University Vocabulary - Helpful Definitions

Universities use a language that may seem intimidating and difficult to interpret at first. The following definitions will help you understand the terminology used at VIU.

A-Z List of Common University Terms

A

**Academic Advising**
Educational Counsellors in VIU’s Advising Centre help prospective and current VIU students to explore, make program and course choices that align with their personal and professional goals, and to problem solve and enhance their educational experience. Contact the [Advising Centre](#) for information and support as you navigate the world of post-secondary education. Registered students from first year on may consult [Degree Advisors](#) regarding Majors/Minors, program completion and additional opportunities.

**Academic Penalty-Free Course Drop Date**
Each semester has two drop course deadlines. There is a deadline for dropping a course before tuition is calculated for the semester. The second deadline, the academic penalty-free deadline is the last day to drop a course and not receive a mark for it. Check these and other deadlines on the [Schedule of Dates](#). You can drop courses by either deadline via your online [student record](#).
**Academic Year**
The Academic Year at VIU consists of the Fall (September – December) and Spring (January – April) semesters. [Summer session](#), from May – August, is optional and offers 14 week and compressed 7 week courses. Some programs do not follow the typical academic year.

**ACCUPLACER**
[ACCUPLACER](#) is a self-study exam that VIU will accept as equivalent to English 12.

**Academic Code of Conduct**
VIU’s Student [Academic Code of Conduct](#) outlines expectations for every VIU student regarding standards of academic integrity and responsibility and the consequences of violations.

**Admission**
Before you can register for courses you must be admitted into a program. In order to be considered for admission, you must submit an application to VIU, pay the application fee, submit the required academic documents, and submit any other items that may be required for admission to a specific program (questionnaire, portfolio, resume, etc.). Here is how to [apply](#).

**Alumni**
People who have graduated or attended a particular university or school. [VI U’s Alumn i Assoca tion](#) is focused on establishing a strong, vibrant network of VIU graduates.

**Assigned Texts**
The books chosen by the professor for your class. Make sure you have the full information before buying books as your professor may require a certain edition from a certain publisher (ex. Not just
Shakespeare’s Plays but the 16th edition of the Collected Plays by W.W. Norton And Company). The VIU Bookstore provides lists of your required textbooks ahead of each semester.

Audit Option
To take a course for no academic credit. Audit students attend class, complete reading assignments but do not receive a mark, and do not need to write examinations.

Bachelor's Degree
Generally, this is a first degree in an undergraduate program. At VIU, it normally takes 4 years to complete if you are studying as a full time student (4 years of classes from September - December and January - April). This typically means that you are registered in 5 courses per term, as you will need a minimum of 120 credits to graduate with a VIU bachelor's degree. See VIU Degree Programs.

Bursary
Money awarded to a student based on financial need and reasonable academic standing. More Bursary info.

Calendar
VIU’s official calendar is our online calendar. It lists all VIU programs, by credential or subject area, and provides program outlines, course descriptions and additional admissions information. If a discrepancy occurs between any printed information and the online calendar, the online calendar would prevail.
**Certificate program**
A program that can be completed in one year of full-time study, or less. More information is [here](#).

**Chair**
The Chair is a faculty member designated as the administrative head of an academic department or unit, acting as the department representative in a number of capacities.

**Convocation**
A formal ceremony normally held twice each year at VIU, after Fall and Spring semesters, where degrees, diplomas and certificates are awarded to students who have completed their programs. Students are responsible to ensure they meet the graduation requirements, must [apply to graduate](#) by the deadline specified, and pay the appropriate graduation fee.

**Co-operative Education (Co-op)**
[Co-operative Education](#) is full-time, paid work experience that alternates with academic terms. One of the Experiential Education options at VIU. Contact the Campus Career Centre for more info.

**Corequisite**
A specific course or requirement that must be taken at the same time as a prescribed course.

**Course Load**
A full course load is normally 5 courses per semester, or 15 credits. No student may register in more than 18 credits per semester unless the Dean of the relevant program provides written permission. A full-time student is one enrolled in a minimum of 60 percent course load (9 semester credits – usually 3 courses).

