

EARNING A DEGREE

Degree Types

Individualized Areas of Study and Majors/Structured Programs

SUNY Empire offers both structured and individualized degrees. Majors are structured programs with curriculum written by faculty that provides pre-defined choices. Individualized degree programs (<http://catalog.sunyempire.edu/undergraduate/earning-undergraduate-degree/individdegreedesign/>) are intentionally created or personally designed by the student within Areas of Study.

You will work with your mentor to determine which type of degree best fits your personal and educational goals. A complete list of all programs and their guidelines and/or course requirements can be found in the **Undergraduate Programs** section of the catalog.

Associate Degree Programs

An associate degree is the equivalent to two years of full-time study and generally include a variety of foundational and general education studies that help develop and strengthen basic academic skills, such as college-level reading and writing, quantitative reasoning, analysis, and critical thinking.

To earn an associate degree, students need 64 credits, with at least 24 credits earned at Empire State University. Students may include up to 40 credits of transfer and/or other prior learning (advanced standing). Our **A.A./A.S. in General Studies** is an exception, where students can bring in as many as 52 credits of transfer/advanced standing, with 12 credits earned at SUNY Empire.

Students in A.A. and A.S. degrees will be expected to meet **Area of Study guidelines** as well as **SUNY General Education Requirements**.

Planning For Transfer Within SUNY

If a student plans to begin at Empire State University and later transfer to another SUNY campus, SUNY Transfer Paths will help identify core coursework that will prepare them for multiple SUNY campuses. Transfer Paths summarize the common lower division requirements shared by all SUNY campuses for similar majors within most disciplines. Students should work with their mentors to follow the core course sequence designed to ensure a seamless transfer. This is especially important for students pursuing an associate degree who wish to transfer to another SUNY campus to complete a bachelor's degree in one of the Transfer Paths. For full details on the Transfer Paths and guaranteed transfer courses, please go to the SUNY Transfer Paths web page (<http://www.suny.edu/attend/get-started/transfer-students/suny-transfer-paths/>).

Bachelor's Degree Programs

A bachelor's degree is equivalent to four years of full-time study and requires a minimum of 120-124 credits depending on the program, with at least 30 credits earned at Empire State University. Students may include up to 94 credits of transfer and/or other prior learning (advanced standing).

All bachelor's degrees require a minimum of 45 advanced-level credits. The amount of liberal arts and sciences credits required vary based on degree type. In addition to area of study guidelines or major

requirements, students will be expected to meet **SUNY General Education Requirements**.

Undergraduate Certificates

Undergraduate certificates provide focused study to support a specific career interest and are applicable to at least one undergraduate area of study. Associate and bachelor's degree program plans may include a certificate.

Combined Bachelor's/Master's Degrees

SUNY Empire offers combined bachelor's/master's degree programs for highly qualified undergraduate students who wish to continue to a master's degree. Students accepted into the combined bachelor's/master's degree program will be able to take specified master's-level courses during their bachelor's degree at the undergraduate rate and have them count towards their degree. These programs may accelerate a student's time to degree completion and reduce the cost of completing the master's degree.

SUNY General Education Requirements

As a university of arts and sciences, SUNY Empire expects students to acquire the qualities of a broadly educated person. One way this breadth of knowledge is accomplished is through the SUNY General Education Requirements, which all new and returning degree-seeking undergraduate students are required to fulfill. See the General Education section (<http://catalog.sunyempire.edu/undergraduate/earning-undergraduate-degree/gened/>) of the catalog for details about requirements.

G.P.A. Requirements

Students are expected to maintain an overall Grade Point Average (GPA) of a 2.0 on a 4.0 scale. See the Academic Probation for Undergraduate Students policy (<http://catalog.sunyempire.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies-procedures/academic-probation-for-undergraduate-students/>) for more details. A minimum G.P.A. of 2.0 is required to graduate with an undergraduate degree or certificate. Nursing students should visit the **nursing program page** for specific G.P.A. requirements.

