

TRANSLATING DEGREES AND ACADEMIC TITLES ABBREVIATIONS: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Egyetemi fokozatok és tudományos címek rövidítéseinek fordítása: kihívások és perspektívák. Az ember társas lény, ezért természetes szükséglete a kommunikáció. Az emberi kommunikáció fontosságát már évezredekkel ezelőtt felismerték, és gyökerei sokkal messzebbre nyúlnak vissza, mint amiről az írott történelem beszámol. Az emberi kommunikáció alapja az együttműködés és a közös szándék, ahogy azt az antropozsemiotika is tanítja. Idáig azonban hosszú utat kellett bejárni.

„Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος”,¹ tanítja a Biblia, de az igét meg kell hallgatni, és terjeszteni kell. Minél messzebbre kellett eljutnia, annál fontosabb volt, hogy valamilyen módon lejegyezzék. És az ember másik természetes szükséglete, hogy nyomot hagyjon a világban – valamilyen képpel, számmal vagy betűvel. Nézzük meg röviden ennek a történetét.

Kulcsszavak: latin nyelvű oklevelek, egyetemi fokozatok fordítása, tudományos címek rövidítése, bírósági tolmácsolás, a terminológia alakulása

Since man is a social being, one of his innate needs is the desire to communicate. The importance of human communication has been recognised for thousands of years, far longer than demonstrated through recorded history. Human communication is rooted in cooperative and shared intentions, as anthroposemiotics teaches us. But it was a long road to get us here.

“Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος”, the Bible has taught us, but it has to be heard and spread. The further it needed to go, the greater was the need to record it in some way. And the second man’s innate need was to make a mark in the world – with a picture of some kind, a certain sign, numeral or letter. Let us have a quick look back in history.

1. What Is Written?

It is generally agreed that the true writing of language goes back to between 3400 and 3300 BC, while numerals go back even much further. The idea of a writing system was independently conceived and developed in at least two ancient civilisations and possibly in even more. The two places where it is almost certain that the concept of writing was

1 Kezdetben volt az ige.

conceived are in ancient Sumer (in Mesopotamia) and in Mesoamerica by 3300 BC, because no precursors have been found to either of these in their respective regions. Independent writing systems also arose in Egypt around 3100 BC and in China around 1200 BC, but historians debate whether these writing systems have been developed completely independently of the Sumerian writing or whether either or both were inspired by the Sumerian writing via cultural diffusion. Ancient Chinese characters are considered by many to be an independent invention because there is no evidence of contact between ancient China and the literate civilisations of the Near East, and because of the distinct differences between the Mesopotamian and Chinese approaches to logography and phonetic representation. The Egyptian script is dissimilar from Mesopotamian cuneiform, but similarities in concepts and in earliest attestation suggest that the idea of writing may have come to Egypt from Mesopotamia. To cut a long story short, a conventional “proto-writing to true writing” system follows several development stages:

- *Picture writing system*: glyphs were simplified pictures representing objects and concepts. Accordingly, the following sub-stages were developed:
 - Mnemonic: glyphs primarily used as a reminder,
 - Pictographic: glyphs directly represent an object or a concept such as syntagma or basic sentence,²
 - Ideographic: graphemes are abstract symbols that directly represent an idea or a concept.³
- *Transitional system*: graphemes refer not only to the object or idea that it represents but to its name as well.
- *Phonetic system*: graphemes refer to sounds or spoken symbols, and the form of the grapheme is not related to its meanings. This resolves itself into the following substages:
 - Verbal: grapheme (logogram) represents a whole word.
 - Syllabic: grapheme represents a syllable.
 - Alphabetic: grapheme represents an elementary sound.

It is possible that the concept of representing language by writing was passed on by traders or merchants traveling between the two regions, regardless of dissimilarities. This was, and still is, a genuine power of progress. The need to record, measure or calculate precedes the written word as a text message. Furthermore, the first historically proven literary form was, in fact, a culinary recipe, which easily derived from a list of

2 Limestone Kish tablet from Sumer with pictographic writing; may be the earliest known writing.

3 The best-known picture writing systems of ideographic or early mnemonic symbols are:

- Jiahu symbols, carved on tortoise shells in Jiahu, c. 6600 BC
- Vinča signs – 5300 BC
- Early Indus script – 3100 BC.

numbers and items with some words added. Epigraphs, epigrams, poems and prose are yet to come. Not only because there was no need for expression in a longer and more complex written form, but because conciseness saved time and space. For in ancient times, before Gutenberg's invention of the press, it was imperative to be brief.

2. What Is Meant?

It cannot be denied that symbolic communication systems are distinguished from writing systems and co-exist side by side. In that one must usually understand something of the associated spoken language to comprehend the text. In contrast, symbolic systems, such as information signs, painting, maps, and numerals, often do not require prior knowledge of a spoken language. Today, we know that every human community has at least one language, a feature that many regard as an innate one and a defining condition for the development of humankind. However, the development of writing systems has been sporadic and slow. Once established, writing systems change more slowly than their spoken counterparts and often preserve features and expressions that no longer exist in the spoken language. Even so, writing allows societies to transmit information and share knowledge.

3. How Can It Be Translated?

The Rosetta Stone is considered to be the first proof of the translation need and process. It is a granodiorite stele, found in 1799, inscribed with three versions of a decree issued at Memphis, Egypt in 196 BC during the Ptolemaic dynasty on behalf of King Ptolemy V. The top text is written in Ancient Egyptian, using the hieroglyphic script, the middle is the Ancient Egyptian text written in the Demotic script, while the bottom one is in Ancient Greek, written using the Greek alphabet. Since it was a very successful text translation, with only minor differences between the three versions, the Rosetta Stone proved to be the key to deciphering the Egyptian hieroglyphs. And that is how the history of translation began.

The most commonly used traductology theory states that translation is the process of transferring the meaning of the text from one language to another. This is true to some extent. While spoken interpretation undoubtedly existed before the appearance of the writing system, written translation began after the appearance of written literature. Furthermore, what can be transmitted in written translation does not necessarily include everything that could be comprehended in spoken interpretation. And this is as far as verbal communication goes, not to mention the possibilities of non-verbal communication.

