

Systems compared: the US and the UK

In US universities, many of the words for people and places are the same as those used in the UK (see Unit 18), but there are some differences.

Terms with different meanings in US and UK university systems

US example	meaning/comment	UK example	meaning/comment
Are you faculty or student?	If you are <i>faculty</i> , you are a member of the academic staff.	The faculty will have to come to a decision on this.	<i>Faculty</i> refers to a group of departments (see Unit 18) with similar interests.
The grading rubric for term papers has been revised.	A <i>rubric</i> is a set of criteria or guidelines which tells how an assignment will be graded or scored.	Some students misread the exam rubric and didn't answer enough questions.	Instructions on an exam paper or in a textbook as to how a task must be done.
I went to college in St Louis. I attended Washington University . I took some fascinating courses at college .	The word <i>college</i> in American English refers broadly to the undergraduate experience, whether it is at a two-year community college, a four-year college, or a large state university in the US. A specific institution can be a college (granting undergraduate degrees only) or a university (granting undergraduate and graduate degrees).	She went to university in Scotland. She graduated from university in 1996.	In British English, <i>university</i> refers to the undergraduate experience. In both American and British English, no article is used before <i>college</i> or <i>university</i> in these examples.
Her brother went to school at Harvard.	<i>School</i> is often used to mean <i>university</i> . A common question is 'Where did you go to school?' meaning 'Where did you go to college?'	I went to school in London, then I went to university in Bristol.	Refers to primary or secondary education; <i>school</i> can also refer to a university department which covers several different teaching areas (e.g. School of English and Journalism).

Different US terms

I wonder who should be on my **PhD committee**¹. My **advisor**² suggested Dr Fry and Dr Roe. I have a lot of studying to do. I have my **comps**³ in two weeks. Let's meet in **Harley Commons**⁴ at 7.30 pm, and we can study for tomorrow's **quiz**⁵, OK? It was tough being a **freshman**⁶ because I wasn't used to such difficult **finals**⁷, but life got a bit easier when I became a **sophomore**⁸. It was easy enough as a **junior**⁹, but then it got tough again when I was a **senior**¹⁰. As a **graduate student**¹¹, I get to attend seminars with some of the top people in my field. The **fraternity**¹² and **sorority**¹³ houses are all round the edge of the campus.

¹ a group of teachers who advise a PhD student ² equivalent of the UK *supervisor* (see Unit 18) ³ short for *comprehensive examinations*, subject-area tests required of graduate students in some areas of studies ⁴ area where students can meet socially and eat in dining halls ⁵ short test on areas which have been taught ⁶ new, first-year undergraduate (also used in the UK) ⁷ final examinations at the end of the semester ⁸ second-year student, from the Greek *sophos*, wise, and *moros*, dull ⁹ third-year student ¹⁰ fourth-year student ¹¹ student with a bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS) who is enrolled in a master's degree programme, equivalent of *postgraduate* student in the UK ¹² a social organisation for male students ¹³ a social organisation for female students

Exercises

19.1 Look at A. Who is more likely to be speaking – a British person or an American? Why?

1 Only faculty can eat here.

2 All professors use the same rubric for grading term papers.

3 I went to school at Millintown, where I got my masters and PhD.

4 My department is within the Faculty of Engineering.

5 The rubric required students to answer all three questions on the exam paper.

19.2 Put these levels of student in an American university in order of seniority, starting with the first-year student. Explain what kind of student each term refers to.

graduate student junior freshman senior sophomore

19.3 Are the following statements true or false? If false, explain why they are incorrect.

- 1 An advisor is someone who helps American students with their emotional problems.
- 2 Women usually join a fraternity.
- 3 Finals means a student's last semester at university or college.
- 4 A PhD committee is a group of graduate students.

19.4 Use the clues to complete the crossword.

Across

- 1 Sometimes used to refer to college or university in the US
- 2 A short test of material that has been taught
- 3 Test to assess whether a student knows subject material required for a graduate degree
- 4 A social organisation for female students
- 5 A fourth-year student in the US

Down

- 6 A second-year student
- 7 A general word meaning academic staff in the US

