

DEGREE AND PROGRAM TYPES

Baccalaureate Degrees

An award signifying a rank or level of educational attainment. Particular types of baccalaureate degrees identify educational programs having common objectives and requirements. Degree programs may provide academic, preprofessional, or professional experiences and preparation. Majors lead to a baccalaureate degree. Each student must select a major within a baccalaureate degree type. If options are offered within a major, a student selects one. The student may also elect to enroll in a minor to supplement the major. Alternatively, the student may seek to enroll in multiple majors within the same type of baccalaureate degree or to enroll in a simultaneous degree program. A baccalaureate program of study shall consist of no less than 120 credits. Students may elect to take courses beyond the minimum requirements of a degree program.

Major

A plan of study in a field of concentration within a type of baccalaureate degree. Colleges and other degree-granting units may have common requirements for all of their majors. Each major may have requirements identified in Prescribed, Additional, and Supporting Courses and Related Areas categories. Elective credits are not considered part of the major.

Option

A specialization within a major that should involve at least one-third of the course work credits required for the major, but need not be more than 18 credits. All options within a major must have in common at least one-fourth of the required course work credits in the major. A student can only be enrolled in an option within his/her own major.

Minor

A minor is defined as an academic program of at least 18 credits that supplements a major. A minor program may consist of course work in a single area or from several disciplines, with at least 6 but ordinarily not more than half of the credits at the 400 course level. Total requirements are to be specified and generally limited to 18 to 21 credits. Entrance to some minors may require the completion of a number of prerequisites, including courses, portfolios, auditions, or other forms of documentation that are not included in the total requirements for the minor. All courses for a minor require a grade of C or above.

When a student graduates, completion of a minor is recorded on his/her transcript by the Registrar, and the student receives an official certificate certifying completion of the minor. (The certificate is given with the diploma.)

Concurrent Majors/Sequential Majors

At the baccalaureate or associate degree level, students may be approved for admission to more than one major under the Concurrent Majors program. A Concurrent Majors program is one in which students take courses to concurrently meet the requirements of at least two majors, with graduation for all majors in the program occurring during the same semester. Concurrent majors must all be at the baccalaureate or associate degree level. Under the Sequential Majors program, upon graduation from an associate or baccalaureate degree program, a student may apply for re-enrollment in another undergraduate degree program.

Any student requesting more than one major program shall, for each major, meet the same acceptance standards and graduation requirements as met by all other students. Colleges and departments may identify and should publish any combinations of majors that would not be approved for more than one major program. In general, an undergraduate student may not combine a general major with a departmental major within the same college.

READ SENATE POLICY 60-00: Completing More Than One Undergraduate Major Program (Concurrent Majors and Sequential Majors) (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/60-00-completing-more-than-one-undergraduate-program/#60-00>)

READ SENATE POLICY 60-10: Concurrent Majors Program (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/60-00-completing-more-than-one-undergraduate-program/#60-10>)

READ SENATE POLICY 60-20: Sequential Majors Program (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/60-00-completing-more-than-one-undergraduate-program/#60-20>)

Associate Degrees

Majors that lead to two-year associate degrees are available at most of Penn State's undergraduate locations. These majors provide concentrated instruction to prepare graduates for specialized occupational assignments, except for the Letters, Arts, and Sciences major, which provides graduates with a general education and some specialization in their fields of interest.

More than twenty associate degree majors lead to either the Associate in Arts degree, the Associate in Engineering Technology degree, or the Associate in Science degree. Credits received for Penn State associate degree program courses may be applicable to a particular baccalaureate degree program at the discretion of the appropriate college and department. World Campus also offers two-year degrees.

Certificates

Undergraduate certificates, formal awards showing the satisfactory completion of a postsecondary educational curriculum, are designed primarily for students who are beyond the compulsory age for high school. Penn State offers credit or noncredit certificates, which are awarded in academic, vocational, and continuing professional education. Certificates often reflect emerging academic areas, necessary professional development requirements, or requirements that do not constitute degree programs. They may be supplements or enhancements to existing degree programs or may be stand-alone. For-credit certificates often provide "step-up" opportunities to degree programs allowing for milestones of progress. Certificates are not certifications, which are awarded by governmental and professional agencies.

A certificate consists of a group of courses, typically 9-15 credits, developed, supervised, and evaluated by the offering academic unit(s). Students must earn at least two-thirds (2/3) of the credits used to complete a certificate at Penn State. All credit courses for a certificate require a grade of 'C' or higher. For students enrolled in degree programs, at least six (6) credits of the certificate must be unique from the Prescribed Courses required in the major. Noncredit courses require satisfactory completion as defined by the unit offering the certificate. Requirements for a certificate may be completed at any campus location offering the specified courses for the certificate.

All students enrolling in certificates must be defined as Penn State students. New students enrolling in undergraduate credit certificates must enroll as non-degree regular students.

For certificates earned in conjunction with a major, students must declare the intent to earn the certificate prior to being awarded their associate or baccalaureate degrees. Students completing independent certificates should declare their intent to earn the certificate during the final semester of course work. Certificates cannot be awarded retroactively.

READ POLICY M-12: GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE CREDIT CERTIFICATES (<https://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/M-12-guidelines-undergraduate-credit-certificates.html>)