

Graduate School Dictionary

Learn the Lingo

ABD – “All But Dissertation,” or doctoral students who have completed their coursework but are still working on their dissertation.

Advisor – a thesis/dissertation advisor helps you in the thesis writing process, including choosing a topic/committee, researching, drafting, and being published.

AMCAS (American Medical College Application Service) – a system used by most U.S. medical schools in their application process to simplify and standardize applications.

Assistantships – various teaching, research, and academic positions awarded to graduate students.

Attrition – this percentage of people who complete the degree.

Candidacy – usually describes doctoral students who have passed qualifying exams or prelims, synonymous with ABD.

Capstone Paper – at UIS, graduate students in some programs have the option to take a Capstone course, and the major paper written in that course replaces the thesis option.

CLEP – College Level Examination Program; tests that can serve to fill necessary prerequisites based on prior knowledge, either for undergraduate credit or graduate admission.

Collective Bargaining – the GAs and TAs are unionized, and the Graduate Employee’s Organization (GEO) negotiates on their behalf.

Committee – the dissertation committee is a group of faculty who advises the student on their dissertation.

Comps – written and/or oral exams administered at the end of course work for graduate programs.

CV (Curriculum Vitae) – typically used to apply for graduate school entrance, college/university teaching positions and fellowships. In short, a more in depth version of a resume geared toward academic settings.

DAT (Dental Admission Test) – used for entrance in to Dental Schools.

Deposit – the thesis is not officially complete until it is “deposited” in the Graduate College Thesis Office and it meets university guidelines.

Dissertation – 100+ page research paper completed after course work for a doctorate.

Doctorate – academic degree indicating the highest level of study attainable in the US.

Dual Degree Programs – students may be able to enroll in two programs at once to earn a dual or “joint” degree. This usually takes longer to complete, and both degrees will be awarded at the same time.

DVM – Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

Expulsion – usually two “C” grades.

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) – the application for federal financial aid for undergraduate and graduate students. This is usually required for financial aid applications.

Failing Grade – usually a “C”.

Fellowship – graduate level scholarships with no expectation of service/work in return.

Full Load – nine hours (nine hours is a heavy load in graduate school!)

GA – Graduate assistant/assistantship

GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test) – used for entrance in to Business and Management Schools and Master’s of Business Administration (MBA) programs.

GPSI – Graduate Public Service Internship; a paid internship program offered to UIS graduate students.

Graduate Certificate – a postgraduate qualification or credential that is less extensive than a postgraduate degree program, but provides an adequate record of academic achievement in that area.

Grant – financial aid given based on need that is not expected to be repaid by the student.

GRE (Graduate Record Examinations) – general test for many graduate programs, consisting of the general test portion and the subject portion.

GSA – Graduate Student Association

ILSIP – Illinois Legislative Staff Internship Program; a full time paid internship offered to graduate students at UIS for 8 hours of graduate credit

JD – Juris Doctor; a professional graduate degree and a professional doctorate in law. This degree is necessary to practice law.

Leave of Absence – grad students may request a year off from their studies, which is approved on a case-by case basis. If approved, they may return to their studies after the time period has passed without penalty.

LLM – Master of Law degree. This degree is usually not necessary to practice law, and is seen as an additional degree.

LSAT (Law School Admissions Test) – used for entrance in to Law Schools.

LSDas (Law School Data Assembly Service) – a system used by nearly all ABA approved law schools in their application process to simplify and standardize applications.

MA – Master of Arts; reserved for, humanities, theology, and usually social science.

Master's Degree – a post graduate degree awarded after a 1-6 year academic program

MBA – Master of Business Administration.

MCAT (Medical College Admissions Test) – used for entrance in to Medical Schools.

MD – Medical Doctor; academic degree for medical doctors.

MFA – Master of Fine Arts.

MPA – Master of Public Administration.

MS – Master of Science; reserved for more scientific disciplines such as mathematics, natural sciences, and sometimes social sciences.

MSW – Master of Social Work.

Non-Thesis Option – taking 12+ additional hours as a substitute for a thesis.

Normative Time or Time to Degree – the “normal” amount of time it takes to complete a graduate degree program. This differs for each degree, and can range from one to six years (after a bachelor's degree) for a Master's Degree, and about ten years for a doctoral degree.

OAT (Optometry Admission Test) – used for entrance in to Optometry Programs.

PCAT (Pharmacy College Admission Test) – used for entrance in to Pharmacy Schools.

PharmCAS (Pharmacy College Application Service) - a system used by some pharmacy schools to simplify and standardize the application process.

PhD – Doctor of Philosophy; required degree for many university professors/researchers. Equivalent to a doctorate degree.

Post-Bac (Post Baccalaureate Certificate) – Program that provides recent college graduates or professionals the coursework (or studio) background they need to advance into a graduate program. The post-bac is especially important to students of Fine Art and students planning to attend medical school.

Preliminary Exams – an oral/written/combination test that evaluates the student's knowledge in their chosen field, and an oral presentation to review the feasibility and appropriateness of a student's dissertation research proposal.

Qualifying Exams – used to test a student's ability to research and study at the PhD level. This is not a campus requirement for the U of I system, but many departments require them.

RA – research assistant or resident assistant.

Reading List – materials to be read in preparation for comps.

Residency Requirement – required on-campus full-time residence at the university (usually one year).

SPEAK – Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit Tests.

TA – Teaching assistant.

Thesis – 50 – 75 page research paper completed after course work for a master's degree.

Thesis or Dissertation Committee – faculty who “guide” the development of your thesis or dissertation.

TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language.

TSE – Test of Spoken English

Grad School Related Services:

- Online Test Preparation Courses
 - GRE, GMAT, LSAT
- Resume and CV Critique Services
- Panel Mock Interviews
- Personal Statement Development
- CLEP Testing

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