

# Glossary of Some Academic Terms

For those who have never attended college before, the following brief explanation of some of the common terms used at California community colleges and universities is provided below:

<b>A.A., Associate in Arts</b>	College degree granted by Community Colleges (CCs).
<b>A.A.-T, Associate in Arts for Transfer</b>	College degree granted by California Community Colleges (CA CCs) and intended for students who plan to complete a bachelor's degree in a similar major at a CSU campus. <b>Not</b> for UC transfer!
<b>A.S., Associate in Science</b>	College degree granted by Community Colleges.
<b>A.S.-T, Associate in Science for Transfer</b>	College degree granted by California Community Colleges and intended for students who plan to complete a bachelor's degree in a similar major at a CSU campus. <b>Not</b> for UC transfer!
<b>Academic Dismissal</b>	Students on probation are placed in this status after earning a cumulative GPA of less than 1.75 in all units attempted in each of three consecutive semesters.
<b>Academic Probation</b>	Status of students who after attempting 12 units have a cumulative GPA below 2.00 <b>or</b> when grade entries of W, I, NP and /or NC exceed 50%.
<b>Accreditation</b>	A status awarded to a college or university by a professional body with an interest in maintaining standards for its members.
<b>Articulation</b>	Articulation agreements identify specific courses or sequences of courses at one institution that are considered comparable to, or acceptable in lieu of, a course or course sequence at another institution.
<b>Add/Drop</b>	The period of time at the beginning of each term when schedules can be adjusted without penalty. The length of the add/drop period varies by class and is determined by the number of instructional weeks.
<b>Assessment</b>	The process of collecting student information through standardized tests, academic transcripts, surveys, interviews, etc. for the purpose of assisting students with the development of educational plans.
<b>ASSIST.org</b>	ASSIST is a computerized student-transfer information system that can be accessed over the World Wide Web ( <a href="https://www.assist.org">https://www.assist.org</a> ). ASSIST is the official repository of articulation for California's colleges and universities and, therefore, provides the most accurate and up-to-date information available about student transfer in California. It displays reports of how course credits earned at one California college or university can be applied when transferred to another. For further information, please contact a counselor.
<b>Audit</b>	A student who does <b>not</b> want to receive credit in a course may, with approval of the instructor, audit the course as a "visitor." A student who audits a course <b>cannot</b> ask or petition the college at a later date to obtain college credit for the audited course. <b>No</b> financial aid or VA benefits can be awarded for an audited course. <b>Not</b> available for courses with laboratory.
<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	College degree granted by four-year programs; usually the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or the Bachelor of Science (B.S.).
<b>Catalog</b>	College catalogs provide all types of information parents and students need to know about a school. It lists, for example: the institution's history and philosophy, policies and procedures, its accreditation status, courses of study, degrees and certificates offered, physical facilities, admission and enrollment procedures, financial aid, student life activities, etc.
<b>Catalog Rights</b>	Refers to the right of the student to elect to meet the graduation requirements in effect the academic year of first enrollment, as long as continuous enrollment is maintained, or at the time of graduation. Catalog rights apply only to your college graduation and program requirements. If other institutions change their requirements for entrance, graduation, satisfaction of general education patterns or in other ways, it may be necessary for the student to meet the new requirements upon transfer, even if continuous enrollment has been maintained.
<b>Certificate of Achievement</b>	A certificate of achievement is awarded for the completion of a formal instructional program, with a minimum of 18 units, which is designed to give the learner the skills, knowledge and attitudes required for a specific field or endeavor. (fewer units than a degree)
<b>Class Schedule</b>	The listing of courses including hours, instructors, and room assignments offered each semester.
<b>Community/Junior College</b>	A community/junior college is a two-year institution of higher education. Course offerings generally include a transfer curriculum with credits transferable toward a bachelor's degree at a four-year college/university and an occupational or technical curriculum with courses of study designed to prepare students for employment in two years. Community colleges award associate degrees, certificates of achievement and/or proficiency awards for completion of a specific set of courses and units.

