



Structure of the U.S. Education System: Associate Degrees

The associate degree can be awarded in academic or professional subjects and also in terminal career and technical programs. Credits earned in associate degree programs can be transferred to bachelor's degree programs under certain conditions. The transfer of credits from associate degree programs to bachelor's degree programs are usually governed by what are called articulation agreements between institutions.

Articulation agreements specify what courses and other credited work in specific subjects done at a community college may be considered for acceptance at the bachelor's degree level, as well as what standard of performance must be met in order for the presented credits to be accepted. These agreements are negotiated between the institutions and their faculties.

An associate degree can be defined as "An award that requires completion of an organized program of study of at least 2 but less than 4 years of full-time academic study or more than 60, but less than 120 semester credit hours" (NCES). Unlike certificate and diploma programs, the associate degree is a recognized higher education degree. Most associate degrees earned in academic programs are Associate of Arts (AA) or Science (AS) degrees. Associate degrees earned in professional, technical or terminal programs are frequently called Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees, but will sometimes carry the name of the program of study in the title.

[Occupational Outlook Quarterly's Guide to Associate Degrees](#) provides information and data on associate degrees and the fields in which they are earned.

[Joint Statement on the Transfer and Award of Credit](#) sets forth the policies and procedures agreed by recognized U.S. accrediting agencies for the transfer of credit between programs and institutions or between program levels.

[AACRAO Directory of State Articulation Policies and Resources](#) provides links to state regulations, oversight authorities, and other resources that deal with articulation agreements between associate degree and other sub-bachelor's programs and providers and bachelor's degree programs.

FREQUENTLY ENCOUNTERED ASSOCIATE DEGREE TITLES

NOTE: This is only a partial list of such titles for informational purposes, not an exhaustive or official list.

Associate of Applied Business (A.A.B.)
Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.)
Associate of Applied Technology (A.A.T.)
Associate of Arts (A.A.)

Note: This document was posted by the U.S. Department of Education at This document was found at www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/associate.doc.

Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.)
Associate of Business Administration (A.B.A.)
Associate of Electrical Engineering Technology (A.E.E.T.)
Associate of Electronics (A.E.)
Associate of Engineering (A.E./A.Eng.)
Associate of Engineering Technology (A.E.T./A.Eng.T.)
Associate of Forestry (A.F.)
Associate of General Studies (A.G.S.)
Associate of Industrial Technology (A.I.T.)
Associate of Nursing (A.N.)/Associate Degree Nurse/Nursing (A.D.N.)
Associate of Occupational Studies (A.O.S.)
Associate of Science (A.S.)
Associate of Science in Computer Assisted Design (A.S.-C.A.D.)
Associate of Technology (A.T.)

[Return to Structure of U.S. Education](#)
[Return to USNEI Home Page](#)

Note: This document was posted by the U.S. Department of Education at This document was found at www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/associate.doc.