

Higher Education Terms

AAS degree: A work-force degree that is not meant to transfer, but rather is meant to place a graduate into a job following graduation, after approximately 60 credit hours.

A.S., A.A., & A.S.T. degree: Transfer degrees that are meant for a student who is the path to a four-year, university education plan. They are awarded after approximately 60 credit hours.

adviser: A department or college-based faculty or staff member who meets with students to discuss and create an academic plan designed to meet students' educational and career goals, review resources and programs, review curricular choices, and monitor progress toward achieving educational goals.

academic year: The period of formal instruction, which is usually August to May. It may be divided into terms of varying lengths, such as semesters.

accreditation: Approval of colleges and universities by nationally recognized professional associations or regional accrediting bodies.

ACT: A multiple-choice test of English, math, reading, and science reasoning (plus an optional writing component) used for admission into undergraduate programs.

add/drop: A process at the beginning of a term whereby students can delete and add classes with an instructor's permission.

bachelor's degree: A degree awarded upon completion of approximately four years of full-time study.

Bursar (business office): The Bursar is the senior financial administrator at a school or university. The Bursar's Office is responsible for the management of student accounts involving all tuition and fees, discounts, and other money matters.

catalog: An official publication giving information about a university's academic programs, facilities, entrance requirements, course descriptions, and student life.

catalog year: The academic year during which the regulations of a specific edition of the *Undergraduate Catalog* apply.

class meeting days: M = the class meets *only* on Mondays; T = the class meets *only* on Tuesdays; W = the class meets *only* on Wednesdays; R = the class meets *only* on Thursdays; F = the class meets *only* on Fridays; MW = the class meets **both** Mondays and Wednesdays; TR = the class meets **both** Tuesdays and Thursdays; MTWRF = the class meets *all 5* days of the week.

community college: A postsecondary institution that offers associate degree programs, as well as technical and vocational programs.

concentration: A specific focus with a major. For example, Computer Information Technology majors may choose to concentrate in Programming, Networking, or other areas.

co-requisite: Specific conditions, requirements, or courses that must be completed at the same time as another course.

course: A specific subject studied within a limited period of time. Courses may use lecture, discussion, laboratory, seminar, workshop, studio, independent study, internship, on-line, or other teaching formats to facilitate learning.

course load: The total number of credit hours taken in a semester. For example, the average course load for any semester is about 15 credit hours. Students must be registered for at least 12 credit hours to be considered full-time.

course number: The 3- or 4-digit number that identifies a specific course, such as the 1010 in English 1010.

credits: The number of credits assigned to a course is generally based on the amount of time the class meets each week. For example, a 3-credit lecture class meets for about 3 hours per week.

CRN: The course registration number (CRN) is a unique five-digit number that allows students to enroll in a particular section of a specific course. Each course has its own individual CRN.

degree: Diploma or title conferred by a college, university, or professional school upon completion of a prescribed program of studies.

drop: To stop taking a course; before classes start for the semester, students can drop with no record. After certain dates, there is reduced refund % and different requirements for dropping.

early registration: A process of choosing classes in advance of other students; registration has a starting date based on your academic status, and continues until classes begin.

eLearn: The online component of courses. Your syllabus and other class information will be posted here. Also, your instructor may post announcements, course materials, and assignment instructions.

electives: Courses that may be chosen from any field of study. Electives give students an opportunity to explore other topics or subjects of interest.

extracurricular activities: Nonacademic activities undertaken outside college courses.

faculty: People who teach courses at U.S. colleges and universities. Faculty members may include professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and instructors.

fees: An amount charged by universities, in addition to tuition, to cover costs of institutional services.

final exam: Often referred to as a "final," a final exam is a cumulative exam on a particular course subject encompassing all material covered throughout the duration of the course.

financial aid: A general term that includes all types of money, loans, and work/study programs offered to a student to help pay tuition, fees, and living expenses.

freshman: A first-year student at a secondary school, college, or university.

full-time student: One who is enrolled in an institution taking a full load of courses; the number of courses and hours is specified by the institution.

General Education requirements (Ged Eds): This is a group of courses which students complete, regardless of their major, to ensure they have a broad educational experience.

grade point average (GPA): The combined average of a student's grades for all academic coursework completed. In the United States, grades are usually assigned in letters and are based on a 4.0 GPA scale.

graduate: A student who has completed a course of study, either at secondary school or college level. A graduate program at a university is a study course for students who already hold a bachelor's degree.

higher education: Postsecondary education at colleges, universities, professional schools, technical institutes, etc.

learning support: Students can be required to receive learning support if their ACT scores are at a certain level, or they have been out of school for a number of years and need to build skills back. Assistance is provided by the staff of the **Learning Commons**, either through one-on-one meetings or through courses numbered with a 0. For example, ENGL 0810, a companion course taken the same semester with ENGL 1010, for those not at college level in writing. These courses are 3-credit courses and are factored in for a semester GPA, but do not count toward degree completion.

lecture: Common method of instruction in college and university courses; a professor lectures in classes of 20 to several hundred students. Lectures may be supplemented with regular small group discussions led by teaching assistants.

major: The student's field of concentration. Major courses represent 25-50% of the total number of courses required to complete a degree.

office hours: Scheduled times during which your instructors are available for help in their offices. Some instructors have both online and in-person office hours. These are listed in the syllabus, along with their office location and other contact information (including their preferred way to be contacted).

placement test: An examination used to test a student's academic ability in a certain field so that he or she may be placed in the appropriate courses in that field. In some cases, a student may be given academic credit based on the results of a placement test.

prerequisites: One or more courses that must be completed or other knowledge, skills, or standards that must be demonstrated before a student is permitted to take certain courses. For example, ENGL 1010 is a prerequisite for ENGL 1020.

purge: The name of the process used by the Business Office to drop students from their classes for non-payment.

registration: Process through which students select courses to be taken during a quarter, semester, or trimester.

scholarship: A study grant of financial aid, usually given at the undergraduate level, that may take the form of a waiver of tuition and/or fees.

semester: Period of study lasting approximately 15 weeks or one-half the academic year. Summer semesters are typically 10 weeks, 5 weeks, or a Maymester (3 weeks).

sophomore: A second-year student at a secondary school, college, or university.

syllabus: A course outline (and contract) provided by the instructor that spells out course requirements, grading criteria, course content, faculty expectations, deadlines, exam dates, class attendance requirements, and other relevant course information.

technical certificate: A one- to two-year program designed to help a student build job skills and potentially apply earned credits to a workforce degree in the future.

transcript: A certified copy of a student's educational record.

transfer: The process of moving from one school to another to complete a degree.

transfer credit: Credit given toward a degree on the basis of classes successfully completed at another college.

transfer program: Associate degree program allowing the student to transfer into the third year of a four-year bachelor's degree program.

transient student: A student who is already attending another school who chooses to take classes at Vol State as a non-degree student, so s/he can transfer the credits back to their "home" institution. A student can attend as a Transient for up to two semesters.

tuition: The money an institution charges for instruction and training (does not include the cost of books).

university: A postsecondary institution that offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

VolState Portal: The online portal where you access your account. Through login to this portal, students are able to add or drop classes, view financial information, pay tuition, access the online components of classes, and check Vol State email.

withdrawal: The administrative procedure of dropping a course or leaving an institution. Withdrawal is a procedure with required paperwork, and does not happen automatically when a student chooses to stop attending a class or doing the work for a class.