



Student Support & Success Systems
Admissions and Records Office

A Helpful Glossary of U.S. Educational Terms

International Student Office

2008-2009

Glossary of Educational Terms and Definitions

Ability to Benefit

A review made by a college to determine if a potential student will be able to benefit, with or without remedial education/training, from the program(s) offered at the school. The ability to benefit is generally applied as an entrance requirement for Texas community colleges.

Academic Advisor

The official (a member of the faculty or another professional) who provides academic advice and guidance to students.

Academic Calendar

The period that makes up the school year, usually divided into two terms (semesters), three terms (trimesters), or four terms (quarters).

Academic Year

An academic year is the period of time K-12, colleges and universities use to measure a quantity of study. Academic years vary from school to school. Typically, the length of an academic year runs August/September through May/June. The academic year usually equates to two semesters, two trimesters, or three quarters.

Accreditation

Accreditation in higher education is a collegial process of self-review and peer review for improvement of academic quality and public accountability of institutions and programs. This quality review process occurs on a periodic basis, usually every three to 10 years. It typically involves three major activities:

- A self-evaluation by an institution or program using the standards or criteria of an accrediting organization.
- A peer review of an institution or program to gather evidence of quality.
- A decision or judgment by an accrediting organization to accredit, accredit with conditions, or not accredit an institution/program.

The purpose of this process is to provide a professional judgment as to the quality of the school or program(s) offered and to encourage continuous improvement.

Accrediting Agencies

Agencies that establish operating standards for educational or professional institutions and programs, determine the extent to which the standards are met, and publicly announce their findings. Voluntary, non-governmental, institutional accreditation, such as that practiced by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and other regional commissions, is a unique characteristic of American education. In many other countries the maintenance of educational standards is a governmental function. No institution in the United States is required to seek accreditation, however, because of the recognized benefits most of the eligible institutions in the six accrediting regions of the United States have sought to become accredited. Institutional accreditation in higher education is a collegial process of self-review and peer review for improvement of academic quality and public accountability of institutions and programs. This quality review process occurs on a periodic basis, usually every three to 10 years. Typically, it involves three major activities:

- A self-evaluation by an institution or program using the standards or criteria of an accrediting organization.
- A peer review of an institution or program to gather evidence of quality.
- A decision or judgment by an accrediting organization to accredit, accredit with conditions, or not accredit an institution/program.

Regional accrediting bodies accredit institutions, not individual programs; however, programs are actively reviewed by the regional accrediting associations through the substantive change process. A second type of institutional accreditation is one that focuses on single mission institutions, such as theology (Association of Theological Schools – ATS), art and design (the National Association of Schools of Art and Design – NASAD), and music (the National Association of Schools of Music – NASM). Another type of accreditation is specialized or professional accreditation, which focuses on programs in a specific discipline, and not the institution. Examples are specialized accreditation in education, law, medicine, chiropractic, computer science, and more than 90 other disciplines. Austin Community College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

ACT

ACT (American College Testing) is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides more than a hundred assessment, research, information, and program management services in the broad areas of education and workforce development. ACT administers a standardized external battery of tests administered by the American College Testing Program covering English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning. The tests are designed to assess the student's educational development and readiness for college-level study and may be used by institutions in lieu of SAT.

Adjunct Faculty

Faculty members who teach part-time without appointments in the regular faculty.

Admissions Office

The office responsible for admitting students to the institution.

Advanced Degree

An award conferred by a college, university, or other postsecondary education as official recognition for the successful completion of a program of studies past the baccalaureate level. These degrees include:

- Post-Baccalaureate Certificate
- Post-Masters Certificate
- Further Professional Certificate
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Middle/Intermediate Degree
- First-Professional Degree

Advanced Placement Courses

Courses in high school that prepare students to take examinations that allow them to earn college credits while in high school.

Advanced Standing

The practice of placing a student in a course based on previous achievement levels, e.g., study at another institution, by challenge examination, AP or CLEP examination results.

AP

Acronym for Advanced Placement Program, referring to high school courses that prepare students to take examinations that allow them to earn college credits while in high school and, therefore, lessen the time it takes to earn a baccalaureate degree.

Application Deadline

The last date on which a college will accept applications for admission for the coming term.

Application Fee

The amount of money that an institution charges for processing a student's application for admittance to the institution. This amount is not creditable toward tuition or required fees, nor is it refundable if the student is not admitted to the institution.

Assistant Professor

A junior member of the faculty who has not yet received tenure.

Assistantship

Award granted to graduate students and that consists of tuition remission and a stipend for part-time teaching or research.

Associate Degree

An award that normally requires at least two but less than four years of full-time equivalent college work.

Associate Degree Recipient

Refers to students who have already received an associate degree.

Associate Professor

A tenured member of the faculty.

Attrition

A term indicative of those students who leave or drop out prior to completion of their educational program.

Auditing

Taking a class to acquire knowledge but not for credit or grades. Audited courses do not count toward degree requirements.

Average Cost per Student

A calculation that divides selected funds spent in a higher education system by the number of students enrolled in that system.