Changing a Degree

Undergraduate students may change or add a degree to their record in consultation with their mentor. Students may request changes to the degree type (B.A. to B.S.), or AOS/major (e.g. changing from a B.A. Psychology to a B.A. in Cultural Studies), using the Degree Change/Addition Request form (https://banner.esc.edu/BannerExtensibility/customPage/page/ESC_DegreeChange/) found in Self-Service Banner (SSB). Students may also use this form to add an additional degree or certificate to their record. For example, a student may have originally planned on pursuing only a bachelor's degree, and then decide they would also like to complete an associate's degree along the way. Programs with specialized admissions requirements (like those in the School of Nursing and Allied Health) may require a new application. To change a concentration title in an area of study, students work with their mentor to update their degree program plan through DP Planner, and only need to fill out the degree add/change form if they are also changing their degree or area of study.

Catalog Year Changes

Catalog year determines which set of requirements you will follow to graduate. Generally, this year aligns with the academic year that you were first admitted or re-admitted to the university. You may want to

adopt a more recent catalog year if it aligns better with your academic goals or if there have been significant changes in the curriculum. You must first discuss a change in catalog year with your mentor before requesting a change. You may only elect to move forward in catalog year; you may not select a previous catalog year. Changing your catalog year will not impact your general education requirements. In some cases, students approaching graduation might not be eligible for a catalog year change. The Catalog Year Change Form may be found on the Office of the Registrar forms and services webpage (<https://sunyempire.edu/registrar/forms-services/>).

Learning Goals

Growing out of Empire State University's unique mission, the learning goals outlined below serve as a vital link between the university's historical mission, the current context of rapid educational change, and the future of our institution in a global society where knowledge and learning remain urgently important.

Graduates of Empire State University will demonstrate competence in the following areas of learning, appropriate to their degree levels.

- **Active Learning** – assess and build upon previous learning and experiences to pursue new learning, independently and in collaboration with others.
- **Breadth and Depth of Knowledge** – cultivate a broad, interdisciplinary understanding in the liberal arts and sciences, as well as expertise in a particular field.
- **Social Responsibility** – engage in ethical reasoning, and reflect on issues such as democratic citizenship, diversity, social justice and environmental sustainability, both locally and globally.
- **Communication** – express and receive ideas effectively, in multiple contexts and through multiple strategies.
- **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving** – evaluate, analyze, synthesize and critique key concepts and experiences, and apply diverse perspectives to find creative solutions to problems concerning human behavior, society and the natural world.
- **Quantitative Literacy** – read, interpret, use and present quantitative information effectively.
- **Information and Digital Media Literacy** – critically access, evaluate, understand, create and share information using a range of collaborative technologies to advance learning, as well as personal and professional development.

For more details, please see the University Learning Goals Policy (<http://www.sunyempire.edu/policies/?search=cid%3D61278>).

Study Time

Empire State University students are primarily adults, arriving at our locations and programs with full lives that include commitments to family, work, community and personal fulfillment. When you decide to take on the academic rigors of pursuing a degree, it is imperative that you examine your commitments and make adjustments to accommodate your endeavors and thus achieve your academic goals.

In general, you should plan for 10 to 12 or more hours per week of study time for each 4-credit study or course in which you are enrolled, or in simpler terms, at least three hours a week for each credit hour of course study. Study time includes activities such as reading, writing, reflecting and research. Students taking online courses should factor in time for online communications with other students in their courses.

Course Study Modes

SUNY Empire Course Mode Dictionary

Teaching and learning at SUNY Empire uses a vast array of instructional modes in ways that best suit student needs and course content. Some instructional modes are location-based and require pre-scheduled in-person meetings, whereas others depend on different tools and technologies. The university community uses a common vocabulary to describe its instructional modes as defined below, including the expectations and requirements for faculty-student engagement associated with each mode. Students can find current information about any course section in the term guide.

Undergraduate Study Options

Independent Study: an instructor-led one-to-one course (student and faculty member) with flexible contact/meetings arranged by the student and faculty member.

