

As you begin to think about your future and life after high school, you will hear lots of new terms. Please refer to this list as you come across new phrases. The following definitions will give you more than what you might learn from a Google search. Specific meanings or considerations in Virginia are included.

Becoming familiar with the words and phrases and their meanings will give you a better understanding of all of the different options and resources that are available to you. So please refer to the following list as you learn and think more seriously about your own definition of success in the future.

Terms to know as you PREPARE for college:

AA (Associate of Arts) Degree

A two-year community college credential. Often referred to as the “transfer degree” or “general studies” degree program. Students in this program attend lecture courses and take general education classes that may later be applied to a bachelor’s degree. Virginia has [23 community colleges](#) that offer AA Degrees. [Richard Bland College](#), Virginia’s only 2-year junior college, also offers the AA Degree.

AAS (Associate of Applied Science) Degree

A two-year community college credential. This degree is for those who interested in learning a specific skill or technology. Coursework in this degree program is hands-on and involves time in laboratory and clinical settings that are specific to the degree program. Virginia has [23 community colleges](#) that offer AA Degrees.

Academic & Career Plan

A personal learning plan and course of study that aligns with the student’s academic and career goals. Each student should have a completed plan by the end their eighth grade year. The Academic and Career Plan must include but is not limited to a program of study for high school graduation and a postsecondary career pathway based on the student's academic and career interests; a review and update, if necessary, before the student enters the ninth and eleventh grades; and the signatures of the student, student's parent or guardian and school official(s) designated by the principal. To learn more, visit the [Virginia Department of Education website](#).

Accreditation

The recognition by an outside agency that a school maintains a high standard that enables students to qualify for admission to other accredited institutions.

ACT (American College Testing)

A [college admissions exam](#) measuring verbal, math, reading and science reasoning. Check with your college(s) of interest to determine what tests and average scores are required for admittance. To learn more about the ACT and to practice test taking, click [here](#).

Admissions Requirements

A minimum set of criteria established by each college for a student to be accepted. Requirements generally include courses taken, grades, standardized admissions tests and scores and demonstration of character.

Advanced-level Courses/Programs

Academic, career/technical, fine and performing arts, or interdisciplinary high school courses/programs that enable students to acquire and master advanced knowledge. Such courses may be suitable for weighted credit in order to encourage students to take these courses and to be rewarded for the extra endeavor and academic performance these courses/programs require. Taking advanced-level courses are one way of demonstrating academic rigor to college admissions offices.

BA (Bachelor of Arts) or BS (Bachelor of Science) Degree

A four-year college credential.

Credit

A way of referring to the number of credits which are earned in a course. In high school it may refer to a standard or a verified credit. In college it is also known as semester hours, quarter hours or units. Approximately 64 credit are needed for an AA degree, and 124 for a BA or BS degree for schools on a semester calendar. For example, if a class meets three hours per week, it is usually a three credit course. A full-time college student usually attends five classes and earns 15 credits per semester or attends four classes and earns 12 credits per quarter. Students may also attend part-time, earning less than 12 credits a semester.

Fee Waiver

A form available to students having a family income that meets the U.S. Department of Labor's definition of low income used to dismiss payment requirements for college admission applications or tests. A Fee Waiver form is submitted instead of money when applying or testing. Ask your counselor or advisor about waivers to see if you are eligible.

Financial Aid

Money from a variety of sources (grants, loans, scholarships, work study) that helps pay for college costs. The package of funds is determined by family financial need and or student merit. Financial aid comes from many different sources, but most require completion of the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#). Additional forms for aid may be required by an institution. Contact their financial aid office for guidance.

GPA (Grade Point Average)

A measure of average grade in all high school credit-bearing courses taken by a student during a certain term or semester, or accumulated for several terms or semesters; obtained by dividing grade points by number of courses taken. If computed on a four-point scale. An A counts as 4; a B is 3; a C is 2; a D is 1; and an F is 0. Each student has a GPA for the semester and a cumulative GPA that includes previous semesters. Honors and AP courses earn one additional point (weighted) when passed with a C or better. Individual colleges and universities may recalculate a student's GPA based on their own criteria.

MA (Master of Arts) and MS (Master of Science) Degree

A graduate-college credential usually requiring one or two years of work beyond the BA or BS.

Post-secondary education

Education and training beyond high school (secondary education).

Private college or university

A school which is not supported by state taxes. Private colleges may be either for-profit or non-profit organizations. Click [here](#) to see a complete list of colleges operating in Virginia

PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)

A shortened version of the SAT offered in October for high school sophomore and juniors. The scores are helpful in predicting a student's score on the actual SAT, in college admissions planning and/or qualifying for the National Merit and other scholarships. Students taking the test in the fall of their junior year may become eligible for the National Merit Scholarship. To learn more about the test and to access practice tests click [here](#).

SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)

A [college admissions exam](#) measuring verbal and mathematics reasoning. Additionally, students may take a writing exam. Check with your college(s) of interest to determine what tests and average scores are required for admittance. To learn more about the SAT and to practice test taking, click [here](#).

Scholarships

Gifts of money awarded to students for achievement, skill, talents and/or financial need. Most scholarships are awarded to high school seniors in their spring semester and usually range from hundreds to several thousand dollars. Scholarships do not have to be paid back. There are many sources of scholarships, nationwide and locally. Ask your counselor for guidance and begin an electronic search [here](#).

Secondary School Transcript

An official list of secondary courses taken by a student, showing the final grade received for each course, with definitions of the various grades given.

Verified Credit

Credits earned by passing a course in the subject area and the associated end-of-course assessment. To learn more about verified credits and the number required for your graduation click [here](#).

Weighted GPA

High school advanced-level courses are given an extra point when computing their grade point average. An A counts as 5; a B as 4; a C as 3. D and F grades in honors courses are not given extra points. Only certain classes are given the honors point for the U.C. and CSU system. U.C. and CSU grade point averages are calculated with the college counselor during 1st semester of the student's senior year.

For a full list of terms, visit the SCHEV PREPARE website at <http://www.schev.edu/preparetoolkit>.

Terms to look up:
