

Common Data Set Definitions

All definitions related to the financial aid section appear at the end of the Definitions document.

Items preceded by an asterisk (*) represent definitions agreed to among publishers which do not appear on the CDS document but may be present on individual publishers' sites.

Additional guidance for some terms, particularly those common with the IPEDS survey, may be found [here: https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/glossary](https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/glossary)

***Academic advisement:** Plan under which each student is assigned to a faculty member or a trained adviser, who, through regular meetings, helps the student plan and implement

Accelerated program: Completion of a college program of study in fewer than the usual number of years, most often by attending summer sessions and carrying extra courses

Admitted student: Applicant who is offered admission to a degree-granting program at your institution.

***Adult student services:** Admission assistance, support, orientation, and other services expressly for adults who have started college for the first time, or who are re-entering after

American Indian or Alaska Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and maintaining tribal affiliation

Applicant (first-time, first year): An individual who has fulfilled the institution's requirements to be considered for admission (including payment or waiving of the application fee)

Application fee: That amount of money that an institution charges for processing a student's application for acceptance. This amount is *not* creditable toward tuition and require

Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Associate degree: An award that normally requires at least two but less than four years of full-time equivalent college work.

Bachelor's degree: An award (baccalaureate or equivalent degree, as determined by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education) that normally requires at least four years of full-time equivalent college work.

Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.

Board (charges): Assume average cost for 19 meals per week or the maximum meal plan.

Books and supplies (costs): Average cost of books and supplies. Do not include unusual costs for special groups of students (e.g., engineering or art majors), unless they constitute a significant portion of the total cost.

Calendar system: The method by which an institution structures most of its courses for the academic year.

Campus Ministry: Religious student organizations (denominational or nondenominational) devoted to fostering religious life on college campuses. May also refer to Campus Christian Ministry.

***Career and placement services:** A range of services, including (often) the following: coordination of visits of employers to campus; aptitude and vocational testing; interest inventories; and career counseling.

Carnegie units: One year of study or the equivalent in a secondary school subject.

Certificate: See **Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma**.

Class rank: The relative numerical position of a student in his or her graduating class, calculated by the high school on the basis of grade-point average, whether weighted or unweighted.

College-preparatory program: Courses in academic subjects (English, history and social studies, foreign languages, mathematics, science, and the arts) that stress preparation for college.

Common Application: The standard application form distributed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals for a large number of private colleges who are members of the organization.

***Community service program:** Referral center for students wishing to perform volunteer work in the community or participate in volunteer activities coordinated by academic advisors.

Commuter: A student who lives off campus in housing that is not owned by, operated by, or affiliated with the college. This category includes students who commute from home.

Comprehensive transition and postsecondary program for students with intellectual disabilities: Programs designed to support postsecondary students with intellectual disabilities.

Clock hour: A unit of measure that represents an hour of scheduled instruction given to students. Also referred to as contact hour.

Continuous basis (for program enrollment): A calendar system classification that is used by institutions that enroll students at any time during the academic year. For example, a student could enroll in a program at any time during the year.

Cooperative education program: A program that provides for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry, or government.

Cooperative housing: College-owned, -operated, or -affiliated housing in which students share room and board expenses and participate in household chores to reduce living expenses.

***Counseling service:** Activities designed to assist students in making plans and decisions related to their education, career, or personal development.

Credit: Recognition of attendance or performance in an instructional activity (course or program) that can be applied by a recipient toward the requirements for a degree, diploma, certificate, or other recognized postsecondary credential.

Credit course: A course that, if successfully completed, can be applied toward the number of courses required for achieving a degree, diploma, certificate, or other recognized postsecondary credential.

Credit hour: A unit of measure representing an hour (50 minutes) of instruction over a 15-week period in a semester or trimester system or a 10-week period in a quarter system.

Cross-registration: A system whereby students enrolled at one institution may take courses at another institution without having to apply to the second institution.

