

Key terms

A guide to common terms and abbreviations within UK higher education.

Welcome to our concise guide of key terms in UK higher education. Ideal for students, educators, counsellors and parents, this resource decodes essential concepts, from grade classifications to admissions offers.

For additional information on [UCAS key terms](#) and [London Metropolitan University abbreviations](#), please see the linked web pages.

Key term	Explanation
2:1 (Upper Second)	Denotes a specific classification of an undergraduate degree, typically awarded for achieving a mark between 60% and 69%.
2:2 (Lower Second)	Represents another classification of an undergraduate degree, indicating a performance within the range of 50% to 59%.
Adv Dip Pro Dev	Advanced Diploma in Professional Development, a program designed to enhance professional skills and knowledge beyond the undergraduate level.
A-Levels	Advanced Level qualifications usually taken by students aged 16-18. They are subject-specific and widely used for university admissions in the UK.
Alumni association	An organisation connecting former students (alumni) with their former university, fostering networking, mentorship, and support opportunities.
BA	Bachelor of Arts, an undergraduate academic degree typically awarded in the arts, humanities, or social sciences.
BEng	Bachelor of Engineering, an undergraduate academic degree awarded in the field of engineering.
BSc	Bachelor of Science, an undergraduate academic degree typically awarded in the natural sciences, mathematics, or related disciplines.
BSocSci	Bachelor of Social Science, an undergraduate academic degree in social sciences, encompassing disciplines like sociology and anthropology.
BTECs	Business and Technology Education Council qualifications, offering a more vocational and practical approach than A-Levels usually taken by students aged 16-18.
Bursary	Financial aid provided to students based on financial need. Bursaries can assist with tuition fees, living expenses, or other educational costs. Bursaries within the UK are typically for domestic students; however, international students may

	be able to access other financial aid through scholarships and grants.
Buzzword	A unique word provided by a school (if they are registered as a UCAS centre) that acts as a key identifier, linking a student's undergraduate application with the school. This allows them to track the application and upload references and relevant information.
Campus university	A way to refer to the style and location of a UK university that offers distinct environments for student life. A campus university has a more self-contained campus setting and may be based in a more suburban area or away from the inner city.
Career services	University-provided resources and support to help students explore career options, develop job-search skills, and transition into the workforce after graduation. Careers services can often help students look for part-time work during their studies and work placements.
City university	A way to refer to the style and location of a UK university that offers distinct environments for student life. A city university is located within an urban area, possibly with multiple locations.
Clearing	A UCAS process that allows students to find and apply for university courses that still have vacancies, typically after the main application period. Whilst the date that UK universities open for Clearing varies, many will have it available on A-Level results day (typically the 2nd Thursday in August). While Clearing is open to all students, it particularly supports those who did not receive the grades they needed for their conditional offer or those who exceeded their conditions. It varies as to whether universities allow international students to apply via Clearing due to the short time between Clearing opening and term starting, meaning visas can be difficult to acquire.
Conditional Offer	An offer of a place at a university that is dependent on the applicant meeting specific conditions, often related to exam results or other qualifications.
Core modules	Core modules are mandatory components of a program. As a generalisation, within the UK, undergraduate courses start with more core modules, and as the student progresses through the years, more optional modules become available to them. London Metropolitan University includes a list of our course's core and optional modules on the individual course pages .
Course rep/representative	A student elected or appointed to represent the views and concerns of their peers to academic staff and university management.
Course syllabus	An outline of the topics, readings, and assessments covered in an academic course. The syllabus provides a roadmap for students throughout the academic year.
Coursework	Assignments, projects, or tasks that students complete as part of their course assessment.

