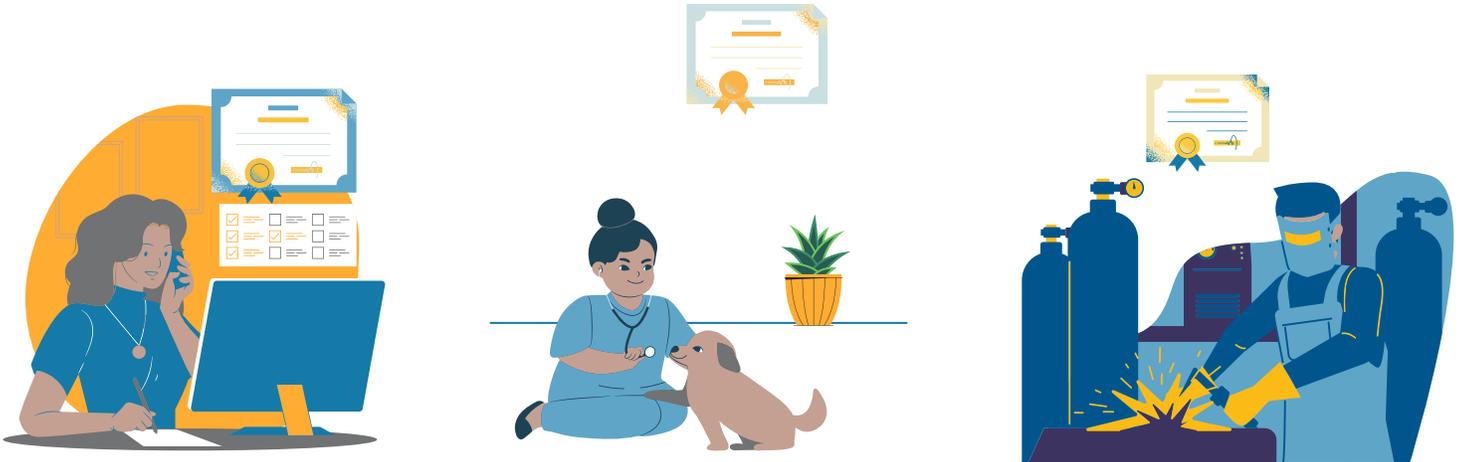


# UNDERSTANDING DEGREES

*What credentials can I earn?*



## INTRODUCTION

When we think about education needed after high school or for a career, we often think of a degree from a college or university.

The truth is, **there are many types of credentials that can be earned**, including certificates, certifications, and professional licenses. Even if college is where you want to be, there are also different degree types to consider. So **how do you know which one to pursue?**

An easy way to figure it out is to **start with an identified job or career path and work backwards** from there. What are the basic education requirements? How long do they typically take to complete and which schools offer them?

The purpose of this guide is to help understand the different types of credentials and to offer additional resources where you can learn more. Together with knowing what career you want to pursue, we hope it will **help you make an informed decision** for your future!

## TIPS FOR THIS GUIDE:

- This isn't the only information available to you! You can (and should) do your own research to learn the most you can about your options. There's *so much* information out there.
- Some information contains **links** to websites where you can find more information. We recommend using this guide electronically to best take advantage of this feature.
- This is one guide of a series from Shareholder Services that cover topics including choosing a school, degree types, training, and financial aid.
- For questions or more information, contact the **Olgoonik Shareholder Services team** in the Anchorage or Wainwright office. You can also email: [shareholderservices@olgoonik.com](mailto:shareholderservices@olgoonik.com).

# College & Training: What degrees or credentials can I earn?

An important part of figuring out your pathway includes choosing which degree or credential you want to pursue.

## What to consider:

- What is required for my career?
- What schools am I looking at?
- How many years do I want to spend in school?
- What are my financial considerations? Do I need financial aid?
- Am I willing to leave my hometown?

Not all schools offer all types of degrees and credentials, so it's important to do your research. Below is some information on common types of degrees and credentials you can pursue and how they differ.

