

Degree/Certificate of HE/Diploma of HE

What is it?

Degrees, Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) and Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) are all higher education qualifications that help you develop a thorough understanding of a subject.

A **Certificate of Higher Education (Cert HE)** normally involves one year of full-time study and might be your first step towards obtaining higher level qualifications.

A **Diploma of Higher Education (Dip HE)** courses normally involve two years of full-time study and allows successful students to progress directly onto the final year of a degree programme.

Degree courses usually lead to a BA (Bachelor of Arts) or BSc (Bachelor of Science) qualification; some lead to BEd (Bachelor of Education) or BEng (Bachelor of Engineering) or other titles. A very wide range of subjects is on offer – from academic subjects like history or English, to work related subjects such as town and country planning or civil engineering.

Top Up to Degree Successful completion of a Foundation Degree allows you to progress to the third year of an appropriate honours degree programme and HNDs can be used to gain entry onto the second or third year of a related degree course.

Where could I study?

You can study for a DipHE, CertHE or Degree at universities, higher education colleges and via distance learning through the Open University and, sometimes, as an external student of a university. Courses start throughout the year, although most begin in September or October. UCAS are responsible for managing full-time applications to higher education courses in the UK and you can find information about lots of courses on their website.

How long will it take me?

A CertHE usually involves one year of full-time study, a DipHE usually involves two years of full-time study and Degrees usually take three or four years to complete full time. You can also study for these courses part time or through flexible learning and these take longer to complete. Bachelors degrees in some subjects can take longer; for example, medical courses usually take five or six years.

Options after the course?

Most graduates use their HE qualification to move into a job or profession. You could also use the qualification to go on to a postgraduate course of higher education, such as a post graduate diploma or masters degree.

Foundation Degrees

Foundation Degrees are higher education qualifications that combine academic study with work-based learning. Designed jointly by universities, colleges and employers, they are available in a range of work-related subjects.

Foundation Degrees: how they work

Changing career can be daunting, but Mark is confident of reaching his potential - with the help of a flexible Foundation Degree in computing...

Foundation Degrees are designed to equip you for a particular area of work – as well as giving you the general skills that are useful in any type of job.

They're university-level qualifications, like other degrees. But Foundation Degree courses are designed with a particular area of work in mind, with the help of employers from that sector.

Typically, you'll get the chance to learn in the workplace as well as the classroom. And because it's often possible to study flexibly, in a way that suits you. So whether you're looking to change job, return to work or boost your career prospects, Foundation Degrees offer a route into higher education for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Choosing a Foundation Degree course

There are hundreds of Foundation Degree courses available. They cover a wide range of subjects, from engineering and e-commerce to health and social care and veterinary nursing.

Getting onto a Foundation Degree course

Universities and colleges set their own entry requirements, but it's not always necessary to have formal qualifications. Universities and colleges will often take into account your experience, achievements and commitment to learning.

How Foundation Degrees fit in with other qualifications

A Foundation Degree is a university-level qualification in its own right, equivalent to the first two years of an honours degree. But once you've got a Foundation Degree, it's possible to 'top up' your qualification to an honours degree. This usually involves an extra year studying full-time (or the part-time equivalent).

A Foundation Degree usually involves learning in the workplace as well as at university or college. You'll get the chance to work on real projects, making a real difference - and picking up the technical and practical skills needed for your chosen line of work.

Typically, you'll be able to learn in a way that suits you: whether it's at college, through distance learning or online. It usually takes around two years to complete a full-time course. Part-time courses may take longer.

How you are assessed?

Different Foundation Degree courses assess your work in different ways. It may involve project work, reports, exams, practical work and presentations - as well as looking at the learning you do in the workplace.

Bachelors degrees

Bachelors degrees are higher education qualifications that help you develop a thorough understanding of a subject. There are a vast number of subjects to choose from.

Bachelors degrees: BA, BSc, MB and more

A bachelors degree (sometimes known as an 'ordinary' or 'first' degree) is a course of academic study leading to a qualification such as a bachelor of arts (BA), bachelor of science (BSc), or bachelor of medicine (MB).

It usually takes three or four years to complete full time (normally four years if you're doing a sandwich course, which includes a year in industry or abroad). Bachelors degrees in some subjects can take longer; for example, medical courses usually take five or six years. You can also study for a bachelors degree part time or through flexible learning.

The qualification is designed to give you a thorough understanding of a subject. It helps you develop your analytical, intellectual and essay or dissertation writing skills. You'll also have much more of a say about the direction your learning takes than you've had previously.

Bachelors degrees are at level 6 on the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. The framework shows how different higher education qualifications compare, in terms of the demands they place on learners.

What you can study

There are a vast number of different bachelor's degree courses to choose from.

Some subjects like medicine, law and architecture prepare you for a particular career. Others, like English or history can equip you with skills for a wide range of jobs.

Entry requirements

To study for a bachelors degree, you will need to have some previous qualifications.

The University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) operates a system called the 'UCAS Tariff'. Your previous qualifications can earn points on the tariff to get a place on a particular higher education course; different courses will ask for a different number of points.

Most bachelors degrees ask for at least two A levels at grade E or above (or equivalent grades in other qualifications).

