



**GREAT FALLS  
COLLEGE**

---

**MONTANA STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

# ***College Vocabulary Handbook***

**academic concentration**

See *major*.

**academic year**

Usually this refers to the September-June school year. In some cases it refers to the entire year.

**accreditation**

Certification that a school or an instructional program meets standards set by an outside reviewing organization. Many forms of financial aid are available only to students attending accredited institutions.

**admission**

Approval for a student to attend an educational institution. The admission process usually involves an application form and may require transcripts or other supporting documents.

**advisor**

A member of the college faculty or staff who assists students with planning quarter or semester schedules as well as their overall programs of study. Advisors may also help with career planning. See also counselor.

**application**

The first step in requesting *admission* to an institution of higher education. Usually there is a form to fill out by a certain deadline; sometimes there is an application fee to pay.

**articulation**

A formal agreement between high schools and colleges or between community/technical colleges and *baccalaureate* institutions, designed to make it easy for students to move from one educational level to the next without any gaps or repetition in their coursework.

**assessment**

A method of determining a student's knowledge or skill level, often taken to find his or her best *placement* or starting level in a series of courses in English, math, or reading. At Great Falls College students can take the Compass test to determine placement in English and Math courses.

**associate's degree**

A *diploma* earned after successfully completing a required *program* of study in a community or technical college. It typically requires 60 or more *credits* and takes at least two years of full-time study. An Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees enable students to *transfer* to *baccalaureate* colleges and universities, Associate of Applied Science degree's prepare students to go right into the workforce in a *professional/technical* field.

**audit**

A student who audits a *course* formally *registers* for it and attends class sessions but earns no *credit* and has no obligation to complete homework projects or take tests.

**baccalaureate or bachelor's degree**

A college *degree* which can often be earned by following a four-year instructional *program*. A baccalaureate institution, sometimes informally called a "four-year

college,” is a college or university which is entitled to grant a baccalaureate or bachelor’s degree.

**basic skills**

Usually refers to a level of *competency*—specifically in reading, writing, and mathematics—which is required for successful *college-level* work in all fields of study.

**campus**

The land and buildings that a college or university uses for instruction or student services.

**catalog**

A comprehensive resource listing college regulations, *program* and *course* descriptions, *degree* and *graduation requirements*, *transfer* requirements, and other essential information.

**certificate**

A document granted by a college or university indicating that a student has successfully completed specified *courses* and *requirements* (compare with *degree*, which usually requires more time and coursework).

**class**

(1) A specific group of students meeting for specific instructional purposes. It can mean the whole series of scheduled meetings (“Dr. Owen is teaching two English Composition classes this quarter”) or just one session (“we had a guest speaker in my Home Economics class today”).

(2) Often means the same as *course* (“she’s taking classes in Interior Design”).

(3) A group of students who start at a school together and expect to complete their studies at the same time (“he’s in the graduating class of 2003”).

**class schedule**

(1) A publication listing detailed *course* and *section* information (days, times, room numbers, etc.) for a specific *semester* or *quarter*.

(2) The specific courses that an individual student is taking or plans to take for a given semester or quarter.

**college-level study**

*Curricula* and instruction that assume the student has already mastered certain skills and abilities and has the level of commitment needed for *postsecondary* school work. Compare to *developmental-level study*.

**commencement**

The ceremony at the end of an *academic year* when students receive their degrees or diplomas (compare to *graduation*).

**community college**

The community colleges in Montana are: Dawson Community College; Flathead Valley Community College; and Miles Community College

**competency**

In “competency-based” *courses* or instructional *programs*, students must demonstrate certain skills and abilities (instead of just earning *passing grades* in

classes) before moving from one level to the next or earning the final *certificate* or *degree*.

## **CORE**

General education courses that students can take to transfer to a 4 year state institution. Students must complete the entire CORE and ask the Registrar's office to post it on their transcript for it to transfer to one of the Montana University System 4 year schools.

## **counselor**

A member of the college *faculty* who has special training in guidance and who assists students in academic or personal matters. See also *advisor*.

## **course**

(1) Often means the same as *class*.

(2) A planned sequence of instruction in a particular topic; may include class meetings, lectures, readings, demonstrations, exercises, assignments, examinations, etc.; offered repeatedly to different groups of students.

## **credit**

A unit of measure for college work. Generally speaking, one credit hour represents one hour of classroom attendance each week for one term, plus the study time, homework, etc. that go along with it.

## **credit load**

The total *credit* value of the *courses* a student is currently enrolled in.