But translation is much more than data transmission, and its success is not always easy to quantify. This becomes particularly true in the literary sphere: concerned with delivering artistic effect more than facts, simple and straight. From the earliest attempts, the 15th century treatise *De interpretatione recta*⁴ by the Florentine historian Leonardo Bruni, scholars have been trying to set us on the correct path, but none of them seemed to head in quite the same direction. To summarise something that could take much more time to discuss and elaborate, the greatest benefit of writing is that it provides a tool by which society can record information consistently and in greater detail, something that could not be achieved by the spoken word.

Now we come to the area of cooperative and shared intentions, because there was a need of some presumption in order to understand what the writer had intended to send as a message. As the translation as a need and process goes far back in history, so does the idea of simplifying it. The more a word or an idea behind a well-known concept has been known, the greater the chances were it would go further – corrupted or misunderstood. As wrong as it sounds, that is the etymology supporting the verbs *to be*, *esse*, *sein*, *ῶμου*, *essere* and other derivatives from IE*-bhu in almost all Indo-European languages.

The same process of simplifying is to blame for some symbol’s or abbreviation’s misuse, although we seem to know what they really mean. But meaning through history changed a lot.

The most commonly used symbol is the comma (,), a punctuation mark that appears in several variants in different languages. It has the same shape as an apostrophe (‘) or a single closing quotation mark in many typefaces, but their position in the text differs.

Japanese comma	Arabic comma	combining comma
、	،	◌̣

The comma is used in many contexts and languages (Image 1), mainly for separating parts of a sentence such as clauses, and items in lists, particularly when there are three or more items listed. The word *comma* comes from the Greek κόμμα (*kómma*), which originally meant a cut-off piece; specifically, in grammar, a short clause, so it was used instead of a full stop. While the apostrophe was used in the sense we use a comma today, because the word *apostrophe* comes ultimately from Greek ἡ ἀπόστροφος [προσῳδία] ‘[the accent of] turning away or elision’, through Latin and French later. A comma-shaped mark is used also as a diacritic in several writing systems, and is considered distinct from the cedilla. The rough and smooth breathings (ῶ, ῶ̄) appear above the letter

4 ‘The Right Way to Translate’

in Ancient Greek, and the comma diacritic appears below the letter in Latvian, Romanian, and Livonian.

In the 3rd century BC, Aristophanes of Byzantium invented a system of single dots (*distinctions*) that separated verses (colometry) and indicated the amount of breath needed to complete each fragment of the text when reading aloud. The different lengths were signified by a dot at the bottom, middle or top of the line. For a short passage (a *komma*), a *media distinctio* dot was placed mid-level (·). This is the origin of the concept of a comma, although the name was used for the mark itself instead of the clause it had separated. The mark used today is descended from a diagonal slash, or *virgula suspensiva* (/), used from the 13th to 17th centuries to represent a pause.

Aristophanes of Byzantium is guilty of introducing another, secondly used symbol (.), the full stop symbol. It also derives from the Greek punctuation. In Aristophanes' system it was a series of dots whose placement determined their meaning: the full stop at the end of a completed thought or expression was marked by a high dot (·), called *στιγμή τελεία* or "terminal dot"; the "middle dot" (·) *στιγμή μέση*, marked a division in a thought occasioning a longer breath (essentially a semicolon); and the low dot (.) *ὑποστιγμή* or "underdot", marked a division in a thought occasioning a shorter breath (essentially a comma). In much later practice, scribes mostly employed the terminal dot; the others went out of use and were later replaced by other symbols. From the 9th century onwards, the full stop began appearing as a low mark instead of a high one. By the time of the invention of the printing press in Western Europe, the low mark was regular and then it became universal. But it was not Aristophanes who invented the symbol, but rather the Arabs did, and it was originally used as a numeral, indicating zero.

Another worldwide used symbol, much complicated in writing, etymology and style is the ampersand (&), the logogram, representing the conjunction "and". It is originally a ligature of the letters *et*, meaning "and" in Latin. The word *ampersand* is a corruption of the phrase "and *per se* & (and)", meaning "and by itself *and* (represented by the symbol &)". In English-speaking schools, when reciting the alphabet any letter that could also be used as a word such as "A" or "I" was repeated with the Latin expression *per se* "by itself". It was also a common practice to add the "&" sign at the end of the alphabet as if it were the 27th letter, pronounced like the Latin *et* or later in English as *and*. As a result, the recitation of the alphabet would end in "X, Y, Z, *and per se and*". This last phrase was routinely slurred to "ampersand" and the term had entered common English usage by the first half of the 19th century.

The section sign (§) is a typographical character for referencing individual numbered sections of a document, frequently used when referring to legal code. It is likely that it originates in the section sign for a digraph formed by the combination of two S glyphs, from the Latin *signum sectionis*. That affected the later names for it – section symbol, section mark, double-s, or alternatively the paragraph mark in some parts of Europe, as well as its usage. It is often used when referring to a specific section

of legal code, along with the pilcrow (¶) or paragraph sign, to reference a specific paragraph within a section of a document. While § is usually spoken as section, European countries may read it as paragraph. When duplicated, as §§, it is read as the plural “sections” (e.g. “§§ 13–21”), much as “pp.” (pages) is the plural of “p.” It may also be used with footnotes when asterisk (*), dagger (†) and double dagger (‡) have already been used on a given page. It is common practice to follow the section sign with a non-breaking space so the symbol is kept with the section number being cited. The section sign is itself sometimes a symbol of the justice system, in much the same way as the Rod of Asclepius is used to represent medicine. The Austrian Ministry of Justice, for example, used the symbol in its logo for a time. In Brazil, the sign may be used to represent numbered article paragraphs following the initial paragraph such as Latin: **caput**.