## 1 Year or Less

	Endorsements	Certificates	Certifications
<b>What is it?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job-specific training in a given field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job-specific training and education, often seen as a gateway to a degree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verifies education meets industry-wide standards</li> </ul>
<b>Where are these offered?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade schools</li> <li>• 2-year colleges</li> <li>• Career &amp; Technical schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade schools</li> <li>• 2-year colleges</li> <li>• Career &amp; Technical schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade, career, and technical schools</li> <li>• Offered through industry associations</li> </ul>
<b>What are some examples?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Carpentry</li> <li>• Behavioral Health Aide/Health Aide</li> <li>• Tribal Justice</li> <li>• Petroleum Production</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welding</li> <li>• Rural Human Services</li> <li>• Culinary Arts</li> <li>• Native Languages Ed.</li> <li>• Diesel/Heavy Equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified Public Accountant (CPA)</li> <li>• Project Management Professional (PMP)</li> <li>• Senior Professional in HR (SHRM)</li> </ul>
<b>Can I use these to start a higher degree?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually, yes! Credits may transfer to another related degree program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes! Programs may apply towards a future associate or associate of applied science degree.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In many cases, certifications are continued education for individuals who have already earned a degree.</li> </ul>



## College & Training: What degrees or credentials can I earn? (continued)

### 2 Year Programs

Associate degrees are undergraduate degrees that generally take 2-years to complete. The most common types of associate degrees are Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS), and Associate of Applied Science (AAS). **These degrees can be standalone** (as far as you want or need to go, depending on your field) **or be foundational degrees** for a bachelor-level program.

All three degree types have a specific major, however AA degrees incorporate broad knowledge requirements for humanities and arts classes in addition to the major, AS degrees have a focus on STEM classes, and AAS degrees are designed so the student is workforce ready after completion.

	AA Degrees	AS Degrees	AAS Degrees
Where are these offered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2-year/community colleges</li><li>• Some universities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2-year/community colleges</li><li>• Some universities</li><li>• Career/technical schools</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trade, career, and technical schools</li><li>• Some colleges/community colleges</li></ul>
What are some examples?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accounting</li><li>• Business Administration</li><li>• Early Childhood Ed.</li><li>• Liberal Arts</li><li>• Indigenous Education</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Biomedical Equipment</li><li>• Computer Information Technology</li><li>• IT Security</li><li>• Paralegal Studies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Construction Management</li><li>• Auto/Diesel Tech.</li><li>• Aviation Maintenance</li><li>• Professional Piloting</li></ul>
Can I use these to start a higher degree?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yes! Many AA degrees transfer to a related Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree program.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yes! Like AA degrees, many AS degrees also relate to a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maybe! AAS degrees may not always have a bachelor program, but some may.</li></ul>

### 4 Year Programs

Bachelor degrees are undergraduate degrees that generally take about 4-years to complete. Common bachelor degrees include **Bachelor of Arts (BA)**, **Bachelor of Science (BS)**, and **Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA)**.

Each degree has its own requirements and areas of study. BFAs, for example, focus on arts like music, dance, and photography. BA degrees, like AA degrees, incorporate broad knowledge so a student majoring in Accounting likely has to take various English, math, and humanities classes, too. With BS degrees there are fewer opportunities to study the liberal arts, which could benefit students who prefer or are required to learn the technical aspects of their field for their career. These are often degrees in Health, Social Science, Nursing, Computer Science, or similar fields.