**Course Outline**
See Syllabus
Counselling
Generally refers to one-on-one assistance with personal issues. In addition to helping with personal issues, Counselling Services can help with learning and career concerns and promotes success and wellness. A student would go to the Advising Centre for assistance with matters like selecting courses or choosing academic programs.

Credit Value
The unit value used to assign academic credit for a course, such as English 115 (3 credits).

Dean
The person who acts as the head of a faculty.

Degree
The academic credential that is awarded to a student who has completed a particular course of study. There are three types of degrees: bachelor's degree (also known as undergraduate degree), master's degree and doctoral degrees.

Degree Audit
The process of matching the courses taken to the specific program requirements. The GPS link in the online student record is an unofficial method that determines which program requirements have been met. Degree Advisors must sign off on degree completion requirements.

Degree English Requirement
All students in undergraduate degree programs at VIU are required to complete 6 credits of first-year English composition and
literature courses or specified alternatives or exemptions, noted here.

**Diploma program**
*Diploma programs* comprise at least 60 semester credit hours.

**Discipline**
An academic discipline is the subject of study within an academic department.

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**E**

**Elective**
An optional course that is not individually specific to your program.

**Exam Schedule**
There are final examination periods at the end of each semester. These are posted online and at the Registration Centre one month prior to exams.

**Exchange**
Exchange is one *Education Abroad* option for VIU students.

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**F**

**Faculty**
A group of related departments. VIU currently has eight *Faculties*.

**Faculty Member**
A member of the regular academic teaching staff.

**First-year Standing**
Students who have completed fewer than 24 university credits.
**Full-Time Student**  
(see Course Load above)

**GPS**  
The online Goal Planning System in a VIU student record outlines the program requirements needed for degree completion and matches a student's personal course record against those requirements. Find this in your online student record menu.

**Grade Point**  
A numerical value given to letter grades used to rate academic performance. Students are assigned a letter grade for each course taken, and each letter grade carries a grade point value.

**Grade Point Average (GPA)**  
The GPA is the total grade points for all courses taken divided by total credits earned. Here is how to calculate a student’s GPA. VIU requires academic students to maintain a GPA or 2.0 (C average) each academic year. See [Probation Policy](#) also.

**Graduate Student**  
A student who has received a bachelor's degree or equivalent and who is enrolled in a program leading to a master's or doctoral degree.

**Interdisciplinary**  
Combining studies and research from different subject areas.

**International Exchange**
Opportunities for students to pursue some of their studies at another institution, often in another country, but still as a registered VIU student. See Education Abroad for details.

J

K

L

Language Proficiency Index (LPI)
Most VIU academic programs require English 12, or equivalent, with C grade or higher for admission purposes. The LPI and ACCUPLACER are two self-study exam options accepted at VIU in lieu of English 12.

Letter Grade
VIU courses are graded with letter grades (A+, A, A-, B+, etc.). These will appear on your VIU transcript. Check your course syllabus to see how you will be marked in each course. Here is VIU’s lettergrade/per cent grade info.

Lower Level Courses
Courses numbered 100 to 299.

M

Master's Degree
Students working towards this designation (ex. MA, MSc, MBA, etc) are called "graduate students." Usually, this is the degree earned after a bachelor's degree that precedes a doctoral degree.

Majors/Minors
Your area of specialization within in a degree program. VIU degree students must complete at least one Major or two Minors to meet graduation requirements. (ex. BA Major in Philosophy; BSc Minors
in Biology/Chemistry).
**Online Registration**

*Online registration* through a VIU online student record allows students who have been admitted to VIU to register for courses via the internet. Students are assigned a student number and PIN.

**Online Student Record**

Most registration services are available in a student’s *online record*. Students can add/drop courses, update address, see grades, pay fees, etc.

**Online Timetable**

Provides students with current *course timetable* information via the Web, including current information on open sections and the number of wait-listed students

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the intentional unacknowledged use of someone else’s words, ideas or data. See *Student Academic Code of Conduct* on this link under Academic Information.

**Probation**
in Biology/Chemistry).

Students register in any number of credits who earn less than a 2.0 GPA ("C") average over Fall and Spring semesters will be placed on probation when they register next. See details.

Part-Time Student
A student taking less than a fulltime course load. This has implications for student loan and other educational funding. See Funding for Part-Time Students.

