Associate Degree in Graphic Design

An associate degree in graphic design is a great way to become a graphic designer. But what is an associate (or associates') Degree? Put simply, it's a type of undergraduate degree (the next step taken after secondary education) that will teach you the basic knowledge and transferable skills to prepare you for work or to launch your chances of studying further. Most commonly offered in the USA, associate degrees can also be undertaken in Australia, Hong Kong and The Netherlands. If taken full-time, they can be completed in just two years but there are also part-time and online options which may take

longer.

Can’t decide whether or not a graphic design associate degree is right for you? we’re going to break down how valuable one is, what you can earn after graduating and more to help you on your way.

Is An Associate Degree In Graphic Design Valuable?

First of, we’re gonna ponder the question of whether an associate degree in graphic design is valuable. In short, yes. As an education provider, we see any form of education as a valuable entity—allowing someone to learn new knowledge or skills and potentially change their lives.

Though, specifically for an associates’ degree in graphic design, we believe it is valuable for several reasons. The first being it allows someone to kickstart their graphic design career in a more streamlined and affordable way than a traditional undergraduate bachelors’ degree. In other words, it gives people the opportunity to achieve their dreams of becoming a graphic designer without having to invest as much time or money—we will take a closer look at this later in this article. Which is always a good thing we reckon!

Another positive of an associate degree in graphic design is that the requirements for study are much less competitive than that of a bachelors’ degree. This means that associates’ degrees in graphic designers are open to a wider breadth of students, especially ones who have undertaken more vocational courses at high/secondary school or haven’t made the grades they needed for a bachelors’ degree.

> *This means that an associate degree in graphic design is valuable as it can provide a graphic design education to someone who might otherwise not be able to attain it.*

Lastly, an associates’ degree, in graphic design and otherwise, is meant to help those who earn them get a job or go on to further study. For this reason alone they are valuable:

> *They’re a fantastic way of starting a career from scratch.*

So, in summary, an associate degree in graphic design can be seen as a really valuable way of learning to graphic design—it’s quicker, more affordable, more accessible and teaches you the skills to become employable.

Career Options With An Associate Degree

As we’ve explained, an associates’ degree in graphic design will be a brilliant step up in learning graphic design. Though, you may now be wondering what jobs you should actually be looking and applying for. The first one is pretty obvious: graphic designer. With you associate degree in graphic design under your belt, you can start applying for jobs as a graphic designer. We would suggest looking mainly for junior designer roles—or undertaking internships at a graphic design agency or studio.

> *But it doesn’t stop there. With your associates’ degree in graphic design in your hand, the design world is your oyster.*

You can choose a specific root into design if you’ve tailored your portfolio the right way. To name a few, there’s digital (UX or UI) designer, exhibition designer, packaging designer, publishing and editorial designer, marketing designer jobs out there—all looking for someone with a killer portfolio and the skills and knowledge you learn on an associate degree in graphic design.

Not found something you're interested in yet? Well there's still other jobs that aren't strict "design jobs" that an associates' degree in graphic design can lead to. Other options include art director, artworker or letterpress printer to name a couple. See more jobs that an associate degree in graphic designer can lead to in our Ultimate Graphic Design Career Guide.

Salary Potential

We've run through the different career options that an associates' degree in graphic design can lead you to. But, just as important as that, is the kind of money that a graphic design associate degree is going to lead to you making. Yep, we're talking salaries. If you're going to get a job as a junior designer then your starting salary will vary depending on where you are in the world:

- **New York City** – According to Payscale and Indeed in June 2019, in New York City, the average salary for junior graphic designers is $43,317.
- **United Kingdom** – In London, according to Indeed in June 2019, the average salary for junior graphic designers is £22,209 and, in Manchester, £18,905.
- **Australia** – According to Indeed in June 2019, in Australia the average salary for junior designers is $48,376.

Though, as we have already shown, a junior graphic designer is far from the only job you can apply for with an associate degree in graphic designer under your belt. If you were to go with one of the other options, such as an artworker or UI designer, then you could be earning more or less than you could as a junior designer. Though it is important, money shouldn't be everything when it comes to your career and you should pick the path that brings you the most happiness. An associate degree in graphic design will allow you to choose

which career path you take—and that’s always a good thing.

