

US Higher Education Glossary

- **ABD** (All But Dissertation) – a title used to describe a doctoral candidate that has completed all their coursework and exam requirements, but still needs to write their dissertation.
- **Academic Advisor** – a member of the faculty who provides advice and guidance on academic matters such as course selection.
- **Academic Honesty** – is the expectation that student’s work is their own and based on their own knowledge, ideas, and thoughts. It is the absence of cheating and plagiarism. USF takes this seriously and a student found guilty of academic dishonesty receives an FF on their transcript and it can never be removed. For more information, visit the following link: <http://www.ugs.usf.edu/catalogs/0001/adadap.htm>.
- **Academic Year** – the academic year is broken into fall, spring, and summer semesters and runs August to July. To see USF’s academic calendar, visit <http://www.registrar.usf.edu/enroll/regist/calendt.php>.
- **Accredited/Accreditation** – the official recognition that a college or university meets the standards of regional or national organization.
- **ACT** – American College Test – a standardized test administered to students who want to be admitted into a college or university. It is designed to assess a student’s readiness for college-level academic work.
- **Add/Drop** – a process that allows students to change their course schedules by adding or dropping courses.
- **Adjunct Faculty** – part time-instructors at colleges and universities that are hired as needed (usually semester by semester) with no guarantees of continued employment.
- **AP** (Advanced Placement) – a national program of standardized classes offered to high school students. AP courses are college-level courses that allow students to earn college credits with a qualifying score on the end of course AP exam.
- **Assistant Professor** – untenured faculty on a tenure track. This is usually an entry-level position with a probationary period of approximately 5-6 years following the completion of a doctorate program.
- **Associate Professor** – tenured faculty at the intermediate level. Many faculty stay at this rank throughout their careers once it’s achieved. However, some strive for the rank of full professor.
- **Associate's Degree** – a degree that requires 60-80 specified credit hours which breaks down to approximately two years of study. It is awarded as Associate in Arts (AA) or Associate in Science (AS). Typically, associate degrees are awarded by community colleges.
- **Asynchronous Learning** – a type of distance learning offered through online courses with no requirements for students and instructors to interact face-to-face.

- **ATLE** - Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence; the teaching center on campus.
- **Audit** – taking a class to gain knowledge about a subject, without receiving a grade or credit toward a degree.
- **Bachelor's Degree** – a degree that requires 120+ specified credit which breaks down to approximately four years of study. It is awarded as Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), or Bachelor of Social Work (BSW).
- **Book Order** – the process of choosing a textbook for a course and placing the order with the university book store. Book orders must be submitted no later than 30 days before the start of the semester. USF's bookstore requires professors/instructors to use [FacultyEnlight](#) to place their book orders.
- **College** – the generic term that is used to refer to any post-secondary institution. Typically a college only provides an undergraduate education. College can also refer to an academic division of a university like College of Education. Click [here](#) to see a list of Colleges at USF.
- **Commencement** – a graduation ceremony that takes place in August, December, and May at USF. Click [here](#) for more information on USF commencement ceremonies.
- **Community College** – a public two-year postsecondary institution that offers two programs: a transfer program which consists of the first two years of a bachelor's degree and a terminal program which consists of vocational training resulting in an associate's degree.
- **Comps** – short for a comprehensive exam that is usually taken at the end of a Master's degree program or at the end of coursework for doctoral students. The content, length, and time are determined by each department.
- **Core Requirements/Core Curriculum** – Mandatory general education, usually interdisciplinary, course requirements needed for the completion of a degree.
- **Course** – regularly scheduled class on a particular subject.
- **Course Load** – the number of courses/credit hours a student takes during a specific semester.
- **Course Number** – every course has an identification number that distinguishes it from other courses in a particular subject. Course numbers increase as the difficulty of the course increases. For example, at USF, PSY 2012 is an introductory psychology course and PSY 3213 is a higher level psychology course.
- **Course Offerings** – a list of courses offered during a specific semester.
- **Credits/Credit Hours** – units used by institutions to record the completion of courses (with a passing grade) in a degree program.

