



## Types of Postsecondary Education

*For students who want to continue their education*

### What is Postsecondary Education?

- **Postsecondary education** means any classes or training programs you go to after you exit high school.
- It is important to start planning early if you want to continue your education.
- You can learn about **postsecondary education** by looking online, attending a college fair or taking a tour.

### What is a Diploma?

- A **diploma** is a certificate that says you have completed high school.
- The type of diploma you earn can affect what postsecondary options you have.
- There are 4 different kinds of diplomas in Tennessee:
  - Regular High School Diploma
  - Occupational Diploma
  - Special Education Diploma
  - Alternate Academic Diploma



### Types of Diplomas

- A **regular high school diploma** is what high school students who complete 22 credit hours, pass end of course exams, and take the ACT or SAT earn. It is the diploma that most employers recognize.
- An **occupational diploma** is for students who gain two years of work experience while in high school and pass the Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery assessment. Students that earn the occupational



diploma can continue working toward earning the regular education diploma.

- A **special education diploma** is earned by students who will not earn a regular education diploma. Students are able to continue working toward an occupational or regular education diploma until the age of 22, after they have earned their special education diploma.
- An **alternate academic diploma** is for students who are not earning a regular education diploma. This diploma is for students that are assessed on the state alternate assessment. Students that earn the alternate academic diploma can continue working toward earning the occupational diploma.

## What are Degrees, Licenses, and Certificates?

- A **degree** is like a diploma but earned after high school. There are different types of degrees you can earn at different schools.
- A **license** or **certificate** is a **document** that says you are trained for a specific job.



## Types of Postsecondary Education

### University

- Students usually attend for 4 years.
  - Most students earn a **bachelor's degree**. Additional degrees or certifications may be offered.
- To apply, you need to:**
- Fill out an application
  - Earn a regular high school diploma
  - Take the ACT or SAT tests
  - Get recommendation letters from your high school teachers
  - Send in your high school grades





## Community College

- Students usually attend for 2 years.
- Most students earn an **associate degree**. Additional degrees or certifications may be offered.

### To apply, you need to:

- Fill out an application
- Ask which high school diplomas are accepted
- Send in your high school grades
- Check if you need to take the ACT or SAT tests



## Certificate Program

- Earned at a community college
- Students usually go to school for 1 year or less

### To apply, you need to:

- Fill out an application
- Send in your high school grades



## College of Applied Technology/Vocational Training

- Students usually attend for 2 years or less.
- These schools will teach you how to do a job.
- You can earn a license, certificate, or career diploma.

### To apply, you need to:

- Fill out an application
- Send in your high school grades
- Check if your program accepts occupational, special education, or alternative academic diplomas



## Inclusive Higher Education Programs

- Programs can range from 1 – 4 years.
- Programs are for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- You will learn independent living and career skills.

### To apply, you need to:

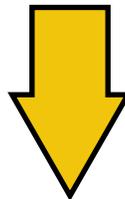
- Fill out an application
- Finish high school
- Send information that says you have a disability
- Send recommendation letters



## Wrap Up

- **Postsecondary education** is any classes or training programs you attend after you finish high school.
- There are different types of high school **diplomas** in Tennessee.
- There are many different kinds of postsecondary education options that you can choose from.
- The requirements for these programs are all different.

KEEP READING FOR MORE DETAILS





## Exploring Postsecondary Education Options

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- Exploring postsecondary education options early on in high school is important to give yourself plenty of time to choose the perfect fit for you.
- Visit the websites for the postsecondary education programs you are interested in so that you can gather general information
- As you gather information from different programs, also consider attending these events:
  - **College Fairs**
    - A gathering of representatives from various postsecondary education programs
    - Provide information on admission requirements and answer a variety of questions on available programs of study, student life, and campus culture
  - **Tours**
    - In-Person: an opportunity to visit the campus and ask questions to various specialists (disability services, registrar, etc.)
    - Virtual: similar to an in-person tour, but completed virtually through video chat and other virtual methods

## High School Diploma Options

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- When you complete high school, you receive a diploma
- The type of diploma you receive is decided based on the type of classes you take while you are in high school
- The type of diploma you receive can affect what choices you have for postsecondary education programs

## Diploma Options in Tennessee

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### Regular High School Diploma

