**Glossary of Completion and Related College Terms**

These definitions include a number of entries from [U.S. News and World Report's Higher Education Glossary](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary) and the [U.S. News and World Report's FAQ about Community Colleges](https://www.usnews.com/education/community-colleges/articles/2015/02/06/frequently-asked-questions-community-college). Please also visit Financial Aid Terms in the PSCCN Financial Aid Toolkit in the Student and Family Resources section.

Academic advisor: A member of a [school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#school)'s staff or [faculty](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#faculty) who provides advice and guidance to students on academic matters, such as [course](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course) selections.

Academic year: Annual period during which a student attends and receives formal instruction at a [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university), typically from August or September to May or June. The academic year may be divided into [semesters](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#semesters), [trimesters](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#trimesters), [quarters](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#quarters) or other calendars.

Associate's: An [undergraduate](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#undergraduate-student_undergraduate-studies) [degree](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#degree) awarded by a [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university) upon successful completion of a program of study, usually requiring two years of full-time study. An associate's is typically awarded by [community colleges](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#community-college); it may be a career or technical degree, or it may be a transfer degree, allowing students to [transfer](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#transfer-credit) those [credits](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#credits) to a four-year [bachelor's](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#bachelors) degree-granting school.

Auto-conferral: A process by which degrees or certificates are automatically awarded to a student upon completion of requirements, without the student initiating a graduation application. The student may not be aware they have completed all the requirements of the certificate or degree. This process requires a college to create procedures to capture student consent, as well as build adequate staffing and technology support at the college to check degree and certificate requirements.

Bachelor's: An [undergraduate](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#undergraduate-student_undergraduate-studies) [degree](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#degree) awarded by a [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university) upon successful completion of a program of study, typically requiring at least four years (or the equivalent) of full-time study. Common degree types include bachelor of arts (B.A. or A.B.), which refers to the [liberal arts](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#liberal-arts), and bachelor of science (B.S.). A bachelor's is required before starting [graduate studies](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#graduate-student_graduate-studies).

Bachelor’s of Applied Science (BAS): A bachelor’s degree that focuses on fields that provide hands-on experiences and incorporating job-related skills into the classroom. Considered career training degrees, they are typically designed to build on associate degrees that provide workplace skills, and are closely aligned with the needs of industry partners.

Career services: An office at [colleges](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) and [universities](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university) that offers counseling, workshops and other resources to help students find [internships](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#internship) and jobs or apply to graduate programs. Some U.S. schools have advisors in these offices dedicated to working with international students.

Certificate: Certificates are offered in a variety of academic disciplines and could be used to pursue a better job in a number of industries. Common fields include auto mechanics, construction trades, computer and information services, business and office management, transportation and materials moving, health care and cosmetology, and many others. Typically offered at community colleges, certificates take anywhere from three months to one year to complete.

College: A postsecondary institution that typically provides only an [undergraduate](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#undergraduate-student_undergraduate-studies) education, but in some cases, also [graduate](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#graduate-student_graduate-studies) [degrees](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#degree). "College" is often used interchangeably with "[university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university)" and "[school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#school)." Separately, "college" can refer to an academic division of a university, such as College of Business. (See U.S. News's rankings of [Best Colleges](http://collegesusnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges).)

Commencement: A graduation ceremony where students celebrate the completion of their [degrees](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#degree), typically held in May or June at the end of the [academic year](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#academic-year), though some [colleges](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) and [universities](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university) also hold August and December ceremonies.

Community college: A [public](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#public-school), two-year postsecondary institution that offers the [associate](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#associates) [degree](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#degree). Also known as a "[junior college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#junior-college)." Community colleges typically provide a transfer program, allowing students to transfer to a four-year [school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#school) to complete their [bachelor's](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#bachelors) degree, and a career program, which provides students with a vocational degree or a bachelor’s of applied science.

Completion Coach: A college staff member who supports students to meet their goals for finishing a college degree, certificate or program. Completion coach position descriptions may be found in **Staff Resources to Guide Planning and Outreach** in the Completion Toolkit.

Completion rate: Numbers of students who complete a certificate or degree; or who successfully transfer to a four-year college or university and complete Bachelor's degree.

Consortium agreement: A policy to allow students enrolled at more than one school in a given semester to receive the maximum amount of federal aid for which they are eligible considering enrollment at both schools. A student may receive federal financial aid from only one school during any given term.

Core requirements: Mandatory [courses](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course) that students are required to complete to earn a [degree](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#degree). Another term commonly used for these courses is “distribution requirements.”

Course load: The number of [courses](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course) or [credits](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#credits) a student takes during a specific [term](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#term).

Credential: A certificate, degree, or other official document that show a student completed their program.

Credits: Units that a [school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#school) uses to indicate that a student has completed and passed [courses](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course) that are required for a [degree](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#degree). Each school defines the total number and types of credits necessary for degree completion, with every course being assigned a value in terms of "credits," "credit hours," or "units."