The youngest on this list of worldwide used symbols is (@) usually read aloud as “at”; it is also commonly called the at symbol or commercial at. It is used as an accounting and invoice abbreviation meaning “at a rate of” but it is now most commonly used in email addresses and social media platform “handles”. Along with the variation of usage goes the variety of names used. The fact that there is no single word in English for the symbol has prompted some writers to use the French *arobase* or Spanish and Portuguese *arroba*, or to coin new words such as the “highly logical” *ampersat*, *asperand*, and the *strudel*, in Greek it is *παπακι*, but none of these have been brought to wider use.

The earliest as yet discovered reference to the @ symbol is a religious one. It features in a Bulgarian translation of a Greek chronicle written by Constantinos Manasses in 1345. Held today in the Vatican Apostolic Library, it features the @ symbol in place of the capital letter alpha “A” in the word Amen. Why it was used in this context is still a mystery. Its origin is also puzzling, with quite a few theories describing it. The one I find most plausible is that medieval monks abbreviated the Latin word *ad* (at, toward, by, about) next to a numeral. Saving space and ink has always been the strongest reason for the abbreviation. Since thousands of pages of biblical manuscripts were copied onto expensive papyrus or hides, and the words *at*, *toward*, *by* and *about* were repeated millions of times throughout the pages, a considerable amount of resources would have been saved in this way.

So, translation is the process of transferring the meaning from one language to another, not only by words and letters, but signs and symbols as well.

4. Diploma as Academic Degree

The same story goes for worldwide usage of academic degrees and their abbreviations. Luckily for us, they have not become logograms or typographical characters yet. An academic degree is a qualification awarded to students upon the successful completion of a course of study in higher education, normally at a college or university. These institutions commonly offer degrees at various levels, typically including bachelor’s,

master's and doctorates, often alongside other academic certificates, and professional degrees. The most common undergraduate degree is the bachelor's degree, although in some countries lower qualifications are titled degrees (e.g. associate degrees in the US or foundation degrees in the UK), while in other countries a higher-level first degree is more usual. The doctorate (Latin: *doceo* "I teach") appeared in medieval Europe as a licence to teach (Latin: *licentia docendi*) at a medieval university. Its roots can be traced back to the early church when the term "doctor" referred to the Apostles, church fathers and other Christian authorities who were the most familiar with the sacred knowledge so they were allowed to teach and interpret the Bible.⁵ The right to grant a *licentia docendi* was originally reserved to the church which required the applicant to pass a test, to take the oath of allegiance and pay a fee. The Third Council of the Lateran of 1179 guaranteed access – now largely free of charge – to all able applicants, who were, however, still tested for aptitude by the ecclesiastic scholastic. This right remained a bone of contention between the church authorities and the slowly emancipating universities, but was granted by the Pope to the University of Paris in 1231 where it became a universal licence to teach (*licentia ubique docendi*). However, while the *licentia* continued to hold greater prestige than the bachelor's degree (*Baccalareus*), it was ultimately reduced to an intermediate step to the magister and doctorate, both of which now became the exclusive qualification for teaching.

At university, doctoral training was a form of apprenticeship to a guild. The traditional period of study before new teachers were admitted to the guild of "Master of Arts", seven years, was the same as the period of apprenticeship for other occupations. Originally the terms "master" and "doctor" were synonymous, but over time the doctorate came to be regarded as a higher qualification than the master's degree. Not so long ago, even in the 20th century, prior to the Second World War, a student who had completed pharmacy was named *Magister Pharmaciae*, while the one completing law school was *Iuris Doctor*, regardless of being granted the first step of university education.

In the medieval European universities, candidates who had completed three or four years of study in the prescribed texts of the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and logic), and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music), together known as the Liberal Arts, and who had successfully passed examinations held by their master, would be admitted to the degree of Bachelor of Arts, from the Latin *baccalaureus*, a term previously used for a squire (i.e. apprentice) to a knight.

Further study, and in particular successful participation in and then moderating of disputations would earn the student the Master of Arts degree, from the Latin magister, "master" (typically indicating a teacher), entitling one to teach these subjects. Masters of Arts were eligible to enter study under the "higher faculties" of Law, Medicine or Theology, and earn first a bachelor's and then master or doctor's degree in these subjects.

5 As well as priests had been, before them, in antiquity.

Thus, a degree was only a step on the way to becoming a fully qualified master – hence the English word “graduate”, which is based on the Latin word *gradus* (“step”). This is highly important to bear in mind when translating medieval diplomas as well as modern ones from universities that traditionally issue diploma degrees in Latin. Especially because the most common abbreviation used as an indicator for the highest level of education Ph.D. *Philosophiae doctor* in diplomas issued nowadays usually does not have anything to do with philosophy, such as Ph.D. in mathematics (sc. *scientiae*).

The confusion arose because in the medieval universities those were equivalent terms, the use of them in a degree name was a matter of custom at a university. Most universities conferred the Master of Arts, although the highest degree was often termed Master of Theology/Divinity or Doctor of Theology/Divinity, depending on the place. The earliest doctoral degrees: theology – *Divinitatis Doctor* D.D., law – *Legum Doctor* LL.D. (teacher of the laws, with double L standing for noun in plural, and later D.C.L. *Doctor Civilis Legis* Doctor in (Civil) Law, and medicine – *Medicinae Doctor* M.D. rarely D.M., reflected the historical separation of all higher University study into these three fields.

Studies outside theology, law, and medicine were then called “philosophy”, due to the Renaissance conviction that real knowledge could be derived from empirical observation. The University of Bologna in Italy, regarded as the oldest university in Europe, was the first institution to confer the degree of Doctor in (Civil) Law in the late 12th century; it also conferred similar degrees in other subjects, including medicine. The University of Paris used the term “master” for its graduates, a practice adopted by the English universities of Oxford and Cambridge, as well as the ancient Scottish universities of St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Edinburgh. Over time, the D.D. has gradually become less common outside theology and is now mostly used for honorary degrees, with the title “Doctor of Theology” being used more often for degrees earned. Furthermore, D.C.L. *Doctor Civilis Legis* Doctor of Civil Law is a degree offered by some universities, such as the University of Oxford, instead of the more common Doctor of Laws (LLD) degrees, such as University of Durham, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, University of Kent, Kent (United Kingdom), McGill University Faculty of Law, Montreal (Quebec Canada), Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana (United States), Pontifical Lateran University, Rome (Italy), Royal and Pontifical University of Santo Tomas (Philippines), while in some other universities, the DCL is an honorary degree. The degree title Doctor of Philosophy had not been introduced in England before 1900. Studies in what was once called philosophy are now classified as sciences and humanities. But this term stands for much more than *septem artes liberales*, which makes almost every diploma translation a journey to a place far and beyond.

