

# University Glossary



## **Glossary**

This glossary outlines some of the key words and terms that University of Staffordshire use, and defines their meanings. Many of these terms include a link to the relevant University regulation, procedure, policy or guidance page. For those entries it is recommended that you review the linked page for further information and full understanding.

The University operates apprenticeships, and these courses use terms which are unique to them. Some common words and terms are included below, but a more comprehensive list can be found on page 141 onwards of the [Apprenticeship Funding Rules Glossary](#).

## **Academic Calendar**

The Academic Calendar is a list of [important dates](#) for your course. This includes the teaching periods, assessment dates and any potential reassessment periods.

## **Academic Conduct**

Academic conduct means ensuring that your work is your own and that you have met the learning outcomes that allow you to achieve the award. Sometimes students try to gain an unfair advantage as below:

- Plagiarism which means copying someone else's ideas or work, this can be from a fellow student, copying from the internet, or from a book or journal. This can also include the unauthorised use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- Breaking the rules in examinations such as taking in notes or talking to other students.
- Getting someone else to complete your work for you or paying someone to do this.

This list does not include all the ways of gaining an unfair advantage, but just some of them. If you break the rules on academic conduct, you will fail your assessment, module, level or even course. The procedures for dealing with allegations that you have broken the rules are set out in the [Academic Conduct Procedure](#).

## **Academic Progression**

Academic Progression means that you may continue to the next stage of your course. Decisions about your progression are made by an Award Board.

## **Academic Skills**

These are the skills you need to succeed at university. They include critical thinking, essay writing, researching, referencing, time management, note-taking, and structuring your work. You can find more information and resources by going to the [Academic Skills](#) area. In this area, you will also find guidance on different types of assignments, as well as resources on academic writing and support with numeracy, maths and statistics.

## Academic Year

This is the period during which University of Staffordshire organises enrolment, teaching, and assessments. An academic year is divided into semesters. More information can be found on the University's [Important Dates page](#).

## Advanced Standing

Advanced Standing is when you start a University of Staffordshire validated course at a later stage, level or year than usual. This can happen if you already have relevant certified learning, for example, if you have already passed a module which is part of the course structure. This is different from Recognition of Prior Learning (RPEL), as we won't need to map your previous learning, and will have established that you have met the learning outcomes required for a module. This can also include articulation agreements.

## Aegrotat

This is a type of award which is made if you are unable to complete your course because of illness or similar circumstances. To make the award, the Award Board must be satisfied that you would have met the standard required, were it not for the illness or other valid reason. Aegrotat degrees do not receive a classification, such as 2:1 or 2:2. Please see the [Academic Regulations](#) for more information.

## Appeals

An appeal is when you wish to challenge a decision that the University has made. This may be a decision made by an Award Board on your assessment or progression between stages of the course, on an Exceptional Circumstances claim, or on a conduct decision. You can find out more about these processes within the individual [procedure](#) relevant to your circumstances, and you will normally be told which process applies to you when we make a decision.

## Apprenticeship Assessment

The Apprenticeship Assessment confirms that you have developed the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) required for your apprenticeship. Some assessments may take place during your programme and others towards the end, depending on your apprenticeship standard.

## Apprenticeship Standard

The Apprenticeship Standard is a national document developed by employers that sets out the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for a specific occupation and explains how they will be assessed.

## Articulation Agreement

Articulation agreements are a type of advanced standing, and are formal agreements between the University and another institution, normally a partner of University of Staffordshire. An articulation agreement guarantees that specific credits that you achieve at the partner can be used to gain advanced standing to a course delivered by the University. For example, if you complete Level 4 and 5 of a course at the partner, you may be able to directly enter Level 6 of the relevant course delivered by the University.

## **Assessment Plan (Apprenticeship)**

An Assessment Plan is a document that explains how the apprenticeship will be assessed, including what assessments will take place and when.

## **Assessment Organisation (Apprenticeship)**

An Assessment Organisation is an independent organisation approved to deliver or oversee apprenticeship assessment and ensure the assessment meets national quality standards.

## **Attendance**

In our [Academic Regulations](#) we explain that we expect you to attend your course fully. It means that you will engage through online learning activities and attend any teaching sessions, classes or tutorials. If we think that you are not attending, we will write to you to explain that to you and help you re-engage and identify steps to help you succeed. It is important that you talk to us because if you don't, we may need to remove you from your course. Please see the [Attendance and Engagement Policy](#) for more information.

## **Award**

An award is the qualification you receive when you successfully complete your course, for example BA (Hons). Awards are usually described by an award title for example Film, Media and Production. Please see [here](#) for more information.