Culture shock: Feelings of uncertainty, confusion or anxiety that can occur when adjusting to a new country and culture that may be very different from your own. International students may also experience "reverse culture shock" upon returning to their home country, after they have become accustomed to the new country and culture.

Curriculum: A program of study made up of a set of [courses](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course) offered by a [school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#school).

Degree Audit: A program or process that allows advisors and students to track progress towards their credential by displaying the classes students have completed and the courses still needed to complete the requirements of the certificate or degree.

Degree: A diploma or title awarded to students by a [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university) after successful completion of a program of study.  
  
Direct transfer agreement (DTA): An associate degree designed to transfer to most Bachelor of Arts degrees at all four-year colleges and universities in Washington State. The DTA is sometimes called an Associate in Arts or an Associate in Arts and Sciences.

Discipline: An area of academic study.

Drop: To [withdraw](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#withdraw) from a [course](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course). A [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university) typically has a period of time at the beginning of a [term](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#term) during which students can add or drop courses.

Early alert: Identifying or flagging students early on in the term who are at risk of not completing their academic courses within their term, or who may be experiencing other challenges;

Educational plan: A term by term plan of which courses students need to take at to meet their goals such as degree completion or transfer.

Enroll: To register or enter a [school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#school) or [course](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course) as a participant.

ESL (English as a Second Language): A [course](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course) or program of study used to teach English to nonnative English speakers.

Exempt: Not required to do something that other students may be required to do. For example, a [school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#school) may require all students to take a [first](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#freshman) year English [course](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course), but some students may be exempt based on their high scores on a [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) entrance exam or their previous coursework.

Extracurricular activities: Optional activities, such as sports, that students can participate in outside of academic classes.

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid): Application used by U.S. citizens and permanent residents to apply for [financial aid](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#financial-aid) from U.S. federal and state governments. International students are not eligible for U.S. government aid, but [schools](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#school) may ask international students to submit a FAFSA to determine financial need. (Note: A [social security number](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#social-security-number) is required to complete the FAFSA.)

Fees: An amount of money charged by [colleges](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) and [universities](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university), in addition to their [tuition](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#tuition), to cover costs of services such as libraries, computer technology, or laboratory equipment.

Financial aid: All types of money offered to a student to help pay [tuition](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#tuition), [fees](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#fees) and other educational expenses. This can include [loans](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#loan), [grants](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#grant), [scholarships](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#scholarship), [assistantships](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#assistantship), [fellowships](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#fellowship) and [work-study](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#work study) jobs.

Full-time student: A student who is [enrolled](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#enroll) at a [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university) and is taking at least the minimum number of [credits](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#credits) required by the [school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#school) for a full [course load](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course-load).

GPA (Grade point average): A student's overall academic performance, which is calculated as a numerical average of [grades](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#grade) earned in all [courses](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course). The GPA is determined after each [term](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#term), typically on a 4.0 scale, and upon graduation, students receive an overall GPA for their studies.

Grant: A type of [financial aid](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#financial-aid) that consists of an amount of free money given to a student, often by the federal or a state government, a company, a [school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#school) or a charity. A grant does not have to be repaid. "Grant" is often used interchangeably with "[scholarship](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#scholarship)."

Higher education: Any type of education that takes place after high school, or secondary school. (See "[postsecondary](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#postsecondary).").

Highly Selective: Competitive and limited program that admit a low percentage of students; also refers to four-year institutions that admit 20% or less of their applicants.

Independent study: An academic [course](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course) that allows students to earn [credit](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#credits) for work done outside of the normal classroom setting. The reading or research assignment is usually designed by the students themselves or with the help of a [faculty](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#faculty) member, who monitors the progress.

Internship: An experience that allows students to work in a professional environment to gain training and skills. Internships may be paid or unpaid and can be of varying lengths during or after the [academic year](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#academic-year).

IRS (Internal Revenue Service): The U.S. government agency that collects income taxes. International students who work on or off [campus](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#campus) or receive taxable [scholarships](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#scholarship) must pay taxes. A [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university)'s [international student adviser](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#international-student-adviser) can provide further information, including on relevant tax treaties between the United States and specific countries that may allow certain benefits. A campus financial aid department may also require students to obtain documentation from the IRS to complete their financial aid file.

Letter of recommendation: A letter written by a student's instructor, advisor, counselor, coach or mentor that assesses their qualifications and skills. [Colleges](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college), [universities](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university) and [graduate schools](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#graduate-school) generally require recommendation letters as part of the application process.

Loan: A type of [financial aid](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#financial-aid) that consists of an amount of money that is given to someone for a period of time, with an agreement that it will be repaid later, with interest. International students are generally not eligible for U.S. federal government loans and will typically require an American cosigner to apply for a private bank loan.

Major: The academic subject area that a student chooses to focus on during their [undergraduate studies](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#undergraduate-student_undergraduate-studies). Students typically must officially choose their major by the end of their [sophomore](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#sophomore) year, allowing them to take a number of [courses](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course) in the chosen area during their [junior](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#junior) and [senior](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#senior) years.

