

Glossary of Foreign Transcript Evaluations



Transcript Research

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This *Glossary of Foreign Transcript Evaluations* arose out of our desire to assist and educate US institutions when working with international academic, vocational, and professional credentials. Researching educational systems and credentials is our passion, but we recognize that not everyone has the excitement, support, time, or resources we do. As a result, we have created this simple guide as another tool for the admissions officer, registrar, recruiter, education abroad professional, hiring manager, school official, military recruiter, and others who work with those who have earned international credentials as they pursue further opportunities at your institution.

We hope you find this tool valuable as you work to understand the foreign educational documents provided by your applicants. Please let us know what you think. Suggestions are always welcome!

Our best regards,

Peggy Bell Hendrickson, Director, and the entire Transcript Research team

10+2: Some countries in South Asia, particularly India, may refer to their combination of primary and secondary education studies as 10+2. Primary and (lower) secondary education are comprised of 8 years of primary education and 2 years of (lower) secondary education for a total of 10 years. After Grade 10, students attend a junior college to complete 2 years of upper secondary or intermediate education. As a result, this is referred to as 10+2.

3+2: India and other South Asian countries follow a university degree structure where the first degree is often a 3-year Bachelor followed by a 2-year Master, a system locally known as 3+2.

Abitur: The *Abitur*, or *Zeugnis der allgemein Hochschulreife* (Certificate of General University Maturity), is the leaving certificate after upper secondary education in Germany. It is awarded after completion of 12 or 13 years of study, depending on the *lander* (state) and year of graduation.

Academic Year: The academic year refers to the schedule of time during which an institution offers courses. Some academic years are divided into semesters while others are divided into trimesters or quarters. Typically the academic year, or school year, begins in the fall and ends in the summer. In the Southern Hemisphere, that means that the academic year generally follows the calendar year, while the academic year in the Northern Hemisphere typically runs from August/September to the following May/June.

Accreditation: Accreditation is a US mechanism for validating the quality of an institution or program. Some other countries have established separate accrediting boards for their institutions or specific programs, but this is a relatively new concept internationally. Most commonly, foreign institutions that have government recognition are considered comparable to holding the equivalent of US regional accreditation. US accreditation at all levels of education means simply that the institution meets the minimum standards of the accrediting body. These minimum standards are set by the voluntary accrediting body, not law or a government entity. Accreditation is a continuous review process, requiring renewal and re-accreditation after a set period of time. It refers to the accountability of an institution and the mobility of its credits and degrees. See also Institutional Accreditation and Program Accreditation.

Accreditation Mill: Clever diploma mills have invented their own accrediting bodies to add an air of legitimacy to their credentials and to further confuse students who know they need to look for an accredited program but don't know that there are recognized and unrecognized accrediting bodies, much less how to tell the difference. See Also: Diploma Mill.

Advanced Standing: In some countries, secondary school studies may encompass

education that falls beyond the standard high school equivalency level. In those situations, it may be appropriate to consider possible advanced standing for these upper secondary school leavers, akin to advanced standing granted for Advanced Placement courses taken at US high schools.

Affiliated College: Globally, many universities offer their undergraduate degree programs through affiliated colleges. The parent university is the degree-granting authority, but the affiliated college may oversee the actual teaching of the courses. Often, the curriculum and syllabus are determined by the parent university and merely carried out at the affiliated college. In these instances, even the final examinations are typically graded by the parent university. In some situations, however, an affiliated college may prove itself to be an exceptional institution and be granted some level of autonomy in establishing the curriculum; these institutions are usually referred to as autonomous colleges.

Alteration: One type of fraud that is most difficult for the inexperienced evaluator to spot is alteration, or a change to legitimate documents. In some instances, the alteration refers to the student biographical information, where the document is altered from a legitimate student's record to appear to belong to another student entirely. Other common alterations include changing grades or adding program completion.

Apostille: An apostille is used to authenticate public documents to certify the authenticity of the issuing official's signature on the document. This form of authentication was established at the 1961 Hague Convention Abolishing the Requirement of Legalization for Foreign Public Documents. Just as notarized documents in the US only confirm that the copies/signatures appear to be original, an apostille does not confirm the validity of the documents themselves, only that a notarized document appears to have a proper seal and signature.

Attachment to the Diploma: In Russian-based systems of education, the Diploma represents the credential earned, but the Attachment to the Diploma is the transcript of academic record.

Attestations: Attestations are official (or otherwise acceptable) copies of academic credentials. Attested documents are commonly used in India where students are generally only issued one "original" marksheet and degree certificate by the university but may be able to receive multiple official, attested copies. These copies are made by official university personnel authorized to certify that the copies are made from original university-issued documents. Acceptable personnel include the Registrar, Principal (of a college affiliated to a recognized university), Attestation Officer, or Controller of Examinations. Many US higher education institutions and private evaluation companies will also accept attestations that are made by EducationUSA advising centers, US India

Education Foundation, the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, or other education agencies that are trained in the indigenous credentials.

Authenticity: Authenticity in the area of foreign transcript evaluations simply refers to the genuine or legitimate nature of the documents.

Autonomous College: See Affiliated College.

Baccalaureat: In many countries, the (upper) secondary school graduation certificate is known as the Baccalaureate. In some Francophone countries, however, the *Baccalaureat* refers to a post-secondary university credential.

Bachelor: The Bachelor degree is a benchmark credential in the US that represents graduation from a university undergraduate program. This is typically a 4-year program of study representing 120-144 semester credits.

Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery: The MBBS degree is a first professional degree in medicine. In many countries, it does not require prior undergraduate study and may range in duration from 4 to 7 years.

Bachillerato: The *Bachillerato* is an educational credential awarded in many Spanish-speaking countries. While it is often translated as Bachelor or Baccalaureate degree, the *Bachillerato* may be the credential awarded at the end of upper secondary level in some countries and the undergraduate university level in others.

Benchmark Credential: A benchmark credential identifies the point of transition from one level of education to the next. Examples of benchmark credentials in the US education system include high school diploma, Bachelor's degree, and Master's degree.

Benke: In China, *Benke* programs are generally 4 years for full-time study and are typically comprised of 160-190 indigenous credits. Upon successful completion of the coursework and thesis/project, students are awarded the *Benke* Certificate of Graduation. The *Benke* Certificate of Graduation indicates that a student has completed all requirements of the curriculum, the examinations from all courses, and the graduation thesis or project (if applicable). The Bachelor Degree Certificate is awarded after the student completes additional requirements as stipulated by the province and/or higher education institution. Usually, this includes high grade averages on institutionally-designated degree courses, passing the foreign language test, or other requirements. Students may be denied a Bachelor Degree Certificate due to disciplinary action (political activism, academic dishonesty, etc.).

Bogus Institutions: See Diploma Mills.

Bologna Process: The Bologna Process stipulates a Europe-wide educational structure of three cycles: the first cycle (generally called a Bachelor degree but sometimes retains the indigenous name of the first cycle degree within the country) is 3 or 4 years; the second (generally called Master degree) cycle is 2 or 1 year, so that the total of the first and second cycles together is 5 years; and the third cycle is a Doctoral degree. The Bologna Process also stipulates the usage of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. The goal of Bologna-compliant degrees and ECTS credits is to increase transparency and mobility for students traveling within Europe by creating a standard system of credits; providing an official native language and English language diploma supplement that identifies subjects, credits, grades, and the educational system; and employing standardized degree nomenclature at set periods. See also: European Credit Transfer System.

Calendar: In most countries, the Calendar refers to date-oriented information such as the start and end dates of the academic term, final examinations, and other schedule-related information. In some countries, however, the Calendar also includes program information such as degree plans, admissions requirements, grading scales, and other information useful for foreign credentials evaluations.

Carnegie Units: In many US states, high school studies are recorded in terms of Carnegie Units, a method of quantifying coursework so that admissions processes could be standardized. One standard unit represents approximately 120 hours of classroom instruction in a subject, with the assumption that the subject is studied 4-5 periods per week (40-60 minutes per period) during a school year of 36-40 weeks. American high school students typically complete 5-6 Carnegie Units per year.

Carte de Pasante: At public universities in Mexico, students who fulfill the course requirements but not all requirements for a degree may be issued a *carta de pasante*, a letter or diploma stating that a student has completed all (or a specific portion) of the required coursework in a given program of study. The notation *Kardex Complete* on the academic record shows that all courses in the degree program were completed. While the *carta de pasante* is not recognized as an official degree in Mexico and does not provide the full professional or licensure/employment privileges of a degree-holder (though students who have completed all coursework in a particular field may work in the field but not in the full capacity), many universities in Mexico and the US allow applicants who are holding the *carta de pasante* to enroll in graduate degree programs, depending on the missing items. On the other hand, many universities require the actual award of the *Licenciado* degree for admission into a graduate degree program. Those institutions that do accept the *carta de pasante* (or similar documentation from private universities) for admissions to graduate programs will generally only consider those programs that are at least 4 years (or the equivalent for *tetramestres*) long.

Cedula: The *Secretaria de Educacion Publica* registers graduates of validated programs of study in Mexico. All graduates who register with the SEP are issued a *cedula*, or professional credential to practice the profession. This was initially designed to ensure that certain types of professions could be monitored to ensure basic minimum standards of training and education were met for fields such as engineering, accounting, law, medicine, nursing, and teaching. These fields of study require the *cedula* to fully practice in the field, but almost all post-secondary programs are now able to register for the *cedula*. Students who do not register for the *cedula* only fail to do so for two primary reasons: they are in a field where registration is not generally a professional requirement, or they did not complete the degree requirements and were not awarded the degree so they could not register for the *cedula*. The *cedula* provides proof or verification of the award of the degree.

Chartered University: In Kenya, a chartered university is a public or private university that has been fully accredited by the Commission for Higher/University Education and has received a government charter to that effect.

Clock Hours: see Contact Hours

Coefficient: Coefficients are the method used on many French and Francophone academic credentials to identify the weight of some subjects over others. They are used in a similar manner to US credits.

College: College refers to post-secondary study in the US and is often used interchangeably with university; in other countries outside the US, it can refer to both upper secondary and post-secondary studies. In some countries such as India and Nepal, college is actually used to refer to either upper secondary or post-secondary studies, depending on the institution and program. As a result, it is usually best to refer to “upper secondary” and “post-secondary” or “university-level” studies to be more precise.

Comparability: Comparability refers to the likeness or relative equivalence between credentials in different educational systems.

Conceded Pass: Some educational systems allow students to pass a course even if they did not meet the minimum passing grade. This is often referred to as a conceded pass or compensated pass. This is similar to the concept of a D grade in the US because the student did not actually meet minimal course requirements but is still allowed credit for the course.

Concessional Entry: See Direct Entry.

Condoned Pass: In Francophone education, grades of 8 and 9 (out of 20) are considered condoned passes if the entire year is passed. Generally, this means an overall average of 10 out of 20 for the year; however, individual institutions may allow students with an overall average of 9.5 or higher to be considered passed.

Consolidated Marksheet: See Marksheet.

Constituent College: A constituent college is a semi-autonomous higher education institution that offers post-secondary education programs but is not a degree-awarding institution. It is maintained and administered by a recognized university and may be referred to as a Constituent College or a University College. The parent university provides academic and administrative leadership as well as degree-awarding authority.

Contact Hours: In the US, contact hours refer to the classroom period. This is generally represented as 1 hour of in-class instruction. Typically, a 3 credit hour courses will meet 3 times a week for one hour (or once per week for 3 hours) over a semester of 15 or 16 weeks, resulting in 45-48 contact hours for a 3-credit course.

Council: The National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials, or the Council, was an interassociational group formed in 1995 and comprised of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), the American Council on Education (ACE), the College Board, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), the Institute of International Education (IIE), and NAFSA: Association of International Educators. The Council reviewed publications and offered extensive placement recommendations in the field of foreign transcript evaluations. This group was dissolved in 2006.

