



ASSOCIATION FOR
Orientation • Transition • Retention
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Terminology Resource Guide

A support tool for international attendees to NODA conferences

Overview

NODA: An Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education strives to create peer-to-peer learning opportunities for its members. The association uses online connection platforms, conferences, and webinars to foster experiential learning.

The NODA Leadership has acknowledged that sometimes the terminology used by the membership may be misunderstood or unfamiliar to international members. NODA's Global Initiatives Committee is working toward developing a means for all members of the association to understand the various terminology related to new student transition used in other regions of the world. In the interim, this guide has been developed for international members to better equip themselves with a basic understanding of the terms frequently used by membership during conferences and other engagement opportunities.

Understanding the Terminology

“Orientation” in the United States

The term “Orientation” is used in varying contexts throughout the world. In the United States, “Orientation” describes a program designed for new students that traditionally occurs during the months prior to the start of classes. It could occur multiple times, vary in days, be mandatory, and each institution includes a range of programming in their Orientation.

Extended Orientation

Extended Orientation (EO) refers to programs that support the further transition of new students to an institution. Such programs include spirit or tradition camps, outdoor orientations, welcome weeks, and experiential orientation programs. Schools that run a multi-day “Orientation” program immediately before classes begin are likely to find similarities with the US “Welcome Week” model.

Veteran Students

Many American schools coordinate special programming for students who are military veterans. NODA's Non-Traditional Student Network includes veterans as one of their student populations of focus.

“College”

The term “college” is often used to indicate an institution of higher education. Students who are “going to college” are pursuing higher education. Similarly, “college students” is a term meant to include all types of students enrolled in higher education. While this terminology may be familiar to some outside of the United States, the context is different in some other areas. For example, in Canada the term “college” typically describes a 2-year institution and “university” typically describes a 4-year institution.

Undergraduate vs. Graduate

American schools offer undergraduate degrees that are called Associate’s or Bachelor’s Degrees. Many also offer graduate degrees, including Master’s, Doctorate, Professional, and Advanced Degrees.

Types of Higher Education Institutions

American institution types include universities, colleges, community colleges, technical, 2-year, 4-year, professional, and others. Institutions can sometimes categorize themselves based on the demographic they serve:

- PWI - Predominantly White Institution
- HSI - Hispanic-Serving Institution
- HBCU - Historically Black College or University
- Tribal College - serves Native American students

Title IX

Title IX is a law that was enacted in 1972 that gives each gender equal rights to educational programs, activities, and federal financial assistance. Title IX also requires higher education institutions to publish grievance procedures for students who are filing complaints related to sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. Many other countries have similar legislation or requirements of institutions, and you can often find valuable information within Title IX discussions.

Further Support

If, throughout your communication within NODA, you identify language used that you have not heard before or is not included in this guide, please always feel like you can ask the speaker questions about the terms used. This creates a valuable learning opportunity for both you, the speaker, and others participating in the session - just like in Orientation, if you have the question, likely others do, too!

You are encouraged to also email the Global Initiatives Chair with a description of the event and the terminology discussed, at rlwroe@uwaterloo.ca. This will allow the association to update the guide for future use.