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Academic year

The university year. The academic year at The University of Manchester runs from September to June. It is divided into two semesters of teaching, with holidays at Christmas and Easter.

Admissions

The admissions office of any university or college handles the applications and enrolments.

Admissions Tutor

The person in a department or faculty who is responsible for applications and other enquiries about the admissions process.

Adult Dependant's Grant

If you have husband, wife or partner or another adult member of your family who depends on you financially, you may be entitled to this grant. The amount will depend on your income and that of your dependants. This help does not have to be repaid is paid to you with your student loan.

A levels

The exams most students take at the end of school or college (further education) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Usually, students heading for university take three or four A levels, or the equivalent, which include AS levels taken over two years, Highers in Scotland, the International Baccalaureate, or new qualifications such as vocational A levels.

Alumni

Former students who have graduated from a particular university are described as an alumni. Being an alumnus of The University of Manchester will give you continued access to the University's Careers Services.

Athletics Union/Sports Union

The organisation that runs student sports clubs and sometimes sports facilities.

BA - Bachelor of Arts

An undergraduate degree that takes three years to complete. BA Hons means Bachelor of Arts with Honours.

BEng - Bachelor of Engineering

An undergraduate degree that usually takes three years to complete. BEng Hons means Bachelor of Engineering with Honours.

BSc - Bachelor of Science

A type of undergraduate degree that usually takes three years to complete. BSc Hons means Bachelor of Science with Honours.

BUSA

The British Universities Sports Association.

BUSC

British Universities Snow-sports Council.

Bursary

A kind of scholarship. This contributes towards your fees and/or living costs whilst you are studying.

Campus

The area of land on which the university buildings are built. The University of Manchester has two campuses: North Campus (Sackville Street Building) and South Campus (Oxford Road).

CDL (Career Development Loan)

A deferred-payment bank loan, like a student loan, but aimed at those who aren't entitled to one, whose employers aren't already footing the bill and who can't afford to pay the fees themselves.

Chaplain

Chaplains are on hand to offer religious guidance and support to those who want it.

Childcare grant

The Childcare Grant is for students with dependent children in registered and accredited childcare. How much help they get will depend on their income. Any help will not be counted by the DSS in working out benefit entitlement. Up to 85% of a childcare bill could be paid for.

Civic university

Universities such as The University of Manchester, which were established before 1992 and have strong associations with one of the UK's great cities.

Clearing

When you get your A-level results, if you don't get the grades required by your chosen universities, you can go through clearing. This is the system operated by UCAS to allocate students places on courses that still have vacancies after the publication of the A level results.

College

A vague word that could mean (a) a sixth form college where students do A levels, (b) a semi-self-contained unit in a collegiate university, (c) an institution of higher education that isn't allowed to call itself a university or (d) any university, college of higher education, its buildings and/or its administrative authorities.

Combined honours degree

An undergraduate degree course that involves several subject areas - usually three - in approximately equal parts (to start with at any rate).

Course

A programme of study leading to a degree or other qualification. Internally, The University of Manchester calls all its courses 'programmes' as in 'programmes of study'.

Course Units

A course unit is generally worth 20 credits and is concerned with a specific area of study for example 'Introduction to the Sociology of Religion.' In some schools, course units are referred to as modules.

Credits

All modules at the University of Manchester are generally 10 or 20 credits. Each academic year, at least 120 credits must be obtained to pass the course. In the final year of study, you may complete a dissertation which will normally be at least 40 credits.

Degree

A higher education qualification of a certain level. They are split into undergraduate degrees or first degrees which are usually bachelorships, (although we also offer undergraduate masters degrees which usually require another year of study) and various postgraduate degrees (masters, doctorates, PGCEs and so on).

Dissertation

An essay or report usually up to ten thousand words on a specific subject. Usually completed during a course of study, often in the final year of study.

Distance learning

Allows you to learn through self-study, using printed materials, CDROM and web-based resources.

Faculty

Universities are usually divided into departments or schools (see above). Schools and departments are grouped together into faculties. At the University of Manchester there are academic faculties: The Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences, The Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences, The Faculty of Humanities and The Faculty of Life Sciences.

Finals

Finals are the final exams taken by students at the end of their study.

First

First class honours degree - the highest grade attainable..

Foundation year

If your qualifications are not in the right subjects or at the right grades to meet the entry requirements for your chosen course (usually a science or engineering course), you may be able to do one year's foundation study. If you complete this to the required standard you will be guaranteed a place on the first year of your chosen course.

Freshers

First year students in their first few weeks at university.

Further education (FE)

Further education is what comes after primary and secondary education, i.e. it's usually what 16 to 18 year-olds do. A levels, Highers and NVQs etc.

Gap year

Many students decide to take a year off - or a gap year - after school or college and before going to university. Usually spent gaining work experience, earning money or travelling.

