

## 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'

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 impleme

**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 d

**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 aft

**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 affil

**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

**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,

**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

**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 consti

**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 Cr

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

**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 un

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

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

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

**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 hom

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

**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

**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 food and housing expenses and participate in household chores to reduce living e

**\*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, diplom

**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 p

**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 underg

**\*Developmental services:** Instructional courses designed for students deficient in the general competencies necessary for a regular postsecondary curriculum and educational set

**Differs by program (calendar system):** A calendar system classification that is used by institutions that have occupational/vocational programs of varying length. These 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 disse

**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 l

**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:** Refers to high school students enrolled in college courses for credit. In accordance with IPEDS, student performance is recorded on a college transcript and po

**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 can

**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 notificati

**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

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

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

**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 :

**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

**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 progr

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

**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 comm

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



**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

**Unduplicated Count of High School Students Enrolled for Credit:** Include all high school students enrolled in college courses for credit within or outside of a dual enrollment

**Undergraduate Research:** Opportunities offered to undergraduate students to make original contributions in an academic discipline via the exploration of a specific research topic

**\*Veteran's counseling:** Helps veterans and their dependents obtain benefits for their selected program and provides certifications to the Veteran's Administration. May also provide

**\*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 disabled)

**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.

**Within a dual enrollment program:** Program within an organized system with special guidelines that allows high school students to take college-level courses. The guidelines must be

**\*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). These are

**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 includes

**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 gifts)

**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.