Matriculate: To [enroll](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#enroll) in a program of study at a [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university), with the intention of earning a [degree](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#degree).

Merit aid / merit scholarships: A type of [financial aid](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#financial-aid) awarded by a [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university) to students who have demonstrated special academic ability or talents, regardless of their [financial need](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#need based financial aid). Most merit aid has specific requirements if students want to continue to receive it, such as maintaining a certain [GPA](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#gpa).

Need-based financial aid: [Financial aid](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#financial-aid) that is awarded to students due to their financial inability to pay the full cost of attending a specific [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university), rather than specifically because of their [grades](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#grade) or other [merit](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#merit aid).

Open admissions: A [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university)'s policy of accepting all students who have completed [high school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#high-school), regardless of their [grades](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#grade) or test scores, until all spaces are filled. Most [community colleges](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#community-college) have an open admissions policy, including for international students.

Part-time student: A student who is [enrolled](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#enroll) at a [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university) but is not taking the minimum number of [credits](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#credits) required for a full [course load](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course-load).

Persistence: A student's ability to continue term after term towards their academic goal. Persistence may also be understood as the way in which students face, and to some degree overcome, academic, financial or personal obstacles in their educational path.

Postsecondary Education: Any type of education beyond high school.

Postsecondary: Any type of education that takes place after high school, or secondary school. Priority date: The date by which an application must be received in order to be given full consideration. This can apply to admissions, [financial aid](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#financial-aid) and on-[campus](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#campus) housing. After the priority date passes, applications may be considered on a case-by-case or first-come-first-served basis.

Probation: A status or period of time in which students with low [GPAs](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#gpa), or whose academic work is unsatisfactory according to the [school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#school), must improve their performance. If they are unable to do so, they may be dismissed from the school and/or could lose financial aid. Students may also face "disciplinary probation" for nonacademic reasons, such as behavioral problems in or outside the classroom.

Progression: Students take courses that build upon one another, follow an educational plan, and fulfill degree requirements.

Registrar: The [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university) official who is responsible for [registering](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#registration) students and keeping their academic records, such as [transcripts](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#transcript).

Registration: The process in which students choose and [enroll](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#enroll) in [courses](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course) to be taken during the [academic year](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#academic-year) or in summer sessions.

Retention: A measure of numbers/percentage of students with continuous enrollment from term to term or year to year.

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP): Standards that ensure that students are successfully completing coursework in order to continue to receive financial aid. All students receiving financial aid are required to meet these standards. Federal regulations require the college to establish, publish, and apply standards to monitor student progress toward completing degree programs. If students fail to meet the standards, they may be placed on financial aid warning or suspension.

Scholarship: A type of [financial aid](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#financial-aid) that consists of an amount of free money given to a student by a [school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#school), individual, organization, company, charity, or federal or state government. "Scholarship" is often used interchangeably with "[grant](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#grant)."

School: Any educational institution, including those that provide elementary, secondary and postsecondary education. In the latter case, "school" is often used interchangeably with "[college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college)" and "[university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university)."

Transcript: An official record of a student's coursework and [grades](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#grade) at a [high school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#high-school), [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university). A high school transcript is usually one of the required components of the college application process.

Transfer credit: [Credit](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#credits) granted toward a [degree](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#degree) on the basis of studies completed at another [college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#college) or [university](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#university). For instance, students who transfer from a [community college](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#community-college) to a four-year college may earn some transfer credit.

Tuition: An amount of money charged by a [school](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#school) per [term](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#term), per [course](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#course) or per [credit](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#credits), in exchange for instruction and training. Tuition generally does not include the cost of textbooks, [room and board](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#room-and-board), and other [fees](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#fees).

WASFA (Washington Application for State Financial Aid): Students who are not eligible for federal financial aid due to immigration status may be eligible for several Washington State financial aid programs, including the [State Need Grant](http://www.readysetgrad.org/college/state-need-grant), [the College Bound Scholarship](http://www.readysetgrad.org/college/college-bound-scholarship-program), [State Work Study](http://www.readysetgrad.org/college/state-work-study), or [Passport Scholarship](http://www.readysetgrad.org/college/passport-foster-youth-promise-program). These programs fund in-state public and private technical, two-year, and four-year colleges and universities. Learn more about eligibility and complete the WASFA at [readysetgrad.org](http://www.readysetgrad.org/wasfa)

Work-study: A [financial aid](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#financial-aid) program funded by the U.S. federal government that allows [undergraduate](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#undergraduate-student_undergraduate-studies) or [graduate](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#graduate-student_graduate-studies) students to work part time on [campus](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#campus) or with approved off-campus employers. To participate in work-study, students must complete the [FAFSA](https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/08/15/us-higher-education-glossary#fafsa). In general, international students are not eligible for work-study positions.