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University



# *Higher Education Glossary*

Higher Education Glossary



## Explanation

### Glossary of Terms

All businesses, industries and sectors have their own jargon, acronyms and phrases, but Higher Education must be near the top of the league tables!

For most new entrants coming into Higher Education, the sheer quantity, and the frequency with which they are used on an everyday basis can be quite overwhelming. Add to this the fact that they are constantly changing and this aspect of life in HE becomes nigh impossible to master (for example, the government department responsible for HE has changed its name four times since 2007).

In this section we've collected together as many as we can find, with as accurate a definition as we can manage, and some relevant links. It won't stay up-to-date, but it's a start – good luck. **Add some more in if for yourself if you find any!**

Crtl and click on the “Quick links” below to get to letter headers:



#### A

**Access agreements** - Agreements submitted by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to Office for Fair Access (OFFA), which indicate how institutions intend to:

- support improvements in participation rates in higher education from under-represented groups
- where appropriate, increase the amount of funding available for bursaries and/or for outreach work with schools, Further Education (FE) colleges and so on.

**Access courses** - Access courses are designed to prepare students who do not have standard entry qualifications for higher education courses.

**Access to learning funds** - Government money given to universities and colleges via the UK HE funding councils to assist students in financial difficulty with their living costs. Funds may be used to provide bursaries for students who might be deterred from entering higher education. They can also be used to waive tuition fees for part-time students on benefits, or who become unemployed during their course.

**ACE** - Adult Continuing Education

**Accountability** - The process through which institutions and individuals are expected to demonstrate the fulfilment of their obligations, including the proper use of public funds.

**Accreditation** - Accreditation is the approval of a higher education course by an authorised body.

**Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)** - A general term used for the recognition of an individual's previously acquired skills and knowledge and the award of credit on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past, in order to:

- gain entry to further or higher education courses
- give exemption from certain parts of a new course of study
- qualify for an award in an appropriate subject in further or higher education.

This learning may have come about as the result of a course, self-directed study, or as the result of experience either at work or in leisure pursuits.

**ACU** - Association of Commonwealth Universities

**Acua** – Acua Solutions Limited, subsidiary of Coventry University

**AGCAS** - Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services

**AGR** - Association of Graduate Recruiters

**AHRC** - Arts and Humanities Research Council

**AHUA** - Association of Heads of University Administration

**AIRs** - Accelerated & Intensive Routes (to Higher Education) - completed HEFCE-funded initiative

**ALF** - Access to Learning Fund

**ALI** - Adult Learning Inspectorate

**AMOSSHE** - Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education

**AMS** - Annual Monitoring Statement

**The Ancient Universities** - The seven surviving British and Irish Universities, founded in the middle ages and renaissance. They are: Oxford, Cambridge, St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Dublin.

**Annual accountability returns exercise** - A streamlined accountability process between HEFCE and institutions, linked to an assessment of institutional risk, which comprises an exchange of documents and dialogue during a specific period each year.

**APEL/APL** - Accreditation (or Assessment) of Prior and Experiential Learning (or Education and Learning) – see Accreditation of Prior Learning above.

**AUA** - Association of University Administrators ([Click here](#))

**AUCF** - Average Unit of Council funding

**AUDE** - Association of University Directors of Estates

**AURIL** - Association for University Research & Industry Links

**AY** - Academic Year

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## **B**

**BA** - British Academy

**BA/BSc** - Bachelor of Arts/Science: academic degree awarded for undergraduate course generally lasting three-four years in the UK. In some exceptional cases, it may also be the name of a postgraduate degree, such as Bachelor of Civil Law, Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Philosophy, etc. From same root as French word baccalauréat, a bay or laurel wreath.

**BAAS** - British Association for the Advancement of Science

**BBSRC** - Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council

**Benchmarking** - A process through which practices are analysed to provide a standard measurement ('benchmark') of effective performance within an organisation (such as a university). Benchmarks are also used to compare performance with other organisations and other sectors.

**BIS - The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills** - Currently (2013) the government department largely responsible for Higher and Further Education policy in the UK.

**Blended learning** - A method of educating that uses e-learning techniques, such as online delivery through the web, discussion boards and e-mail, combined with traditional face to face lectures, seminars, and tutorials.

**Block grant** - The total amount of funding provided by the Council to an institution for teaching and research.

**BMA** - British Medical Association

**BME** - Black and Minority Ethnic

**Bologna Declaration, Bologna Process** - In 1999 Education ministers from around 30 countries undertook in a joint declaration (the Bologna Declaration) to establish a European area of higher education by 2010. This includes, for example, enabling students to study in other European countries, and ensuring that their qualifications and skills are transferable. The ongoing work to achieve this is the [Bologna process](#).

**BoS** – Board of Study, where Academic departments review courses, quality and general University requirements

**BPE** - Beacon for Public Engagement

**BTEC** - Business & Technology Education Council

**BTEC courses** - Vocational courses validated by [Edexcel](#).

**BUFDG** - British Universities Finance Directors Group

**BUFVC** - British Universities Film & Video Council

**Bursaries** - Bursaries (and scholarships) are financial help for students primarily from poorer backgrounds that are aimed at easing the transition into higher education and help them successfully complete their studies. Most are means-tested, but some are based on other criteria such as academic merit.

