

Diploma Mills

Diploma and degree mills are misleading and harmful. In the United States, degrees and certificates from diploma mills may not be acknowledged by other institutions when students seek to transfer or go to graduate school. Employers may not acknowledge degrees and certificates from diploma and degree mills when providing tuition assistance for continuing education.

What is a diploma mill?

A "diploma mill" is generally defined as a nontraditional, substandard, fraudulent college that offers degrees to students who do little or no college-level work. Some diploma mills are outright frauds, sending a diploma to any applicant who pays a fee. Others may require applicants to take a few classes or document their work or life experience for credit.

How can you tell the difference between a diploma mill and a legitimate college?

Spotting diploma mills can be difficult. Below are 10 warning signs. If you see two or more of these warning signs, you may be dealing with a diploma mill.

1. You can earn degrees in significantly less time than at a traditional college or university.
2. The college places a heavy emphasis on offering college credits for life experience.
3. The college sends you a diploma if you pay a fee.
4. The college lets you "buy" a grade point average and academic honors.
5. The college charges tuition by the degree, or offers discounts if you enroll in multiple degree programs. (Traditional colleges generally charge by the credit hour, course, or semester, although some vocational schools charge tuition per program.)
6. The college's address is a post office box or suite number.
7. The college's Web site does not include information that a traditional college Web site might include, such as a mission statement, course requirements for specific programs, library resources, and faculty information.
8. The college provides only vague information about its faculty or has no faculty, only "evaluators," "mentors" or "counselors."
9. The college claims to be accredited by an association that either does not exist or is not recognized by the [U.S. Department of Education](#)
10. The name of a college is similar to a well-known and well-respected college.

Are all unaccredited colleges diploma mills?

No, not all unaccredited colleges are diploma mills. Some unaccredited colleges require legitimate academic work. In general, colleges must operate for at least two years before they can apply for accreditation. The college may be a diploma mill if it is not included in this list, please review the [List of Institution's to Operate in Tennessee](#)

How can I determine if a college is a diploma mill?

If you have concerns about a particular college, we encourage you to do your homework before you send money or enroll. Additionally, you should contact the Division of Postsecondary School Authorization at 615-741-5293.

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404 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Additional Resources

[U.S. Department of Education](#)

[Council for Higher Education Accreditation](#)

[Better Business Bureau](#)

Articles about Diploma Mills

[Council on Higher Education Accreditation - Information concerning Degree and Accreditation Mills](#)

[Federal Trade Commission Employer Alert - Avoiding Employee Fake Degrees](#)

[U.S. GAO's Investigation into Diploma Mills](#)