

**Summary Definitions of Degree Levels in IBHE Program Inventory**  
**(Based on IPEDS Definitions)**  
**Last Revised: July 1, 2021**

| Definitions  | Level      |
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| <b>Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (less than 9 semester hours).</b> An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) designed for completion in less than 9 semester or trimester credit hours, or in less than 13 quarter credit hours, or in less than 300 contact or clock hours.   | <b>01a</b> |
| <b>Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (9 or more semester hours but less than 1 year).</b> An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) designed for completion in at least 9, but no more than 29 semester or trimester credit hours, or at least 13, but no less than 44 quarter credit hours, or in at least 300, but no more than 899 contact or clock hours.  | <b>01b</b> |
| <b>Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (at least 1 but less than 2 academic years).</b> An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least 1 but less than 2 full-time equivalent academic years , or designed for completion in at least 30 but less than 60 semester or trimester credit hours, or in at least 45 but less than 90 quarter credit hours, or in at least 900 but less than 1,800 contact or clock hours.   | <b>02</b>  |
| <b>Associate Degree.</b> An award that normally requires at least 2 but less than 4 years of full-time equivalent college work.  | <b>03</b>  |
| <b>Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (at least 2 but less than 4 academic years).</b> An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least 2 but less than 4 full-time equivalent academic years , or designed for completion in at least 60 but less than 120 semester or trimester credit hours, or in at least 90 but less than 180 quarter credit hours, or in at least 1,800 but less than 3,600 contact or clock hours.   | <b>04</b>  |
| <b>Bachelor’s Degree.</b> An award (baccalaureate or equivalent degree, as determined by the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education) that normally requires at least 4 but not more than 5 years of full-time equivalent college-level work. This includes all bachelor's degrees conferred in a 5-year cooperative (work-study) program. A cooperative plan provides for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry, or government; thus, it allows students to combine actual work experience with their college studies. Also includes bachelor's degrees in which the normal 4 years of work are completed in 3 years. | <b>05</b>  |
| <b>Post-Baccalaureate Certificate.</b> An award that requires completion of an organized program of study beyond the bachelor's. It is designed for persons who have completed a baccalaureate degree, but does not meet the requirements of a master's degree.<br><br>NOTE: Even though Teacher Preparation certificate programs may require a bachelor's degree for admission, they are considered sub-baccalaureate undergraduate programs, and students in these programs are undergraduate students.  | <b>06</b>  |

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| <p><b>Master’s Degree.</b> An award that requires the successful completion of program of study of at least the full-time equivalent of 1 but not more than 2 academic years of work beyond the bachelor's degree. Some of these degrees, such as those in Theology (M.Div., M.H.L./Rav) that were formerly classified as "first-professional", may require more than two full-time equivalent academic years of work.</p>   | <p><b>07</b></p> |
| <p><b>Post-Master’s Certificate.</b> An award that requires completion of an organized program beyond the master's degree, but does not meet the requirements of academic degrees at the doctor's level.</p>   | <p><b>08</b></p> |
| <p><b>Doctor’s Degree – Research/Scholarship.</b> A Ph.D. or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement. Some examples of this type of degree may include Ed.D., D.M.A., D.B.A., D.Sc., D.A., or D.M, and others, as designated by the awarding institution.</p>  | <p><b>17</b></p> |
| <p><b>Doctor’s Degree – Professional Practice.</b> A doctor's degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice. The degree is awarded after a period of study such that the total time to the degree, including both pre-professional and professional preparation, equals at least six full-time equivalent academic years. Some of these degrees were formerly classified as first-professional and may include: Chiropractic (D.C. or D.C.M.); Dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.); Law (J.D.); Medicine (M.D.); Optometry (O.D.); Osteopathic Medicine (D.O); Pharmacy (Pharm.D.); Podiatry (D.P.M., Pod.D., D.P.); or, Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), and others, as designated by the awarding institution.</p>   | <p><b>18</b></p> |
| <p><b>Doctor’s Degree Other.</b> A doctor's degree that does not meet the definition of a doctor's degree - research/scholarship or a doctor's degree - professional practice.</p>   | <p><b>19</b></p> |
| <p><b>Organized Research and Public Service Centers and Institutes.</b> IBHE-approved organized research and public service centers/institutes were created by IBHE staff and the Board, not IPEDS, for significant research and public service units that typically should depend primarily on external funding from sources such as foundations and federal agencies, but not state funding, to sustain them. IBHE expects that for every state dollar invested in the center, at least two external dollars must support the center especially after the second or third year of operation. The centers do not include campus “service” centers/institutes such as those for student counseling, advising, health services or typical academic departmental research or service which are integral parts of campus operations. Such service centers do not require IBHE or staff approval.</p> <p>A temporary center may be approved by IBHE staff for up to five years. However, to operate the center beyond five years requires approval by the Board. Currently there are no IBHE approved organized research and public service centers at Illinois private colleges and universities.</p> | <p><b>59</b></p> |

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**Note: According to the 23 Illinois Administrative Codes 1030.20 Definitions:**

"Certificate or degree program" means a formal award that is included in an institution's catalog and completion of which is noted on students' official transcript certifying the satisfactory completion of undergraduate, post-baccalaureate or graduate organized program of study at a Board approved institution. "Certificate program" means a formal award offered by a degree-granting institution that is included in an institutional catalog and on students' official transcripts certifying the satisfactory completion of undergraduate, post-baccalaureate or graduate coursework at a Board approved institution.

"Degree" means any designation, appellation, series of letters or words, or other symbol that signifies or purports to signify that the recipient has satisfactorily completed an organized academic program of study beyond the secondary school level. For the purposes of this Part, an "organized academic program of study beyond the secondary school level" shall be defined as:

Any academic program, regardless of duration, that offers any designation, appellation, series of letters or words or other symbol known as or labeled as an associate degree, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, a doctor's degree, a professional degree or a certificate of advanced study; or

Any academic postsecondary program, except for a program that is devoted entirely to religion or theology, or a program offered by any institution operating under the authority of the Private Business and Vocational Schools Act [105 ILCS 426].

**Note: According to the 23 Illinois Administrative Code 1050.20 Definitions:**

"Certificate or degree program" means a formal award that is included in an institution's catalog and completion of which is noted on students' official transcripts certifying the satisfactory completion of undergraduate, post-baccalaureate or graduate organized program of study at an institution.

"Degree" means any designation, appellation, series of letters or words, or other symbol that signifies or purports to signify that the recipient has satisfactorily completed an organized program of study of at least one year beyond the secondary school level. It shall include, but not be limited to, the following: certificate, associate, bachelor, post-baccalaureate certificate, master, post-master certificate, doctor's degree – professional practice (degree required for entry into specific profession such as law or medicine), and doctor's degree – research and scholarship.