## **curriculum**

(plural: *curricula*)

(1) An established sequence of information to be learned, skills to be acquired, etc. in a specific *course* or in a complete instructional *program*.

(2) Collectively, all the courses offered by a *department*, *division*, or college.

## **dean**

An academic administrator or official at a school, college, or university, especially one with responsibility for students or *faculty*.

## **degree**

A rank conferred by a college or university and earned by a student who has successfully completed specified *courses* and *requirements* (compare with *certificate*, which usually requires less time and coursework).

## **department**

An organizational unit within a college or university, offering *courses* about closely related topics (at a small school there may be one general education department, at a large school there may be separate departments for psychology, English, math, etc).

## **developmental-level study**

Instruction that helps students improve their English and math abilities and prepare themselves for *college-level study*.

**diploma**

An official document issued by a college or university indicating that a student has earned a certain *degree* or *certificate*.

**discipline**

(1) A subject; field; branch of knowledge or learning ("he teaches in the related disciplines of physics and astronomy")

(2) Orderly behavior ("instructors are responsible for maintaining discipline in their classrooms")

(3) Correction or punishment for disorderly behavior ("she disrupted the class repeatedly, so the college will begin disciplinary action").

**distance learning or distance education**

Instruction which is not time- or place-specific; can include correspondence courses, televised or videotaped lectures, online courses (internet and e-mail), etc.

At Great Falls College distance learning refers to our on-line and hybrid courses. GFC has an *e-learning* department that will help students with their on-line courses.

**distribution requirements**

Course *requirements* included in an instructional *program* to make sure that the student is well-rounded and gains some perspective outside his or her specific focus or *major*.

**division**

An organizational unit within a college or university consisting of two or more related *departments*.

**drop**

To cancel *registration* in a *course* after enrolling into it. Students often add and drop courses before settling on a *class schedule* for a particular *quarter* or *semester*. See also *withdrawal*.

**elective**

A *course* that is not required for a particular instructional *program*. Many programs require a certain number of elective *credits*, and many recommend certain electives for students to choose from.

**ESL (English as a Second Language)**

Usually refers to *developmental-level* instruction in English language skills for non-native speakers.

**enrollment**

(1) The process of signing up and paying for *courses*. See also *registration*.

(2) The total number of registered students attending *classes* in a particular instructional *program* or the whole school.

**evaluation**

(1) The process and standards by which an instructor judges a student's work and assigns a *grade*.

(2) At GREAT FALLS COLLEGE, the process of determining that a student has met all requirements to complete a *degree* or *certificate* and is ready to *graduate*.

**faculty**

The instructors or teaching staff at a school.

**financial aid**

Money available from various sources to help students pay college expenses. These funds come as *loans*, *grants*, or *scholarships* from the state or federal government or other organizations. *Work-study* is also a form of financial aid.

**FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)**

The application required for students to be considered for federal student *financial aid*. The FAFSA is processed free of charge and is used by most state agencies and colleges. There is a form for each academic year. FAFSA forms are available from colleges, high schools and on the website [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).

**freshman**

A student in the first year of a typical four-year *baccalaureate degree* program (or one who has earned fewer than 45 *quarter credits* or 30 *semester credits* so far).

**GED (General Education Development)**

A certificate representing the equivalent of a high-school diploma.

**general education**

At Great Falls College you can either do the general education CORE classes to transfer to another institution, or complete an entire associates degree in general education

**grade**

A formal indicator of a student's overall performance in a *course*, recorded on the official *transcript*. Traditional letter grades are "A" for outstanding achievement, "B" for high achievement, "C" for satisfactory achievement, etc.

**grade-point average (GPA)**

The GPA is computed by multiplying the number value of the *grade* earned in each *course* (generally, A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0) times the number *credits* for each *course*, then dividing the result by the total number of credits taken.

**graduation**

The formal completion of an instructional *program* or course of study. Students graduate after successfully meeting all *credit* and *course requirements* and other criteria set by the college or university (compare to *commencement*).

**grant**

A type of *financial aid* that does not have to be paid back after the student leaves school. Grants are available through the federal government, state agencies, and educational institutions.

**hy-brid class**

A course that is taught both on-line and on campus. Students are required to participate in both portions of the class.

**incomplete**

A temporary *grade* given to a student who is doing satisfactory work but is forced by illness or other emergency to miss an exam or a major assignment. The instructor and student arrange how and when the student will complete the work

and have the "I" changed to a final letter grade. At GREAT FALLS COLLEGE, the student must finish the incomplete work within one academic *semester*.