Baccalaureate

Bachelor's degree.

Bachelor's Degree

An award that normally requires at least four but not more than five years of full-time equivalent college-level work. This includes all bachelor's degrees conferred in a five-year cooperative (work-study plan) program. A cooperative plan provides for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry, or government; thus, it allows students to combine actual work experience with their college studies. It also includes bachelor's degrees in which the normal four years of work are completed in three years.

Bachelor's Degree Recipient

Refers to students who have already received a bachelor's degree or higher.

Books and Supplies

The average cost of books and supplies for a typical student for an entire academic year (or program).

Branch Institution/Center

A campus or site of an educational institution that is not temporary, is located in a community beyond a reasonable commuting distance from its parent institution, and offers organized programs of study, not just courses.

Bursar/Cashier

A university official responsible for collecting student fees.

Census Date

Refers to the day statistics or a report is prepared.

Certificate

A formal award certifying the satisfactory completion of a postsecondary education program that usually requires two or less years of undergraduate coursework and is vocationally/occupationally oriented.

Challenge Examination

An examination created by an institution as the equivalent to a course. Students who pass challenge tests are commonly exempted from, or given credit for, the course counterpart of the examination.

Charter School

Schools run independently of the traditional public school system, but receiving public funding, run by groups such as teachers, parents, or foundations. Charter schools are free of many district regulations and are often tailored to community needs.

Class Rank

The relative position of a student in his or her graduating class, determined by grade average.

CLEP (College Level Examination Program)

A program offered by the College Board designed to offer students the opportunity to earn college credit by examination.

Closed Course

Fully-subscribed course that is no longer enrolling students.

College

A general term for a postsecondary education. It often refers to institutions that offer undergraduate programs or to the undergraduate divisions of large universities.

College Board

The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 4,500 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves over three million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admissions, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT®, the PSAT/NMSQT®, and the Advanced Placement Program® (AP®). The College Board is committed to the principles of excellence and equity, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns. The Board contracts with the Educational Testing Service to create and administer its Admissions Testing Program (SAT I, SAT II - Subject Matter, and Advanced Placement tests), as well as reports to students indicating their performance on the tests.

College Entrance Examinations

A series of standardized examinations required by colleges and universities as part of an admissions application process. The examinations are designed to provide information on the level of academic preparedness of applicants for successful collegiate study at either the undergraduate or graduate levels.

ACT Assessment—a standardized test offered by the American College Testing service.

SAT I Reasoning—a standardized test offered by the College Board through a contract with the Educational Testing Service (ETS).

SAT II Subject Matter Tests—a series of standardized tests offered by the College Board through a contract with the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to assess the proficiency of prospective students in specific subject areas (e.g., chemistry, history, calculus, Spanish, etc.).

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)—a standardized test taken most often by students for whom English is not the native language. It is intended to provide information on the level of readiness of the student to learn in the English language.

College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

A program offered by the College Board designed to offer students the opportunity to earn college credit by examination.

Commencement

Graduation ceremony, usually held in May or June at the end of the academic year.

Community College

In Texas, they are full-service, accredited, degree and certificate-granting institutions offering a full complement of lower-division programs and services, usually at a single campus location owned by the district; community colleges enroll a minimum of 1,000 full-time equivalent students. Primary missions of the colleges are to offer academic and vocational education at the lower division level for both recent high school graduates and those returning to school. Another primary mission is to advance economic growth in the state and global competitiveness through education, training, and services that contribute to continuous workforce improvement. Essential and important functions of the colleges include basic skills instruction, providing English as a second language, adult noncredit instruction, and providing support services that help students to succeed.

Comprehensive Examination

Broad examinations covering material in several courses, typically taken at the end of master's degree programs or after the end of doctoral coursework before writing the dissertation.

Continuing Education

Educational programs offered by colleges and universities to adults in the community during the evening and on weekends. It usually refers to non-credit coursework.

Core Curriculum

General education requirements set as a defined series of interdisciplinary courses that must be taken by all undergraduates enrolled in degree programs at an institution.

Cost of Attendance

The cost of attendance for a student is generally determined by adding the following expenses: tuition and fees; books, supplies, transportation, and miscellaneous personal expenses; room and board; and dependent care, if applicable. Each institution determines its own student cost.

Course

A discrete subject studied during one semester or quarter.

Course Load

The number of courses taken in a given term or semester. Colleges usually specify a range for the number of courses or credits to be taken by full-time students. While the academic institution is allowed to determine what constitutes a full course load, it generally means a minimum of 12 semester credit hours during each term/semester.

Credential

A certificate of competency in a specialized field, usually related to the ability to teach in that field.

Credit

Recognition of attendance or performance in an instructional activity (course or program) that can be applied by a recipient toward the requirements for a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award.

Credit by Examination

Academic credit granted by a college when a student has demonstrated proficiency in a subject as measured by an examination.

Credit Course

A course that, if successfully completed, can be applied toward the number of courses required for achieving a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award.

