

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' surveys.

***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 immediate and long-term academic and vocational goals.

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 during the regular academic term .

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 a lapse of a few years.

American Indian or Alaska Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

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has been notified of one of the following actions: admission, nonadmission, placement on waiting list, or application withdrawn (by applicant or institution).

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

Asian or Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, or Pacific Islands. This includes people from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, American Samoa, India, 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 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 cooperative plan provides for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry, or government; thus, it allows students to combine actual work experience with their college studies.) Also, it includes bachelor's degrees in which the normal four years of work are completed in three years.

Black, non-Hispanic: A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa (except those of Hispanic origin).

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 the majority of students at your institution.

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 Crusade for Christ, an interdenominational Christian organization.

***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, personal counseling; help in resume writing, interviewing, launching the job search; listings for those students desiring employment and those seeking permanent positions; establishment of a permanent reference folder; career resource materials.

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

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 and students who have moved to the area to attend college.
Contact hour: A unit of measure that represents an hour of scheduled instruction given to students. Also referred to as clock 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 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.
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 formal award.
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 formal award.
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. It is applied toward the total number of hours needed for completing the requirements of a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award.
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 formal award. At the undergraduate level, this is intended to include students enrolled in vocational or occupational programs.
Differs by program (calendar system): A calendar system classification that is used by institutions that have occupational/vocational programs of varying length. These schools 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 a three-month program in January, April, and October.
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 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 may include Ed.D., D.M.A., D.B.A., D.Sc., D.A., or D.M., and others, as designated by the awarding institution.
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 license 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, 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.); 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.); or, Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), and others, as designated by the awarding institution.
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 in order to participate.
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 is not committed to enroll; the student may reply to the offer under the college's regular reply policy.
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 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 applicants: admitted, denied, or not admitted but forwarded for consideration with the regular applicant pool, without prejudice.

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** without extending the amount of time required for a degree. **See also Study abroad.**

External degree program: A program of study in which students earn credits toward a degree through independent study, college courses, proficiency examinations, and personal experience. External degree programs require minimal or no classroom attendance.

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

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 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).

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

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 900 contact hours.

Freshman: A first-year undergraduate student.

***Freshman/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; at some colleges, there is a fee.

Full-time student (undergraduate): A student enrolled for 12 or more semester credits, 12 or more quarter credits, or 24 or more contact 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 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 same weight to each course. Weighting gives students additional points for their

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 specialized major, whether on campus or through cross registration.

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 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 academic years of work.

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

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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/ethnic categories.

Religious affiliation/commitment (as admission factor): Special consideration given in the admission process for affiliation with a certain church or faith/religion, commitment to a religious vocation, or observance of certain religious tenets/lifestyle.

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

Weekend college: A program that allows students to take a complete course of study and attend classes onl