Graduand

A student in the few months between finishing their course and attending graduation.

Graduate

Someone who has successfully completed a degree course and been awarded their degree.

Graduation

The ceremony where you're officially awarded your degree.

Grants

Students used to get grants which paid for their tuition and grants which went towards their living costs. They still exist in Scotland for Scottish students only. Nowadays the usual source of funding is the student loan.

GTTR (Graduate Teacher Training Registry)

The GTTR processes applications for PGCE courses

Education

A Bachelor of Education degree trains teachers to teach, within a specialised field at any rate (usually determined by age group, academic subject, or both). Some take a 'normal' first degree (BA, BSc, etc) instead and study for a further year to get a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE). .

Halls

At most colleges, when students talk about halls, they mean 'halls of residence', the accommodation blocks which traditionally provide cleaners, heat, light and electricity and a variety of amenities such as launderettes, common rooms and TV lounges.

Higher education (HE)

After primary school, there's secondary school, then further education (A-levels, highers etc.) and, finally, higher education which takes place at universities, colleges of higher education and so on. HE includes undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, higher national diplomas (HNDs) and a few other things like certain vocational qualifications (such as LCPs for lawyers, for instance).

Highers

In Scotland, students take Highers as the equivalent of A levels.

HND

The Higher National Diploma is based on vocational studies, generally aimed at preparing students for a particular career or industry. It can lead on to, or count towards, a degree course.

Hons

A degree with Honours.

Honours degree

Most degrees are honours degrees and, depending on how you do in your exams or coursework, are split into: first class honours (or firsts), upper second class or 2.i (pronounced 'two-one'), lower-second class or 2.ii (a 'two-two', more commonly called a 'Desmond') and third class honours, or a

third. If a student does badly, but not quite badly enough to fail, that's when they might not get an honours degree, but an ordinary degree instead.

Joint Honours

Not an honours degree in cooking big roasts, but, like a combined honours degree a course involving more than one subject. In this case, two subjects.

Local Education Authority (LEA)

Responsible for student loans, means testing etc.

Learning Resources Centre (LRC)

Basically, a library, but with more emphasis on non-book facilities such as e-journals, PC access and multimedia archives.

Lecture

Lectures can be given to quite large audiences, especially during the first year of a degree, or to quite small groups as in the case of students who attend specialised options in their final year. You would not usually ask questions in the middle of a lecture, especially if large numbers of students are involved, but many lecturers will invite questions at the end. Many lecturers make their notes available online after a lecture through the University's web and e-learning tools and this can help to supplement the notes you take during the class.

Lecturer

Lecturers are members of university staff who are responsible for the teaching of university courses and in helping students to learn.

Levels

Some course will use the term 'Levels' rather than years so Level One is equivalent to the first year of a full-time degree, and so on.

LGBT

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender.

Manchester Bursary

The Manchester Bursary is available to any student who is registered on an eligible undergraduate degree course at the university and who has had a full financial assessment carried out by student finance. The bursary may be in cash, or students may receive an accommodation discount.

Mature student

A mature student is anyone aged 21 or over when they start a university course.

MA - Master of Arts

A type of degree that leads to a postgraduate qualification (i.e. a higher degree than a BA).

MSc - Master of Science

A type of degree that leads to a postgraduate qualification (i.e. a higher degree than a BSc).

Means-testing

Local Education Authorities used to assess how much money students have at their disposal before handing out any money for their tuition fees. Student loans for maintenance are based on a means test.

Module

A module is a single unit of study, such as 'Slavery in the Ancient World' or 'Survey Design.' A module usually lasts for one semester. On average, a module normally consists of 20 credits. In some schools, modules are referred to as 'course units.'

Nightline

Nightline is a confidential listening and information service run for students by students. Nightline also provides general information such as bus timetables or details of clubs in the city. They also provide contact numbers for a wide range of places connected with student life, such as who you need to contact about your student loan. The number is available on the back of your library card

NMAS

The Nursing and Midwifery Admissions Service. NMAS process applications for nursing and midwifery courses at higher education institutions in England.

NUS

The National Union of Students, provides research, welfare information and services to those SUs which are affiliated. NUS is also the national body which represents and campaigns on behalf of students.

NUS Card

You'll get your NUS card from your students' union. The card can get you into nightclubs and museums for free or money off very useful things like train tickets or books.

NVQ

The National Vocational Qualification is usually taken when you've already got a job (or work experience). They're taught at an industry-agreed standard, so employers in those industries can be keen if you've got one on your CV.

Open days

An opportunity for prospective students to be shown around the university.

Ordinary degree

An 'ordinary degree' is somewhat less than ordinary, because most students get an honours degree. You only get an ordinary degree if either you decide to aim lower for some reasons or you fail an honours degree, but don't fail so badly you get nothing.

Oxbridge

The collective name for the two oldest universities in the country, Oxford and Cambridge, both collegiate, both traditional and both highly respected.

