

## Dictionary of Academic Terms

The following list of words and phrases are common terms that you will hear when discussing your academic requirements with your adviser at PSU. Underlined words and phrases in the definitions can be found alphabetically in this dictionary.

- Undergraduate students who need further explanation about any of these terms should visit the Undergraduate Advising and Support Center (UASC), located in Suite 425 of Smith Memorial Student Union.
- Graduate students who need further explanation should meet with their assigned program adviser (named in your departmental acceptance letter).

**Academic Adviser** – a trained professional who helps students understand the complex requirements for earning a bachelor's degree. The UASC advisers help students with general education (University Studies or University Honors) and degree (BA/BS) requirements, while departmental advisers help students with major-specific issues.

**Academic Requirements Committee (ARC)** – This committee develops policies and judges petitions regarding academic regulations such as credit loads, transfer credit, and graduation requirements for all undergraduate degree programs. Visit the UASC for more information on the ARC.

**Arts & Letters** – departments and courses such as applied linguistics, architecture, art, art history, some black studies (see catalog), some chicano/latino studies (see catalog), conflict resolution, English/writing, foreign languages and literature, humanities, music, philosophy, communications, speech and hearing sciences, and theater arts.

**BA** – Bachelor of Arts.

**Baccalaureate degree** – the certificate conferred after one finishes all undergraduate requirements: major, general education, and degree (BA/BS).

**Banweb/Banner** – the computer system that manages all student-related information. Students have access through Banweb, which is located in the PSU Information System.

**BS** – Bachelor of Science.

**Bulletin** – also called catalog, this is the book that contains important information about PSU's degrees, programs, services, and policies. It is very important that all students become very familiar with the PSU Bulletin year that they are using for graduation.

**Capstone** – The culminating, or final, course in the undergraduate University Studies program. Capstone courses are community-based (i.e. connected with the Portland community in some way) and collaborative (i.e. students work in groups on the project).

**Catalog** – see Bulletin, above.

**Certificate** – some PSU departments grant certificates in certain fields after a prescribed number of courses have been taken and passed satisfactorily. Certificate programs do not usually require as many units as a major. A certificate program is only available upon graduation or as a post-baccalaureate student.

**Class Standing** – Freshman (0-44 credits), Sophomore (45-89 credits), Junior (90-134 credits), or Senior (135+ credits).

**Co-admission** – a program that allows qualified students to be admitted simultaneously with PSU and certain area community colleges.

**Co-curricular** – learning experiences that are not part of the academic curriculum. These include seminars, presentations, activities, clubs and organizations, etc.

**Co-requisite** – a course that one must be enrolled in along with another course. For example, each Freshman Inquiry has a Mentored Inquiry co-requisite. You must take both in the same term, and you must take a Mentored Inquiry that is connected to the Freshman Inquiry that you are taking.

**Course** – a particular class, such as Biology 251, Writing 121, Management 551 or Computer Science 581.

**Credit** – also known as unit or hour; each course carries a certain number of credits. For example, Writing 121 is worth four credits.

**DARS** – Degree Audit Reporting System. A computer system that shows students how earned credits are being applied in a program, and what credits are needed for graduation. DARS is accessed through the PSU Information System, or Banweb.

**Deadline Appeals Committee (DAC)** – a committee that judges petitions from students who want to be exempted from published deadlines for the current term. *Visit the UASC for more information on the DAC.*

**Deficiency** – courses, test scores, documents, etc. that are required before a student can graduate, be granted full admission, and so on.

**Degree** – see baccalaureate degree, master's degree, or doctoral degree.

**Degree requirements** – those courses required for the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, and Bachelor of Music degrees. In addition to these requirements, students must complete all other university requirements before they can receive their baccalaureate degrees. *Contact the UASC for more information and explanations.*

**Differentiated grade** – grades of A, B, C, D, or F.

**Dismissal** – occurs when a student has failed to maintain good academic standing after having been on academic warning and academic probation.

**Doctoral degree** – the degree conferred after a student has completed all of the courses and requirements for a Ph.D. or Ed.D. and has been approved for graduation by both their academic department and the university.

**Electives** – courses not required for any specific component of the bachelor's degree, but which count toward the total minimum number of credits for graduation.

**Freshman** – a student who has earned 0 to 44 credits.

**Freshman Inquiry** – a year-long sequential course for freshmen with fewer than 30 transfer credits. Freshman Inquiry is the first course in the University Studies program which is required of all undergraduate students at PSU.

**General education requirements** – those courses that are required of all undergraduate students regardless of academic major. At PSU, the University Studies program and the University Honors program are the general education options available.

**Good academic standing** – a student with “good standing” has met these GPA requirements: undergraduate students: cumulative PSU GPA of 2.0 or higher; and graduate students: cumulative PSU GPA of 3.0 or higher.

