

Read this first!

I Don't Know a Thing about Going to College!



Your Army Education Guide on College



THINGS TO KNOW AND ASK ABOUT

❖ **Keep it simple**

You may want to complete a Bachelors degree in something, but you are here at Fort Drum, so start with local colleges that offer associate degrees (half of a bachelor's degree) and the classes are either classroom instruction or online.

❖ **Ask questions and questions to think about**

What is the college's accreditation? What is a degree plan and does the college offer the one you want? How best do you learn? Do you need face-to-face instruction or are you disciplined enough to handle online?

❖ **What does it cost?**

What is the cost of tuition? How much are books? What are the fees? Does the Army help pay the costs? Can I apply for financial aid to help me pay the extra costs?

❖ **Refresher classes**

I am not up to speed in Math or English. It has been years since I was in school. What will the college do to help me? Do they offer placement testing to help me find the right class for my skills?

❖ **What are college classes like?**

Read everything you receive from your college and instructor. Read the college catalog. It will explain the degrees and class descriptions, provide clarification on policy and other rules and responsibilities. The class syllabus will show you everything you will need to do for the class. Study daily. Take careful notes. Keep up with your reading and homework. You are responsible for turning in all assignments even when you are in the field, out sick, or TDY somewhere.

Most Common Degrees

ASSOCIATE DEGREE: a two-year course of study (generally 60-65 semester hours of credit). This means you must take about 20 classes, resulting in an Associate of Arts (A.A.), an Associate of Science, (A.S.), or an Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.). An A.A.S. is considered a terminal or career-oriented degree, and is not meant to transfer to a 4-year college or university (you plan to go to school and then seek employment).

BACHELOR'S DEGREE: a four-year course of study that results in either a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or a Bachelor of Science (B.S.). It is also called a baccalaureate degree. It generally consists of 120-136 semester hours of credit or a quarter-hour equivalent. This means you must take about 40 classes.

MASTER'S DEGREE: a one to two-year course of study usually 30-60 semester hours beyond the bachelor's degree. It usually results in a Master of Arts (M.A.) or a Master of Science, (M.S.). There are many variations as well, such as the Master of Business Administration, (M.B.A.) and the Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.). Your master's degree may or may not require a thesis.

DOCTORATE DEGREE: This is the highest academic award a student can earn for graduate study. It usually results in a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) in a particular academic field. For example, you could earn a Ph.D. in math, history, engineering or public administration. Those who earn a doctorate in education are awarded an Ed.D. (Doctor in Education) All doctorate degrees require three or more years of graduate work (60-100 semester hours) beyond a master's degree and completion of a dissertation approved by faculty committee.

PROFESSIONAL DEGREE: This degree is specific to a certain profession, such as medicine, law, pharmacy, optometry, theology, and veterinary medicine, to name a few. It requires (1) completion of academic requirements to begin practice in a profession, (2) at least two years of college work prior to entering the program, and (3) a total of at least six academic years of college work to complete the degree program, including prior college work plus the length of the professional program itself.

Associate Degrees

WHAT IS AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE?

It is a program of courses which usually takes two years to complete (or their equivalent if attending part-time or through non-traditional means or accelerated terms.) It consists of 60-65 semester credits or 90-96 quarter credits, depending on what type of term the college uses. This equates to about **20 courses**. Most associate degrees are earned at a community or junior college. There are more than 1,260 community colleges in the United States.

WHAT TYPES OF DEGREES DO COMMUNITY COLLEGES OFFER?

1. **Technical degree programs** that train students to go into jobs such as dental/medical technicians or automotive mechanics. Many technical occupations only require a certificate or two years of college. Completion of a two-year technical degree program results in an Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.). This degree is a terminal, occupational degree that is generally **not** designed to transfer into a four-year university.
2. **Transfer degree programs** that consist of the freshman/sophomore years of college. These programs prepare students to transfer to a four-year university to complete their last two years. Many community colleges and four-year colleges have “articulation” agreements that identify what credit from the two-year school will transfer to the four-year college. Completion of these programs results in earning an Associate in Science (A.S.) or an Associate in Arts (A.A.)

WHAT ADVANTAGE IS THERE TO ENROLLING IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

1. **It is less expensive.** The cost of tuition at a two-year public community college is less than tuition at a public or private four-year university. Because community colleges are state-supported, legal residents of the state and in many cases, military personnel stationed in that state pay less than non-residents.
2. **It is easier to be admitted.** Over 90% of all applications at a community college are accepted. Many of these colleges have an “open-door” policy, which allows any person with a high school diploma or GED to enroll. No admissions tests like the SAT or ACT are required.

3. **Many occupations just require a two-year college education.** Community colleges offer a wide variety of degree programs in many different occupational fields of interest.

WHAT ARE SOME ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS OFFERED?

Accounting	Cosmetology	Interior Design
Art	Criminal Justice	Medical Assistant
Auto Mechanic/Technician	Data Processing	Nursing
Aviation Technology	Dental Hygiene	Legal Assistant
Business Administration	Engineering Technology	Real Estate
Computer Maint. Technology	Fire Science	Secretarial Science
Computer Science	General/Liberal Arts	Travel Management

Bachelor Degrees

A bachelor (or baccalaureate) degree is a program of courses which usually takes four years (or their equivalent by attending part-time, or through non-traditional means or accelerated terms). It requires at least 120-128 semester hour credits or 180-192 quarter hours. This equates to at least **40 courses**. You learn a considerable amount in a particular field of study (the major) and broad general knowledge.

