



# Exploring the Academic “ABC's”

The definitions of terms given here, commonly used by colleges to describe their programs, admissions procedures, and other practices, are general. Consult the college catalogs of individual institutions to get more detailed and up-to-date information.

**Academic Advisement:** A plan under which each student is assigned to a faculty member or a trained advisor, who, through regular meetings, helps the student plan and implement immediate and long-term academic and career goals.

**Accreditation:** Recognition by an accrediting organization or agency that an institution meets certain acceptable standards in its education programs. Accreditation can be for the entire institution or for specific academic programs.

**ACT (AMERICAN College Testing Program):** A test battery of the American College Testing Program, which includes tests in English, mathematics, social studies, reading, and natural sciences reading. The composite score is the average of the students' scores on the five tests.

**Admission:** The process of accepting students into a college or university for the purpose of pursuing a degree.

**Advanced Placement:** Admission or assignment of a freshman to an advanced course in a certain subject on the basis of evidence that the student has already completed the equivalent of the college's freshman course in that subject while in high school.

**Alternate Group:** \*See Wait list.

**Articulation Agreement:** The formal, written and published agreement identifying courses (or sequences of courses) at an institution which are comparable to, or acceptable in lieu of, specific course requirements at another institution.

**Associate Degree:** The degree earned for completing, at minimum, two years of study, most often earned at two-year institutions.

**Auditing a Course:** The process of enrolling in credit courses on a non-credit basis. Each institution will have its own policy regarding the student's obligation to class assignments and tuition.

**Bachelor Degree:** The degree earned for completing, at minimum, four years of study (also referred to as the baccalaureate degree).

**Career Program:** An educational program designed to prepare students for immediate employment; available in many junior colleges, community colleges, and vocational-technical institutes.

**Certificate:** An award for completing a particular program or course of study; offered by two-year colleges. In many cases, a certificate may lead directly to a career program.

**Certificate of Residence:** A document providing official proof of residency within a particular county or state which may affect in-state versus out-of-state tuition.

**Class Rank:** The approximate position of a student in his or her graduating high school class, calculated according to grade average.

**CLEP (College Level Examination Program):** A service of the College Board that provides examinations in undergraduate college courses so that students may earn college credits without having to take the course.

**College Preparatory Subjects:** A term used by colleges when describing their admission requirements or recommendations; usually understood to mean subjects from English, social studies, foreign languages, mathematics, and sciences that involve more rigorous preparation.

**Credit Courses:** Courses that award credit toward an associate, or higher, degree.

**CQPA (Cumulative Quality Point Average):** \*See GPA.

**Curriculum:** A program of courses approved for a specific degree or certificate.

**Dean's List:** Honorable mention for those students who achieve a certain GPA or above. Lists are established at the end of each semester.

**Deferred Admission:** The practice of some colleges of permitting students to postpone enrollment for up to one year after acceptance.

**Degree:** An award conferred by a college, university, or other post-secondary institution as an official recognition of the successful completion of a program of study.

**Developmental Courses (Learning Assisted):** Courses designed to strengthen the basic skills of a student prior to enrolling in college credit programs. Units earned are not applicable to the credits required for a degree.

**Distance Learning:** An option for earning course credit at off-campus locations via internet, cable television, satellite classes, videotapes, correspondence courses, or other means.

**Doctoral Degree:** The highest academic degree conferred by a university; can be earned in a wide assortment of fields.

**Early Decision:** Decision plans offered to applicants who are sure of the college they want to attend and are likely to be accepted by that college. This application is initiated by the student, who is then notified of the college's decision earlier than usual—generally by December 1 of the high school senior year.

**Early Admission:** The practice of colleges admitting students who have not completed high school—usually students of exceptional academic ability who have completed their sophomore year (also known as the College Experience Program or College Bridge Program).

**Electives:** Courses required in a given curriculum or degree program, which allow the student a choice from a wide variety of subjects.

**FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid):** A financial information collection document processed by the federal government to estimate the amount of money students and their families are able to contribute to the student's college expenses based on their income and asset information provided; required by all colleges, FAFSA can be used to apply for the federal and state grant programs, campus-based aid and the Federal Family Education Loan program.

**Full Time Student:** A student enrolled for twelve (12) or more credit hours in a semester, twelve (12) or more quarter credits, or twenty-four (24) or more contact hours a week each term.

**GED (General Education Development Test):** A series of five tests that students who did not complete high school may take through their state education system to qualify for a high school equivalency diploma.

**GPA (Grade Point Average):** An academic assessment which is computed by dividing the total number of grade points by the total number of credits (hours) in courses attempted. Numerical values are used to express letter grades (for example: A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1 F=0).

**Graduate Student:** A student who has attained a bachelor degree and is pursuing a master degree or doctorate.

**Honors Program:** Any special program for students of exceptional academic ability, which offer the opportunity for educational enrichment, independent study and acceleration.

**International Student:** Any student whose legal residence is in another country other than the United States, but is attending high school or college in the United States (see also NON-RESIDENT ALIEN).