So, today we have a clear case, someone would say – the terms: “baccalaureus,” “master,” “doctor” (from Latin – meaning literally: “teacher”) and “professor”, signifying different levels of academic achievement. Usually this is true, but within one educational

system. What happens if a diploma enters another one, and what place will be granted to its possessor is an entirely different story, mostly depending on the translator.

5. The Evolution of the Terminology of Degrees until Today

The naming of degrees eventually became linked with the subjects studied. Scholars in the faculties of arts or grammar became known as “master”, but those in theology, medicine, and law were known as “doctor”. As study in the arts or in grammar was a necessary prerequisite to study in subjects such as theology, medicine and law, the degree of doctor assumed a higher status than the master degree. This led to the modern hierarchy in which the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), which in its present form as a degree based on research and dissertation is presented in the 18th and 19th century by German universities as a more advanced degree than the Master of Arts (M.A.). The practice of using the term *doctor* for PhDs developed within German universities and spread across the academic world.

French terminology, on the other hand, is closer to the original meanings of the terms. The *baccalauréat* (cf. “bachelor”) is conferred upon French students who have successfully completed their secondary education and admits the student to a university. When students graduate from university, they are awarded a *licence*, much as the medieval teaching guilds would have done, and they are qualified to teach in secondary schools or proceed to higher level studies. Spain had a similar structure: the term “*Bachiller*” was used for those who finished the secondary or high-school level education, known as “*Bachillerato*”. The standard Spanish university 5-year degree was “*Licenciado*”, (although there were a few 3-year associate degrees called “*diplomaturas*”, from where the “*diplomados*” could move to study a related *licenciatura*). The highest level is “Doctor”.

6. Degrees Awarded by Various Institutions

The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies lays down five levels of qualification with the title of degree: foundation (not in Scotland), ordinary and honours bachelor’s (only separate levels in Scotland), master’s and doctoral. These relate to specific outcome-based level descriptors and are tied to the Bologna Process. So in English it is common to put the name of the awarding institute in brackets after the degree abbreviation, e.g. BA (Lond). A list of standard abbreviations for British universities can be found on various lists of Universities in the United Kingdom § Post-nominal abbreviations, even online, but this is helpful only if the diploma is in English. For the Latin one, pre-knowledge of the educational system is required. It is important to emphasise that many educational institutions, other than universities, have been granted degree awarding powers, including higher education colleges and colleges of the

University of London (many of which are now effectively universities in their own right). In the past, degrees have also been directly issued by authority of the monarch or by a bishop, rather than any educational institution. This practice has mostly died out, but not entirely, such as some religious schools in Rome (Vatican) also affecting this state of confusion.

7. Abbreviations used in Academic World

Along with this variety of origin and adopted names comes the confusion of abbreviation. They vary between countries and institutions, e.g. MS indicates Master of Science in the US and places following American usage, but Master of Surgery in the UK and most Commonwealth countries, where the standard abbreviation for Master of Science is MSc, while in Serbia, for example, it stands for Nurse (*medicinska sestra*). But, let us not get confused with all types of abbreviations and places where they might be found, and have a look at some order in this very complicated world of well-known words we really do not know what to do with and how to translate, although we understand them all.

Common abbreviations include BA and MA for Bachelor and Master of Arts, BS/BSc and MS/MSc for Bachelor and Master of Science, MD for Doctor of Medicine, and PhD for Doctor of Philosophy. They all originate from the same source, as well as a traditional education system, so what would be the problem with translating them? This is a particularly problematic task when translating academic diplomas which are issued in Latin, but from the perspective of modern language affecting the dead one. It is more than a puzzle a certain kind of paradox, you might say. Latin was a *lingua franca* for more than a thousand years, after which followed several more centuries for scientific and political purposes, being eventually replaced by French in the 18th and English in the late 19th century. It is considered dead, but that is not quite true. Latin, the language of several sciences, shaped by culture and spread by conquest, nowadays is considered a “dead language” because it is no longer spoken as a native tongue by any group or culture but, it is the official language of the Vatican, the only religious state in Europe, and still lives on at most universities of the old continent and America. Due to this fact, it continues to change, and that affects modern languages. This is what I have come up with over a decade of sworn legal translator practice. (see: **Table 1. Levels of academic degrees, titles, abbreviations, their variations and some translations**).

This is only a brief and very concise overview of academic degrees, titles, abbreviations, their variations and translations in some languages, which might look confusing to a hasty reader. But, to the observant ones, it would be clear that due to historical reasons and many attempts towards the modernisation of human resources, it is not possible to produce a more distinct analysis in such a wide range of examples. That would have required a comparison of one or two educational systems. However, for the sake of comprehending a variety of questions that can arise when translating university

diplomas written in Latin, it is helpful to emphasise a few very important angles. For historical reasons some universities (the ancient universities of England and Scotland) do not fully adhere to the Framework (particularly with respect to the title of Master of Arts), and degrees in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine are titled bachelor's degrees despite being at master's level. The usage in the ancient universities is not consistent with the Framework or the Bologna Process. The ancient universities of England, such as Oxford and Cambridge, grant an MA degree that is not a substantive qualification but reflects the ancient practice of these universities of promoting BAs to MAs a few years after graduating such as Master of Arts at Oxbridge and Dublin. The ancient universities of Scotland award an undergraduate MA instead of a BA. For students to obtain a master's degree consistent with the framework in these ancient English universities, they have created the MSt (Master of Studies) to address this anomaly and differentiate between the degrees, both being named Masters. N.B. bachelor's degrees in medicine, as well as in dentistry and veterinary science, while being undergraduate degrees, are longer courses and are considered to be master's level qualifications in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and second cycle qualifications under the Bologna Process. This undefined and nonchalant usage of a rather strict and severe educational system of antiquity consequently affected names and abbreviations of the highest rank. An international, but not universally accepted custom that certain degrees are designated with "*of Philosophy*", such as BPhil, MPhil and PhD or DPhil while the degrees are available for a range of disciplines, having nothing to do with philosophy itself.

