

What do we mean by.....demystifying higher education terminology – listed alphabetically

Accredited: some courses provided by employers or private training providers are accredited by a university. This means that the university has looked at the course and valued its worth in terms of credit (amount and level, see definition of credit). It is then possible to put this course towards a larger qualification. Some professional institutes also accredit courses. In these cases, when you complete the course you may also gain a professional qualification or status.

APL/APEL: Accreditation of Prior Learning/Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning. These indicate a process of using previous qualifications (APL) or experiences (APEL) at work to either gain a place on a course or to get some remission from a course. If you can demonstrate that you have already covered some of a course you may not have to do that bit.

Conditional/Unconditional Offer: universities and colleges offer places to some of the students who have applied. If the offer is made before a student has passed the exams for the course they are currently on, then the offer is conditional upon the student passing that course and may stipulate grades which must be achieved. If the offer of a place is made when a student knows their results, that offer will be unconditional.

CPD: Continuing Professional Development is the ongoing learning you do at work as part of developing your role. This may be a mixture of university/college courses, courses provided by your employer, and experiences.

Credit: Each chunk or module of learning has credit points. The larger the chunk, the more credit it has. You can sometimes build up qualifications using the credit from modules, a degree require 360 credits. Credit is described in both volume (how many points depending upon the size of the module) and level (difficulty).

Degree: a degree takes three years study full time (longer if taken part time). It is the most common course at universities and most students pass 'with honours' and with a classification such as first class,2:1, 2:2, third. Students with a degree are called graduates and are entitled to use the letters BA or BSc after their name

Distance Learning and Blended Learning: distance learning refers to elements of the course for which you don't have to go to the university or college. Instead, you may have to complete exercises on the computer, or receive study packs which you can go through at a time to suit you. Blended learning means that a course has some elements of going to university/college, and some elements of distance learning.

Foundation Degree: foundation degrees are qualifications which are designed with employers and should focus on the work place. They are the equivalent of the first two years of an honours degree. In many cases there is the opportunity to take one further year to achieve an honours degree. They are taught at universities and colleges

Full time, part time: most qualifications can be taken either full time or part time, depending upon which suits your circumstances. It is always worth asking about study times for courses in which you are interested as full time does not necessarily mean studying all day every day.

HE: Higher Education is the term used to describe the learning which follows on from qualifications such as A levels, BTEC national diplomas, NVQ level 3. You need to be at least 18 and can participate until way past retirement. Within Herefordshire and Worcestershire you can participate in HE at the university and each of the colleges, as well as some private training providers and via the Open University.

HND: Higher National Diplomas are vocational qualifications and are the equivalent of the first two years of an honours degree. In many cases it is possible to study for a further year to gain a degree. They are taught at universities and colleges

Learning week: some institutions have a learning week which is a week with no taught sessions, providing time to catch up on private study.

Levels: levels are terms used to indicate degree of difficulty of a course. The following are some examples of courses and their level

- Level 1 = GCSEs grades D-G, BTEC introductory diplomas or certificates, or NVQ Level 1
- Level 2 = GCSEs grades A-C, BTEC first diplomas or certificates, Key Skills Level 2 or NVQ level 2
- Level 3= A levels, BTEC diplomas, certificates or awards, BTEC Nationals, Key Skills Level 3, NVQ Level 3
- Level 4= Certificate in Higher Education (year one of a degree), BTEC professional diplomas, certificates and awards, NVQ Level 4
- Level 5= HNC, HND, Foundation Degree, Diploma in Higher Education (equivalent to two years of a degree), BTEC professional diplomas, certificates and awards, NVQ Level 5
- Level 6= Degree, BTEC Advanced Professional diplomas, certificates and awards
- Level 7= Masters and Doctorate, BTEC Advanced Professional diplomas, certificates and awards

Mode of delivery: this means how you would take the course, e.g. part time or full time, and can also refer to whether there is some study which is based at work, or at home using distance learning materials (computer exercises or study packs)

Module: Courses are often split up into chunks of learning which are referred to as modules. You will need to pass a certain number of modules to pass your course. Students studying part time will take fewer modules each year than those studying full time. It is often possible to take a single module in an area you find interesting or relevant to work.

Postgraduate: this refers to qualifications taken after a degree, such as a Masters or Doctorate.

Semester: some universities organise their year into two big semesters, rather than three terms. It is just another name for term, but indicating a slightly different structure.

Study skills: this refers to skills which enable you to learn, and includes things like note taking, summarising, analysing, essay writing, presentations, referencing. All courses will include sessions on improving study skills, but in addition, many institutions offer additional help in this area for anyone who wants it. The Student Services section of an institution will be able to provide more information.

Undergraduate: this refers to higher education qualifications up to and including degree.

Vocational qualification: sometimes qualifications are referred to as 'vocational'. This generally means that they are related to work in some way.

Work based learning: This refers to learning relating directly to your work or job. It may also be taught at your work.