

Glossary of Graduate Terms

This is a list of must-know terms for graduate students

Quick Glance

ABD	FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)	Personnel Action Form (PAF)
Academic Year	Fellowship	Ph.D.
Appointment	Financial Aid Package	Postdoctoral Fellowship
Assistantship	Forbearance	Preliminary Exams (Prelims)
Chair	FTE (Full Time Equivalency)	Program Advisor
COE	Full-Time Enrollment (Academic Year)	Program of Study
Committee	Graduate Assistant (GA)	Proposal if Prospectus
Comprehensive Exams (Comps)	Grant	Proposal Defense
Curriculum Vita (CV)	IRB (Institutional Review Board)	Research Assistantship (RA)
D1	International Teaching Assistant (ITA) Exam	Stipend
D2	M.A.	Teaching Assistantship (TA)
Defense	Master's Degree	Thesis
Discipline	Mentor Program	Teaching and Learning (T&L)
Dissertation	Minimum Enrollment	
Doctorate Degree (Doctoral)	Office of Graduate Studies	
ED.D.		
ED.M.		
ELCP		

ABD: Term used to describe a doctoral student who has completed All coursework and preliminary exams But has not completed their Dissertation (All But Dissertation).

Academic Year: The academic year at WSU consists of two semesters, Fall and Spring. Fall semester begins in August and Spring semester begins in January.

Appointment: Term generally refers to an appointment to a teaching assistantship (TA) or research assistantship (RA). Also see Assistantship.

Assistantship: A form of financial aid in which the graduate student is paid for work performed, work which is often related to the student's studies or area of specialization. A research assistantship (R.A.) pays a student to assist a professor on an experiment or research project; a teaching assistantship (T.A.) pays a student to teach sections or classes of undergraduate courses or to help faculty grade papers and examinations.

Chair: Another term of reference to your academic advisor. This person is formally chosen through filing your Program of Study and will direct your research and/or examination process. See also Program Advisor.

Glossary of Graduate Terms

COE:	A common abbreviation you will see often for the College of Education.
Committee:	A thesis/dissertation committee consists of three faculty members. One faculty member is identified as the chair or thesis/dissertation advisor of the committee. The chair is your primary contact and is responsible for guidance during your degree. This may or may not be your program advisor. See handout on how to choose your committee for more information.
Comprehensive Exams (Comps):	The comprehensive exams for EdM or MA students taking the non-thesis option include a written exam and may include an oral defense. The written exam tests understanding of course work and knowledge gained in specialty areas.
Curriculum Vita (CV):	A special type of resume traditionally used within the academic community. Earned degrees, teaching and research experience, publications, presentations, and related activities are featured. Unlike a resume, a CV tends to be longer and more informational than promotional in tone.
D1:	See Proposal Defense
D2:	See Defense
Defense:	Also known as D2 for dissertation defense or T2 for thesis defense. This is the final examination on a graduate student's dissertation or thesis and the final requirement for the Ed.D, Ph.D. and M.A. The graduate student explains and defends for informed questioners the accuracy and significance of the research and arguments in her/his dissertation or thesis.
Discipline:	A broad field of study, such as counseling psychology, educational psychology, cultural studies and social thought, or language, literacy and technology.
Dissertation:	A dissertation is a substantial work of independent original research, at the doctoral level, which makes a contribution to the current body of knowledge in a scholarly field. A dissertation usually consists of an abstract, introduction with statement of problem, literature review, methods, results, discussion, limitations, and references (not necessarily in this order). Other sections may or may not be necessary depending on your individual research. Your chair will guide you further with regard to the details of your dissertation and all Graduate School guidelines must be followed.
Doctorate Degree (Doctoral):	Another word for the Ed.D. (Doctorate of Education) or Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy in Education) degree. Those who earn the Ed.D. or Ph.D. are entitled to use the title "Doctor."
ED.D.:	See Doctorate.

Glossary of Graduate Terms

ED.M.:	See Master's Degree
ELCP:	A common abbreviation for the Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling Psychology in the College of Education.
FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid):	The needs analysis annual application for federal student aid programs. The FAFSA is due around March of every year for the following year.
Fellowship:	A fellowship is money given to the student usually with no WSU work expectations. However, there may be additional guidelines to follow set forth by the granting agency.
Financial Aid Package:	A "package" is any combination of scholarships, grants, loans, and work funds used by the postsecondary institution to assist the student in meeting the cost of education.
Forbearance:	Permitting the temporary cessation of repayments of loans, allowing an extension of time for making loan payments, or accepting smaller loan payments than were previously scheduled.
FTE (Full Time Equivalency):	The number of hours an employee is expected to work. Forty hours per week is full time or 1.0 FTE. Twenty hours per week is half time or .50 FTE. Assistantships are usually considered half time employment (20 hours per week).
Full-Time Enrollment (Academic Year):	Enrollment in a minimum of twelve graduate level credits. The normal load for a graduate student is 12-16 credit hours per semester. For those on assistantship the minimum is 10 graduate level credits with the average student on assistantship enrolling in 12. Note: in order to be eligible for financial aid you must be enrolled in a minimum number of graded credits. Be aware of this number for academic year and summer terms.
Graduate Assistant (GA):	Graduate assistants are required to work 20 hours per week during the semester in which they receive the assistantship. Graduate assistants are required to work 20 hours per week during the semester in which they receive the assistantship.
Grant:	Money given to the student with or without WSU work expectations. However, there may be additional guidelines to follow set forth by the granting agency.