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## C

**CABE** - Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment

**CAFAS** - Council for Academic Freedom and Academic Standards

**CATE** - Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education

**CATS** - Credit Accumulation & Transfer Scheme

**CETL** - Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

**CFEE** - Co-Funded Employer Engagement

**Chancellor** - see Vice Chancellor

**CHEAD** - Council for Higher Education in Art & Design

**CHEIA** - Council of Higher Education Internal Auditors

**CHEMS** - Commonwealth Higher Education Management Service

**CHERI** - Centre for Higher Education Research and Information

**CIF** - Capital Investment Framework

**CIHE** - Council for Industry and Higher Education

**CKE** - Centre for Knowledge Exchange

**COI** - Central Office of Information

**Collaborative arrangements** - A general term for arrangements between two or more institutions (universities, higher education colleges or further education colleges) for joint activity.

**Compacts** - Relationships between HEIs and schools to encourage pupils to study at the HEI.

**Continuing education (CE)** - Continuing education students are on courses normally lasting less than one year; they are usually part-time. Continuing education can be award-bearing or non-award bearing and vocational or non-vocational.

**Continuing professional development (CPD)** - A range of short and long training programmes, some of which have an option of accreditation, which foster the development of employment- related knowledge, skills and understanding.

**Core funding** - HEFCE funds provided to an institution for teaching, research and related activities. Core funding is allocated by formula. Institutions can spend it according to their own priorities, within HEFCE's broad guidelines.

**Coventry University Committees** – List of Coventry University Committees available at: <https://staff.coventry.ac.uk/ps/Registry/geu/Pages/Committees.aspx>

**CPD** - Continuing professional development

**Credit accumulation and transfer schemes (CATS)** - System used by many universities in the UK to monitor, record and reward passage through a modular degree course and to facilitate movement between courses and institutions. E.g.: a completed university course of 10 to 20 2-hour sessions would be worth between 10 and 20 CATS points, at one of Levels 1 to 3. 360 points need to be accumulated (240 points at level 2 or above and 120 points at level 3) to qualify for an honours degree; a foundation degree is broadly equivalent to 240 points, and a 'pass/ordinary degree' to 300 points. A postgraduate Master's degree is equivalent to 180 points at Level M.

**CUBO** - Conference of University Business Officers

**CUC** - Committee of University Chairs

**CURL** - Consortium of Research Libraries

**CVU** - Council of Validating Universities

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## D

**DAPs** - Degree-awarding powers

**DCMS** - Department of Culture, Media and Sport

**DDA** - Disability Discrimination Act

**DEFRA** - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

**Degree course** - A course of higher education leading to the award of a foundation, bachelor's or master's degree.

**DEL, DELNI** - Department of Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland; the department of government responsible for higher education in Northern Ireland.

**DELLS** - Department for Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills (in Wales)

**Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)** - Formerly the department of UK government with ultimate responsibility for education and children's services. It was renamed the Department for Education in May 2010.

**Department for Education (DfE)** - The department of UK government with ultimate responsibility for education and children's services. Formerly the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

**Department for Education and Skills, DfES (now BIS and DfE)** - Formerly the department of UK government with ultimate responsibility for all sectors of education. It was split into the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills in July 2007.

**Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (now BIS)** - Between July 2007 and June 2009 the department of UK government with ultimate responsibility for higher education in England. Before 2007 it was part of the Department for Education and Skills and in June 2009 it merged with the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform to form BIS.

**Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)** - The department of UK government with ultimate responsibility for higher education in England. It was formed in June 2009 from the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

**Diploma** - A qualification awarded for a course of higher education.

**Distance learning** - Instruction provided at a distance to students who do not normally attend lectures and tutorials at the institution. It can involve learning through TV, radio, correspondence, computer network, CD-ROM and video.

**Diversity** - A broad term to describe the range of visible and invisible differences between people and institutions. It can mean the varieties of learners with different backgrounds, requiring varied methods of entry to courses and of instruction. It is also used to describe the variety of provision available in the higher education sector and the different types of institution which deliver it.

**DLHE** - Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education. Statistics gathered from students on their status after leaving University. They count as positive if they are employed in a graduate level job or in postgraduate level study.

**DPhil (and PhD)** - **DPhil** is the abbreviation Oxford (and some other universities, mainly commonwealth) uses for "Doctor of Philosophy". **PhD** is the more common abbreviation, used by Cambridge, for instance, and most US universities.

A **doctorate** is an academic or professional degree that in most countries qualifies the holder to teach in a specific field. All UK doctorates are research based in that their main (and in

many cases only) component is the submission of a thesis or portfolio of original research, examined by an expert panel appointed by the university.

The UK has relatively recently introduced 'vocational doctorates' such as **EngD, EdD, DSocSci, DCrimJ and DClinPsych**, which still require the submission of a body of original research of a similar length to a PhD thesis, but might be in the form of a portfolio of technical reports on different research projects as opposed to a single, lengthy thesis. Another important difference is that the candidate may work full-time for an industrial sponsor and is jointly supervised by university faculty members and company employees.