Deferred admission: The practice of permitting admitted students to postpone enrollment, usually for a period of one academic term or one year.

Degree: An award conferred by a college, university, or other postsecondary education institution as official recognition for the successful completion of a program of studies.

Degree-seeking students: Students enrolled in courses for credit who are recognized by the institution as seeking a degree or recognized postsecondary credential. At the undergraduate level, these students are also referred to as "degree-seeking students."

Differs by program (calendar system): A calendar system classification that is used by institutions that have occupational/vocational programs of varying length. These schools are referred to as "differs by program schools."

Diploma: See **Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma**.

Distance learning: An option for earning course credit at off-campus locations via cable television, internet, satellite classes, videotapes, correspondence courses, or other means.

Doctor's degree-research/scholarship: A Ph.D. or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation.

Doctor's degree-professional practice: A doctor's degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or licensure in a profession.

Doctor's degree-other: A doctor's degree that does not meet the definition of a doctor's degree - research/scholarship or a doctor's degree - professional practice.

Double major: Program in which students may complete two undergraduate programs of study simultaneously.

Dual enrollment: A program through which high school students may enroll in college courses while still enrolled in high school. Students are not required to apply for admission to the college.

Early action plan: An admission plan that allows students to apply and be notified of an admission decision well in advance of the regular notification dates. If admitted, the candidate may enroll in the fall term.

Early admission: A policy under which students who have not completed high school are admitted and enroll full time in college, usually after completion of their junior year.

Early decision plan: A plan that permits students to apply and be notified of an admission decision (and financial aid offer if applicable) well in advance of the regular notification dates.

English as a Second Language (ESL): A course of study designed specifically for students whose native language is not English.

Exchange student program-domestic: Any arrangement between a student and a college that permits study for a semester or more at another college in the United States with the understanding that the student will return to the original institution.

External degree program: A program of study in which students earn credits toward a degree through independent study, college courses, proficiency examinations, and personal achievement.

Extracurricular activities (as admission factor): Special consideration in the admissions process given for participation in both school and nonschool-related activities of interest to the institution.

First-time student: A student attending any institution for the first time at the level enrolled. Includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended a postsecondary institution during the previous year.

First-time, first-year student: A student attending any institution for the first time at the undergraduate level. Includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended college for the first time.

First-year student: A student who has completed less than the equivalent of 1 full year of undergraduate work; that is, less than 30 semester hours (in a 120-hour degree program) or less than 10 quarter hours.

***New student orientation:** Orientation addressing the academic, social, emotional, and intellectual issues involved in beginning college. May be a few hours or a few days in length.

Full-time student (undergraduate): A student enrolled for 12 or more semester credits, 12 or more quarter credits, or 24 or more clock hours a week each term.

Geographical residence (as admission factor): Special consideration in the admission process given to students from a particular region, state, or country of residence.

Grade-point average (academic high school GPA): The sum of grade points a student has earned in secondary school divided by the number of courses taken. The most common method of calculation is to use a 4-point scale.

Graduate student: A student who holds a bachelor's or equivalent, and is taking courses at the post-baccalaureate level.

***Health services:** Free or low cost on-campus primary and preventive health care available to students.

High school diploma or recognized equivalent: A document certifying the successful completion of a prescribed secondary school program of studies, or the attainment of satisfactory

Hispanic or Latino: A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

Honors program: Any special program for very able students offering the opportunity for educational enrichment, independent study, acceleration, or some combination of these

Independent study: Academic work chosen or designed by the student with the approval of the department concerned, under an instructor's supervision, and usually undertaken

In-state tuition: The tuition charged by institutions to those students who meet the state's or institution's residency requirements.

International student: See **Nonresident**.

International student group: Student groups that facilitate cultural dialogue, support a diverse campus, assist international students in acclimation and creating a social network.