**GPA** – grade point average. Differentiated grades receive quality points according to the number of credits the course is worth. For example, for courses worth four credits, an A would earn sixteen quality points, a B would earn twelve, a C eight, a D two, and an F none.

**Grading option** – many courses at PSU have the option of being taken for a differentiated grade or for Pass/No Pass credit.

**Graduate student** – a student who has been admitted into a master's or doctoral program.

**Hour** – see credit, above.

**ID** – identification. A valid PSU ID is required for using most campus services and facilities. A student's ID number is assigned to the student by Portland State.

**Incomplete (I)** – a grade given when a student fails to complete all of the requirements for a course. The student and the professor must arrange for the work to be completed within one year of the end of the term in which the course was taken. I's do not affect a student's GPA.

**In-progress (IP)** – a grade indicating that a course is still in progress and will be completed at a later date.

**Junior** – a student who has earned 90 to 134 credits.

**Lower division** – courses numbered 100 through 299, often referred to as freshman and sophomore courses.

**Major** – a student's primary field of study. All PSU undergraduate students seeking a bachelor's degree must declare at least one academic major.

**Master's degree** – the degree conferred after a student has completed all of the courses and requirements for their master's program and has been approved for graduation by both their academic department and the university.

**Mentored Inquiry** – a section of a Freshman or Sophomore Inquiry class that is a co-requisite to the Inquiry.

**Minor** – a secondary field of study at the undergraduate level; it does not require as many units as a major. While all PSU students must declare a major, students are not required to declare a minor.

**Missing (M)** – a grade issued when no other grade has been reported to the Office of Admissions, Registration and Records. M grades carry no credits and do not affect a student's GPA.

**Noncredit** – a course that carries no credits. Many noncredit courses are offered through PSU's School of Extended Studies.

**Orientation** – a program for new international students. At orientation, much valuable information is presented in group format to help students become familiar with the PSU campus, its services, and various academic departments through contact with departmental academic advisers. **All new students are required to attend an orientation session prior to attending Portland State.**

**Overload** – taking more than 21 credits in a single term. Students desiring to take 22-25 credits must receive approval from an academic adviser. Students wanting to take 26 or more credits must petition the Academic Requirements Committee. *For more information and assistance, visit the UASC.*

**Pass/No Pass** – a grading option offered for some PSU courses. Pass grades result in earned credit but do not affect a student's GPA. Similarly, No Pass grades result in zero credits and do not affect a student's GPA.

**Petition** – a form that must be submitted to the appropriate committee or board for review and adjudication. For example, a student must file a petition to drop a class after the published deadline, to change a grading option after a published deadline, and to be reinstated (see reinstatement, below) at PSU after being academically dismissed. These are just a few of the situations requiring petitions.

**PIN** – Personal Identification Number. This number is required for a student to log in to the PSU Information System.

**Post-baccalaureate** – an undergraduate student who has already earned at least one bachelor's degree and is working toward another bachelor's degree is a post-baccalaureate student. Students who wish to enter a master's program but must take prerequisite courses first will often take those courses as a post-baccalaureate student.

**Pre-professional** – courses that prepare students for admission into professional graduate-level schools, such as medicine, law, and others.

**Prerequisite** (mandatory vs. recommended) – a course or courses that serve as foundations for continued (advanced) courses. Some courses at PSU have mandatory prerequisites that must be met before a student can enroll in the course. Other courses have recommended prerequisites that allow students, in consultation with their academic advisers, to make their own judgments regarding their preparedness for the course.

**Probation** – a student failing to maintain good academic standing for a certain period will be placed on academic probation. Undergraduate students should contact the UASC for more information. A graduate student should contact his/her assigned academic department program adviser for additional details.

**Program Adviser** – a faculty member assigned to advise and guide a student who has been admitted into a master's or doctoral program. The academic department in which a student has been admitted will assign each student a program adviser.

**Quarter** – an academic term of approximately ten weeks. PSU is on the quarter system, with fall, winter, spring, and summer quarters. Some U.S. colleges are on the semester system, with fall and spring semesters. One semester credit at U.S. college/university equals 1.5 quarter PSU credits.

**Registration** – the process of enrolling in courses. Most PSU students register for classes through the PSU Information System known as Banweb.

**Reinstatement** – after academic dismissal from PSU, a student must petition the Scholastic Standards Committee for reinstatement before s/he can register for further Portland State courses.

**Residency** (Oregon residency for tuition purposes vs. PSU academic residency) – this word has two meanings at Portland State. First, students with Oregon residency pay in-state tuition, while students with out-of-state residency, including all international students, pay nonresident tuition. Second, PSU has academic residency requirements. Undergraduate students must complete either 45 of their last 60 credits in residence at PSU, or a minimum of 165 of the total credits presented for a bachelor's degree (180 credit minimum for a bachelor's degree).