**DRC** - Disability Rights Commission

**DSA** - Disabled Students' Allowance

**DTI** - Department of Trade & Industry (now BIS)

**Dual-support system** - The system of funding research, partly by HEFCE and partly by the Research Councils.

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## E

**EAUC** - Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges

**EAZ** - Education Action Zone

**EC** - European Community

**ECU** - Equality Challenge Unit

**Edexcel** - Edexcel is a UK examining and awarding body. It provides a wide range of qualifications including at higher education level.

**EEA** - European Economic Area (all EU member states plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein)

**EIA** - An **Environmental Impact Assessment** is an assessment of the potential positive or negative impact that a proposed project may have on the environment, together consisting of the environmental, social and economic aspects. The purpose of the assessment is to ensure that decision makers consider the ensuing environmental impacts when deciding whether to proceed with a project.

**EUA** - **The European University Association** represents and supports higher education institutions in 47 countries, and is the official representative of the university sector in the **Bologna process**. As such, it participates in numerous working groups or consultative bodies within that framework, represents universities' views and advises the European Commission in multiple research policy fora as well as working closely with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organisation (UNESCO).

It cooperates with other European and national organisations in higher education, and research is an important component of EUA's work in order to develop common positions and



effectively impact on future policies. EUA's scope also includes an international strategy aimed at fostering cooperation with representative organisations in other parts of the world, working on common issues and raising awareness on the reform of the European higher education system.

**EiC** - Excellence in Cities

**E-learning** - The delivery of content via electronic media, such as the internet, video, interactive TV and CD-ROM. E-learning encompasses all learning undertaken, whether formal or informal, through electronic delivery

**ELQ** - Equivalent or lower qualification

**Employability skills** - The transferable core skills that represent functional and enabling knowledge, skills, and attitudes required in today's workplace. They are necessary for career success at all levels of employment and for all levels of education.

**EPSRC** - Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council.

**EQUALL** - Equal Opportunities, Access and Lifelong Learning (a HEFCE committee)

**Equal opportunities** - The process of ensuring that everyone is entitled to freedom from discrimination. Areas specifically covered by the law currently are gender, race, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief. Age discrimination will be unlawful from 2006.

**ERASMUS** - A scheme in which students can spend time abroad as part of their study at a UK higher education institution

**ERDF** - European Regional Development Fund

**ESECT** - Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team

**ESF** - European Social Fund

**Estate Management Statistics** - Estate Management Statistics is a service collecting data on estates performance from UK higher education institutions. It produces a CD-ROM annually containing tools and time-series data for HEIs to analyse.

**Exempt charity** - Exempt charities are those charities exempt from registration with the Charity Commission. Most HEIs that HEFCE funds are exempt charities; HEFCE became their principal regulator on 1 June 2010.

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## F

**FACE** - Forum for Access and Continuing Education

**FD** - Foundation degree

**FDTL** - Fund for the Development of Teaching & Learning

**FE - Further education** is a term mainly used in connection with education in the United Kingdom and Ireland. It is post-compulsory education (in addition to that received at secondary school), that is distinct from the education offered in universities (Higher Education). It may be at any level above compulsory education, from basic training to Higher National Diploma or Foundation Degree. FE in the United Kingdom includes education for people over 16, usually excluding universities.

It is primarily taught in FE colleges, work-based learning, and adult and community learning institutions. This includes post-16 courses similar to those taught at schools and sub-degree courses similar to those taught at higher education (HE) colleges (which also teach degree-level courses) and at some universities.

Just to confuse things even more, in February 2012, the government announced that more FE colleges were to be able to offer degrees, and that direct funding would be released by HEFCE to 60+ colleges.

**FEC** - Further education college

**Fees** - See Tuition fees

**FEES** - Further Education Early Student Statistics

**Financial memorandum** - The financial memorandum is an agreement between HEFCE and the institutions it funds that sets out the terms and conditions for payment of HEFCE grants.

**FOI** - Freedom of Information Act

**Foundation course** - A recognised HE course designed to prepare students who have qualifications which are acceptable for entry in general, but are not appropriate to a specific course of study. Foundation courses are also used as Year 0 of a degree course to enable students with non-traditional qualifications to participate in HE by using Year 0 as a preparatory year for a full degree programme.

**Foundation degree** - Foundation degrees are two-year higher education qualifications that were first offered in 2001-02. They are designed to meet skills shortages at the higher technician and associate professional levels. Foundation degrees are one level below the honours degree.

**FPE: Full-person equivalent** - In order to accurately measure HE provision where students are taught at more than one institution or are studying more than one subject, we split head-counts across the institutions/subjects involved in proportion to the activity in each – this results in counts of full-person equivalents. This gives a more accurate measure than direct head-counts, where the student would have to be arbitrarily assigned to one of the teaching institutions and/or one of the subjects.

**Franchise** - The agreement by one institution (usually an HEI) that another institution may deliver all or part of a programme approved and owned by the first institution. The franchising institution normally retains overall control of the programme's content, delivery, assessment and quality assurance arrangements.