What To Look For In A Program

Once you’ve made the decision to undertake an associate degree in graphic design, the next step is to start finding the right associate degree course for you.

> *There are certain important things to consider whilst you’re looking for a course: your lifestyle, your budget, your career goals and your own personal design interests.*

We’ll try to explain what we mean by each of these.

You’ll need to find a course that works around your lifestyle. By this we mean the associate degree in graphic design course you choose should align with how you want to study. If you can dedicate all your time to a course, then a full-time course is probably the best choice for you. Although, if you want, for instance, to keep working while you study or have child care to consider? Then it’s most likely a part-time course would work best for you. There’s also options to study for an associates’ degree in graphic design online. These are generally more flexible, but do require top notch time management.

Furthermore, you’ll also need to consider how much money you can and want to spend on a course. Different courses at different institutions have varying fees so it’s definitely worth taking a deep look at your finances and how much you want to invest before picking a course.

Your own career goals and personal interests are also an important thing to think about before picking a course. Have a look at a course’s curriculum before you enrol—does everything on there spark your interest? Does it cover everything you want to learn? Definitely make sure that you’re going to get everything you want out of the associates’ degree in graphic

design you choose.

> *Finally, potentially the most crucial thing to look at then tracking down the right associate degree in graphic design course for you is whether or not that course helps you to develop a portfolio.*

Ultimately, a graphic design portfolio will be your biggest, most valuable asset once you become a graphic designer—helping you showcase your work and skills and essential in landing a job. A course with no portfolio development could potentially be a waste of your time.

How Long Do Programs Take?

One of the biggest benefits of studying an associate degree in graphic design is the time it takes to complete the course. Usually, if taken full-time, an associate degree will take half the length of a bachelors' degree.

> *That means you could have an associates' degree in graphic design and be ready to start working in just two years.*

That means there will be an extra 2 years of working in the industry before those who started a bachelors' degree at the same time as you even graduate!

There are, of course, other options when it comes to an associates' degree in graphic design—part-time study. Part-time courses obviously take longer than a full-time course, so longer than two years, and can vary in length depending on the course itself and how much time the part-time students can apply to the course every day or every week. That being said, a part-time associates' degree will still take a lot less longer than a part-time bachelors' degree—which can take over five years to complete!

Is There A Better Alternative To An Associate Degree?

So, as you've seen, an associate degree in graphic design is a great way of studying to launch a new career as a graphic designer—it's a fast and cheap way of doing so. However, there is a better alternative.

> *Which is faster, cheaper and has exceptional teaching standards, producing many amazing, award-winning graphic designers over the past 24 years. That alternative is Shillington.*

Through its innovative graphic design course, Shillington provides its graduates with the best possible chance of employment. In just three months full-time or nine months part-time, Shillington students go from being complete beginners to industry-ready, working graphic designers. They leave the course with not only the graphic design certificate, practical knowledge, technical skills and theory to become a graphic designer, but also an industry-ready portfolio. They're ready to start applying for jobs as soon as they're out the door.

With six campuses across three countries—New York, London, Manchester, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane—and an Online course like no other, Shillington is open to anyone regardless of prior education or experience. And, to top this all off, Shillington is cheaper than other degree options, including an associate degree in graphic design. Upfront payment also means that Shillington graduates are riddled with debt that they have to think about paying off as they start their creative careers.

In summary, an associates' degree in graphic design is a great route to becoming a graphic designer. It's a fast, cheap way to gain the employable skills and, if you pick the right

course, the necessary portfolio to get a foot up into the world of graphic design. In addition to this, an associate degree in graphic design has good job prospects and salary expectations. All in all, if you don't have four years and a *lot* of money to dedicate to studying, an associates' degree in graphic design could be the perfect choice for you.

Artwork by #ShilloLON Teacher Jack Trotman.

Despite this, as we outlined in the previous section, Shillington's graphic design course is a better alternative to an associate degree in graphic design. It hits that same marks as an associates' degree in graphic design does—affordable, fast and job-focused—but with a much higher quality of education, taught by teachers who themselves are practicing graphic designers. Sound good to you? Learn more about the course. Or enroll now, if you're ready.

https://www.shillingtoneducation.com/blog/associate-degree-graphic-design/