

Guidelines for degree designations at WVU

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Background

Approved degree programs at WVU are listed in the WVU Curriculum Matrix, available at <http://registrar.wvu.edu/curriculum-matrix>. Programs are identified by a degree program title and a degree designation, along with an appropriate CIP Code. Within a degree program may be listed individual majors and areas of emphasis. The degree program title indicates the field of the degree program (e.g., finance, physics). The degree designation indicates the degree awarded to students who complete the degree program (e.g., B.A. – Bachelor of Arts, M.S. – Master of Science, Ph.D. – Doctor of Philosophy, M.F.A. – Master of Fine Arts). CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) codes are identifiers that support tracking and reporting of fields of study across institutions (see <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/>). Programs are typically referenced by using the combination of the degree designation and degree title (e.g., M.S. in History), although it is also acceptable to informally refer to the combination of the degree designation and major (e.g., M.A. in Higher Education Administration rather than M.A. in Educational Leadership with a major in Higher Education Administration).

Degree program approvals and changes

Requests for new or changed degree program titles and designations require approval from the Office of the University Registrar and the appropriate associate provost (Associate Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs or Associate Provost for Graduate Academic Affairs). This approval should be obtained before submitting a proposal through the CIM system to obtain Faculty Senate or Graduate Council approval.

Guidelines concerning degree program titles and designations

The following guidelines were developed to facilitate selection of appropriate degree program titles and designations and to establish some principles to maintain uniformity across programs at WVU, with attention to general disciplinary practices as appropriate.

1. Degree program titles should be as concise and general as possible, and should represent widely accepted fields of study. In general, a new major should be added within an existing degree program, rather than creating a new degree program, whenever possible. Degree program titles should be considered long-term, stable entities, whereas it is expected that majors within a degree program will be changed from time to time, both in terms of their title and their content, as disciplinary foci and interests shift.
2. Degree designations should be one of the following standard, non-discipline-based designations for most non-professional, liberal arts and sciences, programs:
 - Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)
 - Bachelor of Science (B.S.)
 - Master of Arts (M.A.)
 - Master of Science (M.S.)
 - Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

3. Degree designations for professionally oriented programs may be of the format Bachelor/Master/Doctor of <discipline>, in line with disciplinary practices. Some examples of common degree designations of this type include Bachelor/Master of Fine Arts (B.F.A./M.F.A.), Master of Public Health (M.P.H.), Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), Doctor of Medicine (M.D.).
4. Degree designations that combine one of the standard designations above and the degree program or major title should be avoided, unless such designations can be justified as normal disciplinary practice.
5. Requests for degree designations that do not fit the format described in items 2 and 3 above must provide a strong rationale for the request. A strong rationale might include evidence of widespread use of the proposed degree designation by existing programs at other institutions. A goal of consistency across related programs at WVU or disciplinary guidelines that suggest a particular style of degree designation might also provide a compelling, but possibly not a sufficient, rationale.