

Jargon Busting

Initially one of the most annoying - and puzzling - aspects of higher education for a new governor is that everyone seems to speak in a coded language, and frequently what is meant by this code or shorthand is never made clear. Rather it is assumed either that everyone knows, or that those who don't will 'pick it up' fairly quickly and become 'one of us'. Of course, this happens in most organisations, but the diversity and complexity of higher education means that jargon is particularly rife.

In this section there are a number of widely used words or phrases, with a short explanation for what each means:

Access means various things in higher education depending upon the context, but most commonly relates to student access to courses or programmes. The government is committed to 'widening access', which means making it possible for people from all backgrounds and social strata to enter higher education if they have the potential to succeed.

Accreditation is the word used to show that a course or programme has been vetted or certified by a body as being of sufficient academic standard to enable an institution to offer an award to students who meet the necessary criteria. There are a variety of accrediting organisations: the institution itself (all universities are self-accrediting although not all colleges of higher education); another institution (for example, where a college does not have degree awarding powers, it may get its programmes accredited by one which does); national professional bodies (RIBA, Law Society, the engineering institutions etc) who accredit programmes concerned with professional practice (more often in addition to the basic academic qualification); and international professional bodies and organisations. In the latter case, even though a programme or course has been accredited nationally, it may be valuable for the purposes of recruiting overseas students for international accreditation to be obtained.

Annual Monitoring Statement (AMS) is the annual return that the Higher Education Funding Council for England currently requires institutions to submit along with financial forecasts and other information. The statement changes its content and design at intervals to accommodate the latest policy priorities. Institutions are requested to report on the extent to which they have achieved both their overall strategic objectives, and also those associated with some of the special funding programmes.

(The) **Cathedrals Group**, formerly the Council of Church Universities and Colleges, comprises 15 church universities and colleges in England and Wales, founded by the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church or the Methodist Church.

Distance Learning describes the mode of delivery when students do not reside on campus and may not even visit it for their programme. The best known example is the Open University which offers all its courses remotely to students all over the world (even though it encourages participation in summer schools and meetings with colleagues at regional centres). Over half of English institutions offer some form of distance learning. Where their students reside in other countries, in some cases a partnership arrangement is made with an overseas university or college under which tutorial support is provided (usually for an extra fee). Increasingly the term '**blended learning**' is being used for programmes that may be partly taught at a distance but which also involve some use of other approaches.

Educational Development is a term that tends to be reserved for the activity undertaken by those staff who specialise in enhancing learning and teaching. Many institutions have created centres or units of educational developers whose role is to help individual teachers enhance their teaching and to assist students with their learning. Educational developers usually work closely with **learning technologists** in



the application of computers in learning and teaching and the development of electronic resources to support students.

Equality and Diversity relates to one of the government's key policy objectives, and the need to ensure satisfactory institutional performance on matters concerning gender, racial and social composition, and support for those with disabilities. Although such concerns apply to all staff and students, emphasis tends to be on the recruitment, support and retention of the latter group. Governing bodies are expected to ensure that the institution has sound policies in this area which are regularly monitored.

Franchising is the term used when a university or college allows another institution or college to deliver its programmes or courses. To ensure that the delivery is of an acceptable standard the providing institution will accredit the activities of the receiving college. A wide variety of franchising arrangements exist, and in some cases staff from the franchising body may teach at the franchisee's institution. This is particularly the case with some overseas franchise arrangements, where the presence of English academic staff is a marketing advantage. Some such arrangements lead to the overseas student coming to the UK for the final year of their course.

Full Economic Costing (FEC) means calculating the full cost of research or academic projects, including overheads. All research council and government research projects will reimburse higher education institutions with a fixed percentage (yet to be decided) of the full economic cost of any services.