DBA	Doctor of Business Administration, a doctoral-level academic degree emphasising practical application of business knowledge and research.
Dissertation	An extended piece of academic writing involving in-depth research on a specific topic. Within the UK, it is common for undergraduate students to complete a dissertation within their final year. It is typically required for postgraduate study,
Distance learning	A mode of study where students engage in courses remotely, often online, without attending physical classes on campus.
Enrolment	The process of officially registering for courses and becoming a student at a university for a specific academic term. Within the UK, students do not typically have to sign up for modules before their arrival. However, this varies between institutions.
Examination period	The specific time frame during which formal exams take place, usually at the end of a term or academic year. Within the UK, these typically take place in December or January and/or May or June for undergraduate students.
Firm Choice	In the UCAS application process, the firm choice is the student's preferred and first choice university.
First	Refers to the highest classification of an undergraduate degree, indicating outstanding academic achievement and typically a mark of 70% or above.
Foundation year	An additional preparatory year before the start of a degree program, designed to provide essential knowledge and skills to students who may need extra support.
Freshers' week/welcome week	The initial week of the academic year features orientation activities, social events, and introductions to university life.
Gap year	A break typically taken by students between finishing high school and starting university, often spent traveling, working, or engaging in volunteer activities.
GCSEs	General Certificate of Secondary Education, taken by students aged 14-16. GCSEs cover a range of subjects and are crucial for further education and employment.
GDL	Graduate Diploma in Law, a conversion course for individuals with a non-law degree seeking to qualify as solicitors or barristers.
Halls of residence	Another term for student dormitories. Halls of residence, commonly referred to as 'halls', offer various room options and communal facilities, fostering a sense of community among residents. These can be owned by the university or private companies. Within the UK, it is typical for students to have a private bedroom with options for personal bathrooms (ensuite). Halls can be catered (food provided like a meal plan) or self-catered (kitchen provided to complete your own cooking).
Honours Degree (Hons)	Honours, denoting an undergraduate degree program focused on specialisation and typically awarded to students with higher academic achievements.
Insurance Choice	In the UCAS application process, the insurance choice and

	second choice serves as a backup in case the firm choice is not secured, for example, by not meeting the academic conditions.
International orientation	A period, often just before the start of the academic term, where international students are invited to campus for sessions covering information relevant to them such as visa compliance, setting up bank accounts, UK laws and more. Not all institutions will provide this however London Metropolitan University does.
Internship/placement	A period of work experience related to a student's field of study, providing practical skills and insights into the industry.
Lecture	A formal, instructor-led presentation or talk on a specific subject, usually delivered to a large group of students.
Library resources	Various materials and services are available to students in a university library, including books, journals, electronic databases, and study spaces.
LLB	Bachelor of Law, an undergraduate academic degree in law.
LLM	Master of Laws, a postgraduate academic degree in law, often pursued for advanced specialisation in legal studies.
MA	Master of Arts, a postgraduate academic degree that follows a bachelor's degree and often involves advanced study in the arts or humanities.
MArch	Master of Architecture is a postgraduate academic degree for individuals pursuing advanced studies and architectural qualifications.
MBA	Master of Business Administration, a postgraduate academic degree focusing on business and management principles.
MFA	Master of Fine Arts, a postgraduate academic degree focused on creative and visual arts, including areas such as painting, sculpture, and writing.
Module	A self-contained unit of study within a course, often with its own set of learning objectives, assessment methods, and academic credit value. In other countries, this is referred to as a 'class'.
Module handbook	A document outlining details of a specific academic module, including objectives, assessment methods, reading lists, and other relevant information.
MPhil	Master of Philosophy, a postgraduate academic degree that often involves a combination of coursework and research.
MSc	Master of Science, a postgraduate academic degree awarded in various scientific and technical fields.
Open day	An event hosted by universities to showcase their campus, facilities, and academic programs, allowing prospective students to explore and gather information. You can see all upcoming London Metropolitan University open days and campus tours on our events page .
Optional modules	Another term for an elective. Optional modules allow students to choose which classes they would like to attend. These are often still within their subject area but allow students to select

