

# Types of Common Undergraduate Degrees

**Certificate:** A certificate demonstrates that a student has earned knowledge in a very specific area of study often focused on a vocational or professional subject. Typically does not involve taking general education courses and usually can be completed in days, weeks, or months, rather than years. The Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs) and Tennessee's community colleges both offer a number of certificate programs. In Tennessee's public colleges, certificates are awarded to students who successfully demonstrate competencies for a proficiency level in occupational programs less than one year in length.

**Diploma:** A diploma is awarded to students who complete an academic program, typically a program that is longer than a certificate program. At the TCATs, a diploma is awarded to a student who successfully completes an occupational program which is at least one year in length.

**Associate Degree:** An associate degree is typically a two-year degree program requiring students to earn approximately 60 hours of college credit; often awarded through community and technical or junior colleges. Many public and private four-year universities in Tennessee also offer associate degrees. (See page 34 for a list of Tennessee institutions with two year programs eligible for Tennessee Promise.) At Tennessee's community colleges, different types of associate degrees are offered, such as an Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.), which is considered a degree for going directly into a career, an Associate of Arts (A.A.) or an Associate of Science (A.S.), which can be used to either go into a career or can be applied toward a bachelor's degree at a Tennessee public university.

**Bachelor's Degree:** Traditionally a four-year degree program requiring students to earn approximately 120 hours of college credit; also known as a baccalaureate or undergraduate degree. Many of Tennessee's public universities and many private colleges in Tennessee offer bachelor's degrees. For students who earn an associate degree, they can often apply those credits toward a bachelor's degree to earn that bachelor's degree in as little as two years after earning their associate degree.