**FTE : Full-time equivalent** - For comparison and funding purposes, numbers of part-time students and staff are converted to full-time equivalents. This is because a direct head-count is often a poor indication of the actual volume of activity.

**Full economic cost** - The full economic cost of an activity incorporates all direct and indirect costs, including all cost adjustments required under the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) methodology.

**Funding agreement** - See Financial memorandum

**Funding council** - The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) comprise the funding councils for higher education in the UK. There is no funding council for Northern Ireland, where HEIs are funded directly by the Department of Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland (DELNI).

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## G

**Governing body** - The university court (in Scotland), council, board of governors or other body ultimately responsible for the affairs of a higher education institution. This will contain a large number of 'lay members' who are not from within the higher education sector and give their time voluntarily.

**Graduate** - Someone who has attained a bachelor's or higher degree.

**Grant letter** - The Secretary of State sends an annual grant letter to HEFCE that sets out the Government's resources and priorities for higher education.

**GuildHE** - One of the two representative bodies for higher education in the UK. ([Click here for more information](#))

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## H

**HAY** - [Hay](#) (with HERA) are the main providers of job evaluation within HE. Both offer a methodology to enable organisations to map out their job roles in the context of the organisation.

**HEA** - [Higher Education Academy](#)

**HEFCE** - [Higher Education Funding Council](#) for England: HEFCE distributes public money for higher education to universities and colleges in England, and ensures that this money is used to deliver the greatest benefit to students and the wider public.

**HEFCW** - Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

**HEI** - Higher education institution (university or college of higher education).

**HERA - Higher Education Role Analysis:** HERA (with Hay) is the main job evaluation scheme within HE. Both offer a methodology to enable organisations to map out their job roles in the context of the organisation

**HESA - Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)** is the official agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative information about higher education. It was set up by agreement between the relevant government departments, the higher education funding councils and the universities and colleges in 1993, following the White Paper “Higher Education: a new framework”, which called for more coherence in HE statistics, and the 1992 Higher and Further Education Acts, which established an integrated higher education system throughout the United Kingdom.

**HEIFES** - The Higher Education in Further Education: Students Survey is HEFCE's main annual survey of students on recognised higher education courses at further education colleges. It informs HEFCE's funding for teaching.

**Higher degree** - Degree above bachelor's level such as master's degree or doctorate.

**Higher education** - Higher education courses are programmes leading to qualifications, or credits which can be counted towards qualifications, which are above the standard of GCE A-levels or other Level 3 qualifications. They include degree courses, postgraduate courses and Higher National Diplomas. Higher education takes place in universities and higher education colleges, and in some further education colleges.

**Higher Education Academy** - [The Higher Education Academy](#) works to help universities, colleges and others to deliver the best possible learning experience for all students. The academy was formed in 2004 from a merger of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN), and the TQEF National Co-ordination Team.

**Higher education colleges** - HE colleges are divided into specialist colleges dealing mainly with one subject area, such as music, art and design or teacher training; and more general colleges offering a range of courses, particularly in business, humanities and education.

**Higher education institution** - A higher education institution is a university or higher education college.

**HNC, HND** - Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma.

**Home students** - These are students normally resident in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. They do not include students living in the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

**Honours degree** - A bachelor's degree with honours covering greater depth than a general or ordinary BA or BSc degree.

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## I

**ICT** - Information and communication technologies. The broad subject concerned with all aspects of managing and processing information electronically, on databases or in libraries.

**Initial teacher training (ITT)** - A course that leads to a qualification as a teacher. ITT is funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools.

**Institutions** - A general term for education institutions, which may include universities, higher education colleges and further education colleges.

**Island students** - Students from the Isle of Man or Channel Islands.

**Intellectual property rights (IPR)** - Intellectual property rights protect the creator's right to be appropriately acknowledged for their work, such as an invention or a manuscript. IPR gives the creator a means of controlling how their protected work is exploited, thereby ensuring that they are properly rewarded for their creative endeavours. Includes patents, registered trademarks and copyright.

**ITT** - Initial Teacher Training

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## J

**JANET** - High-speed computer network for the academic community.

**JCPSPG** - Joint Costing and Pricing Steering Group

**JIF** - Joint Infrastructure Fund

**JISC** - Joint Information Systems Committee (of the UK higher education funding bodies)

**Jiscmail** - An e-mail list service to facilitate discussion, collaboration and communication within the UK academic community. For more information, [click here](#).

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## K

**Knowledge transfer** - Knowledge transfer is the process by which HEIs' knowledge, expertise and intellectually linked assets are constructively applied beyond HE for the wider benefit of the economy and society, through two-way engagement with business, the public sector, cultural and community partners.

**KPT** - Key performance target (refers to HEFCE corporate plan)

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## L

**LAN** - Local area network - a computer network linking parts of an institution.

**Leadership Foundation (LFHE)** - [The Leadership Foundation](#) provides a dedicated service of support and advice on leadership, governance and management for all the UK's higher education institutions.

**Level** - Level of study refers to undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG).

**LGM** - Leadership, governance and management

**Lifelong learning** - Defined by the Government as all post-16 learning, but applying specifically to learning by adults who are already in the workplace and need special part-time provision, or to learning that adults may wish to undertake to enrich their lives.