Counterfeit Transcripts: Counterfeit transcripts are those transcripts that purport to be issued by legitimate, recognized institutions but in fact are forgeries, stolen records, falsified documents, or illegally made copies.

Credit: A credit represents quantitative data for coursework that is recorded on educational documents. The credit hour is the quantifying unit of measure of a US post-secondary education program. In the US, this measures the contact hour, or teaching hours, with the assumption that there is a fixed correlation between time spent in the classroom and time spent on outside preparation, such homework, reading, studying, research, papers, and homework assignments. See also Contact Hours.

Credit or Pass Grade: Grades of Pass or Credit in Russian-based systems of education represent passing a course on a Pass/Fail basis. This is extremely common on Russian academic credentials because only five examinations are graded each semester. The

remaining passing subjects are marked as Зачет, which is generally referred to as Pass or Credit. This grade means that all requirements were met for the course, and the student met a grade of 3 or better on the 5-point scale, but there is no way to determine where the student's performance fell on that 3-5 range. This grade may be used in a variety of situations: to identify electives (this is the most common usage); when a subject spans more than one semester but the final semester/program has not been completed yet; or when a course does not have a final examination. Regardless, a grade of Pass or Credit means that all requirements were met even though a final examination was not taken. The concept of Pass or Credit in the Russian system is not like Pass/Fail in the US educational system, which may imply poor performance or lowered academic rigor. Russia does not have the concept of a D grade; if courses are passed, they are successfully applied towards graduation requirements.

Cycle: See Short Cycle and Long Cycle.

Degree Classification: In countries that use a marking system such as the United Kingdom and India, degree classes indicate the overall level of performance. For example, a student who graduates in the First Class or First Division is an A student overall, though individual subjects may have lower marks, or grades. Some degree classifications may not be evaluated on the basis of the entire program. At some institutions, the degree classification is determined on the basis of the final 2 or 3 years of a program, while others may be calculated on the basis of only the major field of studies. It may also be determined by all subjects and marks obtained for the entire duration of the program, but that cannot be assumed since that is not the norm.

Degree Mill: See Diploma Mill.

Diploma Mill: Diploma or degree mills are companies that issue academic credentials – diplomas, certificates, and/or transcripts – for a fee. They simply sell paper without requiring their so-called students to attend courses or take exams. These types of diploma-for-money companies generally operate via flashy websites, toll-free numbers, and post office boxes. Some diploma mills state that they are awarding their credentials on the basis of distance education, but no coursework is ever required. Some of the more insidious diploma mills even have degree verification services, provide fake syllabi for non-existent courses, sell recommendation letters from faculty they don't have, and provide other services that allow the customer to more easily pass off their faked documents as earned credentials.

Diplome d'Etudes Universitaires Generales: The *Diplome d'Etudes Universitaires Generales (DEUG)* represents completion of two years of lower division undergraduate study in Francophone countries. *The DEUG* leads to the *Licence*, after 1 additional year of study. See also *Licence*.

Direct Entry: University admission in Nigeria often follows two main routes: direct entry and concessional entry. Direct Entry means that the student has met minimum secondary school leaving examination results and has also submitted relevant General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A Level) passes or some other post-upper-secondary credential such as an Ordinary National Diploma, Higher National Diploma, or a professional education credential. Direct Entry students are usually admitted directly into 200-level subjects of a bachelor degree program (where the final year is 400-level). Those students who do not hold both credentials are admitted to 100-level courses and are often referred to as Concessional Entry, which may be indicated by the type of leaving certificate or entrance examination they submitted.

Distance Education: Distance education, or distance learning, is a method of delivering education to students who are not physically sitting together in the same classroom or lecture hall as the instructor. In modern times, distance education is increasingly being done online and through virtual universities, but distance education is a long-standing tradition around the world. Correspondence courses, radio, and television have all been widely used for generations. See also Virtual University.

Equivalency: A major goal of a foreign credential evaluation is to determine the equivalency or comparable level of education into the target country's educational system. An equivalency conducted for the US education system would indicate how the foreign educational records compared to the US education system so that a US recipient would be able to understand it and compare it to others.

European Transfer Credit System: In the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), one year of full-time study results in 60 ECTS credits. In the US semester-based system, one year of full-time undergraduate study represents approximately 30 credit hours. The standard conversion from ECTS credits to US credit hours is 2:1. ECTS is a system for measuring and comparing the study attainment and performance of students based on workload, not on contact hours.

Evaluation: Foreign transcript evaluation is a formal comparison of educational credentials from one education system to another. A general evaluation provides a statement of equivalency or comparability while a course-by-course evaluation provides more details about specific credits and grades for academic studies.

Examinations Council: Many countries offer standardized examinations by a central examinations authority, typically referred to as an examinations council. Many exams councils oversee secondary leaving examinations in addition to technical, professional, and other examinations. Some well-known examples include the West African Examinations Council, the Caribbean Examinations Council, and Edexcel.

External Marks: In India, most undergraduate programs are studied at a local, affiliated college of a state, regional, or national university that has the degree-granting authority. Usually, the affiliated college will assess students in such areas as mid-term exams, semester or annual projects, laboratory practices, or daily work, while the final examination for the semester or year is conducted and graded by the parent university. As a result, the marksheets issued by many universities show the internal assessments (often referred to as sessionals) listed separately from the university assessments. The external marks make up a greater percentage of the student's total marks obtained, often representing as much as 80% of the grade distribution. See also: Internal Marks.

External Student: In some countries, students may sit for final examinations without enrolling in classes at the degree-granting universities. An external, or private, student is one who has prepared for the university examinations without attending the examining university, either at an affiliated or constituent college or a teaching department. It is recommended that these students be considered with greater caution than traditional students with the same grades. A degree earned by an external student is comparable to a degree earned by a traditional student, but further analysis of the educational records or the applicant's educational history may be warranted.

Fabrication: Fabrication is a form of fraud where an entirely fake academic credential is created. It might or might not look like the official documents, but the credential itself is entirely made up.

False Cognates: False cognates refer to words in another language that appear to be the same as the word in English but really have a different meaning or use. Example: *Bachiller* is often translated as Bachelor, but in many Latin American countries including Mexico, this is the name of the high school graduation certificate.

