

# Nontraditional Degree Programs

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Nontraditional Degree Programs provide expanded opportunities for quality education in two baccalaureate degree completion programs. These programs are self-paced and involve university faculty and individualized academic advising to support students' degree attainment.

Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (<http://catalog.neiu.edu/nontraditional-degree-programs/bachelor-arts-interdisciplinary-studies>) offers students a variety of options to complete graduation requirements, including prior learning assessment for credit.

University Without Walls (<http://catalog.neiu.edu/nontraditional-degree-programs/university-without-walls>) is a competency-based program that leads to a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree. Students in this program are highly motivated, self-directed, and have clear academic goals.

## Competency-based Credit Policy

Nontraditional Degree Programs (NDP) award credit for prior experiential learning in order to acknowledge and validate college level learning that occurs outside the classroom. The Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) option for students who major in the degree completion program Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (BAIS) helps students determine, demonstrate and document such learning with integrity and rigor through a Prior Learning Portfolio submitted for assessment by faculty evaluation.

### Course/Credit Based Approach

The program uses the credit equivalency model of PLA in which students identify an existing credit-bearing course (offered by a regionally accredited American institution of higher education) that states learning outcomes consistent with those of the student's prior experiential learning. The student demonstrates through a portfolio how and when the course-equivalent learning occurred and requests an award of credit. A credentialed faculty member with expertise in the relevant academic area evaluates the portfolio and makes a determination regarding the award of credit. The amount of credit awarded through PLA is limited to 36 credit hours for each student and may be applied to any BAIS degree requirement except Northeastern residency.

### University Without Walls

In addition, NDP offers University Without Walls (UWW) degree program. This program awards the bachelor's degree based on demonstrated competencies as determined by Northeastern's faculty. Each competency is assigned a proportional share of the 120 credit hours required of a traditional Northeastern bachelor's degree.

UWW Competency/Component	Equivalent Credit Hours	Percentage of 120 Credit Hours
Depth Area	50	42
Breadth areas (10 each for four areas)	40	33
Effective communication	30	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>