

General Vocabulary for Education

Types of Educational Institutions

Primary school – A school for children aged 5 to 11 years old: “She teaches at a primary school near her home.”

Secondary school – A school for children aged 11 to 16 or 18 years old: “Students usually attend secondary school after primary school.”

Public school – In British English, a private and often expensive school; in American English, a state-funded school: “He attended a prestigious public school in England.”

Private school – A school that charges fees and is not funded by the government: “Many parents prefer private schools for smaller class sizes.”

Boarding school – A school where students live during term time: “She sent her son to a boarding school in Scotland.”

University – An institution of higher education and research that awards academic degrees: “He hopes to study engineering at a top university.”

College – In British English, often refers to a place of higher education where you can get a degree; in American English, it is synonymous with “university”: “She will start college in the autumn.”

Vocational school – An institution that provides practical and work-related training: “He enrolled in a vocational school to become an electrician.”

Types of Courses and Subjects

Curriculum – The subjects comprising a course of study in a school or college: “The school has a broad curriculum that includes arts and sciences.”

Syllabus – An outline of the subjects in a course of study or teaching: “The teacher provided a syllabus for the new term.”

Elective – A course that a student can choose, not a required course: “She chose French as her elective for the semester.”

Core subject – A subject that is compulsory for all students to study: “Mathematics is a core subject in most schools.”

Extracurricular activities – Activities outside the regular academic curriculum, such as sports, music, and clubs: “Extracurricular activities are important for personal development.”

Humanities – Academic disciplines that study aspects of human society and culture, such as history, literature, and philosophy: “She decided to major in the humanities.”

STEM – An acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics: “There is a growing emphasis on STEM education.”

Major – The main field of study chosen by a university or college student: “His major is biology.”

Minor – A secondary field of study chosen by a university or college student: “She is majoring in economics with a minor in psychology.”

Academic Assessment and Progress

Assignment – A piece of work or task given to a student as part of their studies: “We have a challenging assignment to complete by next week.”

Project – A planned piece of work that is intended to achieve a particular purpose, often involving research: “The students worked together on a science project.”

Thesis – A long piece of writing on a particular subject, especially one that is done for a higher university degree: “She is writing her thesis on climate change.”

Dissertation – A lengthy, formal written work required for a PhD or other advanced degree: “His dissertation focused on medieval literature.”

Examination (Exam) – A formal test of a person’s knowledge or proficiency in a subject or skill: “The final examination is scheduled for next Monday.”

Quiz – A short test to assess students’ knowledge on a particular topic: “We had a surprise quiz in the history class today.”

Assessment – The process of evaluating a student’s progress, skills, or knowledge: “Continuous assessment is used to monitor the students’ progress.”

Grading system – A method of evaluating and recording academic performance, often using letters or numbers: “The university uses a letter-based grading system.”

Pass mark – The minimum score required to pass an exam or course: “The pass mark for the exam is 60%.”

Fail – To not pass a test or course: “He failed the exam because he did not study.”

Higher Education Terms

Undergraduate – A student pursuing a first-level degree (such as a Bachelor's degree): "She is an undergraduate studying law."

Graduate – A person who has completed a first degree: "He is a graduate of Oxford University."

Postgraduate – A student who has completed a first degree and is studying for a further degree (such as a Master's or PhD): "She is doing postgraduate studies in computer science."

Scholarship – Financial aid awarded to a student, usually based on academic or other achievements: "He received a scholarship to study abroad."

Tuition fees – The money charged for instruction at a school or university: "Tuition fees at private universities can be very high."

Bursary – A financial award given to a student based on need or merit: "She received a bursary to help with her living costs."

Fellowship – A scholarship or grant awarded to a graduate student to pursue advanced study: "He was awarded a research fellowship."

Dormitory (Dorm) – A building where university or college students live: "She moved into a dormitory on campus."

Campus – The grounds and buildings of a university or college: "The university campus is large and has beautiful gardens."

General Education Terms

Lecture – An educational talk to an audience, especially students in a university: "The professor gave an interesting lecture on quantum physics."

Seminar – A small group meeting for discussion or training: "Students are expected to participate actively in the weekly seminar."

Tutorial – A period of instruction given by a tutor, usually involving individual or small group discussions: "Each student attends a weekly tutorial with their professor."

Workshop – A practical session in which a small group discusses or practices a particular topic or skill: "The creative writing workshop was very helpful."

Peer review – An evaluation of a student's work by other students: "Peer review is an important part of the learning process."

Study abroad – To pursue education in a foreign country: “Many students choose to study abroad to experience a different culture.”

Distance learning – A way of studying where tuition is carried out over the internet or by correspondence, without attending a school or college in person: “Distance learning has become more popular during the pandemic.”

Mature student – A student who begins or returns to university after a significant period, typically over the age of 21: “Mature students bring valuable life experience to their studies.”

Placement – A period of work experience, often part of a course of study: “The nursing degree includes a six-month placement in a hospital.”