

What is an A.A. (Associate of Arts) or an A.S. (Associate of Sciences) Degree?

A.A or A.S degrees are sometimes called 2-year college degrees (the amount of time it would take to complete the degree if you were going to college full-time). A.A. or A.S. degrees are offered at all community colleges, and at some local private colleges. Colleges usually award the Associate of Arts Degree (A.A.) for studies in liberal arts, humanities, and social science fields and the Associate of Science (A.S.) degree for studies in scientific and technical fields. All A.A./A.S. degrees will require that specific courses (including general education courses and degree related coursework) are taken (and passed) to achieve the degree.

What is a B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) or a B.S. (Bachelor of Science) degree?

B.A. and B.S. degrees are also sometimes called 4-year degrees (the amount of time it would take to complete the degree if you were going to college full-time). A Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree is usually awarded for coursework in liberal arts or the humanities. A Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree is usually awarded for coursework in the sciences.

Students who have an A.A. or A.S. degree may apply to a college offering a Bachelor Degree, however, an AA or AS is not required. If accepted the college will use some or all of the students A.A. or A.S. credits toward their Bachelor Degree. However, students should carefully check the requirements of the 4-year college they are interested in, because not all Bachelor Degree programs will accept all associate degree credits.

What is a Post Baccalaureate Teacher Licensure Program (PBTL)

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has several levels of teacher licensure. The Post Baccalaureate Teacher Licensing (PBTL) program is designed for students who have completed a bachelor's degree and are seeking Massachusetts Initial Teacher Licensure. This program prepares candidates for the second level, Initial licensure. Further study and at least three years of successful teaching with the Initial license are elements required for the final level, Professional licensure.

What is an M.A. (Master of Arts) or an M.S. (Master of Science) Degree?

M.A. and M.S. degrees are academic degrees conferred by a college or university for students who complete at least one year of prescribed study (in a specific area) beyond the Bachelor's Degree. Students with a master's degree demonstrate mastery in a specific field of study or an area of professional practice. The designation of the M.A. or M.S. is given based on whether the program is course-based or research-based or a combination of the two.

What is a Certificate of Advanced Study (CAGS)?

A Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS) is a post-Master's academic certificate designed for non-traditional students and practitioners who seek a continuing education program to enhance their professional development in education.

What is a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) or Ed.D. (Doctor of Education) Degree?

A Ph.D. or Ed.D. is the terminal academic degree awarded by Universities. These degrees includes coursework in the student's chosen field of study, written and oral examinations with an emphasis on breadth and depth of knowledge in the area, and the completion of a written dissertation (original or unique research contribution to the field of study). In the United States the Ed.D. is usually granted through a School of Education at a University.



What is a Certificate Program?

Some colleges offer certificate programs in early childhood education. A certificate is not a degree, but acknowledges that you have taken a number of specific courses to meet a specific certificate (for example: Early Childhood Education Certificate). Most early childhood certificate programs include the courses that you would need to qualify for lead teacher certification. The courses in a certificate program will often focus on one specific area (for example: early childhood education) and may not include general education courses such as history or math. Certificate programs will usually integrate into the college's Associate Degree program.

What is a Child Development Associate (CDA)?

The Child Development Associate (CDA) is a national credential from the Council for Professional Recognition in Washington DC. Many colleges offer courses pertaining to the CDA. The CDA helps an early childhood educator gain the competence, knowledge and skills to work with young children in Infant, toddler, preschool or family child care programs. The program focuses on the CDA 'Competency Areas' that include health, creativity, guidance, working with families, curriculum planning and professionalism. This training is offered for Continuing Education Units or College Credit depending on the program you participate in.

What does it mean to matriculate?

To matriculate means that you have applied into a college's degree-granting program, have been accepted into the program and you have made a commitment to enroll by paying appropriate fees and/or declared yourself as a registrant to attend the college. You are not matriculated if you are taking one course, but haven't applied to be accepted to a degree program at the college. Matriculation is very important as it allows you to receive Financial Aid or the EEC State Scholarship and to receive the services of the college. After matriculation, there is an expectation that you will be taking course(s) each fall and spring semester until you graduate. It is important to notify the college if you are taking a semester off or you may become inactive and have to reapply.

What is an Assessment/Placement Test?