Internship: Any short-term, supervised work experience usually related to a student's major field, for which the student earns academic credit. The work can be full- or part-time

***Learning center:** Center offering assistance through tutors, workshops, computer programs, or audiovisual equipment in reading, writing, math, and skills such as taking notes,

***Legal services:** Free or low cost legal advice for a range of issues (personal and other).

Liberal arts/career combination: Program in which a student earns undergraduate degrees in two separate fields, one in a liberal arts major and the other in a professional or

Living learning community: Residential programs that allow students to interact with students who share common interests. In addition to living together, students may also

Master's degree: An award that requires the successful completion of a program of study of generally one or two full-time equivalent academic years of work beyond the bachelor's

Minority affiliation (as admission factor): Special consideration in the admission process for members of designated racial/ethnic minority groups.

***Minority student center:** Center with programs, activities, and/or services intended to enhance the college experience of students of color.

Model United Nations: A simulation activity focusing on conflict resolution, globalization, and diplomacy. Assuming roles as foreign ambassadors and "delegates," students

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

Nonresident: A person who is not a citizen or national of the United States and who is in this country on a visa or temporary basis and does not have the right to remain indefinitely

***On-campus day care:** Licensed day care for students' children (usually age 3 and up); usually for a fee.

Open admission: Admission policy under which virtually all secondary school graduates or students with GED equivalency diplomas are admitted without regard to academic

Other expenses (costs): Include average costs for clothing, laundry, entertainment, medical (if not a required fee), and furnishings.

Out-of-state tuition: The tuition charged by institutions to those students who do not meet the institution's or state's residency requirements.

Part-time student (undergraduate): A student enrolled for fewer than 12 credits per semester or quarter, or fewer than 24 clock hours a week each term.

Permanent Resident or other eligible non-citizen: A person who is not a citizen or national of the United States and who has been admitted as a legal immigrant for the purpose

***Personal counseling:** One-on-one or group counseling with trained professionals for students who want to explore personal, educational, or vocational issues.

Post-baccalaureate certificate: An award that requires completion of an organized program of study requiring 18 credit hours beyond the bachelor's; designed for persons who

Post-master's certificate: An award that requires completion of an organized program of study of 24 credit hours beyond the master's degree but does not meet the requirements

Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma: Includes the following three IPEDS definitions for postsecondary awards, certificates, and diplomas of varying durations and

Less Than 1 Academic Year: Requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in less than 1 academic year (2

At Least 1 But Less Than 2 Academic Years: Requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least 1 but

At Least 2 But Less Than 4 Academic Years: Requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least 2 but

Private institution: An educational institution controlled by a private individual(s) or by a nongovernmental agency, usually supported primarily by other than public funds, and

Private for-profit institution: A private institution in which the individual(s) or agency in control receives compensation, other than wages, rent, or other expenses for the assurance

Private nonprofit institution: A private institution in which the individual(s) or agency in control receives no compensation, other than wages, rent, or other expenses for the assurance

Proprietary institution: See **Private for-profit institution**.

Public institution: An educational institution whose programs and activities are operated by publicly elected or appointed school officials, and which is supported primarily by public

Quarter calendar system: A calendar system in which the academic year consists of three sessions called quarters of about 12 weeks each. The range may be from 10 to 15 weeks

Race/ethnicity: Category used to describe groups to which individuals belong, identify with, or belong in the eyes of the community. The categories do not denote scientific definitions

Race/ethnicity unknown: Category used to classify students or employees whose race/ethnicity is not known and whom institutions are unable to place in one of the specified racial

Recognized Postsecondary Credential: Includes both Title IV eligible degrees, certificates, and other recognized postsecondary credentials. Any credential that is received after

Religious affiliation/commitment (as admission factor): Special consideration given in the admission process for affiliation with a certain church or faith/religion, commitment

***Religious counseling:** One-on-one or group counseling with trained professionals for students who want to explore religious problems or issues.

***Remedial services:** Instructional courses designed for students deficient in the general competencies necessary for a regular postsecondary curriculum and educational setting.

