

Understanding an Applied Bachelor's Degree vs. a Traditional Degree

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Most people are familiar with the traditional bachelor's degree. It represents the culmination of a standard college education, usually incorporate a number of classes that represent and general education as well as the same number of classes concentrating in a particular area of study. However, while the standard bachelor's degree can be in either a science or an art, there is a third option available in a number of universities known as an applied bachelor's degree.

The Traditional Bachelor's Degree

To understand the differences of the applied bachelor's degree, it's important to understand how a traditional degree works. The traditional bachelor's can be earned in a number of study areas including academic, liberal, scientific or professional topics. Most accredited schools and universities will require a minimum of 30 college credits spent in general education courses, which provide an array of exposure to basic topics, and 30 college credits concentrated in a particular study area such as English, Biology, Accounting, or Drama. Timing-wise, the program usually takes on average four to five years, depending on how compacted a discipline area is and when specific classes are offered.

For decades the bachelor's degree has represented the standard of college education. That said, it is also well understood to provide a general training that still needs specific instruction in the workplace after the fact. Further,

with so many educated in modern times, it is now also a stepping stone to a graduate degree as well. A standard bachelor's degree can also be earned online through distance learning. However, most state schools offering in-person programs are still far less expensive than online offerings.

An Applied Bachelor's Degree

While the applied bachelor's degree is designed to meet many of the same, minimum requirements for a similar college degree, the applied version focuses on providing a student coursework and learning that are applied to actual skills and disciplines used in the regular world as opposed to just theory in the classroom. This training is performed through contextualized education, with skill-learning that can be used in the workplace on day one after graduation. Because of the nature in how applied degrees are put together, they are not always accepted as precursor to a traditional graduate degree program.

The value of the applied bachelor's degree is that it provides two significant advantages for those seeking direct workplace skill training.

First, the college education involved can be applied immediately without further training being required. For example, computer science applied degrees allow a graduate to literally be hired and assigned programming work within his first week. Nursing would be another technical example.

Second, the applied degree offers an educational path for those with certificate training or an applied associate degree that won't be fully recognized under a traditional bachelor's degree program. This second

aspect is important because it gives full credit for the training already received in a lower level school program. Such programs would otherwise be treated as "terminal" having no further educational path on which to expand or build upon. Affected students in traditional program often find half or less of their credits being accepted on transfer, forcing them to take more general classes to fulfill traditional bachelor's degree requirements.

In Summary

For those who already know the specific work and career path desired, the applied bachelor's degree can often seem a faster, more direct path to educational training than a traditional college degree. For employers, a graduate can be put to work in technical applications almost immediately without any further cost on internal company training.

However, the traditional bachelor's degree still has plenty of purpose, often providing a general college education until a student focuses on which career area he or she wants to work in for the future. So choosing one degree type over another often depends on how directed a person is about gaining a college education and how fast he or she needs to enter the work world.