Internship/practicum: an instructor-led learning experience designed to give a student practical knowledge of their field, e.g. clinical experience.

Laboratory/Lab: an instructor-led course, or components of a course, in which all students are “practicing” an application of a scientific, technical, or creative nature.

Online (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/online/>): an instructor-led course conducted virtually, using the university's Learning Management System (LMS). Online courses are offered both synchronously and asynchronously. If an online course includes synchronous meetings, information regarding days and times of those meetings is shared in advance of the first day of classes via the term guide (<https://banner.sunyempire.edu/StudentRegistrationSsb/ssb/registration/>).

Residency (<https://www.esc.edu/residencies/>): an instructor-led course that combines virtual learning or independent study and professional and academic enrichment opportunities with on-site, in-person meetings that occur on one or over several days. Information regarding days and times of scheduled synchronous meetings is shared in advance of the first day of classes and is included in the term guide.

Study Group (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/degrees-programs/ways-to-study/study-groups/>): an instructor-led course that includes regular in-person meetings with students. Information regarding days and times of scheduled meetings is shared in advance of the first day of classes and is included in the term guide.

Virtual Exchange: an instructor-led educational practice that brings together students from across geographic boundaries in synchronous and asynchronous interactions. Available through but not limited to students in the International Education program.

Virtual Residency: an instructor-led course that combines virtual learning or independent study with scheduled virtual synchronous meetings that occur on one or over several days. Information regarding days and times of scheduled synchronous virtual meetings is shared in advance of the first day of classes and is included in the term guide.

Virtual Study Group: an instructor-led course consisting of a combination of asynchronous activities and scheduled virtual synchronous meetings. Information regarding days and times of scheduled synchronous meetings is shared in advance of the first day of classes and is included in the term guide.

Other Learning Opportunities

Workshops: Noncredit workshops are offered regularly to students, particularly in the areas of writing and degree program portfolio development. Check the Workshops Calendar (<https://my.sunyempire.edu/academics/AcademicSupport/Pages/default.aspx>) (MySUNYEmpire log-in (<https://my.sunyempire.edu/>)) to find out about workshops available to student.

Working With Your Mentor and Degree Works

Every undergraduate student at SUNY Empire is assigned a mentor who serves as their own academic guide and resource from orientation to graduation. Students should confer with their mentors on a regular basis to discuss degree requirements and plan their progress toward their degree. Students and mentors will utilize Degree Works to aid in this process. Degree Works (<https://esc.degreeworks.suny.edu/>) is a Web-based tool for students to monitor their academic progress toward degree completion. A Degree Works audit is a review of past, current and planned coursework that provides information on completed and outstanding requirements necessary to complete the degree.

Degree Award/Graduation

Applying to Graduate

Students apply for graduation (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/registrar/general-information/graduation/>) once they have registered for final courses. When a student applies to graduate, it informs the Office of the Registrar that they are completing their studies. It also provides the student with an opportunity to confirm details about their diploma, such as preferred name, and address to which it should be mailed. Once an application to graduate is submitted, student records are reviewed to determine if all requirements will be met based on current registration. The student and mentor are notified of the outcome of the review.

Degree and Certificate Award Process

The degree award process begins once a student has satisfied all academic requirements, and final grades have been received in the Office of the Registrar. Students will receive an email from the Office of the Registrar to their SUNY Empire email address when the degree and/or certificate has been awarded. At that time, the awarded degree will be noted on the student's official transcript (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/registrar/general-information/transcripts/>). SUNY Empire is authorized to award degrees 12 dates a year. All award dates are the first day of the month after academic requirements have been met. Students can expect to receive their diploma by mail approximately three weeks from the day the university awarded the degree.

Commencement

To celebrate student success and achievement, SUNY Empire offers commencement ceremonies for eligible students twice a year. For details about Spring and Winter commencement ceremonies, as well as eligibility criteria, consult the commencement website (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/commencement/>).