Luckily for translators, NARIC (National Recognition Information Centre) has to deal with all these discrepancies and find the most suitable place for degree holders, but we do have to understand the system as a whole and variety of combinations in order to translate the diploma or certificate of graduation in the best interests of our client. (see: **Table 2. Most common academic degrees and abbreviations**)

Degree abbreviations are used as an alternative way to specify an academic degree instead of spelling out the title in full. Many degree titles have more than one possible abbreviation, with the abbreviation used varying between different universities. In the UK it is normal not to punctuate abbreviations for degrees with full stops (e.g. BSc rather than B.Sc., although this is done at some universities). Furthermore, due to the flexibility of Latin word order, there are two schools in the abbreviation of degrees – prenominal or post nominal degree. This is particularly complicated in doctor's degrees. The two ancient universities of England have different points of view: at Cambridge, D follows the faculty e.g. PhD, LittD., while at Oxford the D precedes the faculty e.g. DPhil, DLitt, and that affected all others. Most universities in the UK followed Oxford for the higher doctorates but followed international precedent in using PhD for Doctor of Philosophy and professional doctorates.

Some academic titles also reflect this variety of different university policies and their consequent meanings in hierarchy. Associate professor, for example, in North America and universities elsewhere using the North American system, is a position between assistant professor and a full professorship. In some Commonwealth countries, the title associate professor is often used instead of reader, which is used in the United Kingdom and a number of other Commonwealth universities, typical of Australian and New Zealand universities, as well as in South Africa, India, parts of Southeast Asia, Ireland and other countries. The title associate professor in those countries, like the title reader, corresponds to a full professorship in North America. Increasingly, some universities in Commonwealth countries have adopted the American hierarchy of titles. The University of Western Australia, for example, adopted the American system in 2009. Therefore, those who had until then held the title of lecturer would now receive the new title of assistant professor, whereas previous senior lecturers received the new title associate professor, previous associate professors under the old system received the new title professor, and previous professors under the old system received the new title of distinguished professor. (see: **Table 3. Levels of academic ranks**)

As translation goes far back in history, so does the idea of simplifying it. Since the 1940s, we have been trying to find a way to automate translation by using machines (machine translation) or to mechanically provide assistance to the translator / computer-assisted translation – CAT). The emergence of the Internet has made it possible to create a worldwide translation services market and has made it easy to localise the language. But as far as abbreviations are concerned, computers are not likely to become helpful, because it would take much more than text and context recognition. It would take something like a mathematical formula with various variables to calculate which abbreviation in what language would most likely stand for the abbreviation in question. And that is something that machines could do, but only if it is people assisted translation – PAT⁶. If this dilemma could be regarded as a chess game, machine translation vs. human translation would be in the pat position, and would remain so for a long time.

Being still a lingua franca, as the Latin language is in a world of science, it is alive and changing, and still affecting modern languages, and *vice versa*. It is an old language but is still heading toward new frontiers and new challenges. Therefore, some pre-knowledge of the Latin language *is usus sine qua non*, not only in university diploma translating, but court interpreting and legal translating, as well. There is no single and precise answer to: what makes a good translation? but, among all partial responses, and all attempts worthy of note, this one stands out: a good translation opens new doors and offers new horizons. This is even more true if we are talking about translation of an academic degree.

⁶ Untranslatable wordplay: *pat* is a Serbian word which means stalemate (chess).

Appendix. 1. Levels of academic degrees, titles, abbreviations, their variations and some translations

	Certificate	Variation	Latin	Abbreviation	
Levels of academic title	Special diplomas, of non dominant classification: Licentiate, Graduate certificate/diploma, Professional degree, Terminal degree, Specialist degree/diploma				
	Full professor		Professor	Prof.	
	Senior lecturer/Principal lecturer Reader			Assoc Prof ASP AP	
	Lecturer, clinical lecturer		Docens	Asst Prof	
	Fellow is the title of research used to denote an academic research position at a university or a similar institution. Research fellow is also used to refer to the holder of a research fellowship			USA, Canada It is roughly equivalent to the title of lecturer in the teaching career pathway	
	Habilitation defines the qualification to conduct self-contained university teaching which is the key for access to a professorship in many European countries. Similar to a British readership . In USA tenure allow only a limited period to establish a record of published research, ability to attract grant funding and academic visibility				
	Despite all changes implemented in the European due to Bologna Process, it is the highest qualification level issued through the process of a university examination and remains a core concept of scientific careers in these countries The degree is conferred for a habilitation thesis based on independent scholarship, which was reviewed by and successfully defended before an academic committee in a process similar to that of a doctoral dissertation. In some countries, a habilitation degree is a required formal qualification to independently teach and examine a designated subject at the university level.				
	Higher doctorate may be awarded on the basis of a formally submitted portfolio of published research of a particularly high standard.	Commonwealth, Scandinavia France. Cambridge: D follows the faculty, PhD while at Oxford the D precedes the faculty DPhil.	Doctor Scientiae Litterarum doctor Litt.humanorum doctor Legum doctor Musicae d.	DSc & S.D. D.Litt. & LTD L.H.D. LL.D. Mus.D.	
	Doctorate is an academic degree awarded by universities, in most cases a research degree that qualifies the holder to teach at the university level in the degree's field, or to work in a specific profession. Most UK followed Oxford for the higher doctorates, but international precedent for professional doctorates		Doctor, licentia docendi, Philosophiae Doctor Candidatus scientiarum Juris utriusque doctor Philosophiae doctor, Rerum naturalium doctor	DPhil rather than a PhD CSc. after bearer's name and a full stop Czech: JUDr. PhDr RNDr. MUDr. MVDr. RSDr.	
	Levels of educational degree	Magister degree was a research-oriented degree awarded for 2 or 3 years of study following the <i>diploma</i> degree (which lasted 4 to 6 years) and the defence of magister's thesis	Older educational system prior to Bologna process	Magistri in artibus liberalibus studiorum prolatorum. Artium Magister	Mr
Master's degree is an academic degree awarded by universities or colleges upon completion of a course of study demonstrating mastery or a high-order overview of a specific field of study or area of professional practice. A master's degree normally requires previous study at the bachelor's level, either as a separate degree or as part of an integrated course		UK, EU, USA England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Scotland	Magister scientiae licentia docendi <i>permissio to teach</i> and <i>licentia ad practicandum</i> for someone who holds a certificate of competence Medicinae universae doctor Theologia sacra Licentia	A.L.M. Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies MA, MSc, MS MBA, MST, LLM etc. PGCert, PgCert, PG Cert, PGC, or PgC PGDip STL	

