

Heartland Community College | AMC 1902 · JULY 15, 2026 · 45 MINUTES

# Understanding Apprenticeship Degrees

**What They Are and What It Takes to Get Started**

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# How the Session Flows

|    |                                                                                     |           |        |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| 01 | <b>Welcome &amp; Frame</b><br>Introduction, context, and orientation to materials   | 0:00–0:05 | 5 min  |
| 02 | <b>What Are Apprenticeship Degrees?</b><br>The spectrum, definition, and principles | 0:05–0:20 | 15 min |
| 03 | <b>AD Landscape</b><br>How ADs differ                                               | 0:20–0:30 | 10 min |
| 04 | <b>Getting Started in Your Context</b><br>Activity                                  | 0:30–0:42 | 12 min |
| 05 | <b>Close</b><br>One next step                                                       | 0:42–0:45 | 3 min  |

# "Apprenticeship" Describes Several Different Models

The term varies in three key areas: DOL registration · training provider · formal credentials awarded.

## Work-Based Learning

- Internships, co-ops, job shadowing
- CTE, residencies, job-embedded learning
- Varies widely in structure and outcomes

## Registered Apprenticeship

- DOL-registered program
- Training: employer, 3rd party, or IHE
- Certificate of completion required

## Apprenticeship Degree

- Co-designed with higher education
- Formalized + accredited postsecondary training
- Degree credential required (not incidental)

*increasing integration of work + learning + postsecondary credential →*

## AN APPRENTICESHIP DEGREE IS...

A postsecondary credential that integrates registered apprenticeship — paid work, structured on-the-job learning, related instruction, and college credit — toward a degree.



*Co-designed: higher education + employers + workforce partners — neither alone can build one.*

# Three conditions that must all be true — simultaneously

A

## **Affordability**

Affordability without necessary loan debt.

B

## **Based in the Workplace**

Workplace is a learning place from day 1 through graduation. Starts with a paid job and ends with a better paying job. Colleagues are classmates, coaches, and mentors.

C

## **Credit for Work**

Earn degree credit for learning at work. Up to half of the learning experience comes from the on the job training. The learning is put to work - theory from the classroom is put to practice.

# How ADs Differ from Traditional Apprenticeship

|                              | Traditional Apprenticeship    | Apprenticeship Degree         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Credential outcome</b>    | Journeyworker credential      | Degree + workforce credential |
| <b>Training design</b>       | OJL + RTI                     | OJL + RTI + college credit    |
| <b>Institutional partner</b> | Employer-led; IHE optional    | Co-designed — IHE required    |
| <b>Degree status</b>         | Degree optional or incidental | Degree is a required outcome  |
| <b>Financial aid</b>         | Not typically available       | Pell + employer + other aid   |

# The Design Principles of an Apprenticeship Degree

01

## Program Co-Design

Co-designed between employers, higher ed, and workforce partners. No one partner can build this alone.

02

## Credit for Prior & Current Learning

Incumbent worker experience maps into the program. On-the-job competencies earn academic credit.

03

## Operational Alignment

Work schedules, admissions, and course scheduling aligned across employer and institution.

04

## Mentorship & Support

On-site mentors assess competencies. Structured supports guide working adult participants.

05

## "Registrable" Design

Built to meet DOL registration requirements — apprentices may have access to workforce funding and supports.

GUIDED ACTIVITY • ~12 MINUTES

# Getting Started in Your Context

**Pair** with someone you haven't met yet. Use your own institution, organization, or partnership as your lens.



## ACTIVITY

# Three Questions to Start

Anchor your answers in a specific institution, organization, or sector context.

1

## WHO needs to be at the table?

Key partners: institution, employer(s), workforce system.

### If you get stuck:

*Start with who you'd call first if you decided to explore this tomorrow.*

2

## WHAT conditions need to be in place?

Name 2–3 things that must be true before you move to design.

### If you get stuck:

*Think leadership, partnerships, policy, and capacity.*

3

## WHAT is your biggest unknown?

The one question you'd most need answered before a next step.

### If you get stuck:

*This becomes your action item for the next 30 days.*

**Debrief** Surprising partner? | Most common condition? | Anyone share their biggest unknown?

CLOSE • 0:42–0:45

# What you just did is the beginning.

Before you leave: write down one next step — one task in the next 30 days.

National Center of the Apprenticeship Degree

*Accelerating Apprenticeship Degrees at scale.*

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# Thank you.