First Professional Degree: A degree in a professional field such as medicine, veterinary science, dentistry, and law is considered a first professional degree. In the US, first professional degrees often require a Bachelor degree or 3-4 years of undergraduate study for admissions. In other countries, these degrees may range from 4-7 year and might or might not require prior undergraduate study, depending on the educational system.

Further Education Colleges: In the United Kingdom and other British-based systems, education for students who have completed compulsory education at age 16 can be handled in two primary ways: through Sixth Form Colleges that prepare students to take the General Certificate of Education Advanced Levels (the most common credential for university admission) and through Further Education Colleges that teach a wide variety of technical, vocational, academic, and personal fulfillment programs. Further education colleges offer programs ranging from work-based learning purely for employment

purposes to university preparation Advanced Level certificates to sub-degree programs similar to those offered at universities that lead to advanced standing in degree programs.

General Certificate of Education Advanced Level: The General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A Level) examinations generally represent 13 years of primary + secondary education. Subjects passed at the General Certificate of Education, Advanced Level represents one year of full-time study in a particular subject. Universities in the United Kingdom typically required 4-5 passes on the General Certificate of Secondary Education and 2-3 GCE A Level exams for admissions to their Bachelor degree programs, which are 3 years' duration and usually considered comparable to US Bachelor degrees in conventional placement recommendations. See also: General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary Level.

General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary Level: The General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE AS Level) examinations generally represent 12 years of primary + secondary education, but the 12th year is actually offered beyond the final year of the US high school equivalent credential. Passes at the GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level are considered completion of half of the curriculum of the Advanced Level subject. As a result, subjects passed at the General Certificate of Education, Advanced Subsidiary Level represents one semester of full-time study in a particular subject if they are not continued at the Advanced Level. See also: General Certificate of Education Advanced Level.

General Certificate of Secondary Education: In the United Kingdom, primary and secondary education culminates in 11 years of study and leads to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). The GCSE is comparable to a US college-preparatory high school diploma. See also: General Certificate of Education Advanced Level.

General Secondary Education Certificate: The General Secondary Education Certificate, or *Tawjihi*, represents the culmination of primary and secondary education. The General Secondary Education Certificate is awarded after completing the national leaving examination in Grade 12 in several countries in the Middle East.

Grace Marks: Sometimes, a student's academic record will show grace marks, or marks that have been added to the score the applicant earned in a particular subject or exam. What that means is that the applicant did not actually meet the minimum passing marks for that subject, but the institution determined that it was not necessary for the applicant to retake the course and granted an exception by giving the applicant a bonus to their grade such that it was able to meet the passing level. Grace marks are often considered to be comparable to a D grade in the US grading system, because the student did not actually meet minimal course requirements but is still allowed credit for the course.

Grades: Grades are qualitative assessments of student performance. Grades may be awarded as a percentage basis, a number on a scale, letter grades, verbal grades, or other measures.

Grading Scale: In the US, grade ranges are typically defined in the grading scale, which is basically the defined parameters for measuring success along a continuum. The grading scale is often printed on the academic records in the US. In other countries, assessment of student learning may be handled in a variety of manners and may be identified by different names: marking scheme, marking scale, grading scheme, division, degree classification, evaluation, and other terms.

Graduate: In the US, Associate and Bachelor degree studies are generally referred to as undergraduate level while Graduate Certificate, Masters, and Doctoral programs are usually referred to as graduate programs. In many other countries, “graduate” programs refer to those (Bachelor-level) programs completed after graduation from (upper) secondary education, and those studies completed at a level beyond the Bachelor degree are referred to as “post-graduate” programs.

Higher Education Institutions: There exist a variety of types of higher education institutions (HEIs) around the world. The most well-known is the university, but other examples include post-secondary colleges, higher schools, community colleges, polytechnics, comprehensive universities,

Higher Schools: Higher schools typically offer post-secondary educational programs. In some countries, these are technical programs for students who completed secondary education in a vocational or technical stream, but in other countries, these are advanced technical education programs in non-university post-secondary institutions that may transfer to related university degree programs.

Honours Degree: In many countries, two levels of Bachelor degrees exist, with a different duration of studies and different intended outcome. In countries such as (Ontario) Canada and Australia, a 3-year Bachelor degree is often referred to as an Ordinary or Pass Bachelor degree, and its goal is to prepare students more quickly for employment. On the other hand, the credential required for graduate studies is a 4-year Honours Bachelor. Holders of the 3-year Ordinary/Pass Bachelor are not typically eligible for graduate education without an additional year of study, often referred to as an Honours or qualifying year. See also: Ordinary/Pass Degree.

Indigenous GPA: When calculating a US-style GPA, three primary methods can be used: simple GPA, weighted GPA, and degree classification. The Indigenous GPA calculation is the quickest method of converting the GPA. In many educational systems,

a completed degree program may be placed into a degree classification such as First Class or Second Class Lower. A very quick method of evaluating a student's academic success is to simply take the degree classification and convert it to a US grade range. For example, a First Class degree is typically considered an A grade average, while a Second Class Upper Division is considered a B or B+ average. The indigenous GPA can be converted in mere moments but is also problematic. Even within the same country, different institutions may have different rules regarding the degree classification calculation. In many programs, the degree classification is based only on the final 2 or 3 years of the program, while in others, the degree class is determined only from the major field of study. In some programs, the degree classification may be upgraded if the student petitions for additional points or marks added to the final grades earned, and in other programs, the degree classification may be lowered if the student failed and repeated a course, even if the final passing grade would have placed the student in a higher classification. See also: Degree Classification.

Individual Marksheets: See Marksheets.

In-House Document Fraud: Perhaps the most difficult type of fraud to identify, the in-house document fraud occurs when legitimate academic credentials are sold as blanks or printed with fraudulent information by in-house employees of the issuing institution or printing house.