- Traditional diploma earned by high school students
- Most widely recognized by employers
- Eligible to attend all traditional postsecondary educational opportunities



### **Special Education Diploma**

- Pathway for students who will not be earning a regular education diploma
- Eligible to attend inclusive higher education programs, which give postsecondary education options for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Eligible to attend certain colleges of applied technology
- Not often recognized by employers
- Not eligible to attend traditional universities or community colleges

### **Occupational Diploma**

- Emphasizes vocational and career outcomes for students
- Student must complete two years of work experience which will likely be attractive to future employers
- Not eligible to attend traditional universities or community colleges
- Able to attend certain technical schools
- Able to attend inclusive higher education programs if the student has an intellectual or developmental disability

### **Alternate Academic Diploma**

- Pathway for students who are not earning a regular education diploma
- Not eligible to attend traditional universities or community colleges
- Able to attend certain technical schools
- Able to attend inclusive higher education programs if the student has an intellectual or developmental disability

## **Types of Postsecondary Education**

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- When deciding which postsecondary education option is the best fit for you, it is important to understand the types of degrees, certificates, or training that each program provides
- Different postsecondary education programs may also provide different housing, transportation, and financial aid options.
  - Some postsecondary education programs offer on-campus living in dorms, while other programs may require you to commute daily to campus
    - If you commute to college, it is important to research what type of



transportation is best for you (driving yourself, a parent driving you, taking a public transportation, etc)

- Attending college can sometimes be expensive so make sure you research the cost of the program, financial aid, and other scholarship options to help with funding your education

## **University**

- 4-year program
- Earn a bachelor's degree
- Offers general education courses and career specific courses
- Admission requirements:
  - Application
  - Regular high school diploma
  - Typically require standardized test scores (ACT/SAT)
  - Recommendation letters
  - High school transcript
- Example: Raymond received his Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Accounting at a 4-year university and now works as an accountant for a local business.

## **Community College**

- 2-year program if seeking a degree
  - Earn an associate degree
  - Offer courses for credit in many fields that can be transferred to 4-year colleges or universities
  - Admission requirements:
    - Application
    - Regular high school diploma or GED
      - Some community colleges will accept the Occupational Diploma, Special Education Diploma, or the Alternate Academic Diploma
      - High school transcripts
    - May need standardized test scores (ACT/SAT)
  - Example: Julia received her Associate of Science (A.S) at a community college. Her course of study was in nursing and she now works as a full-time nurse at a local hospital.



- Less than 1 year for non-degree seeking
  - Earn a professional or technical certificate
  - Admission requirements:
    - Application
    - High school transcripts
    - Some programs may have additional requirements
  - Example: Marcus is interested in applying for a job with a construction company. He goes to a community college and earns a Civil and Construction Engineering Technology Technical Certificate. This will help him to be more qualified for the position he is applying for.

### **College of Applied Technology/Vocational Training**

- Programs take less than 2 years
- Can receive a license, certificate, or career diploma
- Offer a wide variety of certificates that help individuals enter the job market directly without further coursework
- Admission requirements:
  - Application
  - Regular High school diploma or GED
    - Some colleges of applied technology will accept the Occupational Diploma, Special Education Diploma, or the Alternate Academic Diploma
  - High school transcripts
- Example: After graduating from a College of Applied Technology, Robbie had specialized experience in fixing cars and was able to get a job as an Automotive Technician Assistant.

### **Inclusive Higher Education Program**

- Programs can be up to 4 years
- Receive a Certificate of Completion
- Designed specifically for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities focusing specifically on career goals and independent living
- Admission requirements:
  - Application
  - High school completion
  - Documented intellectual or developmental disability



- Letters of recommendation
- Example: Morgan was a student in an inclusive higher education program. She had an internship in the college's admission office. She learned many skills needed to be able to assist admission counselors. This experience led to her getting an administrative assistant job at another local college.

## Tennessee Pathways Initiative

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- Partnerships between high schools and postsecondary education programs to prepare students by giving them opportunities to begin working towards college and careers while still in high school
- Structured to support students with the goal of being enrolled in a postsecondary education program
- Helps students gain work experience and skills as they transition to college and/or careers
- After completing a career pathway course sequence, students should be ready for an entry-level job in the career area chosen or postsecondary education
- [Visit the Tennessee Pathways Website to learn more.](#)