

## **American Education Terms**

**Academic Standards:** Measures of scholastic excellence held by a university; most require that students maintain a minimum grade point average (GPA) to continue their studies.

**ACT:** A university entrance examination generally taken during the high school junior and/or senior year that assesses a student's general educational development and his/her ability to complete college-level work. The ACT is comprised of four subject tests - English, mathematics, reading, and science and an optional writing test (essay). Most international students are exempt from taking this test for admissions.

**Academic Year:** The period of formal instruction. This consists of both the fall and spring semesters. Summer and winter sessions are available at UofL, but this is not inclusive of the academic period/year.

**Accreditation:** Approval of colleges and universities by nationally recognized professional associations or regional accrediting bodies to be identified as meeting educational standards.

**Affidavit of Support:** An official document (form I-134) proving a promise of funding from an individual or organization.

**Bachelor's Degree (Baccalaureate Degree) (see undergraduate):** The bachelor's degree is awarded to students who complete a minimum of 120 college credits and is found at four-year colleges and universities. It is a prerequisite to study in a graduate program. The degree usually takes four full-time years to complete.

**Certificate Programs:** Certificate programs provide specific job skills and are required by specific professions.

**Community College:** A community college is also known as a two-year school. Courses offered include a transfer curriculum with credits transferable toward a bachelor's degree at a four-year college and an occupational or technical curriculum with courses of study designed to prepare students for employment in two years within specific fields.

**Credit:** College courses are measured in credit hours and typical college courses are 3-credit hours. A full-time undergraduate student will take 12 college credits or more, or 4 to 5 classes, per semester and a Graduate student will take 9 college credits or more, 3 to 4 classes, per semester. Full-time study is required for International students by regulations, unless they meet specific guidelines to drop below this requirement.

**College:** A postsecondary institution that provides undergraduate education and, in many cases, master's and doctorate level degrees. A college can also be a division of a university; for example, College of Business. The terms "college" and "university" are used interchangeably. Sometimes we even refer to colleges and universities as schools.

**College Catalog:** An official publication (usually found online) which provides information about a university's academic programs, facilities, entrance requirements and student life.

**Conditional Admission:** An acceptance to a college or university that is dependent upon the individual completing coursework or meeting specified criteria prior to enrollment, such as English language proficiency, transcript submission, GPA requirements, taking pre-requisite courses, etc..

**Course:** Regularly scheduled class sessions of one to five hours (or more) per week during a semester. A degree program is comprised of a specified number of required and elective courses and varies from institution to institution.

**Department:** Administrative subdivision of a school, college, or university through which instruction in a certain field of study is given (such as English Department or History Department).

**Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. (ECE):** is a public service nonprofit organization. ECE prepares evaluation reports that identify the United States equivalents of educational qualifications earned in other countries.

**Elective Courses:** An elective course is one chosen by a student from a number of optional subjects or courses in a curriculum, as opposed to a required course which the student must take.

**Fees:** An amount charged by universities, in addition to tuition, to cover costs of institutional services, such as library services, recreational facilities, international services, etc.

**Freshman:** A first-year Bachelor's or Undergraduate student who has earned between 0-29 credit hours.

**Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT):** The Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) intended to assess certain analytical, writing, quantitative, verbal, and reading skills in written English for use in admission to a graduate management program, such as an MBA.

**GPA (Grade Point Average):** Grade point average reflects the average of a student's semester (or end of term) grades, starting with their first year. A variety of methods are used to determine GPA. Regardless of the method used, the higher the grades, the higher the GPA, and the higher the GPA, the greater the college and scholarship opportunities may be possible at the Graduate level. UofL uses a 4.0 scale.

**Graduate:** A student who has completed a course of study, either at the secondary or university level. A graduate program at a university is a study course for students who already hold a bachelor's degree. These are referred to as Master's or Doctoral (PhD) level students.

**Graduate Record Examinations (GRE):** The Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) is a standardized test that is an admissions requirement for most Graduate Schools in the United States.

**International Student:** An international applicant is a prospective student who is neither a U.S. citizen nor permanent resident of the United States and will require a non-immigrant visa for study in the U.S.

**International Student/Scholar Adviser or Coordinator:** The person at a university who is in charge of providing information and guidance to international students in such areas as government regulations, visas, academic regulations, social customs, language, financial or housing problems, travel plans, insurance and legal matters. These are commonly referred to as Designated School Officials (DSO) or Alternate Responsible Officers (AROs).