**Restricted registration** – some courses at PSU have registration restrictions. For example, art courses are open only to art majors; some upper-division courses are open only to students with junior or senior class standing; some upper-division business courses are open only to students who have been accepted into the School of Business Administration; graduate-level business classes are open only to students admitted to School of Business Administration masters or doctoral programs, and so on.

**Schedule of Classes** – the quarterly publication that shows which classes are being offered for that quarter, and when. The schedule is available online on the Portland State website.

**Scholastic Standards Committee (SSC)** – reviews and adjudicates undergraduate petitions on such matters as reinstatement, deadline appeals from prior terms, and so on. *Visit the UASC for more information and assistance with SSC petitions.*

**Sciences** – departments and courses including biology, chemistry, environmental studies, geology, physics, mathematics/statistics, and science education.

**Semester** – an academic term lasting approximately sixteen weeks. See quarter, above.

**Senior** – a student who has earned 135 or more credits.

**Sequential courses** – courses which must be taken consecutively, as in SPAN 101, 102, and 103. Previous courses are mandatory prerequisites for higher-numbered courses in the sequence.

**Social Sciences** – departments and courses including administration of justice, anthropology, some black studies (see catalog), some chicano/latino studies (see catalog), child and family studies, community development, economics, geography, history, international studies, political science, psychology, sociology, urban studies and planning, and women's studies.

**Sophomore** – a student who has earned 45 to 89 credits.

**Sophomore Inquiry** – a course required in the undergraduate University Studies program. Most students are required to take three Sophomore Inquiry courses. However, some transfer students are required to do only two or one, depending on the number of credits being transferred to PSU. Sophomore Inquiries last for one term. *Contact the UASC for more information.*

**Special registration form** – a document used to register for courses through the Office of Admissions, Registration, and Records when a student is not able to register for the courses online. It is often used when the instructor's or the department's approval is needed.

**Syllabus** – a document usually given by the instructor to the students on the first day of class. It contains such information as the instructor's contact information and office hours, the required textbooks/readings for the course, the course's objectives, the grading and attendance policies, and a schedule of assignments and exams, among other things.

**Term** – often used in place of the words "quarter" and "semester," as in "fall term" rather than "fall quarter."

**Transfer Evaluation** – a report of an undergraduate student's credits being transferred to PSU from another institution. The Transfer Evaluation shows which credits have been accepted and how they are being applied toward graduation requirements at Portland State.

**Transcript** – a student's academic record. An unofficial transcript can be printed by a student from his/her online student record. A student's official transcript, granted only by the university and validated with an appropriate university stamp/signature, must be in a sealed Portland State University envelope to be considered "official." All students applying for university admission to PSU must submit official transcripts, meeting these same requirements, from all other colleges and universities attended.

**Tutor/Tutoring** – a tutor is a person who helps students understand specific academic subjects. PSU offers free tutoring services in various locations. *Visit the UASC for more information.*

**UASC** – Undergraduate Advising and Support Center. The advising office for general education and degree (BA/BS) requirements, as well as academic support services and other general academic issues. Students with questions about specific major requirements should visit their major departments for advising.

**Undergraduate** – a student working on a bachelor's degree or taking undergraduate courses. Courses numbered 100 through 499 are undergraduate courses. Students working on master's or doctoral degrees are graduate students.

**Unit** – see credit, above.

**University Honors** – a general education requirements option that is designed for undergraduate students planning to continue into professional programs such as Ph.D., M.D., and J.D.

**University Studies** – a general education requirements option that involves Freshman Inquiry, Sophomore Inquiry, Upper Division Cluster, and Capstone courses.

**Upper division** – courses numbered 300 through 499 are upper division courses.

**Upper Division Cluster** – three upper division University Studies courses from the same cluster, or list connected to a Sophomore Inquiry by theme. All undergraduate students at PSU are required to do three upper division cluster courses, regardless of major, class standing, and number of transfer credits. All Upper Division Cluster course numbers are followed by the letter U (for example, PSY 311U, Human Development, is a course in the Family Studies cluster).

**Waitlist** – some courses at PSU have a waitlist option. If a class fills up during the registration period, students can put their names on the waitlist. If spaces later open up in the class, students on the waitlist will be able to register for the class on a first-come, first-served basis by attending the first day and submitting a special registration form.

**Waiver** – if an academic department determines that a student is not required to enroll in a particular course, the department may waive that specific requirement for that student. Waivers are done on a case-by-case basis. Students should contact the appropriate academic department for more information.

**Warning** – a student failing to maintain good academic standing for a certain period will be placed on academic warning. Undergraduate students should contact the UASC for more information. A graduate student should contact his/her assigned academic department program adviser for additional details.

**Withdrawal (W)** – dropping a course. If the course is dropped before a certain deadline, nothing from that course will show on the student's transcript. If the course is dropped after that deadline, but before the final deadline, a grade of W will show on the transcript. W's do not affect a student's GPA.

**X** – grade conferred when the professor determines there was no basis for a differentiated or Pass/No Pass grade. X's do not affect a student's GPA.