Institutional Accreditation: Institutional accreditation is basically a review of all aspects of a particular higher education institution, from curriculum to finances to qualifications of the teaching staff. At the institutional level, there are also two categories: national and regional. These two categories are not synonymous. National accreditors are accrediting specialized or special-interest institutions whereas regional accreditors are providing recognition of the degrees and authenticity of the educational process for a particular geographic area. Regionally accredited institutions will generally only accept or recognize coursework or degrees from other regionally-accredited institutions but are unlikely to accept work from a school that only holds national accreditation. It is possible for an institution to have both regional accreditation that validates the quality of academic, educational programs as a whole and national accreditation because it falls into a special-interest category and wants to be linked with like institutions. See also Accreditation.

Intermediate Education: For those countries with a two-stage secondary education ladder, the upper or higher secondary education program is often referred to as intermediate education, or the level of education between lower secondary education – which may lead directly to employment – and university studies.

Internal Marks: In India, most undergraduate programs are studied at a local, affiliated

college of a state, regional, or national university that has the degree-granting authority. Usually, the affiliated college will assess students in such areas as mid-term exams, semester or annual projects, laboratory practices, or daily work, while the final examination for the semester or year is conducted and graded by the parent university. As a result, the marksheets issued by many universities show the internal assessments (often referred to as sessionals) listed separately from the university assessments. In most cases, the internal marks and external marks will be listed for each examination subject, but at a few institutions, the internal marks for the entire grading period (semester or year) are lumped together as Sessionals on the marksheet, and it is not possible to differentiate the marks obtained for subject in that period. See also External Marks.

International Baccalaureate: The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program is an international upper secondary education program that was developed to address the needs of internationally mobile students preparing for university, with a common pre-university curriculum and a common set of external examinations. The IB diploma program is 2 years of study. More than 700 colleges and universities in the US and Canada have established a stated policy of accepting the IB Diploma for university admission.

Junior College: In the US, a junior college typically offers post-secondary education that may transfer to a university-degree program. In other countries, however, a junior college may actually offer studies at the upper secondary level, post-secondary level, or vocational studies at both levels. Some countries may even offer all three levels from the same physical institution.

Kardex Complete: See *Carte de Pasante*

L-M-D: The Francophone system of education under the Bologna Accord follows the *Licence-Master-Doctorate / LMD* (Bachelor-Master-Doctorate) degree structure. See also: Bologna Process.

Language of Instruction: The language or medium of instruction refers to the language used in the classroom. It might or might not be the official language of the country or the language spoken at home. In some countries, secondary education and higher education may be offered in different languages of instruction. In still other countries, higher education programs may be offered in a choice of languages.

Leaving Certificate: In many countries around the world, high school records are merely internal documents not used for further education. During or after the final year of (upper) secondary education, all students around the country will sit for a national or state leaving examination that will determine their educational prospects. Rather than

comparing different curricula, public and private school differences, class rankings, academic and vocational/technical and advanced courses, and other variables seen in various high school programs, all students sit for the same standard examination so that they are compared against the same criteria. For these students, high school grades may or may not be reflective of how well they do on the exams and are often not required for admissions to university-level studies in their home countries. Instead, the leaving certificate, which shows the grades earned on the nationally administered leaving examination, is used.

Letter of Interim Authority: In Kenya, the Commission for Higher Education (now called the Commission for University Education) oversees private higher education along a continuum of accreditation. The first stage is being granted a Letter of Interim Authority to operate as a university. The letters of interim authority will allow new institutions to set up a governing body for the university, develop physical facilities, get academic resources, advertise their programs and admit students. In order to be granted the letter of interim authority by the government, the university must have fulfilled specific conditions and applied for registration as a university. This is often seen as a pre-accreditation permit and is intended to be a short-term authorization (1-3 years).

Licence: The *Licence* (Licentiate) is awarded after 3 years of undergraduate study in Francophone systems and is comparable to three years of undergraduate study. In some countries, it may be awarded after 1 additional year of study following the 2-year *Diplome d'Etudes Universitaires Generales (DEUG)*, for a total of 3 years of study. It leads to the *Maitrise*.

Licensing: Licensing of an institution or program refers to an evaluation of planned educational offerings prior to obtaining accredited status.

Long Cycle: For many countries, university undergraduate studies are offered as short- and long-cycle programs. Short-cycle programs are often 2- or 3-year programs that might or might not continue to the long-cycle programs. Long-cycle programs are more likely to be comparable to US degrees, though that is a generalization.

Maitrise: In Francophone systems of education, the *Maitrise* represents completion of 4 years of university study. It is typically awarded after a combination of a 2-year *Diplome d'Etudes Universitaires Generales (DEUG)* + 1-year *Licence* (Licentiate) + 1-year *Maitrise*, or a 3-year *Licence* and a 1-year *Maitrise*. The *Maitrise* is typically translated as a Master degree, but that does not correspond to conventional placement recommendations. This is a separate credential from the new *Master* degree from the L-M-D Bologna-compliant format also now being used in Francophone countries around the world.

Marking System: The marking system, or marking scheme, refers to the grading scale in places such as the United Kingdom, India, and others that use marks in lieu of grades. Generally, the marksheets or transcripts will indicate the maximum possible marks per subject as well as the minimum pass mark, but they might not always indicate the range of degree classes or the marking system used. See also: Marks.

Marks: Marks are the method of grading students in many countries whose education is based on the British system of education. Marks may be out of 100 (most common) but may range from 25 to 300, and other variations exist as well. In some places, such as the United Kingdom, marks are primarily used to indicate a student's performance on a given subject or examination; in others, such as India, marks are used both to identify a student's performance and to indicate the weight of a particular subject examination.

Marksheets: In some South Asian countries, separate academic records are issued at the end of each term and show all subjects taken during that term, both passing and failed. In contrast, educational institutions in those same countries may issue a single, consolidated academic document showing only the final grades earned from each examination or subject. In this region, the term transcript has no meaning, or it does not refer to an academic record used. Instead, students receive marksheets, or statements of marks showing the subjects studied and marks earned that semester or year. Since consolidated marksheets show only the final, passing grade, the individual marksheets provide a more accurate reflection of the educational history of the applicant.