- **CRN** (Course Reference Number) – a unique number assigned to a course that is used by students to register for the course.
- **Curriculum** – a program of study made up of a set of courses offered by a degree program.
- **CV** (Curriculum Vitae) – a document that details your accomplishments similar to a resume, but longer. It is usually requested at academic institutions when applying for an academic position.
- **Dean** – the director or head of a division of a certain professional school or college of a university.
- **Degree** – a diploma or title awarded by a college or university to students after they have successfully completed a program of study.
- **Department** – the formal division of a school consisting of faculty and support staff responsible for instruction in a subject area.
- **Discipline** – an area of academic study.
- **Dissertation** – an in-depth thesis on an original topic of research that is typically submitted and presented in the final stage of earning a doctorate.
- **Doctorate** – the highest degree awarded by a university after the successful completion of an advanced graduate program of study. It usually requires three or more years of study beyond the master's degree. Also referred to as a PhD.
- **Drop** – refers to the withdrawal of a student from a course that must be completed in a specified period of time depending on the college or university. Click [here](#) to read the guidelines specific to student drops at USF.
- **Dual Degree** – a program of study that allows a student to concurrently earn two degrees from the same college or university.
- **Electives** – are courses students can take for credit toward their degree, but are not part of the required course list.
- **Enroll** – to register or enter a school or course.
- **Exempt** – not required to do something that other students may be required to do.
- **Faculty** – the instructional staff of an educational institution.
- **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) – the application used by the US government to determine the amount of financial aid a student will receive in a given year. Students must reapply every year they attend a college or university. International students are not eligible.

- **Fees** – an amount of money charged by schools, in addition to tuition, to cover institutional costs.
- **Fellowship** – a study grant or financial assistance awarded by varying institutions such as educational institutions, the government, research centers, and hospitals. They are usually awarded to graduate and doctoral students and are based on academic achievement.
- **Final Exam**- a course based assessment taken at the end of a semester or term during finals week. See USF's [academic calendar](#) for specific dates.
- **Financial Aid** – a general term that includes all types of money offered to students to help them pay tuition, fees, and other educational expenses. Click [here](#) for more information on financial aid at USF.
- **Freshman** – a student in their first year of attendance at a high school or college/university.
- **Full Professor** - refers to the rank of a tenured faculty member that has advanced beyond the associate professor level.
- **Full-time Student** – a student taking 12 or more credit hours at the undergraduate level and 9 or more hours at the graduate level. Click [here](#) to see USF's policy on enrollment status.
- **GA (Graduate Assistant)** – a graduate student employed part-time to assist faculty in teaching, grading, and meeting with students.
- **GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test)** – a standardized test required for admission into graduate programs in business.
- **GPA (Grade Point Average)** – a system of recording a student's overall academic performance as a numerical average. A GPA is on a 4.0 scale and calculated at the end of each term/semester with an overall GPA calculated upon graduation.
- **Grades** – a score or mark (ie. A,B,C,D,F) indicating a student's academic performance on an assessment, paper, or in a course. See USF's [grading system](#) for more information.
- **Graduate Course** – a credit course that is applied toward a graduate degree like a master's or doctorate.
- **Graduate School** – the division of a college or university which offers graduate programs that result in a master's degree, doctorate, or graduate certificate. Click [here](#) for more information on graduate programs at USF.
- **Graduate Student** – a student that already has an undergraduate degree and is enrolled in an advanced studies program leading to a master's or doctorate degree.
- **Grant** – a type of financial aid that does not require repayment and is given to students by the federal or state government, company, school, or charity.

- **GRE** (Graduate Record Examination) – a standardized test that is required for admission into a graduate degree program. The exam measures verbal, quantitative, and analytical writing skills.
- **Independent Study** – a course that allows students to earn credit toward their degree for work with a faculty member outside the traditional classroom setting. Click [here](#) for more information on USF’s independent study policy.
- **Interlibrary Loan** – a system offered through the USF library that can get access to materials that the Tampa campus library does not have. Click [here](#) for more information on the interlibrary loan system.
- **Internship** – supervised professional training designed to provide students with experience in the work place.
- **Junior** – a student in their third year of high school or college/university.
- **Letter of Recommendation** – a letter written on behalf of a student that assesses their qualifications and skills. They are usually required for admission to a program of study or as part of the application process for a fellowship, internship, scholarship, etc.
- **LSAT** (Law School Admission Test) – a standardized test required for admission into law school. The exam measures reading comprehension, analytic reasoning, and logical reasoning skills.
- **Major** – an area of specialization, consisting of a number of courses in a discipline of study, chosen by undergraduate students. Students are usually required to choose their major before the end of their sophomore year.
- **Major Professor** – a professor that serves as an advisor and mentor for students at the graduate level. The student is typically responsible for choosing their major professor, but the preferred professor must agree to the arrangement. Click [here](#) to read more on USF’s major professor criteria and responsibilities.
- **Master's Degree** – a degree awarded after the completion of an advanced program of study at a college or university. A master’s degree program typically requires one to two years of study past the bachelor’s degree. It is awarded as a Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Science (M.S.), and Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.).
- **Matriculated** – enrolled in a program of study leading to a degree at a college or university.
- **MCAT** (Medical College Admission Test) – a standardized test required for admission into medical school. The exam measures verbal reasoning, writing skills, and physical and biological sciences knowledge.
- **Midterm Exam** – an exam given in the middle of an academic term that covers all the material studied in a particular course to that point.
- **Minor** – a secondary area of specialization chosen by undergraduate students.