**Lifelong Learning Networks** - A new HEFCE initiative to improve progression into and through higher education, which will involve a wide range of organisations at a national, regional and local level.

**LSC** - Until 2010, the Learning and Skills Council was responsible for funding and planning education and training for over 16-year-olds in England. It has been succeeded by the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency.

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## M

**MaSN** - Maximum student number

**Masters degree (MA/MSc/MPhil/MEd)** - MA/MSc degrees are awarded to graduates who have undertaken a further course of study, after an honours degree, either full-time or part-time. Masters degrees may be taken following a period of work experience and some courses take the form of company training programmes. MPhil degrees may be awarded following a period of research rather than a course of study.

**Million+** - The [Million+ group](#) (formerly known as the Campaign for Mainstream Universities (CMU)) is a university think-tank, funded by contributions from its members, currently 22 UK universities incorporating post-1992 and university colleges. Many have long histories as colleges and polytechnics.

**Mode** - Mode of study refers to full-time, part-time or sandwich.

**Modern Universities** - See Post-1992 Universities

**Modular degree/modularisation** - A programme of study in which a student chooses a number of short courses or modules, the satisfactory completion of which leads to a degree.

**Moodle** - Open Source Course Management System (CMS), also known as a Learning Management System (LMS) or a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). It has become very popular in Higher Education around the world as a tool for creating online dynamic web sites for staff and students. To work, it needs to be installed on a web server somewhere, either on one of your own computers or at a web hosting company. For more information go to [Moodle.org](http://Moodle.org)

**MOOC** - A Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is an online course aiming at large-scale participation and open access via the web. MOOCs are a recent development in distance education and often use open educational resources. Typically they do not offer academic credit or charge tuition fees, and it's estimated that only about 10% of the tens of thousands of students who sign up complete the course. They might be seen as formalising and exploiting the reality of the internet: so much information is available free online that systematising it enables institutions such as Universities to use for a number of reasons: for example, marketing, recruitment or managing alumni.

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## N

**New Universities** - See Post-1992 Universities

**Non-continuation or 'drop-out' rates** - The proportion of students who do not complete their course, for a variety of reasons, including financial difficulties.

**Northern Ireland** - Higher education in Northern Ireland is offered mainly through NI's six universities - higher education institutions, including the Open University in NI, and a number of further education colleges. HE is a 'devolved' area, which means that most decisions that are made about HE in Northern Ireland are taken by the Northern Irish Assembly. However, unlike Scotland, funding arrangements are less differentiated from those in England, and are served by Department of Employment and Learning. For more details, please [click here](#)

**NSS: National Student Survey** - A national online survey carried out annually at most Higher and Further Education institutions across the UK. It provides students with the opportunity to give opinions on their total experience during their period in higher and further education. Student feedback is used to compile year on year comparative data and contribute significantly to the annual 'League Tables'. Results are publicly available to prospective students and advisors to help make informed choices of where and what to study and data from previous surveys are currently available on [Unistats](#)  
From September 2012, the results have been publicly available through 'Key Information Sets' (KIS), available on the web-sites of universities and colleges, on a new official web-site and on the redeveloped UCAS course search tool (Course Finder). Universities, students' unions or colleges use results internally to facilitate best practice and enhance the student learning experience.

**NUS: National Union of Students** - The organisation representing students in further and higher education in the UK. Please see link on this site.

**NUSSL: NUS Services Limited** - NUS Services Limited, owned by Students' Unions and the NUS, uses collective purchasing power to provide core commercial services for member unions.

**NVQ** - National Vocational Qualification

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## O

**Office for Fair Access (OFFA)** - [OFFA](#) is a non departmental public body set up in 2004 to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for under-represented groups, in light of the introduction of variable tuition fees.

**Office of Science and Technology (OST)** - The Office of Science and Technology is the department of UK government with responsibility for science, engineering and technology and their uses to benefit society and the economy.

**OFSTED: The Office for Standards in Education** - Aims to improve standards of achievement and quality of education through regular independent inspection, public reporting and informed advice. [Ofsted](#) is responsible for assessing the quality of initial teacher training.

**Operating Framework in Higher Education** - Under [plans announced in July 2013](#) by the Minister for Universities and Science, HEFCE is asked to take on a regulatory oversight and coordination role and is leading work on a number of strands of the new framework, will have responsibility for the process of approving designation of HEFCE-funded universities and colleges, and for providing assurance that the agreed terms and conditions are met.

**The Open University** - The Open University is Britain's 'open access' distance learning University (est. 1968), the first truly successful of its type in the world and recognised as a global leader in modern distance learning. The OU is the largest academic institution in the UK, in terms of student numbers, with more than 240,000 students.

**Ordinary degree** - A bachelor's degree awarded without honours (see honours degree above).

**Overseas students** - Overseas students are defined as students from outside the European Community.

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## P

**Performance indicators** - A set of indicators produced by HESA which measure the performance of higher education institutions in the UK in a number of areas.



**Phd (and Dphil) - DPhil** is the abbreviation Oxford (and some other universities, mainly commonwealth) uses for "Doctor Of Philosophy". **PhD** is the more common abbreviation, used by Cambridge, for instance, and most US universities.

