.

**c. Professional Baccalaureate Degrees:**

Professional degrees may be approved and granted in certain professional fields, and may reflect standards of professional societies or accrediting agencies as well as those of the university. Though they usually include general education components comparable to those in B.A. or B.S. programs, the component may be specifically adapted to the profession.

Examples include Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.), Bachelor of Music (B.Mus.), Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.S.N.), Bachelor of Social Work (B.S.W.), and the Bachelor of Science in Education (B.S.Ed.).

**3. Master's Degrees**

Master's degrees represent advanced study beyond the baccalaureate degree, and signify mastery in a discipline or professional field. A master's program requires at least one year of full-time study, or its part-time equivalent, and usually includes three basic components: a common core of courses related to the discipline or field of

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study; a concentration or specialization in a focused area of the discipline; cognate courses which broaden perspective or mastery, or provide special skills such as statistics or foreign language. Master's degree programs may also be expected to include integrative experiences, such as seminars, practica, internships, and other field work which synthesize theory and practice. Most require a thesis, research project, or comprehensive examination.

**Master's degrees in the arts and sciences include:**

Master of Arts (M.A.),  
Master of Liberal Arts (M.L.A.), and  
Master of Science (M.S.).

**Professional Master's degrees include:**

Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.),  
Master of Education (M.Ed.), or Master of Science in Education (M.S.Ed.),  
Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.),  
Master of Physical Therapy (M.P.T.),  
Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.),  
Master of Science in Library Science (M.S.L.S.),  
Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.), and  
Master of Social Work (M.S.W.).

**4. Doctoral Degrees**

The doctorate is the highest academic degree awarded in American higher education and is of two general types: the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) and the Professional Doctorate (e.g., Ed.D. and Psy.D.). Though the primary distinction is that the Ph.D. is a research degree and professional degrees are applied degrees, most doctoral programs include both research and applied studies. The doctoral program usually follows completion of a master's degree, except in some fields where admission after the baccalaureate degree is permitted or encouraged. The common components of a doctoral program include a core of increasingly advanced subject-area studies, culminating in seminars involving research. Research skills necessary for such studies, e.g., foreign languages, statistics, or computing, and/or internships or practica in applied fields should be required. Culminating experiences such as comprehensive examinations and a dissertation are expected.

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**3. Implementation**

All degree programs submitted for approval after January 1, 1991 must comply with the above definitions, and all previously approved programs must be in such compliance by conclusion of the next program review cycle after July 1, 1992. (**Example:** a program under review in 1991-92 and in 1996-97 must be in compliance by July 1, 1997.)