## **Award Board**

An Award Board confirms your module results, and based on this, will make decisions about progression through your course and your final classification. After the Award Board has met, your results are published through e:vision and this is your formal results notification. If the University needs to make special consideration of your specific circumstances, then the Award Board may refer you to the University Award Board for Exceptions (UABE) to make a decision.

## **Break in Studies**

Taking a break in studies is sometimes called intermission or interruption and means that you stop attending your course and you re-join later, normally at the beginning of the next semester or academic year. For further details, please see [Academic Regulations](#) and [Taking a Break in Studies](#).

## **Break in Learning (Apprenticeship)**

A Break in Learning is when an apprenticeship student takes a break of at least a clear calendar month from their apprenticeship but plans to return to it in the future. This can be instigated by either the provider (in relation to active learning) or by the student.

## **Classification**

Degrees are awarded with different levels of achievement depending on how well you have performed. In Honours Degrees these are First-Class honours (1<sup>st</sup>), Upper Second-Class Honours (2:1), Lower-Second Class Honours (2:2) and Third Class Honours (3<sup>rd</sup>). Other awards, for example, Masters Degrees and Foundation Degrees, have Distinction, Merit and Pass classifications.

## **Complaint**

If you are dissatisfied with aspects of your experience whilst at the University you should discuss this with your Academic Mentor, Module Leader, Course Leader and/or Head of Department to give us the opportunity to put them right. If we have been unable to resolve your concerns you may use our [Complaints Procedure](#).

## **Condonement**

Condonement is when you have narrowly missed passing the module, with a mark between 35%-39%, but the Award Board gives you the credits for the module because you have demonstrated your knowledge elsewhere in your course. However, not all courses allow condonement, particularly those which require registration with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies. Your course information will explain if this applies to you and can be found on the Virtual Learning Environment, for example Blackboard.

## **Core/Compulsory Modules**

A core or compulsory module is a module that is included within the course structure and which must be completed in order to achieve the award. This is different from an optional module (see entry below)

## **Credit**

Credit is a way of measuring the amount of learning on your course. One credit is 10 learning hours. Each module is worth a set number of credits, which reflects the amount of study required. The National Qualifications Framework sets out that higher education consists of levels 4 to 8. To achieve an award, you must gain a specific number of credits at the required academic levels; for example, levels 4, 5 and 6 are required for an Honours Degree. The requirements for each award is defined in [Academic Regulations](#).

## **Degree with a Placement Year or Study Abroad Year**

This is a course which includes either a period of supervised work experience in industry, volunteering, or on self-employment. It can also include a year studying abroad at a vetted international partner university. The Placement Year and Study Abroad Year are undertaken in addition to the three years academic study required for the award, are assessed and recognised in the degree transcript. These activities are highly valued by graduate employers and considerably improve graduate career confidence and graduate skills.

## **Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)**

[Disabled Students' Allowance](#) (DSA), is financial support provided by the UK Government to help cover extra study-related costs you may have due to a disability, long-term health condition, mental health condition, or a specific learning difficulty. It is not funding provided by the University.

DSA can be used for things such as specialist equipment, study support, or other resources to help you succeed in your studies.

## **Engagement Action Plan**

This is a supportive action plan set up by the University if there are concerns about your attendance or engagement. It outlines what you need to do to re-engage with your studies, with clear expectations and timeframes. If you do not follow the plan or your engagement does not improve, this may affect your ability to complete your course and could lead to withdrawal. Please see the [Attendance and Engagement Policy](#) for more information.

## **Enrolment**

Enrolment is the process of officially becoming a student at the University. This involves completing online and, where required, face-to-face steps to confirm your personal details, identity, academic qualifications, and your tuition fee arrangements.

## **Expulsion / Exclusion**

This is a formal decision by the University that a student is no longer permitted to continue on their course. It is normally used in serious cases, such as where there has been a breach of a University regulations, or where previous warnings or support measures have not resolved the concerns. A decision to exclude a student is made in line with the relevant [University Procedures](#).

## **Extension to Course Registration**

This is where the University considers whether you can have more time to complete your course, due to exceptional circumstances. Decisions on extensions to registration are made by an Award Board, and in some cases, the University Award Board for Exceptions. Please see the [Academic Regulations](#) for more information.

## **Exceptional Circumstances**

Exceptional Circumstances are unforeseen and unplanned events which you have not been able to overcome, and which have a negative effect on your performance. If this applies to you, in the first instance you should talk to your Academic Mentor or Module Tutor, and we will try to help you meet your deadlines. If this not possible, you can make a claim via the [Exceptional Circumstances Procedure](#).