Periodicals

Many students spend time in the university library reading and researching for essays. As well as books the library contains specialist periodicals or journals which are published on a regular basis and contain articles written mainly by university researchers. These are useful and important sources of information.

Personal tutors

At many, if not most, universities, students are assigned to a personal tutor who is charged with responsibilities beyond the purely academic. The extent of their remit and of their usefulness varies enormously. Some have regular meetings to discuss everything from exams to sex, others have little involvement.

PGCE

A Postgraduate Certificate in Education is a one-year postgraduate course that graduates can take and which qualifies them to become teachers. A PGCE is not the only way to become a teacher - you can also do a four-year Bachelor of Education undergrad degree.

PhD (Doctor of Philosophy)

A Ph.D. is a postgraduate research degree completed by a student who already possess a un undergraduate degree. This is a specialist degree that is usually awarded for at least 3 years of supervised but original research work. A person with a Ph.D. degree uses the title 'Dr.'

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is when someone presents "ideas, work or words of other people" without making it clear where they have come from. In other words, if you take someone else's work and pass it off as your own, you are plagiarising the original author.

Postgraduate/postgrad

A student doing a postgraduate degree, i.e. they've already got one degree and now they're doing another higher one such as a masters degree, a doctorate (PhD) or a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE).

Professor

Often the head of a department/school/faculty. Always well respected in their field of study.

Quad (Quadrangle)

A square surrounded by buildings, usually covered in grass. Usually at the heart of the university.

Reading week

A period during a semester when students can concentrate on their individual work. During this week, no lectures are held.

Redbrick

Refers to a style of building - or a period from around the turn of the century through to the Second World War. Used to describe a university whose main buildings are in that style, and is shorthand for 'not Oxbridge but well established'.

Sabbatical (sabb)

Every year at most universities, a few students take a year off their studies to be employed by the SU. This cohort of students are almost always elected by the other students. Sabbatical positions usually include roles such as SU president, welfare officer, communications officer etc.

Sandwich course

A course that involves vocational experience. Usually it takes a year to fill a sandwich (as a result, most last 4 years).

Semester

A semester is the American word used to describe a term at a University. At Manchester, the university year is divided into two semesters.

Seminar

A seminar is usually a talk or presentation on a subject or piece of research, by either a lecturer, tutor or a guest speaker. Seminars are generally followed by a question and answer session. In some schools, seminars may be compulsory, but in others they are optional and may be attended by students and staff from outside the school or faculty.

School

A school is another word used for department in the University context. Each faculty has a number of schools within it in which a number of related subjects are studied. For example, the school of Arts, Histories and Cultures is part of the faculty of humanities and subjects such as English literature, Classics and Theology are studied within this school.

Single honours

An undergraduate degree involving one main subject.

SLC

Student Loans Company.

Societies (Socs)

Short for 'societies', these are the student clubs which range from serious political battlegrounds to sporting teams, from cultural groups to seriously silly socs.

Student Loans

Low interest loans from the government to help university students pay their living and study costs.

Students' Union (SU)

Almost all universities have a students' union and students are usually automatically members, though they can opt out if they wish. As a rule, an SU is usually a services and representative organisation run by students for students or the building in which such services are housed.

Students' Representative Council/Committee (SRC)

Yet another name for a students' union or part of one, especially the part that focuses on representation.

Tuition fees

Tuition fees are set by the Government and paid to the university directly by you or by the student loans company.

Tutor

An academic who oversees or supervises the work of individual students.

Tutorial

Tutorials usually involve small groups exploring areas in a more informal way and can include students being asked to undertake certain tasks.

UCAS

The Universities & Colleges Admissions Service is the organisation that handles most university applications. Prospective students fill out a UCAS form online (or on paper) and submit it to UCAS who send it to the universities the student wants to apply to. The student then gets offers (or not) and can accept one and an insurance (usually lower) offer. UCAS oversees the process to check no one finds themselves with more than one place and to try to match students with vacancies as efficiently as possible.

Undergraduate

A student doing their first degree.

Union

Usually this is just another name for a students' union or the building in which the students' union and/or its facilities and services are based. As such, it's often the students' main hang-out on campus. .

Vice-Chancellor

Students rarely get to meet them, but basically they run the university. Where there are vice-chancellors, there are also chancellors, who are the heads of the institutions and usually famous.

Viva Voce (generally abbreviated to viva)

A viva voce is an examination which the student has a verbal rather than written examination with an examiner.

Vocational course

Any course that is intended at least to train students for a particular profession, career or job. They often involve practical experience in a work environment, such as placements, or doing projects similar to what goes on in real world jobs.

Welcome Week

The first week at the beginning of a student's university career is known as 'Welcome Week' - it's completely packed with events and activities designed to help students settle in, make friends and to get their bearings on the campus.