USA	French	Czech	Serbian	Other examples
Professor	Professeur	Profesor	Profesor	
Associate professor	Professeur des universités associé/habilitation	<i>Mimořádný profesor</i>	Vanredni profesor prof. dr	
Assistant professor	professeur agrégé, professeur certifié	<i>Docent</i>	<p>Docent is an academic evidence that proves that a holder is capable of appointment at the level of associate or full professor. Docent is the highest academic title in several countries and the qualifying criteria are research output that corresponds to 3-5 doctoral dissertations, supervision of PhD students, and concrete evidence of teaching at undergraduate and graduate level. Doc. dr</p>	
	Attaché temporaire d'enseignement et de recherches (ATER)			
	Doctorant contractuel chargé d'enseignement Post-doctorant Doctorant contractuel	habilitácia		
Doctor of Science Doctor of Letters Doctor of Humane Letters Doctor of Laws Doctor of Music	Degree of Maître Agrégé Magister Aggregatus		Doctor nauka Dr In order to be promoted to <i>Doctor of Science</i> , a magistar was supposed to write and defend a doctoral thesis. Sweden awards the licentiate degree as a two-year qualification at doctoral level and the doctoral degree (PhD) as a four-year qualification.	
Engineer's degree is an advanced academic degree at a more advanced level than a standard master's degree. It may include a graduate thesis, and at the level of the doctorates such as the PhD	Doctorate licentiate	<i>Kandidát věd</i> Doktor práv Medicinae veterinariae doctor Rerum socialium doctor quasi-degree, awarded exclusively to Communist Party functionaries	Doktor nauka	Candidate of Sciences is the first of two doctoral level scientific degrees in some former Soviet countries Кандидат наук CSc. was abolished in 1998 and replaced with Ph.D. or Th.D
	Diplôme d'Ingénieur		Magistar umetnosti Mr was a terminal degree in music performance, acting and visual arts Bulgaria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Finland (only for engineers Greece, Hungary, Russia, Romania, Macedonia, Slovenia, Serbia, Drugi stepen	Integrated master's degrees (UK) combine an undergraduate bachelor's degree course with an extra year at master's level in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and five years in Scotland Postgraduate certificate/diploma a certificate program with collection of courses in a given discipline or set of related disciplines. δίπλωμα diploma In the Pontifical system, is equivalent to an advanced master's degree, or the post-master's coursework required in preparation for a doctorate, while other licences e.g. in Canon Law, are at the level of master's degrees
Courses normally last one year in the UK and two years in the US	Master Licentiate is a degree below PhD given by universities in some countries. Many countries (Sweden, Belgium, Finland) have degrees with this title, but they may represent different educational levels	master's degree or its equivalent, e.g. Engineer or Doctor of Medicine MUDr in technical and economic university programs Mr		

Levels of educational degree	Postgraduate	<p>Honours degree Most commonly it refers to a variant of the undergraduate bachelor's degree containing a larger volume of material or a higher standard of study, or both</p>	Older universities of Scotland, South Africa, Serbia	<i>Baccalaureatus in Artibus cum Honore</i>	Not so-called but more of an equivalent to Master	
		<p>A variant of the bachelor's degree containing a larger volume of material or a higher standard of study, or both are honours degrees Bachelor of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies Bachelor's degree generally takes three to four years depending on the country, institution, and specific specialisations, majors, or minors.</p>	USA, UK, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Canada, Australia	<p><i>Baccalaureatus in Artibus Cum Honore</i></p> <p><i>Baccalaureus Scientiae</i> <i>Baccalaureus artium</i></p>	BA (Hons) A.L.B. B.S., BS, or B.Sc; or, less common S.B., BA or AB	
		<p>Foundation degree is a combined academic and vocational qualification in higher education, equivalent to two-thirds of an honours bachelor's degree, 2001, are focused on specific professions Higher National Diploma/Diploma of Higher Education/Certificate of Higher Education It is awarded after two years of full-time study at a university or other higher education institution in the UK</p>	Commonwealth UK, Malta, India, Ghana, Argentina, Finland		FdA, FdSc, FdEng AA, AS, AAS HND HNC DipHE CertHE	
*	<p>Honorary degree is often conferred as a way of honouring a distinguished visitor's contributions to a specific field or to society in general</p>	Most of Europe & Asia, USA do not have system of higher doctorate	<i>honoris causa</i> «for the sake of the honor» or <i>ad honorem</i> «to the honor» usually recognised by italicised letters after the degree			
	<p>Customary degrees or so-called substantive: ad eundum degree, some universities and colleges have the custom of awarding a master's degree to every scholar appointed as a full professor who had never earned a degree there</p>	UK: Oxford, Dublin and Cambridge USA: Amherst, Brown, Harvard	<p>ad eundem or jure officii</p> <p><i>jure dignitatis</i></p>	AM JD N.B. not to be mistaken for <i>luris doctor</i>		