Credit Hour

A unit of measure representing an hour of instruction over a 16-week period in a semester or trimester system, or a 10-week period in a quarter system. It is applied toward the total number of hours needed for completing the requirements of a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award.

Cumulative Grade Point Average

The numerical average of all the student's grades achieved during the period of study at an institution.

Curriculum (plural *curricula*)

A plan of instruction that details what students are to know, how they are to learn it, what the teacher's role is, and the context in which learning and teaching will take place.

Curve Grading

A system of relative grading based on the performance of all members of a class on an examination. It is also called norm-referenced grading.

Dean

A middle level academic or administrative officer in charge of an administrative unit at a college or university.

Default

A default occurs when a borrower misses a number of payments or simply stops making payments on a loan that is due. If a student defaults on a loan, the student's credit rating will be affected and the IRS could take away any tax refund the student expects to receive. In addition, a lender (or the federal government) could charge the borrower whatever collection fees are necessary to collect on the loan, and possibly refer the matter to a court for handling.

If a borrower allows a loan to go into default, the borrower loses the opportunity for deferment (or postponement of repayment), and the borrower will not be able to receive any federal financial aid until satisfactory arrangements to repay the loan have been made with the lender or guarantor or the loan obligation is discharged (handled).

Deferment

A deferment is a period of time that a borrower can postpone making loan repayments. For some loans, interest will not accrue during a deferment period. Even though payments are postponed, repayments are not cancelled—the repayment period is simply extended by the period of deferment. A deferment for full-time or part-time study at an eligible college or university is referred to as an “in-school deferment.”

Deferred Admission

The practice of permitting students to postpone enrollment for one or more terms after acceptance to a college or university. Some institutions do not permit deferred admissions.

Degree

An award conferred by a college, university, or other postsecondary education as official recognition for the successful completion of a program of studies. Types of degrees include:

- Certificate
- Pre-Baccalaureate Certificate—Less than 1 Year
- Pre-Baccalaureate Certificate—At least 1 but less than 2 Years
- Pre-Baccalaureate Certificate—At least 2 but less than 4 Years
- Post-Baccalaureate Certificate
- Post-Masters Certificate
- Further Professional Certificate
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree

Degree-Granting Institution

Refers to any institution that offers an associate's, bachelor's, master's, doctor's, or first-professional degree. Institutions that grant only certificates or awards of any length program (less than two years or two years or more) are categorized as non-degree-granting institutions.

Degree-Seeking Students

Refers to students enrolled in courses for credit who are recognized by the institution as seeking a degree or formal award. At the undergraduate level, this is intended to include students enrolled in vocational or occupational programs.

Delinquent

A loan is considered to be delinquent when a borrower doesn't make a payment or file a deferment form on time. A borrower can be charged late fees for being delinquent in payment. If a borrower misses a number of payments in a row, the loan can be considered in default.

Department

The formal faculty group, together with its support staff, responsible for instruction in a general subject area.

Developmental Education

Instruction designed to bring students up to required basic skills or knowledge levels to allow them to attend programs that they would otherwise have been unable to follow.

Diploma

A formal document certifying the successful completion of a prescribed program of studies.

Discipline

An area of academic study.

Dissertation

The formal writing requirement, often an original contribution of knowledge, for a doctoral degree.

Distance Learning

A system and a process that connects learners with distributed learning. It is usually characterized by (1) separation of place and/or time between student and instructor; and (2) a level of interaction between student and instructor conducted through one or more media.

Doctoral Degree

The doctoral degree classification includes such degrees as Doctor of Education, Doctor of Juridical Science, Doctor of Public Health, and the Doctor of Philosophy degree in any field such as agronomy, food technology, education, engineering, public administration, ophthalmology, or radiology. For the Doctor of Public Health degree, the prior degree is generally earned in a closely related professional field of medicine or in sanitary engineering.

Double Major

Program of study in which a student completes the requirements of two majors at the same time.

Drop

To withdraw from a course.

Drop-Add

A period at the beginning of each term when students are allowed to change their class schedules by dropping or adding courses.

Dropout

A person who has withdrawn from all courses. One who leaves school entirely is known as a dropout.

Dual Degree

Program of study in which a student receives two degrees from the same institution.

Elective

A course chosen freely by the student from the institution's offerings. Also called "free elective."

Elementary School

Primary school (grades 1-6 or 1-8).

Enrollment

The actual headcount number of students; a total count of all students who are currently enrolled.

Enrollment Status

Refers to a coding system that classifies the current enrollment of students into new, continuing, and returning students.

Ethnicity

Racial/ethnic designations reported in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS) do not denote scientific definitions of anthropological origins. The categories are:

Black, non-hispanic—a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa (except those of Hispanic origin).

American Indian or Alaska Native—a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

Asian or Pacific Islander—a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or Pacific Islands. This includes people from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, American Samoa, India, and Vietnam.

Hispanic—a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central, or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

White, non-Hispanic—a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East (except those of Hispanic origin).