**independent study**

An arrangement that allows a student to earn college *credit* through individual study and research, usually planned with and supervised by a *faculty* member.

**internship**

A supervised short-term apprenticeship or temporary job in a real-world setting closely related to a student's field of study. The student may or may not be paid but earns college *credit* for the work experience. See also *practicum*.

**junior**

A student in the third year of a typical four-year *baccalaureate* degree program (or one who has earned 90-135 *quarter credits* or 60-90 *semester credits* so far).

**learning outcomes**

What students are expected to know and to be able to do as a result of their experience at the college and, more specifically, as a result of completing their general education requirements.

**load**

See *credit load*.

**loans**

A type of *financial aid* that must be repaid to the government agency or other lending organization when the student leaves school.

**lower division**

The *courses* students are generally expected to complete during the first two years of a typical four-year *baccalaureate degree program*.

**major**

Specialization in one academic *discipline* or field of study.

**MPSEOC (Montana Post Secondary Educational Opportunities Council)**

The Montana Post Secondary Educational Opportunities Council (MPSEOC) is a non-profit organization representing the 24 institutions of higher education across the state of Montana. The mission of the organization is the promotion of higher education to students, parents and guidance counselors, with the awareness of the post secondary opportunities available throughout the state of Montana and beyond. [www.montanacolleges.com](http://www.montanacolleges.com)

**MUS CORE**

See CORE

**Montana University System**

The campuses associated with the Montana University System are: the University of Montana; Missoula College UM; Bitterroot College UM; Montana Tech; Highlands College of MT Tech; the University of Montana Western; Helena College UM; Montana State University – Bozeman; Montana State University – Gallatin College; Montana State University - Billings; City College at MSU Billings; Montana State University - Northern; and Great Falls College Montana

State University; Dawson Community College; Miles Community College; Flathead Valley Community College.

**no-show**

A student who *registers* into a *course* but never goes to *class*. Refer to College Catalog at Great Falls College for specific no-show policies for students.

**noncredit**

*Courses* or instructional *programs* which do not require extensive homework or examinations and which do not offer college *credit*. Students frequently take noncredit courses for *basic skills* improvement, job training or career enhancement, or personal enrichment.

**open admissions**

The policy of some colleges to admit nearly all applicants, regardless of high school *grades* and admission test scores. It means different things at different schools. Community and technical colleges in Montana admit anyone who is over 18 or has a high school diploma, *GED*, or high school equivalency assessment.

**outcomes**

See learning outcomes.

**pass/passing**

At most schools, a student will earn *credit* and "pass" a *class* with a *grade* of "A" through "D." A student who earns an "F" grade fails the class and earns no credit. Different schools have different standards, so a student who passes a class with a "D" may or may not be able to use that class to meet *prerequisites* or fulfill *requirements*.

**placement**

The appropriate level to enter a series of courses, based on the student's skills often used in the context of basic skills subjects such as mathematics or English composition. See also assessment.

**postsecondary**

Refers to all educational *programs* for students past high-school age; it includes community and technical colleges and job training programs as well as *baccalaureate* colleges and universities.

**practicum**

A *course* that includes job-related activities and stresses the practical application of theory in a field of study. See also *internship*.

**prerequisite**

A *course* that must be completed (often with a certain minimum *grade*) or a skill that must be demonstrated before a student can enroll in a more advanced course (for example, Anatomy and Physiology I is a prerequisite for Anatomy and Physiology II).

**private college**

The private colleges located in Montana are: Carroll College; University of Great Falls and Rocky Mountain College.

**professional/technical**

A *course* or instructional *program* that emphasizes job skills training for a particular field of work; often called "occupational" or "vocational" education and often contrasted with "academic" or "transfer" education.

**program**

A very general term used in many ways in a college or university:

- (1) The *courses* that an individual student plans to take ("the academic *advisors* can help you plan your program each year").
- (2) The *courses required* to complete a particular *degree* or *certificate* ("he's almost finished with the Recreation Leadership program").
- (3) The *courses* that make up a *department* or the departments that make up a *division* within the college organization
- (4) Organized activities with a specific function

**quarter**

Some schools organize the *academic year* into three main periods-Fall, Winter, and Spring Quarters-plus a shorter Summer Quarter (compare to *semester*).

**records**

Refers to all the information the college might keep regarding a student; it includes *registration* activity (*enrollment*, *withdrawal*, etc.), *grades*, payments, awards received, *financial aid* applications and award notices, and notes on *disciplinary* actions, as well as address, phone number, and student identification number.