		Licence		Prvi stepen	Prior to Bologna process, first cycle lasted four years and acquired a certain diploma (diplomirani inženjer, diplomirani filolog...), nowadays it is just a first degree, no name attached to it, while second cycle is master, but it is not really even with former magister.
	USA universities offer three years. (B.S.) B.A, B.F.A B. of Fine Arts B.S.W B. of Social Work, B.Eng. B. Engineering, B.S.P.A B. of Science in Public Affairs, B.Phil B. of Philosophy, B.Arch B. of Architecture is a five-year program	Baccalaureate Bakalář Bc.			Licentiate is normally a lower level qualification. equivalent to a bachelor's degree, (Belgium), it was the basic university degree prior to the Bologna Process . France: it is the bachelors-level qualification in the Bologna process
	Associate degree in two years or more and can be attained at community colleges, technical colleges, vocational schools, and some colleges, as well as at some universities Associate of Arts Associate of Science			Viša škola Strukovne studije	In the US professional degrees in medicine, dentistry, and law are all graduate degrees.
	It is not customary to adopt the prefix 'Dr', but Honorary graduates may use the approved post-nominal letters, followed by h.c. Dr.h.c, Hon DMus, HonD (Auckland University of Technology), DUniv (Open University), American universities award some degrees only as honorary degrees , such as LLD (Doctor of Laws), LittD (Doctor of Letters), LHD (Doctor of Humane Letters), ScD (Doctor of Science), PedD (Doctor of Pedagogy) and DD (Doctor of Divinity) Others do not award honorary degrees as a matter of policy.		A university (or other degree-awarding institution) has waived the usual requirements, such as matriculation, residence, a dissertation, and the passing of comprehensive examinations. The degree is typically a doctorate or, less commonly, a master's degree, and may be awarded to someone who has no prior connection with the academic institution or no previous post-secondary education		
	A <i>jure dignitatis</i> degree is awarded to someone who has demonstrated eminence and scholarship by being appointed to a particular office. Thus, for example, a DD (Doctor of Divinity) might be conferred upon a bishop on the occasion of his consecration, or a judge created LLD (Legum Doctor) or DCL (Doctor of Civil Law) upon appointment to the judicial bench. These, also, are properly considered substantive rather than honorary degrees.			These <i>ad eundem</i> or <i>jure officii</i> degrees are earned degrees, not honorary, because they recognise formal learning.	

2. Most common academic degrees & abbreviations

North America		Commonwealth	
Degree	Abbreviation	Degree	Abbreviation
Undergraduate ISCED level 5			
Associate of Arts	AA or A.A.	Foundation of Arts	FdA
Associate of Science	AS or A.S.	Foundation of Sciences	FdSc
*Brevet d'études professionnelles (France)	BEP	Foundation of Engineering	FdEng
*Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle (France)	CAP	Foundation Degree of Engineering	FDEng
Diploma of Arts	Dip.Arts	Foundation Degree of the Arts	FDA, FDArts
Diploma of Language Studies	Dip.Lang.Stud.		
Diploma of Languages	Dip.Lang		
Diploma of Social Sciences	Dip.Soc.Sc.		
Diploma of Education	Dip.Ed	Foundation Degree of Education	FDEd
Diploma of Music	Dip.Mus.		
Bachelor's/honours degree			
Same abbreviations + Hons if honours degree			
ISCED level 6			
Bachelor of Arts	BA, B.A., AB, A.B. or B.Arts		
Bachelor of Science And Arts	BSA		
Bachelor of Accountancy	B.Acy or B.Acy.		
Bachelor of Accounting	B.Acc or B.Acc.		
Bachelor of Animal and Veterinary Bioscience	B.An. Vet. Bio.Sc.		
Bachelor of Applied Science	B.App.Sc. or B.A.Sc.		
Bachelor of Architecture	B.Arch or B.Arch.		
Bachelor of Business Administration	BBA or B.B.A.		

Bachelor of Civil Engineering	BCE or B.C.E.
Bachelor of Commerce	BComm or B.Comm., or BCom or B.Com.
Bachelor of Communications	B.Comm.
Bachelor of Computer Application	BCA
Bachelor of Dental Hygiene	BDH Or B.D.H
Bachelor of Dental Medicine	BDM or B.D.M.
Bachelor of Dental Science	BDS _c or B.D.Sc.
Bachelor of Dental Surgery	BDS or B.D.S.; or BChD or B.Ch.D.
Bachelor of Dentistry	BDent or B.Dent.
Bachelor of Design	BDes or B.Des.
Bachelor of Design Computing	B.Des.Comp.
Bachelor of Design in Architecture	B.Des.Arch.
Bachelor of Education	BE _d or B.Ed.
Bachelor of Engineering	BEng or B.Eng., or BE or B.E
Bachelor of Electronic Commerce	BEC or B.E-COM.
Bachelor of Electrical Engineering	BEE or B.E.E.
Bachelor of Fine Arts	BFA or B.F.A.
Bachelor of Health Sciences	B.Hlth.Sci
Bachelor of Information Technology	BIT or B.I.T.
Bachelor of International and Global Studies	BIGS or B.I.G.S.
Bachelor of Law	LLB or LL.B.
Bachelor of Liberal Arts and Sciences	BLAS or B.L.A.S.
Bachelor of Library Science	BLib or B.Lib., or BLS or B.L.S.
Bachelor of Literature	BLit or B.Lit.
Bachelor of Mathematics	BM _{ath} or B.Math
Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering	BME or B.M.E.