Exemption

The practice of exempting a student from a requirement. For example, if a college required all students to take freshman English, but on the basis of evidence of outstanding prior achievement (such as high scores on an examination) waived the requirement, this would constitute exemption.

Experiential Learning

Learning that takes place outside of the classroom through formal courses or other life activities.

Faculty

(1) The body of teaching personnel in a department, division, or an entire institution. (2) An academic administrative unit, e.g., the Faculty of Engineering.

FAFSA – Free Application for Federal Student Aid

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a free form distributed by the U.S. Department of Education to collect information used to determine a student's need for federal financial aid. These forms are available from the schools and colleges that participate in federal student aid programs. Check with your school to find out if the form can be used to qualify for nonfederal aid.

Fall Semester

That part of the academic year that begins between late August and mid November.

Federal Sources

Pell Grant Program, State Educational Opportunity Grant Program, Stafford Loan Program (formerly Guaranteed Student Loan Program), Federal Perkins Loan Program (formerly National Direct Student Loan Program), PLUS Program (Parents Loans for Undergraduate Students), Federal College Work Study.

Fellow

A student (graduate or undergraduate) granted a fellowship on the basis of academic achievement.

FICE Code

FICE code is a 6-digit code maintained for historical purposes. This identifier was originally created by the Federal Interagency Committee on Education (FICE) to distinguish postsecondary schools that qualified as institutions of higher education from other postsecondary institutions. As of 1997, this code is no longer maintained.

Final Examination

A course-based examination taken at the end of the semester or term.

Financial Aid

Grants, loans, and funds provided for financial aid by the government. These resources, such as for work-study, are used to pay fees or tuition and sometimes the living costs of students. Such aid comes in many forms and from a variety of sources.

Financial Aid Package

A financial aid package is a combination of scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study funds. A postsecondary institution awards a package as a means of meeting the financial need of each student in the most effective way possible.

First Professional

Refers to students who are enrolled in programs leading toward a first-professional degree in the fields of chiropractic, dentistry, law, medicine, optometry, osteopathy, pharmacy, podiatry, theology, and veterinary medicine.

First-Professional Degree

An award that requires completion of a program that meets all of the following criteria: 1) completion of the academic requirements to begin practice in the profession; 2) at least two years of college work prior to entering the program; and 3) a total of at least six academic years of college work to complete the degree program, including prior required college work plus the length of the professional program itself. First-Professional degrees are discipline-specific and may be awarded as follows:

- Dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.)
- Medicine (M.D.)
- Optometry (O.D.)
- Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.)
- Podiatric Medicine (D.P.M., D.P., or Pod.D.)
- Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.)
- Law (L.L.B, J.D.)
- Theology (M.Div, M.H.L., B.D., or Ordination)
- Chiropractic Medicine (D.C. or D.C.M.)
- Pharmacy (D. Phar.)

Foreign Student Advisor

Usually an official employed by the institution to assist foreign students, scholars, and faculty with immigration, visas, orientation, insurance, and other such matters.

Freshman

Refers to a first-year undergraduate student.

Full-Time Student

Refers to a student who is taking a full load each term. Full-time for community college students is 12 or more credits/hours.

General Education Requirements

A program of courses in the arts and sciences that provides students with a broad educational experience. Courses typically are introductory in nature and provide students with fundamental skills and knowledge in mathematics, English, arts, humanities, and physical, biological, and social sciences. Transfer students often take these classes while attending a community college. Completion of a general education program is required for the baccalaureate degree.

GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test)

A standardized external examination of verbal and quantitative skills usually required by graduate schools of business and used to assess the qualifications of applicants for MBA programs.

Grade

An evaluation (normally by letter on a scale of A-F) of a student's performance in the classroom, on an examination, a term paper, or in a course.

Grade Point Average (GPA)

A system of scoring student achievement used by many colleges and universities. A student's GPA is computed by multiplying the numerical grade received in each course by the number of credits offered for each course, then dividing by the total number of credit hours studied.

Most institutions use the following grade conversion scale: A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, and F = 0.

High school Advanced Placement (AP) courses and honors courses use a grading system that translates to a 5-point scale.

Graduate

A graduate is a student who has completed the requirements for a bachelor's degree and who is enrolled in a master's or higher degree program in a postsecondary institution.

Graduate Advisor

The faculty member who serves as advisor to all graduate students in a department.

Graduate School

The academic unit within an institution that administers graduate education.

Graduate Student

A student who holds a bachelor's or first-professional degree, or equivalent, and is taking courses at the post baccalaureate level. These students may or may not be enrolled in graduate programs.

Graduate Study

A program leading to a master's degree or doctoral degree; advanced study generally following the bachelor's degree.

Grant

A grant is gift aid that does not have to be repaid.

GRE (Graduate Record Examination)

A two-part standardized external examination designed to measure general verbal, quantitative, and analytical skills (General Aptitude Test), and knowledge and understanding of subject matter basic to graduate study in specific fields (Advanced Tests). The GRE is generally required by graduate schools and is used to assess the qualifications of applicants to master's and Ph.D. programs.

