

18. Glossary

Need some help with university jargon? Here's our no-nonsense guide.

Academic schools

Subject departments in a university.
Sometimes called faculties.

Academic year

University year which usually runs from September to June.

Access courses

Designed to prepare students for higher education and usually run by local colleges.

Admissions Office

The university department that processes applications and advises students on suitability of qualifications for degree courses.

A-level/AS-level

The British advanced-level examination allowing entry to university.

Alumni

Graduates or former students of a university.

AVCE

Advanced Vocational Certification in Education – the British advanced-level vocational qualification allowing entry to university. Available as 6-unit or 12-unit qualifications.

Award

Degrees, diplomas, certificates and other qualifications.

Bachelor's degree

The qualification studied towards as an undergraduate, also known as a first degree or undergraduate degree. Can be a Bachelor of Arts or BA (generally associated with humanities, arts, language and social science subjects), a Bachelor of Science or BSc (for courses in science, technology and some business and social science subjects), a Bachelor of Engineering (BEng) or a Bachelor of Law (LLB).

BTEC

Often taken as an alternative to A-levels and covers a wide range of vocational subjects. They can facilitate access to university.

Bursary

Non-repayable financial support for eligible students available from universities/organisations.

Campus

The buildings and grounds of a university or college, including: teaching, accommodation, shops, sports and entertainment facilities.

Campus tours

Where students and their families can look around the campus and see what facilities are available. Current university students are often on hand to answer any questions.

CATS

Credit Accumulation Transfer Scheme – all courses, or modules, are worth a number of CATS points once they are completed. This means if you change course, move to another institution, take a break from study or change from full-time to part-time, you can take the credits with you (see credit entry).

CertHE

Certificate of Higher Education

Clearing

A period in August (after exam results are released) when late applications can be submitted.

Combined/joint honours

A degree in which a student combines two different subjects that may or may not be related.

Course

Set of programmes leading to a particular award.

CRB

Criminal Records Bureau – most health, social care and education courses will require students to be assessed by the CRB.

Credit entry

Direct entry onto the second or third year of an undergraduate degree programme.

Glossary (continued)

Deferred entry

Application for a university place (through UCAS) more than one year before you intend to start the course.

Degree

A qualification awarded by a university after a satisfactory level has been achieved.

DipHE

Diploma of Higher Education.

Dissertation/research project

An extended essay or report (8,000-12,000 words) on a specific subject area, written in the final year of an undergraduate honours degree course.

Entry requirements

Qualifications required for entry onto a university course.

Extended degree

A degree that includes a one-year foundation stage leading directly to Stage 1.

Faculties (see academic schools)

FE

Further education – FE colleges run A-levels, AVCEs, GCSEs, BTECs, HNCs, HNDs, foundation degrees, access and short courses.

Foundation course

The course that is taken prior to degree-level study to bring students up to the required standard.

Foundation degree

An employment-related degree which takes two years to complete and can later be topped up to gain an honours degree.

Freshers

New university students. A freshers' week may be organised as an introduction to university life. This can include social events, society fairs, and introductions to the library and computer resources.

Gap year

Many students take a year out between school or college and university, often to travel, study or work to gain experience and save money for university.

GCSE

General Certificate of Secondary Education. The British high/secondary school qualification necessary to undertake further education qualifications such as AS-levels/A-levels, BTECs etc.

Graduate

Someone who has successfully completed their first degree.

Halls (of residence)

University-owned accommodation that students often stay in during their first year.

HE

Higher education – study beyond A-level, including higher national certificates (HNC) and diplomas (HND), foundation degrees, undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees.

HE maintenance grant

Non-repayable financial support from the Government available to eligible students to help with living costs at university.

HNC/HND

Higher National Certificates/Diplomas – these are practical two-year courses. Students who successfully complete courses may progress onto an appropriate undergraduate degree.

Hons

Degree with honours – this is a full undergraduate degree, usually requiring the completion of a dissertation or research project.

IB/EB

International/European Baccalaureate – a high/secondary school qualification equivalent to British A-levels.

Lecture

A formal presentation of ideas to a large number of students.

Master class

This is a session designed to give a taste of studying a subject at university.

Mature students

Students over the age of 21.

Module

A unit or topic of study.

Glossary (continued)

NVQ

National vocational qualification, available in three levels. NVQ level 3 is usually recognised as the equivalent to A-levels and therefore may be admissible for entry into university.

Offer

An offer of a place on a course at university – this may be a conditional offer, dependent on A-level results, or an unconditional offer.

Open days

Where students and their families can visit a university to find out more about the course they are interested in and the university.

Placement

A period of study involving professional or cultural experience related to your course.

Postgraduate study

A programme of study or research leading to a master's degree or PhD.

Post-qualification

Programme for health and social care practitioners who possess at least a first professional registration in health or social care practice.

Pre-qualification

Programmes that offer a first qualification in a health and social care profession.

Prospectus

A guide to a university with information on courses, facilities and student services.

QAA

Quality Assurance Agency – an independent organisation that reviews teaching quality and standards in higher education.

Sandwich course

An undergraduate degree that includes a work-placement year.

Scholarship

A non-repayable grant awarded to a student based on a range of criteria. This varies greatly between each institution. Scholarships are frequently awarded for merit. Regional scholarships are also being offered by some institutions to local schools/colleges.

Semester/term

The university academic year is divided into either two semesters or three terms; this is dependent on the university.

Seminar

More interactive than a lecture. A group of students meet to discuss a subject with a tutor.

Single honours

An undergraduate degree focusing on one subject area (or group of related subject areas).

Stages (sometimes referred to as levels)

Stage 1 refers to the first year of a full-time programme and stage 2 to the second and third years. Part-time students may take longer to complete each stage.

SU/NUS

Students' Union/National Union of Students – this is a national organisation run for students by students. Every university has its own SU which can provide advice and guidance for students on many aspects of university life, as well as organising entertainment and social events.

Tariff system

Designed to help students calculate whether they meet course entry requirements. A tariff calculator is available on the UCAS website, visit www.ucas.com/students/ucas_tariff.

Taster session

Gives a taste of a subject at the specific university it is held at.

UCAS

University and College Admissions Service – provides guidance and administers all full-time higher education applications.

Undergraduate

Someone studying for their first degree.

Visit days

After receiving an offer of a university place, students may be invited to a visit day where they will find out more about their chosen course and university.

Vocational A-levels (see AVCE)