Maturity Certificate: In many European countries, the high school exit or leaving examination is called the maturity certificate. It is taken after completing higher secondary education and is required for enrollment at higher education institutions. In some countries, studies must meet minimum exam grade standards on their maturity certificates, while in other countries, simply earning the maturity certificate is sufficient for meeting local university admissions requirements.

Minimum Pass Grade/Mark: Most grading scales or marking schemes have a minimum passing grade, which is often listed on the marksheets. For countries where theory and practical grades are identified separately, these two categories may have separate minimum passing grades.

Ministry of Education: In most of the world, educational institutions are overseen by a branch of the national government known most often as the Ministry of Education (MOE). In some countries, primary and secondary education, higher educational, and vocational and technical education all fall under the same overarching authority that governs all educational levels. In other countries, each of these units may have its own governmental authority. This government agency is most often referred to as the Ministry of Education, but it may also be known as the Higher Education Commission,

the University Grants Commission, the Secretary of Education, the Ministry of Education and Research, and other variations. However, specific fields of education may fall under the auspices of additional branches of the government. Often, health education is overseen by the Ministry of Health, while military education programs fall under the authority of the Ministry of Defense for example.

National Accreditation: See Accreditation.

National Examination: See Leaving Examination.

National Qualifications Framework: A national qualifications framework (NQF) is a system of educational qualifications that is mapped out at different levels to show the different progressions across academic levels. In some countries, only higher education is cataloged on the NQF, but in most countries with a framework, all educational documents are placed on the framework. A qualifications framework makes it easier for students within the system to see how different credentials compare and how they can continue their education, and it allows users outside the system to identify comparable levels of education. NQFs are now required in European education as part of the Bologna Accord.

Non-University Education: Non-university education includes post-secondary education programs at polytechnics, colleges, technical institutes, higher institutions, constituent colleges, university colleges, monotechnics, technical colleges, and others. This type of education may cover diplomas, advanced diplomas, certificates, ordinary (national) diplomas, higher (national) diplomas, and other credentials that might be terminal or might be considered for transfer or advanced standing at local universities.

Normal School: Teacher education institutions are often referred to as normal schools, colleges, institutions, or universities. Depending on the country and time period, normal schooling may be offered at the upper secondary, associate, bachelor, or graduate level.

Notary Public: In the US, a notary public has no authority to make official copies of academic credentials, either for domestic or international documents. In some other countries, notary publics are state officials who do have some attestation authority and may even be required to validate the credentials with the issuing institution or higher education authority, but it is not the norm.

Off-Shore Campus: An off-shore campus is a franchise of a higher education institution that is traditionally located in another country as a way for that institution to expand its operations. This type of institution may also be known as an international branch campus. Universities in Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the US have been increasingly setting up off-shore campuses in Asia and the Middle East as a way of

increasing their enrollments of students from those countries by offering their local programs in the host country. The degrees are issued under the name of the primary institution, but the studies may be offered by teaching staff from the primary campus, from local training providers with whom they have established an agreement, or some combination of both. In some programs, the students study for one semester or one year at the degree-granting institution and spend the rest of their studies at the off-shore campus location near their home. In most programs, however, students never set foot on the degree-awarding university's main campus.

Official Documents: Many students are unable to acquire additional “original” documents due to national policies, time period, institutional closings, or other reasons beyond their control. This is especially true for documents that were issued manually by institutional policy or before technology was widely implemented in that institution or system. Even some documents issued currently cannot be reissued as original documents. As a result, it is always best to ask international applicants to provide official documents, which may include original documents, official copies made by the institution or other acceptable educational authority, official duplicate records made by the institution, verification documents provided by the institution, and others.

Open University: See Distance Education and Virtual University.

Ordinary or Pass Bachelor: In many countries, two levels of Bachelor degrees exist, with a different duration of studies and different intended outcome. In countries such as (Ontario) Canada and Australia, a 3-year Bachelor degree is often referred to as an Ordinary or Pass Bachelor degree, and its goal is to prepare students more quickly for employment. On the other hand, the credential required for graduate studies is a 4-year Honours Bachelor in these countries. Holders of the 3-year Ordinary/Pass Bachelor are not typically eligible for graduate education without an additional year of study, often referred to as an Honours or qualifying year. In Pakistan, however, a Pass degree might be of either 2 or 3 years' duration, depending on when the degree program was completed. See also: Honours Degree.

Original Documents: See Official Documents.

Overleaf: See Paper Titles.

Paper Titles: On some educational records, subject names will not appear on the academic records; the individual subject papers are identified by subject codes. These may be what appears to be a random series of numbers, or they may look like US-style course codes. For contemporary programs, the syllabus or degree plan may be available online, but the paper titles, or corresponding subject names, are typically printed on the overleaf, or the backside of the original marksheets. If the applicant has submitted

official, attested copies, however, it may be necessary to request the Paper Titles separately.

Pass Degree: See Ordinary or Pass Bachelor

Pass in Russian System: See Credit/Pass

Placement Recommendations: Placement recommendations are suggestions for the equivalency of a particular credential or its placement within the educational framework. Placement recommendations may represent best practices in the industry. However, they are not mandates, and institutions are not required to abide by them, especially after changes to an educational system or if new information about the educational system has been made available since the publication of the placement recommendations. See Council Council.

Polytechnic: A polytechnic is a type of educational institution that typically offers several types of technical education. This type of institution may offer upper secondary vocational studies, post-secondary technical training, and higher technical education programs offering diploma-level studies.

Post-Secondary: Post-secondary study refers to educational levels that are completed after the high school equivalent level. This can be tricky, however, since many countries have a two-tiered secondary education program and may consider their higher or upper secondary education level to be technically post-secondary. Within the field of foreign transcript evaluations, however, post-secondary study means that level of education that requires completion of all levels of secondary education.

Postgraduate: See Graduate.

Preparatory Year: In some educational system, a preparatory year is pre-degree study required prior to enrolling in a university undergraduate program; it may even be the High School equivalency credential for a country. In others, however, the preparatory year is part of the degree program and is merely a year of introductory-level – but credit-bearing – subjects common to all majors within a given degree program. This is especially common for engineering programs.