Gymnasium

The building that houses the sports facilities on a campus.

Headcount

An unduplicated count of students enrolled in an institution.

High School

Secondary school (grades 6-12 or 9-12). Grades 6-8 are known as junior high school or middle school and the final four years (grades 9-12) as senior high school.

Homework

Regular assignments to be completed outside the classroom and taken into account in the student's course grade.

Honors

Special recognition of student's outstanding academic achievement.

IELTS

International English Language Testing System, which tests English proficiency in listening, reading, writing, and speaking for study or work purposes.

Incomplete

A temporary grade indicating that the student has not met all course assignments at the end of a semester or term.

In-State Student

A student who is a legal resident of the state in which he/she attends school.

Instructor

A formal term that designates a temporary, university teacher. It is also a synonym for teacher.

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) was established as the core postsecondary education data collection program for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). IPEDS is a single, comprehensive system designed to encompass all institutions and educational organizations whose primary purpose is to provide postsecondary education. The IPEDS system is built around a series of interrelated surveys to collect institution-level data in such areas as enrollments, program completions, faculty, staff, and finances.

Intern

A student who is taking supervised professional training designed to allow students to apply previously acquired skills and knowledge to practical situations. Internships may be completed as part of a course, during vacation, or after graduation.

Internship

Supervised professional training designed to allow students to apply previously acquired skills and knowledge to practical situations. Internships may be completed as part of a course, during vacation, or after graduation.

Ivy League

Association of institutions located in the eastern United States originally organized for athletic competitions. The term has since become synonymous with highly selective prestigious and elite education. The Ivy League consists of Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, and Yale University.

Junior College

Formerly referred to a public community college. With few exceptions, the term is now used only for private two-year institutions.

Junior Status

Refers to students who have entered the third year of study for a bachelor's degree. Students who have completed 60-89 semester units are considered juniors.

Land-Grant Institution

A state-run institution founded under the terms of the 1862 Morrill Act, which granted public lands to the states to establish colleges to provide full-time education in agriculture and mechanic arts.

Language Requirement

An institution's requirement that its graduates master one or more foreign languages.

Letter of Recommendation

Letter written in support of a student's application for admission to a study program, which assesses the candidate's qualifications for the program in question.

Liberal Arts

Also known as liberal arts and sciences, this term refers to academic work in the humanities (languages, music, art, etc.), social sciences (economics, history, sociology, etc.), and natural sciences (mathematics, chemistry, physics, etc.), as opposed to technical or professional subjects.

Liberal Arts College

Higher education institution in which the bachelor's degree emphasis is on liberal or general undergraduate education.

Load

An informal term used by students and faculty to refer to the number of credits they are studying or teaching, respectively.

Loan

A loan is money that must be repaid. Loan programs have varying repayment provisions.

Loan Consolidation

Loan consolidation is any type of program that refinances two or more loans so a borrower can make one smaller payment per month instead of several different loan payments. Although this type of arrangement can be helpful in dealing with monthly cash flow, loan consolidation does increase the total cost of borrowing. Loan consolidation may be helpful if a student has several different types of loans, all with different minimum payments, that must be met.

Lower Division

Courses designed for the first two years or within the first 59 semester units of study toward a baccalaureate degree, often taken at a community college and transferred to a university. The term also refers to freshman and sophomore students.

LSAT (Law School Admission Test)

A standardized external examination used by law schools to assess applicants' verbal, analytical, and reasoning skills.

Magnet School

A public primary or secondary school that places special emphasis on a particular field, such as science or art, and is designed to attract students with specific interests, talents, or backgrounds.

Major

The academic area in which a student chooses to concentrate. Generally, major course requirements take up to one quarter to one half of the student's undergraduate studies and are combined with other general education requirements.

Makeup Examination

A late examination for students who missed the original examination.

Masters

Includes students who are enrolled in a master's degree program.

Master's Degree

An award that requires the completion of a program of study of at least the full-time equivalent of one but not more than two academic years of work beyond the bachelor's degree.

Matriculate

To enroll at a college or university to begin or to continue toward an educational objective, i.e., a college degree.

Matriculation

A process that enhances student success through a community college or university and promotes and sustains the efforts of students to be successful in their educational endeavors. The goals of matriculation are to ensure that all students complete their college courses, continue to the next academic term, and achieve their educational objectives.

MBA

Master of Business Administration.

MCAT (Medical College Admission Test)

A standardized external examination designed to measure specified science knowledge and its application in solving related problems, and of other learning and reasoning skills considered important for the study of medicine, used by medical schools to assess applicants.

Mid-Term Examination

An examination administered at the mid-point of the semester or term.

Minor

An academic subject area in which a student may take the second-greatest concentration of courses. While a major may require as many as sixteen courses for a degree, a minor may require only four or five courses.

Multiple-Choice Examination

An objective examination giving students several choices of answers to a question of which one is correct.

NCES

Acronym for the National Center for Education Statistics. NCES is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data that are related to education in the United States and other nations.