Glossary of Graduate Terms

IRB (Institutional Review Board):	The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Washington State University (WSU) is responsible for the review and approval of all projects involving human subjects. The IRB is charged with protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects to ensure that all are treated physically, psychologically and socially in such a way as to minimize embarrassment and stress, and to avoid harm or other negative effects in compliance with the federal, state and university regulations. All projects involving human subjects conducted by WSU faculty, staff and students must be approved by the IRB regardless of the funding source or location and prior to initiating any portion of the activity. It is especially important that graduate students who use data from human subjects for theses and dissertations be fully aware of this policy. Failure to comply with the IRB review may make it impossible for these documents to be accepted by the Graduate School.
International Teaching Assistant (ITA) Exam:	An exam taken through the Intensive American Language Center in order for them to receive a teaching assistantship.
M.A.:	See Master's Degree
Master's Degree:	Another word for the Ed.M. (Masters of Education) or M.A. (Master of Arts in Education). The degree of professional certification in a field, following the bachelor's. A master's curriculum usually requires one to three years of course work and may involve a thesis or limited research project as the final requirement. The master's is not often a prerequisite for admission to a doctorate program.
Mentor Program:	The mentor program is an informal program in the College of Education where returning graduate students are paired up with new graduate students. This program is designed to provide a resource for new students during their first year of graduate school and/or their TA assignment.
Minimum Enrollment:	If you are a TA or RA you must be enrolled in a minimum of 10 credit hours in order to be considered full time and get your tuition waiver. If you are done with coursework you need to be enrolled in a minimum of 2 credit hours in order to defend.
Office of Graduate Studies:	The office in the College of Education who provides record-keeping, disseminates application information, and provides professional program assistance and support for prospective and current students in all College of Education graduate degree programs.
Personnel Action Form (PAF):	A form you will need to fill out if you are employed by WSU.

Glossary of Graduate Terms

Ph.D.:	See Doctorate.
Postdoctoral Fellowship:	A type of position available in some disciplines (especially sciences) to individuals who have just completed the Ph.D. and wish to continue research in a university. Some "postdocs" require teaching, others encourage fellows to dedicate themselves exclusively to research.
Preliminary Exams (Prelims):	Written and oral exams taken by doctoral students. These exams are taken near the end of their coursework. The exam is designed by the student's committee to measure and reflect the specific areas and methods of each program of study. The written component will take place over a week and will vary in length from 12-16 hours. The oral exam may follow and must be conducted by the last date to take it according to the WSU academic calendar.
Program Advisor:	The faculty member appointed to mentor and guide you through the completion of your graduate degree. This person may or may not become the chair of your committee.
Program of Study:	A form accessed from the Graduate School web site that must be filed with the Graduate School by your second semester of enrollment. It indicates the degree sought, general topic area, committee members, and course work plan. It must be approved and signed by your committee members, the chair of your department (Dr. Ward in ELCP or Dr. Shinew in T&L) and the Dean of the Graduate School (Dr. Howard Grimes).
Proposal if Prospectus:	Before research has begun, students taking the thesis/dissertation option must orally present their research proposal to their committee. A proposal usually consists of an abstract, statement of problem, literature review, methods, expected results, and references (not necessarily in this order). The chair of your committee will be able to guide you further with regard to the details of your proposal.
Proposal Defense:	Also known as D1 for dissertation proposal or T1 for thesis proposal. An oral presentation of your research proposal to your committee members. This must be done before research can begin (i.e., data collection).
Research Assistantship (RA):	Occasionally, faculty will hire graduate students to assist them with research projects. These projects are usually funded by grants or outside agencies. An RA may be quarter time (10 hours per week) or half time (20 hours per week) depending on the assistantship and it may or may not include a tuition waiver.
Stipend:	A grant of money to a graduate student for use toward expenses above tuition and fees. Graduate fellowships sometimes pay both tuition and a stipend, which can be applied toward living expenses.

Glossary of Graduate Terms

Teaching Assistantship (TA): All 1/2 time (20 hours per week) teaching assistantships come with tuition waivers and require that you instruct two class sessions per semester. These are awarded per semester and usually at the start of fall. There may be situations where you may have a quarter time (10 hours per week) TA assignment instructing one class.

Thesis: A thesis is a substantial master's level paper presenting independent research, which makes a contribution to the current body of knowledge in a scholarly field. A thesis usually consists of an abstract, introduction with statement of problem, literature review, methods, results, discussion, limitations, and references (not necessarily in this order). Other sections may or may not be necessary depending on your individual thesis. Your chair will guide you further with regard to the details of your thesis and all Graduate School guidelines must be followed.

Teaching and Learning (T&L): A common abbreviation for the Department of Teaching and Learning in the College of Education.

Adapted from N. Schmidt (2004) Edward R. Murrow School of Communication Glossary of Graduate Terms and by Women's Studies faculty (2011).