	where they would like to specialise. The students are often told how many optional modules they can take per year. As a generalisation, within the UK, undergraduate courses start with more core modules, and as students progress through the years, more optional modules become available to them. London Metropolitan University includes a list of our course's core and optional modules on the individual course pages .
Oxbridge	A colloquial term combining "Oxford" and "Cambridge," referring to the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge in the UK. You can only apply to one of these universities per year on your UCAS application.
Personal Statement	A written document submitted with a university application (like a college application essay), in which the student details what course they want to study, why they want to study it and what makes them a good candidate for that course.
Personal Tutor	An assigned academic staff member who provides guidance, support, and advice to students throughout their academic journey.
PG Cert	Postgraduate Certificate, a short program providing specialised knowledge and skills, often completed in less time than a full master's degree.
PG Dip	Postgraduate Diploma, a more extensive program than a certificate, offering in-depth study and often serving as a pathway to a master's degree.
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy, the highest academic degree awarded in various fields, requires original research and a doctoral thesis submission.
Plagiarism	The act of presenting someone else's work, ideas, or intellectual property as one's own without proper acknowledgement considered academic misconduct. This extends to the personal statement within the application.
Postgraduate	Education pursued after the completion of an undergraduate degree. Includes master's degrees, PhDs, and other advanced qualifications.
Prof Doc	Professional Doctorate is a doctoral-level qualification focused on applying research to professional practice in various fields.
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status is a professional accreditation in the UK allowing individuals to teach in state-maintained schools.
Reading week	A designated week during the term when students are encouraged to focus on independent study, catch up on reading, and prepare for upcoming assessments.
Resit/retake	The opportunity for a student to retake an exam or assessment after an initial attempt, often due to a suboptimal performance. Often marks for resits are capped at a pass rate; however, this depends on the course and institution.
Sandwich/ placement year	A year within an undergraduate degree where students undertake work placements or study abroad to gain practical experience in their field, often between Year 2 and 3.
Scholarship	An award granted to students based on academic merit,

	talent, or other criteria. Scholarships may cover tuition fees, living expenses, or both. You can review London Metropolitan University's scholarships on our funding pages .
Semester	A division of the academic year, usually consisting of two terms. Within the UK, universities typically use a 3-term or 2-semester system. London Metropolitan University uses the 3-term system.
Seminar	A collaborative and interactive session where students engage in discussions, debates, and group activities related to the course material often led by a lecturer or facilitator.
Student Loan	Financial assistance provided to students for tuition fees and living expenses, often offered by government or private institutions. Domestic students use funding such as Student Finance England whereas international students may be able to access this from their home countries such as US federal loans .
Student Society/Club	An organisation run by and for students, focusing on shared interests, hobbies, or activities. Societies provide opportunities for socialisation and personal development.
Student support services	Resources and services provided by universities to assist students with academic, personal, or emotional challenges. London Metropolitan University offers services such as counselling , disability and dyslexia , careers and more. We also have a dedicated international and advice team.
Student Union	An organisation representing students within a university, providing services, support, and organising social and recreational activities.
Tariff Points	A UCAS numerical system assigned to different qualifications and grades provides a standardised way for universities to assess and compare applicants' academic achievements.
Teacher Reference	A written recommendation provided by a teacher or advisor as part of the UCAS application. Recent changes to the teachers' reference have created three separate sections covering general information about a school, extenuating circumstances and supportive information about the applicant that is relevant to the course.
Term	A specific period of the academic year, typically divided into three terms (autumn, spring, and summer). Within the UK, universities typically use a 3-term or 2-semester system. London Metropolitan University uses the 3-term system.
Third	The classification below 2:2, indicates a pass but with lower overall academic performance typically awarded for achieving a mark between 40% and 49%.
T-Levels	A vocational qualification introduced in the UK, focusing on technical skills and practical experience in a specific industry.
Transcript	A record of a student's academic performance detailing courses taken, grades received, and other relevant information.
Tutorial	A small-group session, often led by a tutor, focusing on discussion, clarification of course material, and addressing

	students' questions.
UCAS	The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, a central application service for students applying to higher education institutions in the UK.
UCAS Centre	A UCAS centre is an educational institution or organisation registered with UCAS, allowing students to make their application through that institution. It is free for a school to become a centre with more information provided on the UCAS website.
UCAS Extra	A UCAS service allowing students who have used all five choices and haven't received any offers to apply for additional courses one at a time.
UCAS Track	An online system that allows applicants to track the progress of their UCAS application, including offers, replies, and the status of chosen universities.
Unconditional Offer	An offer of a place at a university without any specified conditions, indicating that the applicant has already met the necessary requirements.
Undergraduate	Refers to the level of education that comes before a student earns their first degree. Undergraduate programs typically include bachelor's degrees.