Need

The term “need,” as used in financial aid, usually refers to the difference between the resources available to the student (from parents, student’s savings and summer jobs) and the cost of attending the student’s selected postsecondary institution.

Need Analysis

Need analysis is the process of determining objectively the demonstrated need of an applicant for financial aid. To determine a student’s eligibility for federal student aid, the financial aid administrator must determine the student’s financial need. If the student’s cost of attendance exceeds his or her family contribution, the student has need.

Need-Based Aid

Need-based aid is aid based on the cost of education minus a student’s family’s ability to meet those costs.

Non-Matriculated

Enrolled in courses but not in a program leading to a degree.

Nonportable Funding

This term refers to college funding that cannot be transferred to another college or university. Many colleges, for example, have scholarship funds that are specific to that particular college or university. If a student receiving nonportable funding transfers to another college or university, the scholarship monies remain at that school.

Nonresident Alien

A person who is not a citizen or national of the United States and who is in this country on a visa or temporary basis.

OPE

Acronym for the Office of Postsecondary Education. OPE is a division of the U.S. Department of Education.

Open Admission

Admission policy whereby the school will accept a student who has earned a high school diploma or general education development (GED) certificate and others under certain conditions. In Texas, this usually applies only to the Texas community college system.

Open-Book Examination

An examination where students are allowed to consult course materials while answering questions.

Out-of-State Student

A student who is not a legal resident of the state in which he/she attends school.

Participation

Student's contribution to class discussion, often taken into account in grading.

Part-Time Student

Refers to a student who is taking fewer units than the full load. At community colleges, less than 12 credit units is considered part-time.

Pass-Fail

A system of grading that distinguishes only those who pass from those who fail.

Placement Test

A skills assessment offered to, or required of, newly enrolled students after they have arrived on campus. Institutions that use placement tests recognize that the academic preparation of students varies significantly based upon the rigor of their prior educational coursework. The results of the skills assessment are used to place or advise enrollment of students into courses appropriate to their level of readiness.

Portable Funding

This term refers to college funding that can be used at any college or university, regardless of whether or not the student remains at his or her original school or transfers to another one.

Portfolio (Assessment)

A systematic and organized collection of student work that serves as a record of learning activities. The portfolio may be used to monitor growth of a student's knowledge, skills, and abilities in a specific subject area, and often includes the student's reflections on that work. Students may or may not participate in selection contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection.

Post-Baccalaureate

A student holds a baccalaureate or its equivalent and is not enrolled in a graduate degree program. A student pursuing a second baccalaureate is categorized as a post-baccalaureate student.

Post-Baccalaureate Certificate

An award that requires completion of an organized program of study requiring 18 credit hours beyond the bachelor's; designed for persons who have completed a baccalaureate degree, but do not meet the requirements of academic degrees carrying the title of master.

Postdoctoral Fellow

Usually a recent Ph.D. holder temporarily appointed to teach or conduct research.

Postgraduate Degree

An award conferred by a college, university, or other postsecondary education as official recognition for the successful completion of a program of studies past the baccalaureate level. These degrees include:

- Post-Baccalaureate Certificate
- Post-Masters Certificate
- Further Professional Certificate
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Middle/Intermediate Degree
- First-Professional Degree

Post-Masters Certificate

An award that requires completion of an organized program of study requiring 24 credit hours beyond the master's degree; designed for persons who have completed a master's degree, but do not meet the requirements of academic degrees at the doctor's level.

Preliminary Examinations

Written or oral examinations given to all prospective Ph.D. candidates after they have completed doctoral coursework. The examination results determine whether candidates are admitted to the dissertation stage of the program.

Prerequisite

A course that must be completed before a student is allowed to register for a more advanced course.

Private For-Profit (Profit-Making) Institution

An educational institution owned by a partnership or a for-profit corporation.

Private Institution

An educational institution controlled by a private individual(s) or by a nongovernmental agency, usually supported primarily by other than public funds, and operated by other than publicly elected or appointed offices.

Private Nonprofit Institution

A private institution in which the individual(s) or agency in control receives no compensation other than wages, rent or other expenses for the assumption of risk. These include both independent nonprofit schools and those affiliated with a religious organization.

Probation

A status imposed on students whose work is unsatisfactory until they improve performance or are asked to leave the program or institution.

Professional Accreditation

Accreditation granted to a professional school or a program offered at a regionally accredited institution by accrediting commissions affiliated with national professional organizations in such areas as business, engineering, law, medicine, nursing, physical therapy, etc. Professional accreditation is also known as specialized accreditation.

Professional Judgment

Professional judgment is the discretion a financial aid administrator has to adjust, with proper documentation, the expected family contribution (EFC), the cost of attendance (COA), or dependency status of a student. Such discretion can be used when extreme changes in the student or family situation occurs, such as death, unemployment, disability, etc.

Professional School

A post-baccalaureate institution (usually within a university) that trains students in the traditional professions, e.g., law or medicine.

Professor

The common title for all university faculty members. But it is also the formal rank of senior (full) professors.