Bachelor of Medical Science	B.Med.Sc.	*N.B. Medical doctor M.D.
Bachelor of Medicine	MB or M.B.	
Bachelor of Music	B.M.	
Bachelor of Music Studies	B.Mus.Studies	
Bachelor of Nursing	BN or B.N.	
Bachelor of Pharmacy	B.Pharm.	
Bachelor of Political, Economic and Social Sciences	B.P.E.S.S.	
Bachelor of Resource Economics	B.Res.Ec.	
Bachelor of Science	(US) BS or B.S.; (UK) BSc or B.Sc.	
Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene	BSDH Or B.S.D.H	
Bachelor of Science in Environmental and Occupational Health	BS.EOH	
Bachelor of Science in Nursing	BSN	
Bachelor of Socio-Legal Studies	BLS or B.S.L.S.	
Bachelor of Surgery	BS or B.S.	
Bachelor of Technology	BTech or B.Tech.	
Bachelor of Veterinary Science	B.V.Sc.	
Bachelor of Visual Arts	BVA or B.V.A.	
Postgraduate ISCED level 7		
Master of Arts	MA, M.A. or A.M.	
Master of Business Administration	MBA or M.B.A.	
Master of Commerce	MCom or M.Com	
Master of Computer Application	MCA	
Master of Divinity	MDiv or M.Div.	
Master of Education (Master of Science in Education)	M.Ed. M.S.Ed. or MEd.	

The formulation "Master in ..." is used for the undergraduate degree and "Master of ..." for the postgraduate degree (e.g. MArt/MA, MSci/MSc). Where there is no equivalent postgraduate degree, either "in" or "of" is used.
Postgraduate master's degrees may be either taught degrees or research degrees.

Master of Emergency Management	MEM or M.E.M.	<p>Taught master's degrees may be awarded by an institution with taught degree awarding powers; master's degrees by research (e.g. MPhil, MRes), where over half of the student's effort is in original research, require research degree awarding powers. Postgraduate degrees are not normally honours degrees and thus do not add "(Hons)". Some degrees may be offered as either integrated master's or postgraduate master's courses at different institutes, e.g. MEng and MArch.</p>
Master of Emergency and Disaster Management	MEDM or M.E.D.M.	
Master of Fine Arts	MFA or M.F.A.	
Master of International Affairs	MIA or M.I.A.	
Master of International Studies	MIS or M.I.S.	
Master of Laws	LLM or LL.M.	
Master of Library Science	MLS	
Master of Liberal Arts	MLA	
Master of Library and Information Science	MLIS	
Master of Music	M.M.	
Master of Professional Studies	MPS	
Master of Public Administration	MPA or M.P.A.	
Master of Public Health	MPH or M.P.H.	
Master of Science	US: MS or M.S.; UK: MSc or M.Sc.	
Master of Social Work	MSW or M.S.W.	
Master of Strategic Foresight	MSF or M.S.F.	
Master of Technology	MTech or M.Tech.	
Master of Theology	ThM or Th.M.	
Doctor ISCED level 8		
Doctor of Audiology	AuD or Au.D.	
Doctor of Chiropractic	DC or D.C.	
Doctor of Dental Surgery	DDS or D.D.S.	
Doctor of Divinity	DD or D.D.	
Doctor of Education	EdD or Ed.D.	
Doctor of Jurisprudence (Juris Doctor)	JD or J.D.	

A few postgraduate degrees at Oxford are titled as bachelor's degrees. These are, nonetheless, master's level qualifications. All doctoral degrees include "original research or other advanced scholarship" demonstrating "the creation and interpretation of new knowledge."

Doctor of Law and Policy	LP.D. or DLP	<p>The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications lays down the naming convention that Doctor of Philosophy is reserved for doctorates awarded on the basis of examination by thesis or publication, or by artefact, composition or performance accompanied by written academic commentary. Other doctorates (typically styled professional or specialist doctorates) that have substantial taught elements normally include the field in the name of the degree.</p> <p>Higher doctorates are normally awarded as honorary degrees (honoris causa), but can also be awarded on the basis of a substantial body of published work. DUUniv is only ever an honorary degree. Some degrees awarded as higher doctorates by one institution may be awarded as professional doctorates by another (e.g. EngD).</p>
Doctor of Medical Dentistry	DMD or D.M.D.	
Doctor of Medicine	MD or M.D.	
Doctor of Ministry	DMin	
Doctor of Metaphysics	Dr. mph.	
Doctor of Musical Arts	D.M.A.	
Doctor of Naturopathy	ND or N.D.	
Doctor of Nursing Practice	DNP or D.N.P.	
Doctor of Optometry	OD or O.D.	
Doctor of Osteopathy	DO or D.O.	
Doctor of Pharmacy	PharmD or Pharm.D.	
Doctor of Philosophy	PhD, Ph.D., DPhil, D.Phil., DPh or D.Ph.	
Doctor of Physical Therapy	DPT or D.P.T.	
Doctor of Practical Theology	DPT or D.P.T.	
Doctor of Psychology	PsyD or Psy.D.	
Doctor of Public Health	DrPH	
Doctor of Religious Sciences	Dr. sc. rel. or D.R.S.	
Doctor of Science	DSc, D.Sc. or ScD	
Doctor of Theology	D.Th., Th.D. or ThD	
Doctor of Veterinary Medicine	DVM or D.V.M.	

3. Levels of academic ranks

Commonwealth system	North American system	Czech	Serbia	France
Professor/Chair (equivalent to distinguished professor)	Distinguished, Endowed or University Professor		Profesor emeritus	Degree of Maître Agrégé
Reader > Professor	Professor	<i>Profesor</i>	<i>Redovni profesor</i>	Professeur des universités (PR)
Senior lecturer/Principal lecturer Reader > Associate Professor	Associate Professor	<i>Mimořádný profesor</i>	Vanredni profesor	Professeur des universités associé/habilitation
Lecturer, clinical lecturer > Assistant Professor	Assistant Professor	<i>Docent</i>	<i>Docent</i>	<i>Maître de Conférences (MCF)</i>
Assistant lecturer, demonstrator, seminar leader, associate lecturer, graduate teaching assistant, departmental lecturer	Research Associate, Lecturer, and Instructor	<i>Odborný asistent</i>	<i>Asistent</i> (assistant lecturer), at least Master degree is required	Attaché temporaire d'enseignement et de recherche (ATER)
	Adjunct Professor/Lecturer/Instructor (often part-time)	<i>Asistent</i>	Lektor/istraživač this title requirements vary, usually a Ph.D. is required	Docteur contractuel chargé d'enseignement