Many schools require incoming students to take a placement test or an assessment. You do not need to study for this test. The school is simply trying to get an idea of your writing and math skills, so they can properly advise you on which courses to take based upon your writing and math abilities. In some cases you might need to take a non-credit remedial course in this area to ensure you will be able to keep up with the requirements of coursework.

What is Registration?

Registration is the process of selecting and enrolling in classes, paying for the class and the required fees. Students receiving some form of financial assistance will need to discuss the payment process with the college to ensure the financial assistance is set up in their account properly.

What is a Major?

A major (also called a concentration) is a student's main field of study or subject area that they can specialize in while aspiring to a college degree. Students will take courses in the core curriculum of the major to provide



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them with a basis of knowledge and exposure in this area of specialization. Deciding upon a major helps a student focus and apply his or herself in their career development.

What is an Academic Year?

An academic year is usually split into 2 semesters: Fall and Spring. The term will usually last 15 weeks. Most colleges will also have summer courses; however, these courses are usually taken over a shortened period of time.

What is a Course?

A course is a series of lectures, labs, or other matter providing instruction on a specific subject. Courses could be taught in several ways:

- Face-to-face courses take place in the classroom with an instructor and cohort of students
- On-line course take place through a computer website with the instructor and students participating completely on-line.
- Hybrid course are a combination of both face-to-face and on-line work. The class might meet face-to-face several times within a semester and then do the remainder of their work on-line.
- Distance Learning Courses are courses where the participants are sent reading materials and/or a CD and must complete assignment on a prescribed schedule. This is not an on-line course. The instructor may have phone calls or use email to communicate with students and provide support.

Each course is taught for college credit as stipulated in the course catalog.

What does a Pre-Requisite Mean?

Some courses have a pre-requisite requirement as conditions for enrollment in them. This means that before you can take some courses you must take the earlier course required. For example, if you wanted to take a course on Observing, Recording and Assessing Early Childhood Behavior you will need to have taken a Child Growth and Development Course first. Some pre-requisites for taking courses could be remedial courses in English and/or Math.

What is an Elective?

An elective is a course that is not required for a major or general education but is acceptable for credit. Most colleges will restrict the number of electives a student may take to complete their degree.

What are General Education Requirements?

General Education requirements are required courses to earn a degree which provide a broadly based education. Examples of general education courses majors in Early Childhood Education might need to take could be in the areas of math, humanities, science, and English.

What is a Credit?

College's measure time spent in class as credits. A college will grant credits based the number of hours the course is offered for. Usually a credit is worth 15 hours of actual class time, so a 3 credit course means the student will spend 45 hours in class (or 3 hours a week for 15 weeks). A college will specify how many credits you need to receive a degree. If the degree program you are in requires 60 credits to graduate, and the college offers 3-credit courses, you will need to pass 20 courses to graduate.



What is a Practicum?

A practicum is a field experience where an individual has to assist someone or, observe, or record data and take limited responsibility. Usually the practicum occurs over a short period of time, maybe once a week or a certain number of hours per semester. A preschool practicum may introduce students to young children: their developmental levels, behaviors, interactions and learning styles.

What is an Internship?

An internship is a field experience that usually involves working for a range of time. The intern is required to use his or her knowledge of the field to carry out a specific responsibility. As an intern the student will remain in one field placement for a period of time while assuming more and more responsibility in the classroom under a mentor teacher.

What is Teacher Licensure?

An educator license issued to a person, who has completed a bachelor's degree, passed the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure, completed an educator preparation program approved by the Commissioner of the Department of Education, and meets other eligibility requirements established by the board. In order to teach in the public school system a teacher would need to become a licensed teacher. For more information on Teacher Licensure go to: http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/e_license.html

What is a Non-Licensure Teacher Tract?

A Non-Licensed Teacher is a teacher who has not passed the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure even though he or she has a BA/BS Degree or higher. Most educators in working in child care centers or Family Child Care homes are not required to have Teacher Licensure.

What is the MTEL?

The Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure® (MTEL®) program was initiated by the Mass Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998 as part of our statement education reform initiative for educators seeking Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 licenses usually in a public school. The MTEL program includes tests of communication and literacy skills as well as test of subject matter knowledge. The tests are designed to ensure that Massachusetts educators can communicate adequately with students, parents/guardians, and other educators and that they are knowledgeable in the subject matter of the license sought. For more information on MTEL go to: <http://www.mtel.nesinc.com/>

What is Field-Based Experience?

Experiences such as observation of a variety of classrooms, pre-practicum, practicum/practicum equivalent, internship, apprenticeship, or administrative internship that are integral components of any program for the preparation of educators. Field-based experiences shall cover a range of time periods within the school year.

What is GPA (Grade Point Average)?

The GPA is the method used to compute the numerical value for letter grades received. The actual number represents the average of a student's grades during their time at a school and is usually weighted by the number of credits given for the enrolled course. Most colleges use the 4 point system with the maximum grade point average of 4.0 which is equivalent to receiving an A in every course. A school will add or subtract



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an amount (between .25 and .33) for a plus or minus grade: thus an A- would be equal to 3.75 to 3.67. A B+ would be equal to a 3.25 or 3.33. A semester GPA is your GPA for that one semester. A cumulative GPA is the overall GPA for all attempted courses in the program.

What is a Transcript?

A transcript is an inventory of courses taken and grades earned by a student throughout their time at a college. The official transcript is prepared and sent by the issuing school usually by the Student Registrar with an original signature of the school official.

What if I want to Withdraw from a Course?

All colleges will have a Withdrawal Policy for students to withdraw from a course. However, the student must withdraw prior to the withdrawal deadline (as stated by the individual college). Once a student has officially withdrawn from a course they will be given a grade of “W”. Depending on the school and the time a student has withdrawn the “W” may be part of a student’s permanent record and will be stated on the student’s transcript; however, it will not affect the student’s cumulative GPA. The student can take this same course in another semester. If a student fails to withdraw from a course by the withdrawal deadline he or she will receive a grade of “F” for the course: which will affect the student’s cumulative GPA.

What is Tuition?

The tuition is the cost of taking a college course. Cost of tuition is often based on the cost per credit. For example if the college charges \$200 per credit, a 3 credit course will cost \$600. At some colleges, additional fees will be applied to tuition. These fees are added on to the tuition at the discretion of the college. They might support student services, educational operations, etc.

What is Financial Aid?

Financial aid consists of grants, scholarships, loans and Federal Work-Study. Grants and Scholarships are free money that does not need to be repaid. Loans are money borrowed by the student to help cover educational expenses and they need to be repaid – often with interest. Student loans awarded to FAFSA applicants typically have lower interest rates, better repayment terms and more favorable borrower options than private student or parent loans. Federal Work-Study is a federally subsidized program that provides opportunities for employment in order to help with educational expenses. Federal Work-Study is not deducted from the college bill, and students are expected to find their own employment within a participating Work-Study program.

What is FAFSA?

The FAFSA “Free Application for Federal Student Aid” is the free application to apply for federal student aid, such as federal grants, loans and work-study. In most cases, all student aid programs (such as the EEC Scholarship) have an expectation that a student will apply through FAFSA prior to applying for a scholarship. In order to apply for FAFSA you need a copy of your most recent Income Tax statement to complete the online form. To apply for FAFSA go to: www.fafsa.ed.gov.

What Type of Help is there for completing the FAFSA?

Educators needing help in understanding the Financial Aid process, FAFSA, and a general understanding of student loans and grants can go to the Bessie Tartt Wilson Student Loan information Network at www.btwic.org/resources/student-loan-information-network/. The American Student Assistance College



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Planning Center provides information to students through on-line resources at (<http://www.asa.org/default.aspx>) and through locations in Boston, Chelsea, and Brockton (http://www.asa.org/plan/?WT.MC_ID=TERI-ORG). Additionally all Colleges and Universities can provide additional support in this area.

What is a Transfer/Articulation Agreement?

A Transfer/Articulation Agreement is between colleges. It is an understanding that one college will accept the courses of another college for credit toward their degree program. Transfer/Articulation agreements differ from school to school, based on how many credits will be accepted and what specific courses will be credited.

What is OSFA?

The Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) is the agency primarily responsible for the management and oversight of all state funded financial aid programs and advises the Board of Higher Education about financial aid policy matters of concern to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. OSFA is the approval agency for the ECE Scholarship. Information on OSFA can be found at: www.osfa.mass.edu.