**Independent Study:** Academic work chosen or designed by the student with the approval of the department concerned, under an instructor's supervision, and usually undertaken outside of the regular classroom structure.

**Internship:** Any short-term, supervised work experience usually related to the student's major field, for which the student earns academic credit; can be full or part-time, on or off campus, paid or unpaid.

**Master Degree:** An academic degree higher than a baccalaureate, but lower than a doctorate.

**Matriculated Student (Degree Seeking):** A student who has applied and been formally accepted as a candidate for a degree in a specific curriculum. Matriculated students can be part-time or full-time.

**Non-Credit Course:** A community service course taken for enjoyment, self-enrichment or to acquire a skill.

**Non-Matriculated Student (Non-Degree Seeking):** A student who is taking credit courses, but has not applied to the college as a degree seeking, or matriculated, student.

**Non-Resident Alien:** A person who is not a citizen or national of the United States, who is in this country on a visa, or temporary basis, and does not have the right to remain indefinitely.

**Open Admissions:** Admission policy under which virtually all secondary school graduates or students with high school equivalency diplomas are admitted without regard to academic record, test scores, or other qualifications.

**Part-Time Student:** A student who is taking fewer than twelve (12) credit hours in a semester.

**Pass-Fail Grading System:** The practice of some colleges of rating students' quality of performance in their courses as either passing or failing instead of giving grades to indicate various levels of passing work.

**PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test):** A shorter version of the College Board's SAT administered by high schools each year in October. The PSAT/NMSQT aids high schools in the early guidance of students planning for college and serves as the qualifying test for scholarships awarded by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation.

**Prerequisite:** A course designed to prepare a student for advanced courses in an academic field. The appropriate department chair may waive a college course prerequisite.

**Register:** To enroll in an academic course.

**Remedial Courses:** \* See Developmental Courses.

**Resident Alien:** A person who is not a citizen or national of the United States who has been admitted to the U.S. as a legal immigrant for the purpose of obtaining permanent resident alien status and a resident alien registration card.

**SAT I (Scholastic Aptitude Test):** The College Board's test of writing, mathematical, and critical reading, given on specified dates throughout the year at test centers in the United States and other countries.

**SAT II: Subject Test (Scholastic Aptitude Test):** The College Board tests in specific secondary school subjects used by colleges, not only in deciding about admissions but also in course placement or exemption for enrolled freshmen.

**Semester Calendar System:** An academic calendar that consists of two semesters during the year with about sixteen (16) weeks for each semester of instruction. There may be additional summer sessions.

**Student Visa:** A visa issued at a U.S. Embassy post to an international student for purposes of studying at a U.S. educational institution. Applications for a student visa must be obtained at a U.S. high school or college (Form I-20).

**Study Abroad:** Any arrangement by which a student completes part of the college program studying in another country. Can be at a campus abroad or through a cooperative agreement with some other USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) approved college or institution in another country.

**Transcript:** An official college record of courses taken and grades earned.

**Transfer Evaluation:** The process of reviewing courses completed at another institution in order to award appropriate credit hours towards a degree or certificate.

**Transfer Program:** An education program at a two-year college that is offered primarily for students who plan to continue their studies in a four-year college or university.

**Transfer Student:** A student entering a college for the first time, but known to have previously attended a different college. The student may transfer with or without credit.

**Tuition:** The amount of money charged to students for college. Tuition may be charged per term, per course, or per credit.

**Tutoring:** The process of one-on-one studying in specific subjects areas such as math, writing, and reading. Most tutors are college students, however at some colleges, they are specially trained and certified.

**Twenty-Four Credit Hour Program:** A program that enables a non-high school graduate to attend college. After appropriate assessment of skills (English, math, reading and other criteria), the student may begin to successfully complete 24 college credit hours in certain subject areas. Upon successful completion of the credit work, the student applies for a high school equivalency from the appropriate State Education Department. The student must be a resident of the state in which the school is located to receive the equivalency diploma. There may be financial aid implications dependent upon scores received from the "Ability to Benefit" test.

**Undergraduate Student:** A student enrolled in an associate degree, vocational or technical program, or a four or five year bachelor degree program.

**Upper-Division College:** An institution offering bachelor degree programs that begin with the junior year. Entering students must have completed the freshman and sophomore years at another institution(s).

**Veterans Affairs:** A service providing veterans and their dependants help in obtaining benefits for their selected program and provides certifications to the Veterans Administration. They also provide counseling on the transition from the military to a civilian life.

**Waitlist (Alternate Group):** A list/group of students who meet the admission requirements to the college or specific programs, but will only be offered a place if space becomes available.

**Weekend College:** A program that allows students to take a complete course of study and attend classes only on weekends.

**Work-Study:** Any arrangement by which a student combines employment and college study. The employment may be an integral part of the academic curriculum or simply a means of paying for college. At many colleges, a student must be financially eligible for work-study, and must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).