Program Accreditation: Accreditation of a program/profession in the US refers to individual programs of study within a given institution rather than the institution as a whole. This generally refers to a program, department, or school within a higher education institution. A single institution of higher education may offer many degree programs that hold program/professional accreditation. Program/professional accreditation is important for licensure, certification, and/or employment in certain

fields. See also: Accreditation.

Private Candidate: A private candidate typically refers to a student who is sitting for a national examination, such as the higher secondary education examination, separately from the rest of the candidates, who are typically registered for the national or state-specific exam by their higher secondary school. Most private candidates are registering as such because they are taking supplementary exams for previously failed subjects, but some register for the supplementary examination time period because they missed the regularly scheduled examination, due to illness or other absence.

Private Universities: Increasingly, educational authorities around the globe are allowing the creation and marketing of private universities. While some are not-for-profit, many private universities are for-profit. Public universities are usually created by governmental action at some level, which consigns their recognition, but private universities are often established for several years before applying for academic recognition. In some countries, private universities must go through a rigorous recognition process in order to legally award degrees, and their programs have the same or similar reputation as their public counterparts. However, in other countries, the higher education authorities do not offer any type of recognition status to private higher education institutions so their credentials have no legal weight. As a result, their graduates are unable to apply for government jobs or pursue further education at public institutions. Still other countries, like Kenya, have different tiers of recognition for their private higher education institutions, including chartered, registered, and interim authority.

Provisional Degree Certificate: In many countries, the final degree certificate is not awarded until after a lengthy period of time, sometimes due to additional requirements that must be met, payments that must be made, paperwork that must be completed, lengthy or complicated processes at the institution, complex degree ceremonies, in-person needs, or the printing processes for the degree. In many of these countries, a provisional degree certificate is awarded and is typically good for 1-2 years after the student completed the program.

Public Universities: Public universities outside of the US typically refer to those universities that are primarily funded by the government, usually at the national level but also at the provincial, state, or local level. They may also be referred to as national universities or state universities. Depending on the country, they might or might not be autonomous and might or might not charge tuition. They are often established by an Act of Parliament or a Law on Education.

Quarter Hours: Quarter hours are a method of quantifying the time spent studying a particular subject in a higher education program. In this system, the academic year is

divided into three, 10- or 11-week quarters: fall, winter, and spring. A bachelor degree typically requires 180 quarter hours. One year of full-time study in this system is typically comprised of 45 quarter hours, or 15 credits per quarter.

Radio and Television Universities: See Distance Education and Virtual University.

Recognition: Recognition is the method of determining an educational institution's validity to offer educational programs in the country where it is located. In most countries outside of the US, recognition is conferred by a governmental agency. This may be referred to by many names, including the Ministry of (Higher) Education, the University Grant's Commission, the Higher Education Commission, the Secretary of Education, and others. Please note that in many countries, recognition for specialized studies such as medical, military, or other specific categories of education may be conferred by separate branches of the government, including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Tourism, Nursing Council, Dental Council, or others. See also: Ministry of Education.

Regional Accreditation: See Accreditation.

Regional University: Increasingly, regional universities have been established by the governments of several nations in order to provide higher educational opportunities to students in a particular region. Examples of well-known regional universities include the University of the West Indies, which serves 18 countries and territories in the Caribbean with campuses in 3 countries, and the Arab Open University, with several campuses throughout the Middle East, including Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia.

Registered Universities: Private higher education is a new concept for many countries, but even established educational systems may have a category of Registered University for their private educational institutions. Registered institutions are not fully accredited but are registered to exist. In some countries, registration means that a preliminary review of the institution has been conducted, allowing them to offer limited programs, but detailed examination of the institution's finances, educational offerings, and university inspection have not yet been completed. In other cases, registration is simply the filing of paperwork that registers the institution as a business, and all review is based on the financial stability and physical environs of the institution.

Releve de Notes: The *releve de notes* is the statement of grades (transcript) from French-based systems of education. It is often issued on a semester or annual basis.

Research Degree: In the United Kingdom and elsewhere, some Master degree programs and most Doctoral programs are considered research degrees. A research-based program requires several years of independent research and defense of a dissertation. Research

degrees are not composed of subjects, so there are no grades or transcripts. Research degrees are advanced academic degrees which are obtained mainly (or entirely) through independent research. The basic requirement for the award of the degree is the student's successful defense of a major paper (thesis or dissertation). Degree classifications, grades or marks, and other systems of quantifying a student's progress are not typically associated with research degrees.

Results Slip: For some countries offering a secondary school leaving certificate, students will receive a preliminary results slip, with an unofficial notification of their results on the national examination. Since it does not represent the final, official certificate, it is generally not used for further education.

Secondary School: Secondary school refers to the education after primary or elementary school but before university-level studies. In many countries, secondary education is offered in two stages: lower and upper secondary. Lower secondary education is generally comparable to junior high or middle school in the US, while upper secondary education is similar to senior high school. In some countries, lower secondary education marks the end of compulsory education. Lower secondary education may even be the benchmark credential for high school graduation in some systems, but university-bound students typically must complete higher or upper secondary education.

Security Features: Safety features that appear on educational records include detailed borders, serial numbers, embossed seals, color logos, security paper, holograms, microprinting, special or different fonts, paper type and size, handwritten script, color change printing, photographs, tape, watermarks, perforations, ultraviolet images, wave patterns and spacing, ultraviolet threads, and other security features. In addition, increasing numbers of examinations councils, universities, and even ministries of education are offering online verification services or verification offices or authorities.

Semester Hours: Semester hours are a method of quantifying the time spent studying a particular subject in a higher education program. In this system, the academic year is typically divided into two, 15- or 16-week semesters: fall and spring. A bachelor degree typically requires a minimum of 120 semester hours. One year of full-time study in this system is typically comprised of 30 credit hours, or 15 credits per semester.

Sessionals: See Internal Marks.