Required fees: Fixed sum charged to students for items not covered by tuition and required of such a large proportion of all students that the student who does NOT pay is the exception

Room and board (charges)—on campus: Assume double occupancy in institutional housing and 19 meals per week (or maximum meal plan).

Secondary school record (as admission factor): Information maintained by the secondary school that may include such things as the student's high school transcript, class rank

Semester calendar system: A calendar system that consists of two semesters during the academic year with about 16 weeks for each semester of instruction. There may be an additional

Student-designed major: A program of study based on individual interests, designed with the assistance of an adviser.

Study abroad: Any arrangement by which a student completes part of the college program studying in another country. Can be at a campus abroad or through a cooperative agreement

***Summer session:** A summer session is shorter than a regular semester and not considered part of the academic year. It is not the third term of an institution operating on a trimester

Talent/ability (as admission factor): Special consideration given to students with demonstrated talent/abilities in areas of interest to the institution (e.g., sports, the arts, language

Teacher certification program: Program designed to prepare students to meet the requirements for certification as teachers in elementary, middle/junior high, and secondary schools

Transfer applicant: An individual who has fulfilled the institution's requirements to be considered for admission (including payment or waiving of the application fee, if any) and

Transfer student: A student entering the institution for the first time but known to have previously attended a postsecondary institution at the same level (e.g., undergraduate). The

Transportation (costs): Assume two round trips to student's hometown per year for students in institutional housing or daily travel to and from your institution for commuter status

Trimester calendar system: An academic year consisting of 3 terms of about 15 weeks each.

Tuition: Amount of money charged to students for instructional services. Tuition may be charged per term, per course, or per credit.

***Tutoring:** May range from one-on-one tutoring in specific subjects to tutoring in an area such as math, reading, or writing. Most tutors are college students; at some colleges, the

Unit: a standard of measurement representing hours of academic instruction (e.g., semester credit, quarter credit, clock hour).
Undergraduate: A student enrolled in a four- or five-year bachelor’s degree program, an associate degree program, or a vocational or technical program below the baccalaureate.
Undergraduate Research: Opportunities offered to undergraduate students to make original contributions in an academic discipline via the exploration of a specific research top
***Veteran’s counseling:** Helps veterans and their dependents obtain benefits for their selected program and provides certifications to the Veteran’s Administration. May also prov
***Visually impaired:** Any person whose sight loss is not correctable and is sufficiently severe as to adversely affect educational performance.
Volunteer work (as admission factor): Special consideration given to students for activity done on a volunteer basis (e.g., tutoring, hospital care, working with the elderly or dis
Wait list: List of students who meet the admission requirements but will only be offered a place in the class if space becomes available.
Weekend college: A program that allows students to take a complete course of study and attend classes only on weekends.
White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
***Women’s center:** Center with programs, academic activities, and/or services intended to promote an understanding of the evolving roles of women.
Work experience (as admission factor): Special consideration given to students who have been employed prior to application, whether for relevance to major, demonstration of

Financial Aid Definitions

External scholarships and grants: Scholarships and grants received from outside (private) sources that students bring with them (e.g., Kiwanis, National Merit scholarships). TI
Financial aid applicant: Any applicant who submits **any one of the** institutionally required financial aid applications/forms, such as the FAFSA.
Indebtedness: Aggregate dollar amount borrowed through any loan program (federal, state, subsidized, unsubsidized, private, etc.; excluding parent loans) while the student was
Institutional scholarships and grants: Endowed scholarships, annual gifts and tuition funded grants for which the institution determines the recipient.
Financial need: As determined by your institution using the federal methodology and/or your institution's own standards.
Need-based aid: College-funded or college-administered award from institutional, state, federal, or other sources for which a student must have financial need to qualify. This in
Need-based scholarship or grant aid: Scholarships and grants from institutional, state, federal, or other sources for which a student must have financial need to qualify.
Need-based self-help aid: Loans and jobs from institutional, state, federal, or other sources for which a student must demonstrate financial need to qualify.
Non-need-based scholarship or grant aid: Scholarships and grants, gifts, or merit-based aid from institutional, state, federal, or other sources (including unrestricted funds or gi
Note: Suggested order of precedence for counting non-need money as need-based:

