

Overview of Graduate Degrees

- Graduate programs typically are studies beyond the bachelor’s degree that are at the masters or higher level.
- Professional degrees are those that prepare students for specific careers in specific fields such as business (MBA), education (MEd, EdD), law (JD), medicine (MD), and pharmacy (PharmD). Professional programs focus on real-world application, and often also require students to complete internships in their field of study before graduation.
- Research or academic degrees are typically more research-oriented than professional programs. These programs require students to conduct research and usually require a thesis (dissertation) or capstone project in order to graduate.
- It’s important to know that at places like Penn, students are not typically charged tuition for PhD programs. Most doctoral students have their tuition paid by their program, and are provided with health insurance and a small living stipend in exchange for teaching and research duties.
- Most professional degrees DO charge tuition although there may be ways to obtain loan forgiveness for public service, particularly for teachers, lawyers, and doctors working in underserved areas.
- A postdoc is a temporary position that allows a PhD to continue their training as a researcher and gain skills and experience that will prepare them for their academic career. Most postdoc positions are at a university or in industry, but there are some postdoc positions at nonprofits and in government.

Degree	Avg Years	Avg tuition cost per year	Tuition help	Typical careers	Avg starting salary
DDM/DDS Doctor of Dental Medicine/ Surgery	4	\$36,000 (public); \$67,000 (private)	Scholarships, government/military service programs, loan forgiveness	Dentist Periodontists, Orthodontists require 2-3 additional years of postdoctoral training	\$119,000
DVM Doctor of Veterinary Medicine	4	\$28,000-54,000 (in-state); \$41,000-66,000 (out-of-state)	Scholarships, loan forgiveness & repayment opportunities	Veterinary surgeon or nurse, Federal Government Inspector, Zookeeper, Researcher, Professor	\$60,000
EdD Doctorate of Education	3-5	\$49,000	Student loans, employer tuition reimbursement or sponsorship	School principal, superintendent, higher education administration, chief learning officer	\$90,000
JD Juris Doctor (law)	3	\$21,000 (public, in-state); \$49,000 (private)	Scholarships, grants & assistantship positions, federal student aid, student loans, loan forgiveness programs	Lawyer, Law Librarian, Professor, Consultant, Judge/Hearing Officer, Mediator, Writer/Journalist	\$68,5000 -130,000
MA/MS Master Arts/Science	1.5-2	\$20,000-30,000	Employer tuition reimbursement, federal financial aid, loans, grants, federal work-study, institutional aid, scholarships & fellowships	Highly dependent on specialization	\$78,000

Degree	Avg Years	Avg tuition cost per year	Tuition help	Typical careers	Avg starting salary
MBA Master of Business Administration	2	\$30,000-80,000	Scholarships, loans, employer sponsorship	Director, Entrepreneur, Manager, Analyst, or Consultant in: business development, finance, marketing, projects, programs, products, operations	\$105,000 +
MD/DO Medicinae Doctor (Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine)	7-12	\$36,000 (in-state); \$60,000 (out-of-state & private)	Scholarships & grants, federal financial aid, private student loans, TA/RA, government or military service program	Specialized Doctor, Surgeon, Researcher, Paramedic, Medical Examiner, Public Health Worker	\$89,000
MPH Master of Public Health	2-3	\$16,000-33,000 (public); \$25,000-60,000 (private)	Scholarships, stipends, federal financial aid	Epidemiologist, Biostatistician, Researcher, Educator, Health Care Administrator, Policy Advisor	\$63,000
MSW Master of Social Work	1-2	\$13,000 (public); \$36,000 (private)	Scholarships, stipends, federal financial aid	Social Worker or Counselor in mental health, substance use, school, family, Case Manager, Human Services Administrator	\$60,000
PhD (Humanities) Doctor of Philosophy	7-10	\$36,000 (research-based); \$48,000 (professional)	Many universities fund tuition and stipend for living expenses, TA/RA, fellowships/scholarships, loans	Higher education Faculty or Administrator, Financial Analyst, Policy Advisor, Industry Researcher, Teacher, Consultant	\$75,000
PhD (STEM)	4-6	\$36,000 (research-based); \$48,000 (professional)	Many universities fund tuition and stipend for living expenses, working as TA/RA, fellowships/scholarships, loans	Professor/Teacher, Policy Advisor, Industry/Government Researcher, Consultant	\$75,000-150,000
PharmD Doctor of Pharmacy	4*	\$25,000	Financial aid, scholarships	Pharmacist, Drug Development, Medical Writer *Note that some students enroll in PharmD programs as undergrads, shortening the total higher ed time to PharmD from 8 to 6.	\$90,000-140,000
PsyD Doctor of Psychology	4-6	\$30,000	Financial aid, scholarships	Clinical psychologist, Forensic Psychologist, School Psychologist, Counselor. *Note PhDs are generally trained following the scientist-practitioner model that puts greater emphasis on research, while PsyDs are generally trained with greater emphasis on clinical work.	\$79,000