## **Exit Awards**

If you do not complete the whole course, you may be able to use the credits you have achieved towards a lower level or 'exit' award. Please see [Exit Awards](#) for more information on what exit awards are available.

## **Fail**

If you achieve less than the pass mark for your course (40% for undergraduate and 50% for postgraduate), or do not meet the requirements to pass, at your first or re-sit attempt, you will have failed the assessment or module. In some cases, failed modules may be condoned if you have enough credits from other modules. Please see the Condonement definition within this glossary and the [Academic Regulations](#) for more information.

## **Fee Liability**

This is the amount of tuition fees you are responsible for paying to the University.

Your fee liability is based on your registration and how long you remain on your course. If you withdraw, take a break, or change your course, the amount you owe may change. This is usually calculated from the date you formally notify the University of the change. Please see the [Tuition Fee Policy](#) for more information.

## **Feedback**

Information about your learning or performance that helps you understand what you did well, what needs improvement, and how to improve in the future. It can come from the course team, conversations, or digital tools, and may focus on correcting mistakes, developing skills over time, and guiding your next steps in learning. You can find more information by going to the [Assessment Setting, Marking and Review Procedure](#) and the [Academic Skills](#) area.

## **Fitness to Practise**

If you are studying on a professional course, you are expected to demonstrate the values, skills, knowledge, character and good health needed to work safely and effectively in your intended profession. This is known as Fitness to Practise. It applies not only to your conduct while studying, but also to behaviour outside the University which may impact on your suitability for professional practice or the safety of the public.

Please see the [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#) for more information

## **Fitness to Study**

The University wants you to achieve your potential and be successful in your course. As such, it is important that you are well enough and demonstrate appropriate behaviours. Fitness to Study is a process used to support students whose wellbeing, behaviour, or engagement may be affecting their ability to study effectively or may be adversely impacting the learning experience of others. It involves working with students in a supportive and inclusive way to help them succeed.

Please see the [Fitness to Study Procedure](#) for more information

## **Foundation Year**

This is a one-year stage of a course that prepares you for undergraduate study, for example, if you do not yet have the qualifications to start a Bachelor's degree. It is combined with a full undergraduate degree, so completing a foundation year means you will study for four years in total, or five years if your course includes a placement year when studying full-time. A Foundation Year is different from a Foundation Degree, which is a type of award. More information on course types and delivery lengths can be found on the [University Courses](#) page.

## **Further Re-sit/Further Referral**

If you don't pass an assessment after two opportunities, in some circumstances you may be given a further resit, or further referral. This is a third opportunity for you to pass the assessment. See the "What if things don't go to plan?" section within the [Academic Regulations](#) for more information.

## **Gateway to Completion (Apprenticeship)**

This is the point where you, your employer and your training provider confirm you are ready to take your final apprenticeship assessment.

## **Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)**

The [HEAR](#) is an extended digital transcript that provides a single comprehensive record of your achievement. It details all of the modules and credits that you have achieved as part of your course, as well as any qualification you have been awarded. The HEAR also captures some verified non-academic achievements. Your HEAR is designed to be shared securely with prospective employers, educational institutions and other third parties, providing them with digitally verified evidence of your achievements.

## **Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) (Apprenticeship)**

This is the knowledge, practical skills, and professional behaviours you must develop to be competent in your occupation. These are set out in your apprenticeship standard and are what you are assessed against.

## Learning Outcome

This is a clear statement of what you are expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate by the end of your module or course. You can find the learning outcomes for your course on your Blackboard course information page. Module learning outcomes are detailed on your module descriptors.

## Level

The level of study and the modules you are required to complete indicate the complexity of the stage of your course. Undergraduate degrees are normally studied at levels 3, 4, 5, and 6, postgraduate taught courses at level 7 and postgraduate research programmes at level 8. Please see the [Academic Regulations](#) and the [Postgraduate Research Regulations](#) for more information.

## Moderation

This is the process used to check that assessments are marked fairly and consistently across a module or course. It helps to ensure that marking follows the agreed academic standards and criteria, so that all students are assessed accurately and in the same way. This also helps to reduce unfair differences in marking and ensures that any judgement used by markers is appropriate and academically justified. Please see the [Assessment Verification and Moderation Procedure](#) for more information.

## Module

A module is a unit of study which forms part of your course. Every module has a level (levels 3 to 8). The level indicates how complex the modules. Every module is worth a number of credits which contribute to your course and award.

## Module Registration

Module Registration is the process where you choose and confirm the modules you wish to study during the academic year. This may include compulsory (core) and optional modules, which must meet the credit and structure requirements of your course. This step is completed during the enrolment process.

