

Summary Definitions of Degree Levels in IBHE Program Inventory
(Based on IPEDS Definitions)
Last Revised: August 26, 2014

Definitions	Level
Undergraduate Certificate (1-2 years). A postsecondary award, certificate or diploma requiring completion of an organized program of study of at least one, but less than two, full-time equivalent academic years; or designed for completion in at least 30, but less than 60, semester credit hours; or in at least 900, but less than 1800, contact hours.	02
Associate Degree. An award requiring completion of an organized program of study of at least two, but less than 4, years of full-time academic study; or more than 60, but less than 70, semester credit hours. There must be compelling reasons to exceed 60 hours, such as meeting the requirements of a program accreditation, licensure or certification.	03
Undergraduate Certificate (2-4 years). A postsecondary award, certificate or diploma, requiring completion of an organized program of study of at least two, but less than four, full-time academic years; or designed for completion in at least 60, but less than 120, semester credit hours, or in at least 1800, but less than 3600, contact hours.	04
Bachelor's Degree. An award requiring completion of an organized program of study of at least 4, but not much more than 4 , years of full-time academic study, with at least 120 semester hours. There must be compelling reasons to exceed 120 hours, such as meeting the requirements of a program accreditation, licensure or certification.	05
Post-Baccalaureate Certificate. An award requiring completion of an organized program of study requiring <i>18 semester credit hours</i> beyond the bachelor's and is designed for persons who have completed a baccalaureate degree but do not meet the requirements of academic degrees carrying the title of "master".	06
Master's Degree. An award requiring completion of an organized program of study of at least one, but not more than two, full-time academic years of work beyond the bachelor's degree, and consisting of at least 30, but less than 50 semester credit hours.	07
Post-Master's Certificate. An award requiring completion of an organized program of academic study of <i>24 semester credit hours</i> beyond the master's degree but does not meet the requirements of academic degrees at the doctor's level.	08
Doctor's Degree – Research/Scholarship. This is the highest award a student can earn for graduate study. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), this includes a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), Doctor of Business Administration (D.B.A.), Doctor of Science (D.Sc.), Doctor of Arts (D.A.) or Doctor of Management (D.M.) and other doctoral degrees that require advanced work beyond the master's level, including preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research,	17

<p>or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement.</p>	
<p>Doctor’s Degree – Professional Practice. This degree requires completion of an organized program of study that meets the following criteria: (1) completion of the academic requirements to begin practice in a profession; (2) at least 2 years of college work prior to entering the program; and a total of at least 6 academic years of college work to complete the degree program, including prior required college work plus the length of the professional program itself. According to NCES, examples of the degrees are: Chiropractic (D.C or D.C.M.); Dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D); Law (L.L.B. or J.D.); Medicine (M.D.); Optometry (O.D.); Osteopathic Medicine/Osteopathy (D.O.); Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.); Doctor of Podiatric Medicine/Podiatry (D.P.M., Pod.D., D.P); Theology (Th.D.); and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.).</p>	<p>18</p>
<p>Doctor’s Degree Other. This is a doctoral degree that does not meet the definition of a research or scholarship doctorate or a first professional doctoral degree described above.</p>	<p>19</p>
<p>Organized Research and Public Service Centers and Institutes. 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 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>59</p>