- **Noncredit** – a course taken that does not apply to a degree program. Noncredit courses are taken by students who need developmental work in order to be accepted into a program of study. Noncredit courses can also be taken for one’s own professional development or interest.
- **Nonresident** – a student that does not meet a state’s requirements for residency. Colleges and universities usually have higher tuition rates for nonresident students. A nonresident student can also refer to a student that does not live on campus or in campus housing.
- **Non-traditional Student** – a student that enters a college or university a year or more after high school graduation, pursues their college education while working full time, returns after a number of years away from formal education, and/or attends college while raising a family.
- **Open Admissions** – a college or university’s non-selective policy to accept all students who have completed high school regardless of their grades and/or standardized test scores.
- **Orientation** – a college or university’s official process of welcoming new students to campus and providing them with relevant information on campus policies, financial aid, housing, dining, courses, etc.
- **Part-time Student** – a student that is enrolled in 12 credit hours or less per semester.
- **Pass/Fail** – a grading system that results in a pass or a fail and not a traditional letter grade. At USF, [this system](#) results in an S (satisfactory) or U (unsatisfactory).
- **PhD Candidate** – a student who has completed all their coursework, passed their qualifying or comprehensive exam, and is in the dissertation writing process.
- **Plagiarism** – the illegal use of another person’s words or ideas as your own without acknowledging that person through an academically accepted citation process. Many colleges and universities have strict policies and punishments for plagiarism. Click [here](#) for USF’s plagiarism policies.
- **Postdoc** (Postdoctoral scholar) – a recent PhD recipient engaged in a temporary period of mentored research, scholarly training, or teaching in order to acquire professional skills.
- **Prerequisite** – a required course that must be completed before a student is permitted to enroll in a more advanced course.
- **Probation** – a status given to students with a low GPA and unsatisfactory academic work as defined by their college or university. The probationary period requires students to improve their performance or be dismissed from school.
- **Promotion** – the process of gaining tenure and moving from assistant professor to associate professor to full professor.
- **Provost** – the chief academic officer at a college or university responsible for overseeing academic policies and curriculum-related matters.

- **Qualifying Exams** – similar to the comprehensive exam taken by students at the conclusion of a master’s program or following the completion of doctoral coursework.
- **RA (Research Assistant)** – a graduate student employed part-time to assist faculty with research.
- **Registration** – the process in which students choose and enroll in courses for an academic term.
- **Reserves** – refers to course items like textbooks and additional research material placed on reserve by a professor at the library for student use throughout the academic term.
- **SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test)** – a standardized test required for admission into a college or university and is usually taken in the junior or senior year of high school. The exam measure reading, writing, and math skills.
- **Scholarship** – a type of financial aid that consists of free money given to a student by a school, individual, organization, company, charity, or federal/state government to help pay for college tuition and expenses.
- **Section Number** – a number that is used to distinguish between multiple classes of the same course.
- **Semester** – an academic year that is divided into two equal segments of 15 to 18 weeks.
- **Seminar** – a small class focused on specialized topics discussed in depth with a professor.
- **Senior** – a student in their fourth year of study at a high school or college/university.
- **Social Security Number** – a unique nine digit number issued to people eligible to work and collect benefits in the US such as US citizens, permanent residents, and temporary (working) residents by the US government.
- **Sophomore** – a student in their second year of study at a high school or college/university.
- **Syllabus** – a document distributed to students enrolled in a course that outlines the material a course will cover, instructor expectations, assignments, due dates, instructor contact information, and relevant university policies. USF has specific [guidelines](#) for a course syllabus.
- **TA (Teaching Assistant)** – a graduate student employed part-time to assist faculty with teaching an undergraduate course.
- **Tenure** – a status earned by faculty members at a college or university after demonstrating a strong record of research, publishing, and teaching.
- **Term** – a period of study such as a semester.
- **Thesis** – a formal piece of writing on a specific topic required for a degree.

- **TOEFL** (Test of English as Foreign Language) – a standardized exam that determines English proficiency in reading, listening, speaking, and writing. The exam is required for international student admission to a US college or university.
- **Transcript** – an official record of a student’s performance at an academic institution.
- **Transfer Credit** – credit awarded toward a degree on the basis of studies completed at another college or university.
- **Tuition** – the amount of money an academic institution charges its students for attendance.
- **Undecided** – a student that has not chosen or declared their major field of study.
- **Undergraduate** – a post-secondary program leading to a bachelor’s degree. The term also refers to a student attending such a program.
- **Visa** – an official mark or stamp in a passport that allows someone to enter a country for a specified amount of time. The US government issues the following types of visas for students and scholars: F-1 (student visa) and J-1 (exchange visitor visa).
- **Work-study** – a financial aid program funded by the US government that allows students to work part-time on campus.

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