<b>Community Education Classes</b>	Fee-funded avocational and recreational classes. These classes carry <b>no</b> credit value.
<b>Co-requisite</b>	A course that must be taken with a specified other one during the same semester or quarter.
<b>Credit Course</b>	Courses for which units are granted.
<b>Curriculum</b>	A curriculum is a program of courses approved for a particular degree or certificate. To earn a degree or certificate in a specific program, you must complete the curriculum for that program.
<b>Dean's List</b>	A category of students in a college or university who achieve high grades during their stay in an academic term or academic year.
<b>Department</b>	A department is the basic organizational unit in a higher education institution, and is responsible for the academic functions in a field of study. It may also be used in the broader sense to indicate an administrative or service unit of an institution.
<b>Doctoral Degree</b>	The highest university degree; all holders are “ <b>doctors.</b> ” There are three different kinds in the US: <b>Research:</b> Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) - to earn this means the holder completed all studies required and conducted original research that resulted in a written dissertation accepted by a committee of university faculty. <b>Professional:</b> D.D.S., D.Env., D.N.P., D.O., D.V.M., Ed.D., J. D., M.D., O.D., Pharm.D., etc.- to earn this means the holder completed all studies and an internship that was accepted by a committee of university faculty. <b>Honorary:</b> a college/university committee makes a decision to honor a specific person (do not have to have any specific education to receive this).
<b>Electives</b>	Courses completed by the student which do <b>not</b> fulfill any specific course requirement but provide units toward the degree.
<b>Enroll/Register</b>	This is the procedure by which students choose classes each semester. It also includes the assessment and collection of fees.
<b>Experiential Learning</b>	Knowledge and skills gained from life experience for which credit may be awarded under certain circumstances.
<b>Expulsion</b>	Permanent separation of the college and student.
<b>Faculty</b>	The faculty is composed of all persons who teach classes for the college. Note: at CA CCs, librarians and counselors are also faculty. Community colleges in general call their teaching faculty “instructors.” Some CA CCs also use the academic titles commonly used at universities shown below (sometimes with a slightly different interpretation): Full-time <b>Assistant Professor</b> = early tenure-track faculty member <b>Associate Professor</b> = tenured faculty member <b>Professor</b> = senior tenured faculty member Part-time <b>Adjunct Professor</b> = non-tenured faculty member (usually hired “at will” - term by term) Other titles may be used, e.g.: lecturer, lab instructor, etc., which may have different meanings at different institutions. Advice: When in doubt, call a college/university faculty member “Professor _____.” This is rarely wrong.
<b>FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)</b>	The federal application that must be completed to receive all federal aid. The forms may be completed online at <a href="http://www.fafsa.ed.gov">www.fafsa.ed.gov</a> .
<b>Final Exams (Finals)</b>	These exams are usually given during the last week of classes each semester. The type of final administered in a course is left to the discretion of the instructor. Final exams are given on specified dates, which may be different than the regular class time, and are usually listed in each semester's class schedule.
<b>General Education</b>	Certain groups of courses required of all degree candidates regardless of their major. These may differ for the A.A. and A.S. degrees and for transfer.
<b>Grade Point Average (G.P.A.)</b>	The average of a student's grades. Most colleges use both letter grades and GPAs in determining students' grades. Grades at most colleges are figured using the following method: A = 4 points, B = 3 points, C = 2 points, D = 1 point, F = 0 points. To calculate a GPA, simply multiply the number of hours a course is worth by the number of points for the letter grade, then add up the totals for each course and divide by the number of credit hours. The result is the grade point average. Note: some schools count a “Pass” grade as a “C” when calculating GPA.

<b>Graduate School</b>	A post-baccalaureate program of study, usually at a university, that typically can lead to a Master's, professional and/or research Doctoral degree. Caveat: Aimed at pre-meds there are special "post-baccalaureate programs" at some universities that offer an opportunity to raise a person's GPA and/or increase study for the MCAT. These do <b>not</b> typically offer a degree.
<b>Grant</b>	A monetary award given to a student to help pay college expenses or pursue a project. Professors, programs, and schools can also be awarded grants for projects. Grants do <b>not</b> require repayment by the recipient.
<b>Hold</b>	A hold is placed on a student's academic record when an outstanding obligation, monetary or material, occurs. The Hold is released when the obligation has been satisfactorily met.
<b>Humanities Courses</b>	Humanities courses are classes that cover subjects such as literature, philosophy, language, and the fine arts. Most undergraduate degrees require a certain number of humanities credit hours.
<b>Hybrid Course</b>	A course utilizing more than one mode of instructional delivery. Instruction may be delivered by such modes as, for example, the Internet, email, video, and the classroom.
<b>Incomplete</b>	An instructor may assign an Incomplete (a grade of "I") to a student. It will be assigned only when a student has not completed a major assignment or examination. Course requirements must be completed within a specified time frame (at VC this is 1 year) or the "I" grade will be automatically changed to whatever grade they have earned without the assignment/exam.
<b>Loan</b>	Loans are borrowed money that must be repaid.
<b>Lower Division</b>	The first two years of college work, i.e., freshman and sophomore years and/or courses. By law, typically a community college can only offer lower division courses. Caveat: there are a few courses that are sometimes lower division at some institutions and upper division at others (e.g.: organic chemistry, etc.). For those, special articulation agreements are negotiated. Note: In some states, California included, some CCs are offering selected bachelor's degrees. The California Legislature has chosen recently to pilot a small number of bachelor's degrees at CA CCs largely in technical fields.
<b>Major</b>	The major field of study a student plans to pursue, i.e., biology, math, nursing, history, etc. It typically requires the successful completion of a specified number of courses and credit hours.
<b>Master's Degree</b>	A post-baccalaureate program of study, usually at a university, that typically requires 2 or more years of additional work. This work includes further coursework and may require (depending on the field) an internship, a research project with thesis, passing a qualifying exam, etc. The decision on whether to award the degree or not rests with a committee of university faculty.
<b>Minor</b>	A minor requires the successful completion of a specific number of credit hours in a secondary field of study.
<b>Midterm Exams</b>	Partway through each semester or quarter, instructors may give exams that test students on the material covered during a portion of the term. Classes vary on how many and when these exams are scheduled.
<b>Non-Credit (ungraded) Course</b>	Course for which <b>no</b> units are given. Non-credit courses may serve one of several purposes: to explore new fields of study, increase proficiency in a particular profession, develop potential or enrich life experiences through cultural and/or recreational studies.
<b>Online Classes</b>	Courses delivered via the Internet. Students must have access to a computer and Internet Service Provider (ISP) with an e-mail address. <b>Asynchronous</b> online classes allow students to attend class "anytime, anywhere", whereas <b>Synchronous</b> online classes have scheduled meetings/activities. Classes can have a mixture of asynchronous and synchronous content. Course content and requirements are as close as possible to the same as traditional Face-To-Face (F2F) courses on the campus.
<b>Orientation</b>	Orientation is recommended for all new students. <i>Ventura College's (VC) online Orientation for New Students can be found here:</i> <a href="https://www.venturacollege.edu/departments/student-services">https://www.venturacollege.edu/departments/student-services</a>
<b>Pass/No-Pass</b>	A grading system allowing a course to be taken for a grade of "Pass/No-Pass" rather than for a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F. Note: Pass/No Pass is <b>not</b> always accepted for work in majors courses, and some transfer institutions automatically assign a letter grade of "C" to a course with a "Pass" grade (for GPA calculation purposes).
<b>Placement</b>	The process of advising a student to enroll in a particular course based on valid prerequisites, valid standardized tests, and other multiple measures.
<b>Prerequisite</b>	A requirement which must be completed <b>prior</b> to enrollment in a course. If required, it is listed in the course description. Prerequisites are expressed as minimum requirements. For example, with a grade of "C" means that a grade of "C" or higher is acceptable.