What is the ECE Scholarship?

The ECE Scholarship was created to increase the quality and availability of teachers and care providers to work with young children and youth in inclusive setting including infant/toddler, preschool, and school age programs. The scholarship is designed to provide financial assistance for currently employed early childhood and out of school time educators and providers who enroll in an associate or bachelor degree program in Early Childhood Education. To learn more about the ECE Scholarship go to:

<http://www.osfa.mass.edu/default.asp?page=ecescholarship>

What are the Educator and Provider Support (EPS) Regional Partnerships?

To ensure that all educators in early childhood programs in Massachusetts have access to a workforce development system the Department of Early Education and Care developed the Educator and Provider Regional Partnerships. These partnerships provide pathways that guide educators to degree attainment and increased competency. Each regional partnership offers academic coursework through local Colleges and Universities and formal professional development that leads to continuing education units. To learn more about the Educator and Provider Support (EPS) Regional Partnerships go to: <http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/workforce-and-professional-development/educator-and-provider-support-eps-grant.html>

What is the Professional Qualifications Registry?

The Professional Qualifications Registry (PQ Registry) is a database where educators working in programs serving children from birth through school age, regardless of setting, can create an individual educator profile. Educators, including assistants, who work with infants, toddlers, preschoolers, or school age children in EEC licensed settings, are required to register and update their registration annually. In order for an educator to apply for coursework and professional development through the EPS Regional Partnerships or apply for the ECE Scholarship she or he must be registered in the PQ Registry and have an active Professional Qualifications Number. For more information on the PQ Registry go to: <https://www.eec.state.ma.us/PQRegistry/>



What is a “Related Field”?

Fields related to Early Childhood Education could include: child development, elementary education, child guidance, human services, psychology, physical education, recreation, child psychology, the arts, social work and sociology. To meet specific program requirements the educator will need to show that they have coursework that is specific to the age group of the children that they are working with.

What is the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program?

The Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program provides financial assistance to Massachusetts residents who are currently employed as a paraprofessional in a Massachusetts public school, but wish to become certified as a full time teacher. For more information on the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program go to: <http://www.osfa.mass.edu/default.asp?page=paraprofessional>.

What is an Individual Professional Development Plan?

The Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) is a plan to help an educator develop a pathway in academic and career achievement. The IPDP is based on an assessment of an individual’s knowledge, skills, and abilities and then developing a plan to further their individual goals and priorities. The IPDP provides a framework for the educator to build their professional capacity along with ensuring that they remain current regarding knowledge and practices in the field.

What is the difference between Career & Academic Advising for the Early Educator?

Career advising focuses on an individual’s career choice. It is a time for an educator to meet with a career counselor, coach or supervisor to discuss career choices within the area of Early Education and Care. These sessions will help guide the individual to understand the professional knowledge and skills needed for a position in the early education field.

Academic advising usually follows career advisement and is a time for students to meet with a professional within a college to help the student navigate through the academic environment. The student will be provided with information and resources that will help guide them to make decisions regarding academic and career choices. In meetings with an academic adviser, the student will be supported in designing their academic program, making course selections, and completing degree requirements.

In Higher Education, oftentimes your advisor will discuss career options with you and will help you connect with a career specialist at the College.

What is a CEU (Continuing Education Unit), a CEC (Competency Education Credit) or a PDP (Professional Development Point)?

Each of these is a unit of measure used in continuing education beyond a degree, license or certification. Generally these units, credits or points are based on 10 hours of participation in a recognized continuing education program, with qualified instruction and sponsorship.

- The CEU (Continuing Education Unit) is the professional development educational currency recognized by the Department of Early Education and Care. Most educational training/workshops are offered for a minimum of .5 CEU’s or 5 hours of training. Most colleges do not accept CEU’s in lieu of college courses.



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- The CEC (Competency Education Credit) is the professional development educational currency recognized by the Department of Health and Human Services Early Intervention unit. Most educational training is offered for a minimum of 1.5 hours for a single competency area.
- The PDP (Professional Development Point) is the professional development educational currency recognized by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The educational training is offered for a minimum of 10 hours and must include an assessment of learning from the trainee.

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