Full time Equivalent (FTE) is the term used to calculate student or staff numbers when the population concerned contains part-timers or fractional appointments. Thus, a number of part-time staff may be added together so that in total they become one full time equivalent. The HESA sets national standards for the way the calculation is made on all national statistics. In Wales a credit based funding system by which FTEs are formally defined for all Welsh institutions as 120 credits a year.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is the term now widely used to cover all the computing and telecommunications in an institution, whether used for research, teaching or administration. All institutions have a campus network linked through a national academic network called JANET to the world wide web.

Million+ is a grouping of universities and a think tank, formerly known as the CMU.

Quality Assurance (QA) refers to the act of assessing whether quality has been achieved, and is undertaken both externally by the Quality Assurance Agency and internally through institutions' own quality assurance processes. There are many different approaches to carrying out quality assurance checks ranging from formal inspections and audits to self reviews and the application of checklists.

Quality Enhancement (QE) is the term used to describe measures taken within a course, programme or institution to enhance or strengthen quality. These can relate to curriculum reform, adoption of innovative approaches to learning and teaching, the use of new technology to enhance the way students learn, or aspects of staff development.

The **Research Assessment Exercise** (RAE) has been a national peer review of the quality of research undertaken in UK higher education. The process took place every 5-6 years, with the fifth and final exercise taking place in 2008. It involved numerous subject panels of national and international experts assessing submissions put forward by 'research active staff' nominated by their institution. The rankings established in each RAE exercise formed the basis for the 'quality' element of research funding, and have had major influence for research active institutions. The next assessment, replacing the RAE, will be the Research Excellence Framework, which will take place in 2014, affecting funding from 2015-2016. The intention is to recognise and reward excellent research that has wider social and



economic benefits so, in addition to the quality of research outputs, the impact of the work and the research environment, will be used in the funding calculations.

The **Russell Group** is a grouping of 24 major research intensive universities, formed in 1994.

The **Single Conversation** is a term used as Hefce aims to reduce the burden of regulation on institutions, by placing greater reliance on their own systems. The intention is to concentrate the dialogue and provision of data into a single period in the year.

Sustainability means at least two quite different things depending on who is using the word and why. The first meaning concerns the financial viability (usual long term) of an activity. The second means environmental sustainability and 'green' issues.

Third Stream Funding (or third leg funding) means funding from external non-government sources, particularly from the commercial sector. In recent years the funding councils have striven to encourage more entrepreneurial cultures in institutions, including in England through pump priming the development of business support activities through the Higher Education Innovation Fund. The financial control of such funding gives rise to specific issues for governing bodies.

Transparency Review (TRAC) is the name of a cost analysis methodology that was originally developed at the behest of the Treasury with the aim of identifying the relative costs of teaching and research in institutions. The research led to the development of a standard cost analysis method which is now mandatory for all institutions in England, who are expected to submit annual returns to HEFCE showing how their institutional costs are split between teaching, research and other activities.

The **University Alliance** is a grouping of some 24 pre- and post- 1992 universities, formed in 2006.

Variable ('Top Up') Fees is the term that described the extra tuition fees that institutions could levy from 2006 onwards up to a ceiling of £3,000 (increased annually in-line with inflation) including the original basic fee. The new financial arrangements, introduced in 2012, have reduced the usage of this term. Different arrangements apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Wastage, Non-Continuation, Attrition, Retention and Drop-out Rates are terms that all describe elements of the same thing, namely the proportion of students who leave the higher education system in the middle of a course and do not return. The UK has traditionally had one of the best (lowest) wastage rates of all OECD countries, which produces an enviably low cost per graduate. The levels of wastage and attrition vary widely between institutions according to factors such as entry standards and strategies for widening participation. The retention figure is important because those institutions with comparatively high 'drop-out' ie low retention, may suffer financial consequences through unfilled places. In England, the financial consequences have been even more severe through the potential loss of student fees, and the funding methodology of HEFCE which in the past has not provided any funding for students who do not complete their programme of study in any year.

Widening Participation refers to the government's policy of seeking to ensure a broader range of students in higher education, through making admissions processes fair and transparent including selecting on the basis of student potential as well as previous achievement. The end result is hoped to be that more students will enter higher education from previously under-represented groups.