<b>Private/Public Institutions</b>	Private and public institutions differ primarily in terms of their source of financial support. Public institutions receive funding from the state or other governmental entities and are administered by public boards. Examples include all CA CCs, CSUs and UCs. Private institutions rely on income from private donations, from religious or other organizations, and student tuition. Examples include California Lutheran University (CLU), Westmont College, USC, etc.
<b>Proficiency Award</b>	A Proficiency Award is awarded for the completion of a specified number of units which is designed to give the learner the skills, knowledge and attitudes required for a specific field or endeavor typically in Career Education. (This is awarded by the Department, not the CA CC.)
<b>Progress Probation</b>	Status of students with 50 percent or more of their units with grades of W, I, or NC. Students must see a counselor before they can register for a future semester.
<b>Recommended Preparation</b>	If a course has "Recommended Preparation" it means that it is possible, but more difficult to successfully complete the course without the recommended preparation.
<b>Registrar</b>	The Registrar of an institution is responsible for the maintenance of all academic records and may include such duties as: maintenance of class enrollments, providing statistical information on student enrollment, student eligibility for academic honors, administering probation and retention policies, and verification of the completion of degree requirements for graduation. Find her or him at "Admissions and Records" (A & R).
<b>Semester Unit</b>	In general, a semester unit represents one hour of lecture or three hours of laboratory per week for a semester. Graduation requires that at least 60 semester units be completed. One semester unit is equivalent to one-and-a-half quarter units.
<b>Student Educational Plan</b>	A plan developed for each student which identifies the student's educational objectives and the courses, services, and programs to be used to achieve them.
<b>Student Success</b>	A process to assist students in attaining their educational goals consisting of orientation, assessment, counseling and student educational plans.
<b>Suspension</b>	A temporary separation of the college and student under specified conditions.
<b>Teaching Assistant (TA)</b>	At universities upper-division and/or graduate students are responsible for instruction in non-lecture class sessions (e.g.: discussions, labs, etc.). Usually these student instructors are working under the guidance of a faculty member. TAs are <b>not</b> usually encountered at community colleges.
<b>Transfer Student</b>	A student entering the reporting institution for the first time but known to have previously attended an undergraduate postsecondary institution.
<b>Transcript (of Record)</b>	Copy of student's college record prepared by the Office of Admissions and Records.
<b>Tutor</b>	A person, often another student, who has completed and/or demonstrated proficiency in a course or subject and is able to provide instruction to another student. Tutors usually help students better understand course material and make better grades.
<b>Upper Division</b>	The last two years of college work (i.e., junior and senior years) and/or courses. <b>Not</b> usually available at community colleges.
<b>Withdrawal</b>	Students may withdraw from courses during a semester until the second "Drop Day" (with a "W"). A Withdrawal does appear on a transcript, counts as an attempt on the class, and does have tuition fees charged. It does <b>not</b> , however, impact the GPA.

Text mostly from: Porterville College (<https://www.portervillecollege.edu/academics/glossary-academic-terms>) April 29, 2015 with some additional entries from Greenville Technical College ([https://www.gvltec.edu/about/greenvilletech/glossary\\_of\\_college\\_terms.html](https://www.gvltec.edu/about/greenvilletech/glossary_of_college_terms.html)) and additional comments from this instructor.

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