## Non-Contact Agreement (NCA)

A Non-Contact Agreement (NCA) is a way the University helps students maintain a safe and supportive learning environment. These agreements set clear boundaries between students when continued contact could affect wellbeing or study. Students cannot request an NCA; they are issued as part of a University conduct process. Being asked to sign an NCA does not necessarily mean you have done something wrong; it is intended to be a protective and supportive measure.

## Optional Modules

These are modules included within a course structure where you will have a choice about which modules you want to study. Although you have the option to choose a module, you will need to pass whichever module you choose, in order to get the credits needed to pass your course and achieve your award. Optional modules will sometimes be part of a course pathway (see entry below).

## Off-the-Job Training (Apprenticeship)

This is learning that takes place during your paid working hours but away from your normal job tasks. This may include university teaching, training sessions, independent study, or work-based projects that help you develop the knowledge and skills required for your apprenticeship.

## Partner Students

Partner students is a term used to refer to students who are studying on a University of Staffordshire qualification (or University of Staffordshire accredited programme) at a Partner institution.

## Partner Course / Partnerships Course

Partner or Partnerships courses are those delivered at a Partner institution providing opportunities for students to study on a higher education course.

Courses can be delivered in different ways, including:

- **Franchise:** A University of Staffordshire qualification that is approved for delivery at a different site.
- **Validated:** A qualification developed by a Partner institution but accredited by the University.
- **Dual:** A qualification that is developed and approved by more than one institution and upon successful completion of the course, each institution awarding its own qualification.

For more information on Partnerships and Partners working at the University, please visit: [Partnerships](#).

## Pass

In a module, a pass is awarded when you have attempted all assessments and achieved an overall pass mark. You may also be awarded a pass in a module because of condonement. Modules on professional courses leading to registration may require that every assessment is passed before the module is passed.

## Pathways

These are structured pathways within a degree programme, linked to a main 'parent' course, that allow you to specialise in a particular area of study and build specialist knowledge.

Students apply to and initially enrol on the main course, with the final award depending on the pathway chosen (typically at levels 5 or 6), and the combination of modules completed. This will normally include core or compulsory modules, and optional modules. This often leads to a named award with a bracketed specialism, such as BSc (Hons) Business Management (Innovation and Entrepreneurship).

## **Placement**

A placement is a period of practical work experience undertaken as part of a degree programme, often in a professional setting related to the field of study. Placements help you apply academic knowledge in real-world contexts and develop employability skills. There are different types of placements depending on your course, such as short-term integrated placements or year long placements . There may also be optional work experience available in a course.

## **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is presenting work as original, without appropriate acknowledgement of the source. This includes material taken from books, websites, Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, or any other source. It also includes self-plagiarism where you reuse your own previously submitted work, in whole or in part, without proper acknowledgement and present it as new. Both are breaches of academic conduct and allegations of plagiarism will be investigated in accordance with the [Academic Conduct Procedure](#).

This is not the same as paraphrasing which is restating someone else's ideas in your own words while keeping the original meaning, demonstrating understanding and helping to avoid plagiarism (with proper citation).

## **Practical Period (Apprenticeship)**

This is the main part of your apprenticeship where you are developing the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for your role through work, training and study. This period must be completed before you can move to your final apprenticeship assessment.

## **Progress Reviews (Apprenticeship)**

This is a regular meeting between you, your employer, and your training provider. It is used to review your progress, discuss your learning, and plan the next steps in your apprenticeship.

## **PSRB (Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body)**

An organisation that accredits or regulates academic programmes to ensure they meet professional standards. PSRBs may influence curriculum design and assessment, and successful completion of an accredited programme may lead to professional recognition or licensure.

## **Recognition of Prior Learning**

[Recognition of Prior Experience and Learning](#) means that we can place value in any relevant learning or experience which has taken place elsewhere and which may meet some of the learning on your course. This may be from another course, or from your work experience.

## **Referral/Re-Sit Assessment**

This is when you have been given another opportunity to pass a failed assessment within the same academic year. This may involve resitting an exam or resubmitting coursework. You are normally informed of any referral dates via your Award Board results. You do not need to register for the module again, but your marks will be capped at the minimum pass mark. This is 40% for an undergraduate module and 50% for a postgraduate module. Referral/Re-Sit assessments must be completed by a set deadline, in line with the University's [Academic Regulations](#).

## **Registration**

Registration is when you have formally enrolled with the University and are considered to be an active student. It confirms that you meet the requirements to study and allows you to access teaching, learning resources, and University services. You must maintain your registration throughout your course to remain a student.