Short Cycle: For many countries, university undergraduate studies are offered as short- and long-cycle programs. Short-cycle programs are often 2- or 3-year programs that might or might not continue to the long-cycle programs. Long-cycle programs are more likely to be comparable to US degrees, though that is a generalization.

Simple GPA: When calculating a US-style GPA, three primary methods can be used: simple GPA, weighted GPA, and degree classification. In the simple GPA, each subject or examination's grade is converted to its US counterpart. Then all US-style grades are added together and divided by the total number of graded subjects, which results in the simple GPA. If all subjects are worth roughly the same indigenous credits, there might not be a significant difference in the outcome, but many institutions assign greater weight to more intensive subjects and may assign less weight to subjects that are less important for the program. The simple GPA does not take into account the variable importance of different subjects in the academic plan, and is less accurate, but it can be calculated more quickly than the weighted GPA.

Sixth Form Colleges: In the United Kingdom and other British-based systems, education for students who have completed compulsory education at age 16 can be handled in two primary ways: through Sixth Form Colleges that prepare students to take the General Certificate of Education Advanced Levels (the most common credential for university admission) and through Further Education Colleges that teach a wide variety of technical, vocational, academic, and personal fulfillment programs. Further education colleges offer programs ranging from work-based learning purely for employment purposes to university preparation Advanced Level certificates to sub-degree programs similar to those offered at universities that lead to advanced standing in degree programs.

Statement of Marks: See Marksheets.

Statement of Results: Many national examinations councils will issue the student's record directly to a third party institution. Instead of sending an original of the student's certificate, an institution will receive a Statement of (Examination) Results or Confirmation of Results. This is especially common with African national examinations councils such as the West African Examinations Council and the Kenya National Examinations Council.

Supplemental: In the context of foreign education, supplemental typically refers to a secondary (or later) instance of something. Supplemental examinations are additional time slots for previously offered subjects, usually due to a previous failure on an exam or because of a missed examination. Supplementary students or candidates are those people who are resitting an exam they previously took, often as private candidates, or who were unable to attend the regularly scheduled event.

Syllabus: Syllabus means different things in different places. In the US, a syllabus refers to a course description and may include the major topics covered within the course, the texts used, and the overall makeup of the course. In other countries, the

syllabus may be what those in the US think of as a degree plan or study plan, or the outline of subjects (and credits or hours, if applicable) needed to complete the program and receive the graduation credential.

Taught Degree: In some educational systems, graduate programs are offered as either taught degrees or research degrees. Taught degrees involve lecture classes, coursework, papers or examinations and other relatively standardized aspects of educational records. As a result, students are typically able to obtain transcripts showing examination subjects and grades or other methods of quantifying their success in the program. See also: Research Degree.

Tawjihi: See General Secondary Education Certificate.

Television Universities: See Distance Education

Transcript: In the US, a transcript is an academic record that typically includes subjects studied, grades earned, and credentials earned, if applicable. It may also include the major field of study, grading definitions, scholarships or honors received, term dates, cumulative Grade Point Average, and other relevant information. In other countries, the term transcript may have no meaning, may refer to an enrollment record or letter, or may be an unofficial academic record created by international students applying for US colleges and universities.

Translation: Documents issued in a language other than English need to be translated prior to conducting the evaluation. Translations can be problematic because of generous translations, false cognates, typographical or grammatical errors, interpretations instead of literal translations (often a deliberate attempt to defraud the receiving institution), and other issues. As a result, it is best to use the native language documents for the graduation credential and grades and to rely on the translation for as little information as possible. Official translations are those conducted by the institution or professional, official, or registered translator in the country of study. Professional translations in the US are those completed by translators belonging to professional translators associations.

University: A university is a higher education institution that offers degree programs, typically at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

Verification: Verification is the process by which an applicant's educational documents are verified, or validated, with the source. With advances in technology, increasing educational bodies are utilizing web-based verification services, often for little or not cost. Even more higher education institutions will accept and respond to verification requests via email, fax, or post.

Weighted GPA: When calculating a US-style GPA, three primary methods can be used: simple GPA, weighted GPA, and degree classification. In the weighted GPA strategy, each subject or examination's grade is converted to its US counterpart. Then the weight of each subject in the indigenous system is converted to its US counterpart, using either semester or quarter hours as appropriate. Then the numerical value of each grade is multiplied by the converted credits for its corresponding subject. Adding all of the grade points together and then dividing by the total credits results in the weighted GPA. It is a more time-consuming method of evaluating the student's educational records than either the simple GPA or indigenous GPA, but it also more accurately compares the applicant's entire program based on the relative weight of each subject examination.

Virtual University: A virtual university provides higher education programs electronically, usually via the internet. In some instances, these programs are offered through a branch or online unit of an existing higher education institution, but some virtual universities are standalone teleuniversity institutions. The goal of virtual, or open, universities is to provide access to higher education to those portions of the population who would not be able to attend physical campus locations, due to distance, need for flexibility, religious constraints, scheduling, cost, full-time employment, and other reasons. Two of the most well-known virtual universities are the Open University in England and the Arab Open University in the Middle East. See also Distance Education.

Zhuanke: In China, *Zhuanke* programs are generally 2-3 years for full-time study and are comprised of 120-140 indigenous credits for the 3-year program and 90-100 credits for the 2-year program. *Zhuanke* programs are short-cycle programs that provide a fast-track to employment, because they require only 2 or 3 years of full-time study. They are available in many of the same fields of study as *benke* programs but have a more applied focus. A *zhuanke* graduation certificate gives easy access to further education, usually through a *zhuanke* to *benke* upgrading program

Additional Resources from Transcript Research:

“Bogus Institutions and Accrediting Bodies” E-book

“FAQs for Foreign Transcript Evaluators” Conference Presentation

“International Credentials Evaluation: Using the Internet” Conference Presentation

“Introduction to Foreign Transcript Evaluations” Conference Presentation

“Researching International Education Systems and Institutions” E-book



Transcript Research
9090 Skillman #182-A
PMB 364
Dallas, TX 75243

Phone: 214.810.1124
email: info@transcriptresearch.com
web: www.transcriptresearch.com

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