

# Types of programs and their Differences

Degree Type	Length	Structure / Coursework	Funding	Primary Focus	Why Pursue This Degree?	Typical Career Outcomes
<b>Professional Master's</b>	1–2 years	Highly structured; coursework-heavy; may include capstone, internship, practicum, or project	Usually self-funded; some assistantships, scholarships, employer support available	Career preparation, applied skills, industry knowledge	Gain specialized credentials quickly, advance career, switch fields, increase earning potential	Industry professional, manager, analyst, practitioner, educator, public sector roles
<b>Research Master's</b>	2–3 years	Mix of coursework and independent research; thesis often required	May have assistantships, fellowships, tuition waivers depending on field/institution	Research training, academic skill-building, subject expertise	Prepare for PhD, strengthen academic profile, deepen expertise, explore research interests	Research assistant, policy analyst, lab manager, nonprofit/government research roles, pathway to PhD
<b>PhD</b>	4–7+ years	Advanced coursework early on; qualifying exams; extensive original research; dissertation required	Often fully funded through assistantships, fellowships, stipends (varies by field/program)	Original knowledge creation, advanced scholarship, research leadership	Become expert scholar/researcher, pursue faculty roles, leadership in R&D or policy	Professor, scientist, researcher, senior analyst, consultant, executive leadership, specialized expert roles