**Language Requirement:** A requirement of admission into colleges that display students have a basic reading and writing proficiency in English to receive their degree.

**Law School Admission Test (LSAT):** The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a half-day standardized test administered 6 times each year at designated testing centers throughout the world. Administered by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) for prospective law school candidates.

**Letter of Recommendation:** A recommendation letter is written by a previous employer, colleague, client, teacher, or by someone else who can recommend an individual's work or academic performance. Letters of recommendation can sometimes be used in the admissions process.

**Major:** The primary field of study in which an individual wishes to receive a degree.

**Master's Degree:** Degree awarded upon completion of academic requirements that usually include a one-three years of study beyond the bachelor's degree.

**Matriculation:** The formal process of being admitted, enrolling, and entering a college/university.

**Minor:** A second field of undergraduate study requiring fewer credit hours than a specific major. This is obtained while proceeding towards your Bachelor's degree.

**Nonresident:** A student who does not meet the residence requirements of the state for tuition purposes. Tuition fees and admission policies may differ for residents and nonresidents. International students are usually classified as nonresidents, and there is little possibility of changing to resident status at a later date.

**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.

**PLAN:** PLAN is a framework for understanding and addressing the professional development needs of graduate students. Run by the School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies (SIGS), PLAN helps students take charge of their own learning and development by offering opportunities and resources related to Professional Development, Life Skills, Academic Development, and Networking skills. PLAN is designed to help students in getting started, moving on through their program, and moving beyond graduate school.

**PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test):** A practice test for the SAT that is also used to determine National Merit finalists. The PSAT/NMSQT is given in October, primarily to high school juniors, and measures evidence-based reading and writing skills. Most international students are exempt from taking this test for admissions.

**Prerequisite:** Program or course that a student is required to complete before being permitted to enroll in a more advanced program or course.

**Recommendation:** Most colleges request two or three letters of recommendation when submitting an application for admission. These are generally written by people who know you inside and outside of the classroom (usually an academic teacher and a college advisor/school counselor).

**Registered Student Organizations:** Registered Student Organizations benefit by receiving access to university facilities and services not available to non-registered student groups or to the general public.

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

**Required Courses:** A required course is one chosen by a student from a number of core courses in a curriculum, which the student must take and complete to be eligible to graduate.

**SAT Reasoning Test:** A college entrance examination generally taken during the junior and/or senior year that measures the critical thinking skills needed for academic success in college. The SAT includes evidence-based reading and writing, mathematics and essay sections. Most international students are exempt from taking this test for admissions.

**SAT II Subject Tests:** One-hour tests that measure a student's knowledge in specific subject areas that should be taken as the high school subjects are completed. These tests are required by some of the more competitive colleges. Most international students are exempt from taking this test for admissions.

**Scholarship:** Financial aid that may take the form of a waiver of tuition and/or fees.

**Semester:** The time period during which an educational institution holds classes for UofL. Fall (September to December) and Spring (January to May). Summer (June to August) and winter (December to January) sessions.

**TOEFL:** The Test of English as a Foreign Language. An exam administered by ETS (Educational Testing Services). Scores are often required in order to determine admission status for proof of English proficiency.

**Transcript:** A student's educational record. Transcript vary from school to school and generally contain the following information: courses, grades, and credits for each grade completed, current cumulative GPA: and anticipated graduation date. An unofficial transcript is exactly the same as an official transcript except that there is no signature, stamp, or seal. However, when applying for admissions, an official transcript is required to be submitted.

**Transfer:** A student who has attended or intends to attend another college or university in the United States.

**Tuition:** The money an institution charges for instruction and training (does not include the cost of additional fees, books, room or board).

**Undergraduate:** Incoming freshman and transfer students into a Bachelor's program. Undergraduate students have not yet completed a Bachelor's degree or a program that leads to a Bachelor's degree.

**Undergraduate Studies:** Two-year or four-year programs at a college or university, undertaken after secondary school graduation and leading to the associate or bachelor's degree.

**World Education Services (WES):** is a nonprofit organization that provides credential evaluations for international students and immigrants planning to study or work in the U.S. and Canada.

**Withdrawal:** The administrative procedure of dropping a course or leaving a university.