

Jargon Buster

A glossary of terms

Education has its own language which at times can be difficult to understand.

We always try to keep our jargon to a minimum, but there are some words and phrases that just can't be avoided. So here's our Jargon Buster - a plain English explanation of the terms you may come across:

- **Academic study:** Study that places greater emphasis on reading and theory than technical/practical work. It is often assessed through written work and/or exams.
- **Academic year:** The period of time when students attend college, normally running from September through to June/July of the following year. Locally this is split into three terms.
- **A Level:** The General Certificate of Education Advanced Level, the secondary school leaving qualification in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- **AS Level:** Advanced Subsidiary Level is a qualification in its own right, or forms the first part of an A Level.
- **Apprenticeship:** Practical training in a paid job combined with studying part-time. Assessment takes place both at the place of study as well as in the workplace.
- **BTEC:** The Business and Technology Education Council, a secondary school leaving qualification and further education qualification in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- **Career Path:** The College's online tool to help with career planning, available to everyone.
- **Curriculum areas:** The different subjects taught within The College are grouped together into curriculum areas. For example, Trowel Trades and Wood Trades are both subjects taught in the Construction area.
- **Degree:** A degree is awarded when studies are completed at university or college. A degree is a Level 6 qualification.
- **Entry level:** The lowest level you can begin to study at, it comes before Level 1.
- **Foundation Degree:** Designed to give students a grounding of knowledge in their subject areas, it's a qualification in its own right. Foundation degrees are usually more professional and technical than university-based Higher Education, although many students go on to top up to a full degree either at The College or at a university.
- **Full-Time courses:** Generally 600 hours of study per year. How these hours are spread out depends on the course - it might be 15 hours a week over 3-4 days of teaching time, plus coursework, assignments, research and individual study.
- **Further Education (FE):** Continued education after secondary school, from basic skills training to higher professional and technical qualifications.
- **Higher Education (HE):** Optional stage of learning after secondary school. Most people think these are only delivered at universities, but many colleges deliver Higher Education courses in partnership with universities.
- **HNC:** A Higher National Certificate takes one year to complete and is considered equivalent to completing the first year of an undergraduate degree course (Level 4). It's usually geared towards more professional and technical subjects.
- **HND:** A Higher National Diploma is a level up from the HNC and takes two years to complete. It's considered equivalent to the second year of an undergraduate degree course (Level 5) and is usually geared towards more professional and technical subjects with workplace-based learning.
- **Levels:** The different stages you can study at and an indication of how complex a particular course is. Levels range from a foundation diploma at entry level to a university degree at level 6.
- **Matrix accredited:** Matrix is independent recognition that the information, advice and guidance we offer supports students with both their career planning and with choosing the best qualification routes.
- **Pass rate:** The number of students, usually shown as a percent, who were successful in a particular exam.
- **Raising the Participation Age (RPA):** To ensure that young people are better prepared for work, all students in England born on or after 1 September 1997 have to continue in education or training until their 18th birthday.
- **Traineeship:** Education and training programme with work experience, designed to get 16-24 year-olds ready for full-time study, an Apprenticeship or work.
- **UCAS:** Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, the central UK organisation that processes applications for entry to Higher Education.
- **UCAS points:** The points given to post-16 qualifications; each qualification and grade is equal to a certain number of UCAS points. They are used for entry to Higher Education.
- **Professional and technical:** A course that prepares students for a specific trade or profession.