**Note** - significant difference between a US PhD and UK DPhil or PhD in UK. The former usually involves a lot more course work (and takes at least 5 years), as programme can be entered with a bachelor's degree, whereas in the UK normal qualification is a master's degree and DPhil or PhD will typically take you 4 years to complete.

**Plate Glass Universities OR Robbins Expansion Universities** - The twenty universities founded in the United Kingdom in the 1960s in the era of the Robbins Report on Higher Education.

**Postgraduate student** - A student on a course which normally requires a first degree as a condition of entry.

**Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)** - A course, normally of one year duration, for people with a degree (or equivalent qualifications) to train to be teachers.

**Post-1992 universities** - Higher education institutions which acquired university status as a result of the provisions of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

**Pre-1992 universities** - Higher education institutions which had university status before the provisions of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 came into force; and the two Northern Ireland universities.

**Price groups** - Some subjects cost more to teach than others: some need laboratories and workshops while others are taught wholly in lecture theatres and seminar rooms. This is reflected in HEFCE's funding method for teaching, in which subjects are classified in four groups, A-D, according to how much they cost to teach.

**Principal regulator** - Principal regulators have the duty, as far as they reasonably can, to promote compliance with charity law by the exempt charities for which they are responsible. On 1 June 2010 HEFCE became principal regulator of most English HEIs.

**Public benefit** - All charities must deliver their charitable purposes 'for the public benefit'. The Charity Commission promotes understanding of public benefit generally, and HEFCE has published supplementary guidance for HEIs.

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## Q

**Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)** - The [QAA](#) provides a quality assurance service for higher education institutions throughout the UK.

**QuILT** - The Quality in Learning and Teaching Committee at Coventry University, which is responsible to the Academic Board for keeping under review and enhancing, in co-operation with Faculty Boards, the standards and quality of the academic work of the University. QuILT presents reports and recommendations to the Academic Board on policy issues and other matters significantly affecting the student experience and the enhancement of teaching.

**QR funding** - Quality-related research funding. It is allocated according to research quality (as judged by expert review in the periodic Research Assessment Exercise), and the amount of research carried out.

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## R

**RAE: Research Assessment Exercise** - The primary purpose of the RAE was to produce quality profiles for each submission of research activity made by institutions. It has been replaced by the REF (see below).

**Redbrick Universities** - The term refers to six universities based in the UK's great industrial cities established before WW1.

**REF: Research Excellence Framework** - The [Research Excellence Framework \(REF\)](#) is the new system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions (HEIs). It replaces the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and will be completed in 2014. It will be undertaken by the four UK higher education funding bodies and be managed by the REF team based at HEFCE and overseen by the REF Steering Group, consisting of representatives of the four funding bodies. Its primary purpose is to produce assessment outcomes for each submission made by institutions in order to :

- inform the selective allocation of their research funding to HEIs, with effect from 2015-16.
- provide accountability for public investment in research and evidence of the benefits of this investment.
- provide benchmarking information and establish reputational yardsticks.

**Registered charity** - All charities with income above £5,000 must register with and are subject to the powers of the Charity Commission unless they have been classed as exempt charities. A small number of HEFCE-funded HEIs are registered charities.

**Related body** - A non-HEI/FEC body through which significant levels of HEFCE funding are distributed or activities promoted.

**Research Councils** - There are seven subject-specific [Research Councils](#). They are funded by the Government to support research in their own establishments and to fund research projects in universities.

**Robbins Expansion Universities** - See Plate Glass Universities.

**The Robbins Report** - [The Robbins Report](#) of 1962 (the report of the Committee on Higher Education, chaired by Lord Lionel Robbins) recommended substantial expansion in higher education. Its principles and recommendations formed the basis for the development of the university sector for subsequent years. The report anticipated that by 1980 most higher education would be provided by universities or teacher training institutions.

**Roberts Review** - Report commissioned from Sir Gareth Gwyn Roberts in June 2002 by the four funding bodies for UK higher education to review the future of research assessment in the UK. Many of Roberts' recommendations were implemented for the 2008 RAE, the first review following the completion of the consultation exercise.

**The Russell Group** - [The Russell Group](#), named after the Russell Hotel in which member universities first met, is an association of 24 British research intensive universities with a major role in public research. It was established in 1994 following the post-1992 expansion to represent its members' interests, principally to government and parliament. Nineteen smaller British research universities formed the 1994 Group in that year.

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## S

**SAB/PAB** – Subject Assessment Board / Programme Assessment Board, where student marks are ratified for progression and award.

**Sandwich course** - A course of study which includes periods of practical work in organisations outside the university or college.

**Scholarships** - See Bursaries

**Scotland** - Because of the largely devolved Scottish Parliament there are a number of major differences in HE policy between Scotland and other parts of the UK, including – but by no means exclusively – funding. Scotland has 19 autonomous higher education institutions (HEI) including 14 campus based universities, one distance-learning university, an educational partnership institution based in the Highlands and Islands, one art school, a conservatoire and an agricultural college. All are funded by the Scottish Government via the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), which is responsible for distributing funding. For further details, see the [Scottish Government](#) website

**Sector Skills Councils** - [Sector Skills Councils](#) are independent organisations developed by employers in industry. They are employer-led and involve trade unions and professional bodies. SSCs were set up by Government to tackle the skills and productivity needs of their sector throughout the UK.