Permission
A course with PERM under Registration Restrictions (RSTR) in the timetable requires permission from the Department. Registration is done through the Department. Permission of Instructor is a separate issue: it is an option for course prerequisite.

Personal Education Number (PEN)
A unique number which is assigned to all high school students in the Province of British Columbia. Applicants from BC are asked to provide their PEN at the time of application. High school counsellors can provide this information to Grade 12 students.

Personal Identification Number (PIN)
A unique password that is created by applicants at the time of application that allows secure access to a VIU student record.

Policy
A definite course of action adopted for the sake of expediency, facility etc. See VIU’s policy index for a list of institutional policies.

Prerequisite
A preliminary requirement which must be met before registration in a particular course. Course outlines list prerequisites where applicable.

Program
R

**Reading Break (Study Days)**
A time in the middle of term (February) when no classes are held. Reading break is normally 3 days in February. Reading break is designed to give you time to study and complete assignments. See [Schedule of Dates](#).

**Registered Student**
A person enrolled in at least one credit course at this university.

**Reserves**
Registration in a course or section is limited to a certain kind of student based on factors such as program, year and degree.

S

**Scholarship**
A student award based on academic merit or excellence. Repayment is not required. See [Financial Aid & Awards](#).

**Section**
Many popular courses are divided into multiple classes or *sections* with different professors and time slots. There may be several sections (Section N01, N02, N03) of the same course (FRCH 100). Some courses include both a lecture section and lab section. In this case you are required to attend both lecture and lab.

Ex: ACCT 100 F15N04 (accounting 100 course, Fall 2015, Nanaimo
The series of courses of study organized to fulfill the requirements for a particular degree.

**Seminar**
A small discussion group, either a focused part of a class (where the class is divided into discussion units), or a limited-enrollment class where discussion is emphasized.

**Semester**
Period of time during which the University offers courses. At VIU, there are three academic sessions each year: Fall (Sept – Dec); Spring (Jan – April); Summer May – Aug (summer is optional, offering a small range of 14 week or compressed 7 week courses).

**Student Loan**
A sum of money that must be repaid. Loans to university students are obtained through the government.

**Student Union Building**
Building 193. The [VIU Student Union](http://www.viu.ca/studentunion) offers a number of supports for students and is your voice on campus.

**Syllabus**
At the beginning of a course the professor will give you a syllabus, or course outline, which will include information on what you will study, when assignments are due, and how grades will be assigned.

**Transcript**
An official copy of a student's academic record. Generally, applicants are required to submit official transcripts of their past
study to determine if they can be admitted to VIU.

**Transfer Credit**
Credit assigned for courses successfully completed at the post secondary level. For BC Colleges/universities consult the current [BC Transfer Guide](#).

**Unclassified Studies**
[Unclassified](#) students do not meet regular university admission requirements.

**Undergraduate Degree**
The first level of degree a student can receive at VIU is a bachelor's degree (ex. BA, BSc). A bachelor's degree normally requires a minimum of 120 credits of coursework.

**Undergraduate Student**
A student registered in an undergraduate Faculty in a program leading to a Bachelor's degree or an undergraduate diploma or certificate program.

**Upper Level Courses**
Courses numbered 300 to 499.

**Visiting Student**
A student who is taking certain courses at one institution for transfer to their home university, to complete a credential at the home university. Visiting students may submit a Letter of Permission from their home school, in lieu of transcripts. The LOP
proves the visiting student meets course prerequisites and is a guarantee of how those courses transfer back to their home institution.

**Waitlists**
As course sections may fill during the registration period, many courses have a waitlist option available. Students who choose to waitlist for a course will be offered, in their waitlisted order, spaces that become available. If you are on a waitlist, you must follow the [Waitlist Procedure](#) to claim a seat that opens up for you.

**Work-Op**
Vancouver Island University’s Student Work Opportunities program is designed to create diverse and positive work opportunities, which will provide financial assistance to Vancouver Island University students. The program will provide employment opportunities that support experiential learning and skill development that will be mutually beneficial to students and to the institution. Students may work only one Work-Op position per semester. Exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Year**
The level within a program of study, or the level of the course. For example, First year student, First year course (PHYS 111).