**refund**

- (1) *Tuition and fees* that are paid back to a student who has *withdrawn* from a course. At GREAT FALLS COLLEGE, the amount to be refunded depends on how many *credits* the student is taking and exactly when the student dropped the course(s). The refund policy and deadlines are published in each Credit Class Schedule and on the students Registration Worksheet.
- (2) Financial aid money that is not required as payment to Great Falls College for tuition, fee and book charges.

**register/registration**

To sign up or *enroll* in a *course* or courses. "Registration activity" includes enrolling, dropping/withdrawing, choosing "*pass/fail*" in place of letter *grades*, making payments, etc.

**requirements**

Minimum standards defined by the college, for example for *admission* or *graduation*. See also *prerequisite*; *distribution requirements*.

**resident**

For purposes of calculating a student's *tuition and fees*, someone who has lived in the state for a specified length of time as shown by specified types of evidence.

**scholarship**

- (1) A type of *financial aid*. Organizations may give scholarships according to academic achievement, financial need, or any other basis. Usually there is a competitive *application* process.

(2) A person's ability and expertise in a particular *discipline* of study ("I've always admired Dr. Busacca's scholarship in Italian art and literature").

**section**

A specific *class* with its own unique days, hours, location, and instructor. A number of sections of a certain *course* may be offered during a *quarter* or *semester*, each with different days, times, locations, and instructors but presenting the same *curriculum*.

**semester**

Some schools organize the *academic year* into two main periods-Fall and Spring Semesters-plus a shorter Summer Semester (compare to *quarter*). Great Falls College operates on a 16 week Fall and Spring semester and an 8 or 10 week summer semester.

**senior**

A student in the fourth year of a typical four-year *baccalaureate degree* program (or one who has earned 135-180 *quarter credits* or 90-120 *semester credits* so far).

**sophomore**

A student in the second year of a typical four-year *baccalaureate degree* program (or one who has earned 45-90 *quarter credits* or 30-60 *semester credits* so far).

**syllabus**

(plural: syllabi)

An outline plan for a particular *class*, including textbook requirements, class meeting dates, reading assignments, examination dates, the instructor's grading standards, etc.

**term**

A unit of time that can refer to either a *quarter* or a *semester*, depending on which system the college or university follows.

**TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)**

A standardized test which assesses the English language abilities of students who are not native English-speakers.

**transcript**

An official *record* of the *courses* and *semester* or *quarter credits* a student has taken at a college or university, the *grades* and *degrees* or *certificates* earned, and any awards and honors received.

**transfer**

To move from one college or university to another and have the second institution recognize and accept some or all of the *courses* taken and *credits* earned at the first.

**tribal colleges**

The tribal colleges in Montana are: Blackfeet Community College; Chief Dull Knife College; Fort Belknap College; Fort Peck Community College; Little Big Horn College; Salish Kootenai College; and Stone Child College.

**tuition & fees**

Tuition is a student's basic payment towards the cost of instruction at a college or university. Most institutions also charge fees for laboratory equipment and materials, computer use, parking, and other miscellaneous costs.

**undergraduate**

A student who has not yet earned a *bachelor's degree*; also refers to the *courses* and instructional *programs* such a student enrolls in.

**upper division**

The *courses* students are generally expected to complete during the last two years of a typical four-year *baccalaureate degree program*.

**waiver**

To waive a right or a claim is to voluntarily give it up.

(1) If a student meets specific criteria, the college may waive some of his or her *tuition & fees* (that is, some of the money owed to the college will be forgiven).

(2) If a student demonstrates certain knowledge and abilities, the college may waive a *course prerequisite* (that is, allow the student to take the class even though he or she hasn't completed the listed *requirements* for it).

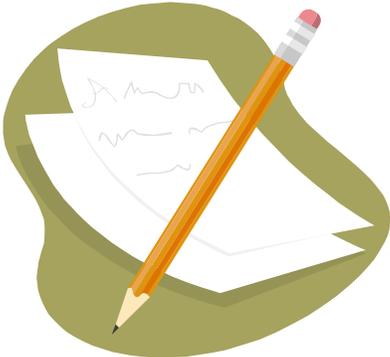
**withdrawal**

The process of formally *dropping all classes* after the *term* has started.

**work-study**

A type of *financial aid* which pays students to work part-time, often on campus, during the *academic year*.

Notes:



Notes:



Notes:



***Prepared for you by:***

Great Falls College Montana State University  
Admissions

[www.gfcmsu.edu](http://www.gfcmsu.edu)

2100 16<sup>th</sup> Ave South  
Great Falls, MT 59405  
(406)771-4414  
800-446-2698