**SEDA: Staff and Educational Development Association** - [SEDA](#) is the professional association for staff and educational developers in the UK, promoting innovation and good practice in higher education.

**Semester** - A study period of up to 16 weeks, often with the last two weeks used as an assessment period.

**SFC** - Scottish Funding Council

**Single conversation** - A streamlined accountability process between HEFCE and institutions, linked to an assessment of institutional risk, which comprises an exchange of documents and dialogue during a specific period each year. This began in 2007, and in 2009 was renamed to 'the annual accountability returns exercise'.

**Skills Funding Agency** - The government agency responsible for funding and regulating adult further education and skills training in England.

**Special funding, Special initiative** - HEFCE funds that are provided for a fixed period and a specified purpose, unlike the Block grant. They may be distributed by formula or in response to competitive bids.

**Specialist institution** - A higher education institution that has 60 per cent or more of its courses in one or two subjects only, such as music or art colleges.

**Student Loans Company** - The [Student Loans Company \(SLC\)](#) is a not-for-profit organisation founded for the 1990/91 academic year to provide students with additional help towards living costs in the form of low-interest loans. It awards loans and non-repayable grants for living costs and studying expenses and provides loans to meet the costs of tuition fees, paid directly to universities and colleges on behalf of students. It also collects loan repayments. It currently has 1.3 million student customers and 2.8 million customers no longer in higher education.

**SPARQS: Student Participation in Quality Scotland** - A service funded by the Scottish Funding Council to assist and support students, students' associations and institutions to improve the effectiveness and engagement in quality assurance and enhancement in institutions across Scotland. For more information [click here](#)

**Student support** - Financial help available from the Government to students in higher education.

**SuperJANET** - The advanced fibre optic computer network linking universities and colleges in the UK. A development of JANET - the joint academic network.

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## T

**TDA** - Training and Development Agency for Schools

**THE: Times Higher Education (Supplement)** - [The Times Higher Education \(THE\)](#), formerly the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES), is a weekly magazine based in London reporting specifically on news and other issues related to higher education. It is the United Kingdom's leading higher education news publication.

In addition to its journalistic publication, it publishes the annual Times Higher Education–World University Rankings, and makes two sets of annual awards: the 'Times Higher Education Awards' across 18 categories including 'University of the Year', and the 'Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Awards' (Thelmas) were launched in 2009. The Thelmas were set up to recognise the impact that administrative staff have on the success of higher education institutions.

**TRAC(T)** - TRAC for teaching (a national framework for costing teaching, based on TRAC principles)- see below.

**Transparency** - Making an institution's processes visible and comprehensible to interested parties outside that institution, such as external examiners, quality control committees and the general public.

**Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC)** - A uniform approach to the costing of activities undertaken by all UK HEIs since 2002.

**Tuition fees** - **Tuition fees** were first introduced across the entire United Kingdom in September 1998 as a means of funding tuition to undergraduate and postgraduate certificate students at universities, with students being required to pay up to £1,000 a year for tuition. However, as a result of the devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, different arrangements now exist in each of the countries of the United Kingdom.

**In England**, in January 2004 the UK government increased the level of tuition fees that universities were allowed to charge to £3,000 a year. By 2010/11, maximum fees had increased to £3,290. In 2009, further demands by some universities for more funding resulted in the commissioning of a report from the former chairman of BP John Browne to examine the future of higher education funding, and in October 2010 the Browne Review was published containing proposals to remove the cap on tuition fees. The resulting debate sparked strong protests from students opposed to any rise in tuition fees, but despite this the government won a House of Commons vote resulting in universities eventually being able to charge students up to £9,000 a year for the annual tuition costs of students, and from 2012, sixty four universities proceeded to charge the full £9,000.

**Scotland:** following devolution, tuition fees were first abolished and replaced with a charge after graduation - the graduate endowment. This too was later abolished so that all students domiciled and studying at Scottish universities do not have to pay any fees towards their tuition costs.

**Wales:** because of the Welsh Assembly's limited powers in comparison with Scotland, it retains the caps imposed on the level of tuition as established by the UK government. However, whereas the UK government chose to replace means-tested maintenance grants with a student loan scheme, the Welsh Assembly re-introduced these for Welsh students either studying in Wales or anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

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## U

**UCAS** - The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is the British admission service for students applying to university and college. UCAS is primarily funded by students who pay a fee when they apply and a capitation fee from universities for each student they accept.

All those wishing to study for undergraduate degrees in the UK, whether home or international student, must apply through a single application via UCAS's website with a list of up to five courses, not listed in preference order, submitted confidentially to universities. Applications must be completed by the middle of the January of the year that the student wishes to start university, and students would usually expect to receive either offers or rejections from all five choices by no later than mid-May.