Program

A combination of courses and related activities organized for the attainment of broad educational objectives as described by the institution.

Proprietary Institution

Privately owned, profit-making educational institution mostly offering practical occupational skills, and that awards certificates and diplomas.

Provost

The chief academic officer of an institution.

Public Institution

An educational institution whose programs and activities are operated by publicly elected or appointed school officials and that is supported primarily by public funds.

Qualifying Examination

Examinations given at the conclusion of master's or doctoral coursework.

Quarter

Refers to three 12-week sessions that comprise the academic year. The range may be from 10 to 15 weeks. There may be an additional quarter in the summer.

Recitation

A small-group session where students discuss material covered in large lectures.

Regional Accreditation

Accreditation granted to an entire academic institution by the accrediting commission responsible for institutions in the particular geographic area. There are six regional accrediting commissions in the United States. Regional accreditation is also referred to as institutional accreditation.

Registrar

The officer responsible for registering students and maintaining their educational records.

Registration

The formal process of enrolling students in courses.

Remedial Education

Instruction designed to bring students up to required basic skills or knowledge levels to allow them to attend programs that they would otherwise have been unable to follow. These courses are also known as developmental courses.

Required Fees

Fixed sum charged to students for items not covered by tuition, and required of such a large proportion of all students that the student who does not pay is an exception.

Research Assistant (RA)

A graduate student who is employed part-time to assist with faculty research.

Residence

The State of Texas requires new students to sign an affidavit certifying their legal residence at the time of enrollment. Students must prove to the satisfaction of the Admissions and Records Office that they are entitled to be classified as a resident of Texas.

Residence Requirement

An institution's requirement that a student take a set number of credits at that institution in order to receive its degree. Austin Community College requires a student to complete 25 percent of the semester credit hours used in the degree plan in residence at ACC.

Resident

A person who resides in the state in which a college is located. Such persons are eligible for in-state or resident charges at publicly supported colleges and universities in that state.

Resident (Student Level)

A student who is receiving advanced training in a medical specialty after graduation from medical school and licensing to practice medicine.

Rolling Admission

A program adopted by many colleges through which admission applications are evaluated upon receipt and applicants are notified of the decision as soon as the application is processed.

Room Charges

The charges for an academic year for rooming accommodations of a typical student sharing a room with one other student.

SACS

Acronym for the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges.

SAT

A standardized admissions examination (formerly known as the Scholastic Aptitude Test or the Scholastic Achievement Test) of mathematical and language arts skills. The test is taken by high school students to demonstrate their knowledge and potential for success in university level study. The test is usually required for admission to public university undergraduate programs.

Scholarship

A scholarship is financial aid that usually is awarded for merit or academic achievement. A scholarship is considered gift aid and does not have to be paid back.

Scholarship Loan

A scholarship loan is money that generally is awarded on the basis of academic merit or achievement, and that must be repaid in cash or by some type of service after graduation. Repayment provisions vary by program.

Semester

Refers to two 16-week sessions that make up the academic year.

Seminar

A small class of generally advanced students that meets with a professor to discuss specialized topics.

Senior

Refers to students who have completed 90 or more semester hours or 135 or more quarter credit hours.

Sophomore

A student level sophomore refers to students who have completed 30 to fewer than 60 semester hours or 45 to fewer than 90 quarter credit hours.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

The Southern Association of Schools and Colleges (SACS) is one of six regional associations that accredit public and private schools, colleges, and universities in the United States.

Specialized Accreditation

Applied to evaluation of programs, departments, or schools that usually are parts of a total collegiate or other postsecondary institution. The unit accredited may be as large as a college or school within a university or as small as a curriculum within a discipline. Most of the specialized accrediting agencies review units within a postsecondary institution that is accredited by one of the regional accrediting commissions. However, certain of the specialized accrediting agencies do accredit professional schools and other specialized or vocational or other postsecondary institutions that are free-standing in their operations. Thus a "specialized" or "programmatic" accrediting agency may also function as an "institutional" accrediting agency, which accredits educational programs within non-educational settings, such as hospitals.

Stafford Loans (Formerly Guaranteed Student Loans)

Provides guaranteed loans for educational expenses from eligible lenders to vocational, undergraduate, graduate, and first-professional students at eligible postsecondary institutions.

Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System

Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System is a code designed to classify and identify all occupations in which work is performed for pay or profit, reflecting the current occupational structure in the United States.

Summer Session

Formal course offerings provided during the summer.

Syllabus

An outline and description of a course stating: (1) topics to be covered; (2) course requirements; (3) required and recommended readings; (4) grading policies; and (5) a schedule of examinations.

Take-Home Examination

A course examination that is completed outside of the classroom.

Teaching Assistant (TA)

A graduate student who is employed part-time to assist with faculty teaching.

Teaching Credential Student

Refers to students who are currently enrolled in the Teacher Certification program, and plan to receive a single or multiple teaching certifications at the end of the program.