Schools on a semester hour plan have terms which last 4 to 4 ½ months- a fall and spring semester and a shorter summer term. At schools with a quarter hour plan each quarter lasts 10 to 12 weeks. Some schools have accelerated terms-terms are shorter and the student has more class time per week. For example, in an accelerated term of 8 weeks, the course might meet two nights a week for 2 ½ hours at night.

Courses generally fall into three major areas:

1. GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES- usually 36-45 semester credits

a. Basic Skills – English and Math

English- usually two classes

Mathematics- number of courses and type of math determined by major

b. Social Science – choose from courses such as:

History, psychology, sociology, economics, political science, anthropology, Western civilization, government, and others

c. Natural Sciences- choose from courses such as:

Biology, botany, zoology, chemistry, geology, astronomy, physics, Oceanography, meteorology, earth sciences, and more

d. Humanities- choose from courses such as:

Fine art, music philosophy, literature, drama, religion foreign languages, Humanities, speech and more

2. **COURSES IN YOUR MAJOR** – at least 30 semester credits
 - a. Foundation/Prerequisite Courses- These courses provide the introduction for the major. They are usually lower-level courses at the freshman and sophomore level.
 - b. Core Courses- Directly related to the major area of study. Primarily upper-level, junior and senior level courses.
3. **ELECTIVES**- courses of the student’s own choosing. Some are recommended, depending on your major.

Accreditation

WHAT IS “PROPERLY” ACCREDITED?

Accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (DoE).

WHY IS ACCREDITATION SO IMPORTANT?

To ensure students receive quality education and transferable credit. For a public record of learning widely accepted by employers, college and associations, and so students can receive tuition assistance or Federal Financial Aid.

TYPES OF ACCREDITATION

Regional- i.e., Southern or Middle States or New England Association of Schools and Colleges

National – i.e., Distance Education & Training Council

Professional or Specialized – i.e., American Bar Association

ACCREDITATION BARRIERS

- Unknowledgeable consumers
- Many kinds of accrediting bodies exist
- Accreditation, approval, license all sound the same
- Diploma Mills “accredited” by agency they make up or one not approved by DoE
- Foreign students assume the U.S. Government regulates American universities

HOW DO I VERIFY ACCREDITATION?

Use DoE’s website: http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg4.html

If accredited body is NOT listed, it is NOT VALID.

Grade Point Average

Grade Point Average (GPA)

- A = 4 POINTS
- B = 3 POINTS
- C = 2 POINTS
- D = 1 POINT

The point values in all courses are added and averaged to create the GPA

EXAMPLE:

American History class	C	2 points
College Algebra class	A	4 points
Intro to Business class	A	4 points
Sociology class	B	3 points

GPA = 13 POINTS divided by 4 COURSES = 3.25 GPA

A high GPA improves chances of getting a good job after college and getting into graduate school to earn your master's degree.

A low GPA (below 2.0) may result in probation from the college (may limit the number of classes you can take) or suspension and your tuition assistance will be revoked until your GPA returns to a 2.0.



Advice to New College Students

1. Learn about your College

Read your college catalog. It is your ultimate guidebook. It contains: required courses; majors offered and the curriculums to follow; school policies and procedures; your rights and responsibilities; and course pre-requisites and descriptions (read these BEFORE your register for classes).

2. Obtain guidance for your academic advisor at the college

Schedule an appointment with that person. Be prepared by becoming familiar with the catalog and get to know your advisor. They will provide you with the best guidance on completing your degree.

3. Many colleges require placement testing for English and Math

The results will indicate whether you must take a refresher course BEFORE beginning freshman-level courses.

4. Improve your writing skills

Take an English refresher course if necessary. Learning to write term papers and themes will be a major task in college, but your reward will be a valuable lifetime asset. Exams, research papers, and term papers will be evaluated based on grammar, punctuation, clarity, organization, logic, and creativity and your ability to gather, analyze and communicate knowledge successfully.

5. Do not plagiarize

This means do not write a paper with words you took from another source. Your writing must be your own. There are not computer programs available to professors which can detect plagiarism.

6. Learn good study habits

Study daily. Learn to take careful notes. Keep up with your reading. Review, review, review. There is no substitute for daily preparation and your teachers expect you to be prepared for class.

7. Maintain a high grade point average (GPA)

Grades of “D” and “F” will not transfer to another college. If you make an “Incomplete,” make up the required work in time to receive a passing grade; otherwise it will become an “F.”

8. If you withdraw from a class, make sure you do it within the official time period

If you just quit going to a class without withdrawing from the class through the Go Army Ed portal and notifying the school, you will receive an “F” grade and face recoupment. ALWAYS fill out the official withdrawal form from the school, if required, and ALWAYS remember to withdraw from the class on the Go Army Ed portal.

9. Don’t overextend yourself when you first begin

Don’t take a heavy workload that you cannot handle along with your military job. Give yourself time to get used to college learning. It is very different from high school. For every one hour of class time, you will need up to three hours for homework and/or study time.

10. Learn how to use the library and internet to do research

11. Keep copies

Keep all assigned projects, term papers, and returned tests until you receive your final grade. (In case your instructor makes an error.)

12. Keep a copy of ALL financial transactions

13. Engage in class discussions

Participate, whether you are in a traditional classroom or online.