To find out entrance requirements for a particular course, you can do a search on the UCAS website, or read the course prospectus - most are now available from the universities' website

Postgraduate qualifications

If you want to carry on your studies after a bachelor's degree, or learn more about a particular subject, there are a range of postgraduate qualifications available. Some are linked to a specific profession, while others allow you to complete an original piece of research.

What they are?

Some higher education qualifications require that you already have a bachelor's degree. These are known as 'postgraduate' qualifications.

Generally, they lead to four main types of postgraduate qualification:

- postgraduate certificates
- postgraduate diplomas
- masters degrees
- doctorates

Most types of postgraduate qualification will include taught and research elements.

Postgraduate certificates, diplomas and masters degrees are at level 7 on the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and doctorates at level 8. The framework shows how different higher education qualifications compare, in terms of the demands they place on learners.

Who can take them?

Normally, to study for a postgraduate qualification, you will need to have a bachelors degree with a grade of lower second (2:2) or above. To find out the entrance requirements for a particular postgraduate course.

Postgraduate diplomas and certificates

Postgraduate diplomas and postgraduate certificates can be academic or vocational qualifications. They normally take 9 to 12 months to complete full-time. The number of lectures and seminars you attend, and projects and research papers you produce will vary depending on the type of course and the college or university you attend.

Subjects available

There are a huge range of subjects to choose from. These are often linked to a specific profession.

You can study a subject that's new to you, or choose a subject that builds on the knowledge and skills you gained during your bachelors degree.

Grades

Grades are normally awarded as: distinction, merit, pass, fail

Where they can lead?

Postgraduate certificates can lead on to postgraduate diplomas.

You can also use a postgraduate certificate or diploma as a route into a specific career or onto further study, such as a masters degree.

Masters degrees

A masters degree is a qualification of academic study. It can be research based, a taught course, or a mixture of both, and will take at least 12 months of full-time study to complete.

The number of lectures, seminars, projects and research papers will vary depending on the type of course and the institution.

You may also have to submit a dissertation at the end of your course.

Subjects available

The types of masters degrees available include:

- MA: master of arts
- MSc: master of science
- MBA: master of business administration
- LLM: master of law
- MEd: master of education
- MPhil: master of philosophy
- MRes: master of research

Grades

Most masters degrees are normally awarded as either:

- distinction
- merit
- pass
- fail

or:

- distinction
- pass
- fail

Where they can lead?

Some masters degrees, such as in business administration and law, prepare you for a career in a particular field. Others, like the master of research can prepare you for a doctorate qualification.

Doctorates

A doctorate qualification gives you the opportunity to undertake an original piece of research. It will usually take at least three years of full-time study to complete. Throughout the course, you will be expected to work independently, with guidance from a supervisor. The supervisor advises you whether your research is on track and about deadlines you have to meet.

During the first one to three years of your doctorate, you will research your chosen topic and plan your dissertation.

In your final year, you will normally write up your dissertation.

Many doctorate courses lead to a qualification such as a Doctor of Philosophy - a PhD or Dphil.

Grades

Doctorates are usually awarded as either a pass or fail; in rare cases with a distinction.

Who offers them?

Doctorate qualifications are offered by universities that offer research opportunities.

Find out more

To find out more about getting a postgraduate qualification, contact universities and colleges, or visit their websites. Their prospectuses will list both taught courses and research opportunities.

Some colleges have a postgraduate open day, which is a chance for you to meet prospective tutors or supervisors.

Doctorate Masters, post grad diploma, post grad certificate

What is it?

For Master's courses, the normal entry requirement is a degree. However, universities also value skills, experience and knowledge gained through work and life and other qualifications - these can sometimes gain you entry to a Masters level course even if you do not have a degree.

Masters level courses are known as 'postgraduate' qualifications. Generally, they lead to four main types of qualification:

- postgraduate certificates
- postgraduate diplomas
- masters degrees
- doctorates

Most types of postgraduate qualification will include taught and research elements and many offer opportunities for part time study. There are a huge range of subjects to choose from which are often linked to a specific profession. You can study a subject that's new to you, or choose a subject that builds on the knowledge and skills you gained during employment or education.

Where could I study?

You can study for a postgraduate qualifications at universities and via distance learning through the Open University and, sometimes, as an external student of a university.

How long will it take me?

Postgraduate qualifications normally take between 9 and 12 months to complete full-time or longer part-time.

Options after the course?

Postgraduate qualifications may help you enter a new field of work, help you progress in your career, or might help you enter a job at a higher grade - evidence suggests further qualifications earn enhanced salaries: postgraduates are valued by employers for their maturity, developed research skills and commitment. You may also be able to continue academically into a PhD.

What is it?

A doctorate qualification gives you the opportunity to undertake an original piece of research. Throughout the course, you will be expected to work independently, with guidance from a supervisor. The supervisor advises you whether your research is on track and about deadlines you have to meet. Many doctorate courses lead to a qualification such as a Doctor of Philosophy - a PhD or Dphil.

Where could I study?

Doctorate qualifications are offered by universities that offer research opportunities.

How long will it take me?

It will usually take at least three years of full-time study to complete.

Options after the course?

Many people start their Doctorate in order to develop an academic career as a researcher or lecturer.