## **Re-sit (Referral)**

If you don't pass an assessment at the first opportunity, you will be given a resit, or referral. This is a second opportunity for you to pass the assessment. See the "What if things don't go to plan?" section within the [Academic Regulations](#) for more information.

## **Restudy Module**

This is an opportunity to study a failed module again, including all classes and assessments, as if for the first time in the next Academic Year. You will need to register for the module again and attend all scheduled activities and sessions. See the "What if things don't go to plan?" section within the [Academic Regulations](#) for more information.

## **Repeat Year / Repeat Stage**

A repeat year is when you are given the opportunity to study a full stage of your course again as if for the first time. You will need to re-register for the stage and attend all scheduled sessions and activities. See the "What if things don't go to plan?" section within the [Academic Regulations](#) for more information.

## **Results**

You will receive your official results through e:Vision; this is your formal notification of marks and academic progression. This will include any information and required actions, such as reassessment dates. The marks shown in Blackboard are provisional only, and are not confirmed until your formal results have been published in e:Vision.

## Second Marking

This is when a piece of assessed work is reviewed by a second tutor to check that the mark is fair, accurate, and consistent with the assessment criteria and academic standards. This is part of the University's moderation process and helps ensure that all students are assessed fairly. Not all work is second-marked, but at least 50% of larger assessments such as dissertations and final-year projects, and a sample of other assessments, are always included. If there are differences in the marks given, these are reviewed and resolved to ensure that there is consistency across the cohort.

## Semester

This is when the academic year is divided into two main teaching periods, usually lasting around 12 to 16 weeks, during which teaching, learning and assessments take place. University of Staffordshire operates a semester-based system and semester dates, including start and end dates, are set by the University, and may include scheduled breaks. Semester 1 typically runs from September to January, and Semester 2 runs from January to May. Some courses may include a third semester during the summer period, from May to September.

## Stage

Postgraduate courses are broken down into stages. Each stage needs to be passed before you can progress on to the next stage. Your course information will show you the stages of your course.

## Student Inclusion Plan (SIP)

A [Student Inclusion Plan](#) is a plan agreed between you and the University that outlines the reasonable adjustments and recommendations to reduce barriers to your studies. These may relate to a disability, additional need, or other factors that affect your ability to study.

## Suspension

A Student Suspension is when the University places restrictions on a student's access to teaching, campus, and/or placement activity. This is a precautionary measure and is only used when the University considers it necessary to safeguard the student, other students or staff, or the wider community. Suspensions are normally issued where there are concerns about possible breaches of the [Student Conduct](#), [Fitness to Study or Fitness to Practise Procedures](#), or where there is a police investigation. Please see the [Student Suspension Procedure](#) for more information.

## Teach Out

Teach out is when a course is closed to new students, but current students can continue and complete their studies. The University will continue to provide teaching, assessments, and support during this time.

## **Transcript**

See 'Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)'

## **Tuition Fees**

These are the charges you need to pay to study to the University. These fees usually cover the cost of teaching, learning resources, and access to University facilities.

The amount you pay will depend on factors such as your course, level of study, and fee status, for example, home or international. Please see the [Tuition Fee and Payment Policy](#) for more information.

## **University Award Board for Exceptions (UABE)**

The University Award Board for Exceptions (UABE) is the University's evidence-based process for considering exceptional cases where a decision needs to be made outside of the normal regulations. The UABE will consider only the most exceptional cases.

## **Upheld**

You may hear this term in relation to an appeal or an exceptional circumstances claim. If your appeal or claim is upheld, this means that we agree that your circumstances meet the University's expectations for exceptionality, or the expectations for an appeal. If your appeal or claim is not upheld, this means that the circumstances do not meet the relevant expectations.

## **Validation**

Validation is a formal process through which the University decides that a programme of study (content, teaching / learning and assessment) is of an appropriate standard and quality to lead to one of its qualifications.

## **Verification**

This is the process of checking that assessment briefs and tasks are clear, fair, and appropriate. It helps make sure that assessments meet the required academic standards, are inclusive, and give students a proper opportunity to show how they have met the learning outcomes at the right level.

## **Withdrawal**

Withdrawal is when you permanently leave your course before you have completed it. This can happen if you choose to leave, or if the University concludes that you have stopped engaging, for example, by not attending. The University may withdraw you if you do not meet the requirements to pass your course. If this happens, we will check whether you are eligible for an exit award based on the credits you have achieved.

If you withdraw or have been withdrawn, you may still need to pay some of your tuition fees. The amount owed is normally calculated based on the date you formally notify the University of your withdrawal. Please see the [Tuition Fee and Payment Policy](#) for more information.