If candidates applied to five choices and find themselves without any offers or have declined all of their offers, they may apply for an additional course that still has sufficient places through the process of UCAS Extra, running from mid-February until the end of June. Otherwise, they would go through the UCAS Clearing process at the very end of the admissions season, when courses are about to begin. From July until late September, the Clearing process helps applicants without places to find institutions with courses that still have places available. (Once UCAS's clearing operation is complete, institutions with available places do advertise publicly, and some students find places by direct application at that stage.) This is usually a particularly frantic time in any university, particularly for Admissions.

**UCEA: Universities and Colleges Employers Association** - [The Universities and Colleges Employers Association \(UCEA\)](#) - provides members with timely advice and guidance on employment matters pivotal to the higher education sector

**UCU: Universities and College Union** - [UCU](#) is the largest trade union and professional association for academics, lecturers, trainers, researchers and academic-related staff working in further and higher education throughout the UK.

**UKBA: United Kingdom Borders Agency** - The government agency supervising entry and temporary and permanent immigration into the UK. Of particular interest to universities as, following a number of notorious cases, the validity of the visas of international or transnational students studying here are subject to scrutiny, and these students provide significant income to universities. [Click here](#) for more information. From 1 April 2013 the UK Border Agency was split into 2 separate units within the Home Office: an immigration and visa service and an immigration law enforcement division.

**UKCISA: UK Council for International Student Affairs** - An organisation promoting and protecting the needs of international students studying in the UK and HE staff supporting them. [Click here](#) for more information

**ULT** – Coventry's University Leadership Team

**Undergraduate** - Student working towards a first degree, foundation degree, higher education certificate or diploma or equivalent.

**Under-represented groups** - Groups that have participation rates significantly below the national average for the cohort under consideration. Examples of such groups may be:

- people from low-income backgrounds
- people from lower socio-economic groups
- people from low participation neighbourhoods
- certain minority ethnic groups
- disabled people.

**UNISON/UNITE** - UNISON is the largest union in general education in the UK, representing 350,000 education staff, and members include librarians, registrars, people working in personnel, IT and finance departments, teaching assistants, technicians, early years (nursery) staff, policy advisors, administrators, secretaries, cleaners, caretakers, school meals workers, craft workers, porters working in schools, children's services, colleges and universities. UNITE members work largely within HE and FE as research, technical, IT, administrative, estates, support and maintenance staff.

**University Alliance** - [University Alliance](#) is a group of 23 business-engaged universities in the United Kingdom. Members focus on combining science and technological research for the benefit and development of professions, businesses and communities, as well as supporting academic learning and providing a quality student experience. University Alliance was formed in 2006, adopting the name in 2007.

**Universities** - Universities are diverse, ranging in size, mission and history. The Secretary of State has the power to grant university status to an institution. Former polytechnics were given the status of universities under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. These are sometimes called 'new' universities or post-1992 universities. The pre-1992 or 'old' universities include many founded in the 1950s and 1960s, the civic universities established in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which date from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

**Universities Scotland** - An umbrella group representing the views and interests of the vice-chancellors and principals of universities and other higher education bodies in Scotland. [Universities Scotland](#) was formed in 1992 as the **Committee of Scottish Higher Education**

**Principals** (COSHEP) adopting its current name in 2000, when [Universities UK](#) was also formed.

**Universities UK** - An umbrella group representing the views and interests of the vice-chancellors and principals of universities and other higher education bodies in the UK. For more information [click here](#)

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## V

**Validation** - The process by which a course is judged to have met the requirements for an award by the relevant degree-awarding body, or the relevant examining body, or by an accredited institution on behalf of that degree-awarding body.

**VCG** – Vice Chancellors Group (see in main sections)

**VC - Vice-Chancellor.** In most UK and Commonwealth (or former Commonwealth) nations, the Vice-Chancellor (VC) is the chief executive of a university (he or she may also carry a title such as "President & Vice-Chancellor"). A Chancellor is a leader of a college or university, usually either the executive or ceremonial head of the university or of a university campus; again, in the UK the Chancellor is usually a titular (ceremonial figurehead) non-resident head of the university. In such institutions, the Chancellor may serve as chairman of the governing body (the council or board of governors); if not, this duty is often held by a chairman who may be known as a Pro-Chancellor.

In many countries, the administrative and educational head of the university is known as the President, Principal or Rector. In United States, the head of a university is most commonly a University President. In U.S. university systems that have more than one affiliated university or campus, the executive head of a specific campus may have the title of Chancellor and report to the overall system's President, or vice versa.

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## W

**Wales** - Higher education in Wales is offered mainly through Wales's 11 universities - higher education institutions - including the Open University in Wales and a number of further education colleges. HE is a 'devolved' area, which means that most decisions that are made about HE in Wales are taken by the Welsh Assembly. However, unlike Scotland, funding arrangements are less differentiated from those in England, and are served by [HEFCW](#) (Higher Education Funding Council of Wales). For more details, please click on the link:

**Widening access, widening participation** - This is when a funding council, institution or other organisation implements policies and engages in activities designed to ensure that all those with the potential to benefit from higher education have the opportunity to do so whatever their background and whenever they need it.

**Work-based learning** - Learning delivered by a university, college or other training provider in the workplace, normally under the supervision of a person from the same company as well as a professional teacher from outside the company.

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