1. Non-need institutional grants
2. Non-need tuition waivers
3. Non-need athletic awards
4. Non-need federal grants
5. Non-need state grants
6. Non-need outside grants
7. Non-need student loans
8. Non-need parent loans
9. Non-need work

Non-need-based self-help aid: Loans and jobs from institutional, state, or other sources for which a student need not demonstrate financial need to qualify.

Work study and employment: Federal and state work study aid, and any employment packaged by your institution in financial aid awards.

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surveys.

it immediate and long-term academic and vocational goals.
during the regular academic term.

or a lapse of a few years.

ation or community attachment.

fee, if any) and who has been notified of one of the following actions: admission, nonadmission, placement on waiting list, or application withdrawn (by applicant or institution).

d fees, nor is it refundable if the student is not admitted to the institution.

Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

but *not* more than five years of full-time equivalent college-level work. This includes ALL bachelor's degrees conferred in a five-year cooperative (work-study plan) program. (A cooper

ite the majority of students at your institution.

usade for Christ, an interdenominational Christian organization.

/entories, personal counseling; help in resume writing, interviewing, launching the job search; listings for those students desiring employment and those seeking permanent positions; estab

/eighted.

or college or university study.

mbers of the Common Application Group.

epartments.

; and students who have moved to the area to attend college.

ibilities obtain instruction in academic, career and technical, and independent living subjects in preparation for employment.

, a cosmetology school or a word processing school might allow students to enroll and begin studies at various times, with no requirement that classes begin on a certain date.

enses.

a, certificate, or recognized postsecondary credential.

ostsecondary credential.

It is applied toward the total number of hours needed for completing the requirements of a degree, diploma, certificate, or recognized postsecondary credential.

raduate level, this is intended to include students enrolled in vocational or occupational programs.

; may enroll students at specific times depending on the program desired. For example, a school might offer a two-month program in January, March, May, September, and November; and

;

rtation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement. Some examples of this type of degree m
icense required for professional practice. The degree is awarded after a period of study such that the total time to the degree, including both pre-professional and professional preparation,

n to the college in order to participate.

didate is not committed to enroll; the student may reply to the offer under the college's regular reply policy.

on date. Applicants agree to accept an offer of admission and, if admitted, to withdraw their applications from other colleges. There are three possible decisions for early decision applicant

out extending the amount of time required for a degree. **See also Study abroad.**

al experience. External degree programs require minimal or no classroom attendance.

st to the college, such as clubs, hobbies, student government, athletics, performing arts, etc.

for the first time at the same level in the prior summer term. Also includes students who entered with advanced standing (college credit earned before graduation from high school).

r the first time in the prior summer term. Also includes students who entered with advanced standing (college credits earned before graduation from high school).

) or less than 900 clock hours.

gth; at some colleges, there is a fee.

on system of assigning numbers to grades counts four points for an A, three points for a B, two points for a C, one point for a D, and no points for an E or F. Unweighted GPA's assign the

factory scores on the Tests of General Educational Development (GED), or another state-specified examination.

2.
outside of the regular classroom structure.

3.
; on- or off-campus, paid or unpaid.
managing time, taking tests.

4.
pecialized major, whether on campus or through cross-registration.
participate in shared courses, special events, and group service projects.
or's degree. Some of these degrees, such as those in Theology (M.Div., M.H.L./Rav) that were formerly classified as "first-professional", may require more than two full-time equivalent ac

5.
duct research, engage in debate, draft resolutions, and may participate in a national Model UN conference.

6.
ably.
cord, test scores, or other qualifications.

