



PA State System of Higher Education Board of Governors

Effective: December 1, 1989

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Policy1989-01-A: *University Diplomas*

See Also:

Adopted: April 20, 1989

Amended: April 9, 2015; July 13, 2017; July 12, 2018, March 2, 2022, and April 11, 2024

A. Purpose

To specify the respective State System and university information to be included on student diplomas, in order to properly represent the respective degree granting authorities.

B. Definitions

University Diploma

The diploma is the ceremonial document that reflects the appropriate degree designation(s) earned by the student.

Academic Transcript

The transcript generally is considered to be the official and legal academic history of coursework and, if applicable, degree(s) earned.

Legal Name

The legal name is the name that identifies a person for legal, administrative, and other official purposes. A person's legal first name generally is the name that was given to the person for the purpose of registration of his/her birth and which then appears on a birth certificate, but may change subsequently.

Preferred Name

A preferred name is a name a person commonly uses that is different from the person's legal name. Examples: a transgendered student has the legal first name "Susan," but prefers to be called "Steve"; a student has always used his/her middle name and prefers that name to his/her first name.

C. Policy

The president and council of trustees of each university shall present a diploma design for approval. The university may use a single design for all university diplomas, or have various designs for different degree levels, schools, programs, degree designations, or certifications. The chancellor, on behalf of the Board of Governors, shall approve such designs, in accord with the established standards and may grant exceptions to the standards.

D. Standards

1. Each university shall develop a policy allowing students to choose either their full legal name or preferred name to appear on the diploma. Any preferred name policy and associated procedures must be consistent within the university.
 - a. University academic transcripts are legal documents and, as such, must bear the full legal name of the graduate.
2. The diploma shall identify the appropriate degree designation(s) approved for the major program(s) completed by the student. These include: Associate in Arts; Associate in Science; Associate in Applied Science; Bachelor of Arts; Bachelor of Science; Bachelor of Applied Science; Master of Arts; Master of Science; Master of Education; Doctor of Philosophy; Doctor of Education; and other such special or professional degree designations as may be approved by the Board.
3. The diploma may identify the major field of study completed by the student.
4. The diploma shall bear Latin Honors, as appropriate (i.e., Cum Laude; Magna Cum Laude; Summa Cum Laude) at the baccalaureate level.
5. The diploma size is generally 8½ inches by 11 inches for undergraduate diplomas and either 8½ inches by 11 inches or 11 inches by 14 inches for graduate diplomas.
6. The diploma shall appropriately reflect the full statutory title of the university and of the State System of Higher Education.
7. The diploma shall bear the name, title, and signature of the following, and of no others:
 - a. Chair, Board of Governors
 - b. Chancellor
 - c. Chair, Council of Trustees
 - d. University president

E. Implementation Date: Effective immediately