Tenure

A status accorded to higher education faculty who have met requirements of scholarly activity, excellence in teaching, and community service over a specified period of time, usually six to eight years. Once achieved, the status of tenure affords the faculty lifelong employment. Tenure is designed to protect academic freedom of faculty to pursue and share unpopular or unconventional knowledge and ideas without fear of termination.

Term

A generic word for academic sessions (quarter, semester).

Term Paper

A formal paper required as part of coursework.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

A standardized test administered worldwide to determine proficiency in English and required by most U.S. institutions of all foreign applicants whose first language is other than English.

Test of Spoken English (TSE)

A test designed to assess the spoken English proficiency of people whose native language is not English. The TSE is often required of graduate students seeking assistantships.

Thesis

A written piece of work required for a degree.

Time to Degree

The total length of time it takes a student, from his/her first day of class, to receive a degree.

Title IV Programs

This term refers to all programs created by the Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. These programs include Federal Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants, Federal Work Study, Federal Perkins Loans, Federal Stafford Loans, Direct Loans, and Direct PLUS Loans.

Title IV-Eligible Institutions

Refers to institutions that are eligible for Title IV federal financial aid programs. IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) surveys are mandatory for Title IV-eligible institutions.

TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language)

A standardized test administered worldwide to determine proficiency in English and required by most U.S. institutions of all foreign applicants whose first language is other than English.

Transcript

A copy of a student's permanent educational record at an institution of higher education. It becomes an official transcript when the seal of an institution is affixed and the signature of an authorized person is appended.

Transfer

The process of enrollment at a college or university other than the one in which a student is currently enrolled. Generally the term "transfer student" refers to a student who has completed two years of full-time lower division college coursework, either in general education or a "major preparation" coursework for a selected degree program.

Transfer Credit

Credit awarded toward a degree on the basis of studies completed at another institution. In Texas, this term generally refers to credits awarded to students who attended a community college and are transferring to a four-year institution.

Transfer Student

A student entering the reporting institution for the first time but known to have previously attended a postsecondary institution. In Texas, this generally refers to a student who previously attended a Texas community college who is transferring to a four-year institution.

Trimester

An academic year consisting of three terms of about 15 weeks each.

TSE (Test of Spoken English)

A test designed to assess the spoken English proficiency of people whose native language is not English. The TSE is often required of graduate students seeking assistantships.

Tuition

Amount of money charged to students for instructional services. Tuition may be charged per term, per course, or per credit.

U.S. Consumer Price Index (CPI)

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics "Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers," or U.S. CPI, is a measure of the average change in prices over time in a fixed market basket of goods and services purchased by U.S. residents. According to the Bureau, the items included in the pricing survey are food, clothing, shelter, transportation costs, medical and dental care charges, and other goods that people buy for day-to-day living. All of the taxes directly associated with the purchase and use of items are included in the index. Items in this market basket are weighted for importance in the base year, as determined by a survey of consumer expenditures. Relative weights change over time as the price of items rises more or less rapidly than the overall index. Prices are collected in 85 geographic areas around the country, utilizing more than 57,000 housing units and 19,000 retail businesses. The U.S. CPI is based on monthly pricing of the market basket and this pricing occurs throughout the entire month.

UT

Acronym for The University of Texas at Austin.

Undergraduate

A student enrolled in a four- or five-year bachelor's degree program, in an associate's degree program, or a vocational or technical program below the baccalaureate who is a degree-seeking student and has not earned a first bachelor's degree at a college or university.

Undergraduate Degree

An award conferred by a college, university, or other postsecondary education as official recognition for the successful completion of a program of studies prior to the baccalaureate level. These degrees include:

- Certificate
- Pre-Baccalaureate Certificate—Less than 1 Year
- Pre-Baccalaureate Certificate—At least 1 but less than 2 Years
- Pre-Baccalaureate Certificate—At least 2 but less than 4 Years
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree

University

A separately accredited, degree-granting institution offering programs at the lower division, upper division, and graduate levels of postsecondary education. Universities usually are single campus locations, though they often operate branch campuses or off-campus centers.

Upper Division

Courses designed for the third and fourth (junior and senior) years of study toward a bachelor's degree. These courses are not offered by community colleges, and they often require completion of prerequisite courses (major preparation courses). This term also refers to junior and senior students in baccalaureate degree granting institutions.

Visiting Scholar or Student

An individual attending a U.S. institution by special agreement with a foreign institution. A visiting scholar or student does non-matriculation, which means that he or she is not engaged in a degree program. To change status and matriculate in a degree program, a visiting student or scholar must apply for admission to the institution and undergo the usual selection process.

Withdrawal

Formal process of leaving an institution before (and without) completing a degree.

Work Study

Employment, usually on campus, awarded to needy students as part of a financial aid package through the U.S. government's Federal Work-Study Program.

Workforce Development

Workforce Development refers to the entirety of the systems by which people are educated, trained, upgraded, and retrained for employment and participation in the workforce. Included in the process are all segments of the system—from K-12 education and postsecondary institutions to public and private training programs to economic development and employment expansion programs.

Work-Study Program

The program provides jobs that enable students to earn a portion of school costs through employment.