7.
e of obtaining permanent resident status (and who holds either a registration card [Form I-551 or I-151], a Temporary Resident Card [Form I-688], or an Arrival-Departure Record [Form

8.
have completed a baccalaureate degree but do not meet the requirements of academic degrees carrying the title of master.
s of academic degrees at the doctoral level.
:dit/contact/clock hour requirements:

9.
semesters or 3 quarters) or in less than 900 clock hours by a student enrolled full-time.

10.
: less than 2 full-time equivalent academic years, or designed for completion in at least 30 but less than 60 credit hours, or in at least 900 but less than 1,800 clock hours.

11.
: less than 4 full-time equivalent academic years, or designed for completion in at least 60 but less than 120 credit hours, or in at least 1,800 but less than 3,600 clock hours.

12.
operated by other than publicly elected or appointed officials.
ption of risk.
umption of risk. These include both independent nonprofit schools and those affiliated with a religious organization.

13.
ublic funds.
ks. There may be an additional quarter in the summer.
itions of anthropological origins. A person may be counted in only one group.
cial/ethnic categories.
· completion of a program that is eligible for Title IV federal student aid. Credentials that are awarded to recognize an individual's attainment of measurable technical or industry/occupati
t to a religious vocation, or observance of certain religious tenets/lifestyle.

14.
.ception. Do not include application fees or optional fees such as lab fees or parking fees.

15.
, GPA, and teacher and counselor recommendations.
lditional summer session.

16.
ement with some other U.S. college or an institution of another country.
ster system or the fourth term of an institution operating on a quarter calendar system. The institution may have 2 or more sessions occurring in the summer months. Some schools, such a
(es, etc.).
hools.
d who has previously attended another college or university and earned college-level credit.

17.
he student may transfer with or without credit.
idents.

18.
ey are specially trained and certified.

ic. Research opportunities may or may not be associated with a specific course or earn credit.
vide personal counseling on the transition from the military to a civilian life.

abled) as a service to the community or the public in general.

employment-related skills, or as explanation of student's academic and extracurricular record.

ic institution may process paperwork to receive the dollars, but it has no role in determining the recipient or the dollar amount awarded.

enrolled at an institution. Student loans co-signed by a parent are assumed to be the responsibility of the student and **should** be included.

cludes both institutional and non-institutional student aid (grants, jobs, and loans).

fts and endowment income) awarded solely on the basis of academic achievement, merit, or any other non-need-based reason. When reporting questions H1 and H2, non-need-based aid t

ative plan provides for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry, or government; thus, it allows students to combine actual work experience with their coll

ishment of a permanent reference folder; career resource materials.

l a three-month program in January, April, and October.

ay include Ed.D., D.M.A., D.B.A., D.Sc., D.A., or D.M., and others, as designated by the awarding institution.

equals at least six full-time equivalent academic years. Some of these degrees were formerly classified as "first-professional" and may include: Chiropractic (D.C. or D.C.M.); E

ts: admitted, denied, or not admitted but forwarded for consideration with the regular applicant pool, without prejudice.

: same weight to each course. Weighting gives students additional points for their grades in advanced or honors courses.

academic years of work.

I-94] with a notation that conveys legal immigrant status, such as Section 207 Refugee, Section 208 Asylee, Conditional Entrant Parolee or Cuban-Haitian).

ional skills necessary to obtain employment or advance within an industry occupation. (Generally based on standards developed or endorsed by employers or industry association

s vocational and beauty schools, have year-round classes with no separate summer session.

hat is used to meet need should be counted as need-based aid.

ege studies.) Also, it includes bachelor's degrees in which the normal four years of work are completed in three years.

dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.); Law (L.L.B. or J.D.); Medicine (M.D.); Optometry (O.D.); Osteopathic Medicine (D.O); Pharmacy (Pharm.D.); Podiatry (D.P.M., Pod.D., D.P.);

s).

or, Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), and others, as designated by the awarding institution.