The **1994 Group** is a grouping of research intensive universities, formed in 1994.



Useful acronyms

A

AHRC: Arts and Humanities Research Council
AGR: Association of Graduate Recruiters
AHUA: Association of Heads of University Administration
AUA: Association of University Administrators
AUDE: Association of University Directors of Estates
AURIL: Association for Research and Industrial Liaison
AUT: Association of University Teachers - now the UCU (see below)

B

BA: British Academy
BBSRC: Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council
BIS: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BUFDG: British Universities Finance Directors Group

C

CADISE: Consortium of Art and Design Institutions in Southern England
CATS: Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme
CETL: Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
CIHE: Council for Industry and Higher Education
CHEW: Chairs of Higher Education Wales
CUC: Committee of University Chairs

D

DCELLS: Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills - Welsh Government
DCMS: Department of Culture, Media and Sport
DBERR: Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform - now BIS (see above)
DEL: Department for Employment and Learning - Northern Ireland
DIUS: Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills - now BIS (see above)

E

ECU: Equality Challenge Unit
EFA: Education Funding Agency
ESRC: Economic and Social Research Council

F

FEC: Full Economic Cost
FE: Further Education
FSSG: Financial Sustainability Strategy Group
FTE: Full-time equivalent

H

HE: Higher Education
HEA: Higher Education Academy
HEAR: Higher Education Achievement Report
HEBRG: Higher Education Better Regulation Group
HEFCE: Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEFCEAS: Hefce Audit Service



HEFCW: Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HEI: Higher Education Institution
HEIDI: Higher Education Information Database for Institutions
HEIF: Higher Education Innovation Fund
HEPI: Higher Education Policy Institute
HERRG: Higher Education Regulation Review Group
HERO: Higher Education and Research Opportunities
HESA: Higher Education Statistics Agency
HESMF: Higher Education Senior Managers Forum
HEW: Higher Education Wales
HOLIS: HESA Online Information Service

J

JANET: Joint Academic Network
JCPSG: Joint Costing and Pricing Steering Group
JISC: Joint Information Systems Committee
JNCHES: Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff
JPPSG: Joint Procurement Policy and Strategy Group

L

LSC: Learning and Skills Council

M

MRC: Medical Research Council

N

NAO: National Audit Office
NERC: Natural Environment Research Council
NIACE: National Institute for Adult Continuing Education
NUS: National Union of Students
NSS: National Student Survey

O

OFFA: Office for Fair Access
OFSTED: Office for Standards in Education
OIA: Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
OST: Office for Science and Technology

P

PAC: Public Accounts Committee
PPARC: Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council

Q

QAA: Quality Assurance Agency
QCA: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
QCF: Qualifications and Credit Framework
QR: Quality Research, the research funding allocated according to RAE rankings



R

RAE: Research Assessment Exercise
RCUK: Research Councils UK
RDA: Regional Development Agency
REF: Research Excellence Framework
RPG: Regulatory Partnership Group

S

SCONUL: Standing Conference of National and University Libraries
SFC: Scottish Funding Council
SFA: Skills Funding Agency
SLC: Student Loans Company
SRHE: Society for Research into Higher Education
STEM (subjects): Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
STFC: Science and Technology Facilities Council

T

TRAC: Transparent Approach to Costing Methodology
TA: Teaching Agency

U

UCAS: Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UCEA: Universities and Colleges Employers' Association
UCISA: Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association
UCU: Universities and Colleges Union
UKADIA: United Kingdom Arts and Design Institutions Association
UKBA: United Kingdom Border Agency
UKCISA: United Kingdom Council for International Student Affairs
UKERNA: UK Educational Research Network Association
UPA: University Personnel Association
USI: Union of Students in Ireland
USS: Universities Superannuation Scheme
UUK: Universities UK

W

WG: Welsh Government

Y

YPLA: Young People's Learning Agency

Find more information and resources on this topic on our website at:
www.lfhe.ac.uk/en/governance/jargon-busting

