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Structure of U.S. Education

Education in the United States follows a pattern similar to that in many systems. Early childhood education is followed by primary school (called elementary school in the United States), middle school, secondary school (called high school in the United States), and then postsecondary (tertiary) education. Postsecondary education includes non-degree programs that lead to certificates and diplomas plus six degree levels: associate, bachelor, first professional, master, advanced intermediate, and research doctorate. The U.S. system does not offer a second or higher doctorate, but does offer postdoctorate research programs. Adult and continuing education, plus special education, cut across all educational levels.

The following links direct you to information on different aspects of the structure of education in the United States. You may open these documents and link directly to the information sources, or you may save or print the pages and use them later.

See also:

- Organization of U.S. Education
- Accreditation and Quality Assurance
- U.S. Institutions and Programs
- Diploma Mills and Fraud [MS Word, 92K]

Progressing Through the System [MS Word, 58K] provides links to research and statistics concerning the flow of students through the U.S. education system as well as education indicators and international comparisons.

Curriculum and Content Standards [MS Word, 91K] provides information on school and tertiary curriculum standards and related reform efforts.

U.S. Career and Technical Qualifications [MS Word, 69K] provides information on commonly encountered types of postsecondary vocational awards.

Bachelor's Degrees [MS Word, 88K] provides information on the bachelor's degree, post-bachelor's certificate programs and common bachelor's

Evaluation and Assessment provides information on common U.S. grading and credit systems as well as evaluation and standardized tests.

U.S. Primary and Secondary Qualifications [MS Word, 79K] provides information on the U.S. high school diploma, other secondary qualifications, and high school equivalency for adults.

Associate Degrees [MS Word, 72K] provides information on the associate degree, credit transfer to bachelor's level studies, and common associate degree titles.

First-Professional Degrees [MS Word, 72K] provides information on first degrees in certain professional fields that require completion of prior

degree titles.

undergraduate education for admission.

Master's Degrees [MS Word, 90K] provides information on the master's degree, both non-thesis and research, and common master's degree titles.

Intermediate Graduate Qualifications [MS Word, 72K] provides information on certificates, diplomas, and degrees in the U.S. higher education system that represent a level of education between the master's degree and the research doctorate.

Research Doctorate Degrees [MS Word, 77K] provides information on the U.S. research doctorate degree and degree titles considered equivalent to the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree.

Postdoctoral Programs and Academic Tenure [MS Word, 72K] provides information on research and professional academic programs that follow the award of the research doctorate.