# College vs. Training: What degrees or credentials can I earn? (continued)

	BA Degrees	BS Degrees	BFA Degrees
Where are these offered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4-year colleges and tribal colleges</li><li>• Universities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4-year colleges and tribal colleges</li><li>• Universities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some 4-year college and universities, but most often at specific schools for the Arts</li></ul>
What are some examples?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accounting</li><li>• Business Administration</li><li>• Education</li><li>• Journalism &amp; Comms</li><li>• Psychology</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Biological Sciences</li><li>• Engineering</li><li>• Geomatics</li><li>• Nursing</li><li>• Petroleum Engineering</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dance</li><li>• Music</li><li>• Painting</li><li>• Photography</li><li>• Sculpture</li></ul>

## Other Credentials

**Professional Licenses:** Licenses are required to practice in certain occupations. These include, but are not limited to, teaching, cosmetology, hairdressing and barbering, real estate, morticians, attorneys, and electricians. To obtain a license, a person must **demonstrate they meet the standards for that career in their specific state** as most licenses are authorized by state government.



## What didn't we cover?

We didn't cover graduate degrees, including master's, doctorates, and PhD-level degrees. These degrees are highly specialized to provide an advanced-level education in a specific field. By the time a student gets to this advanced level of education, they typically have a firm desire to study in that field.

## Interested in learning more? Visit:

### CollegeBoard College Degree Quick Guide

- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/college-101/quick-guide-your-college-degree-options>

### Alaska Division of Corporations, Businesses, and Professional Licenses

- <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/cbpl/ProfessionalLicensing.aspx>

 **How long does it really take to finish a degree?** It can depend. Some students are able to go to school full-time, meaning they finish within the expected 1, 2, or 4-years for their program. There's a number of reasons why it may take someone more time or less time to finish a degree, and that's okay! **Your goals and your plan has to work for you**, your commitments, and your life.

## Other Tools & Resources For Your Future

These are just a small portion of the tools available to you. As we mentioned at the beginning of this guide, this isn't the only information available to you! You can (and should) do your own research to learn the most you can about your options. There's so much information out there.

### Other Tools & Resources

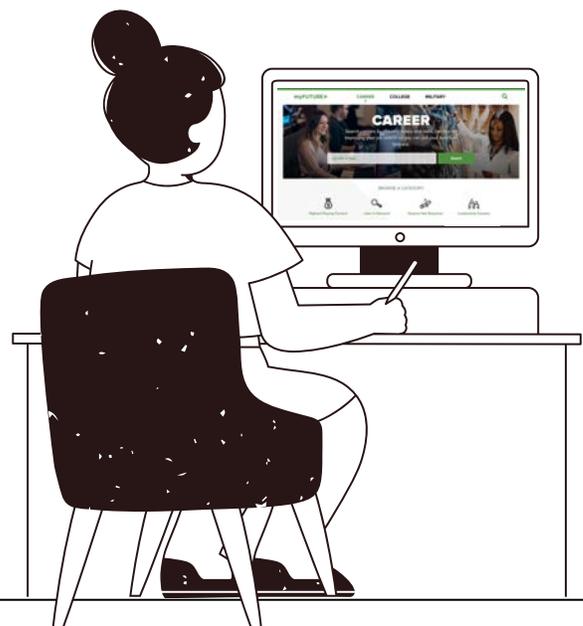
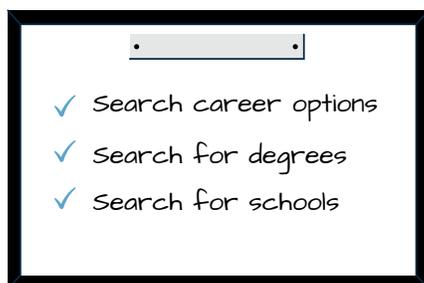
As mentioned in the Introduction, an easy way to decide what education path to take is to **start with a career and work backwards to learn what type of education and credentials are needed** and what type of schools to consider. While you're waiting to speak with your counselor or advisor, consider checking out these resources about careers:

**myFuture, Career** - <https://www.myfuture.com/career>

- Search by job title or field and see average salaries, most **common education required** for a specific field, skills required, industry areas, and job outlooks.
- Browse jobs in demand, highest paying careers, and career resources

**CollegeBoard, Major and Career Search** - <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/majors-careers>

- View and search majors by field and careers by industry, and see an overview of the type of work, skills, and **education needed** for a specific job



**For questions, to request additional information, or to suggest additions and changes, please contact:**

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