

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

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

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

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

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

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

Applicant (first-time, first year): An individual who has fulfilled the institution's requirements to be considered for admission (including 1

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

Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for exa

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) tha

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., engineer

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 ca

***Career and placement services:** A range of services, including (often) the following: coordination of visits of employers to campus; aptit

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-p

College-preparatory program: Courses in academic subjects (English, history and social studies, foreign languages, mathematics, science,

Common Application: The standard application form distributed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals for a large nu

***Community service program:** Referral center for students wishing to perform volunteer work in the community or participate in voluntee

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

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

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 d

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

Cooperative housing: College-owned, -operated, or -affiliated housing in which students share food and housing expenses and participate i

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

Credit: Recognition of attendance or performance in an instructional activity (course or program) that can be applied by a recipient toward

Credit course: A course that, if successfully completed, can be applied toward the number of courses required for achieving a degree, diplo

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

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

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

Degree: An award conferred by a college, university, or other postsecondary education institution as official recognition for the successful c

Degree-seeking students: Students enrolled in courses for credit who are recognized by the institution as seeking a degree or recognized po

***Developmental services:** Instructional courses designed for students deficient in the general competencies necessary for a regular postsec

Differs by program (calendar system): A calendar system classification that is used by institutions that have occupational/vocational prog

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, cc

Doctor's degree-research/scholarship: A Ph.D. or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including 1

Doctor's degree-professional practice: A doctor's degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and ski

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

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

Early action plan: An admission plan that allows students to apply and be notified of an admission decision well in advance of the regular

Early admission: A policy under which students who have not completed high school are admitted and enroll full time in college, usually a

Early decision plan: A plan that permits students to apply and be notified of an admission decision (and financial aid offer if applicable) w

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 anoth

External degree program: A program of study in which students earn credits toward a degree through independent study, college courses,

Extracurricular activities (as admission factor): Special consideration in the admissions process given for participation in both school an

First-time student: A student attending any institution for the first time at the level enrolled. Includes students enrolled in the fall term whc

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

First-year student: A student who has completed less than the equivalent of 1 full year of undergraduate work; that is, less than 30 semeste

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

Full-time student (undergraduate): A student enrolled for 12 or more semester credits, 12 or more quarter credits, or 24 or more clock ho

Geographical residence (as admission factor): Special consideration in the admission process given to students from a particular region, s

Grade-point average (academic high school GPA): The sum of grade points a student has earned in secondary school divided by the num

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 progr

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

Honors program: Any special program for very able students offering the opportunity for educational enrichment, independent study, acce

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

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 accl

Internship: Any short-term, supervised work experience usually related to a student's major field, for which the student earns academic cre

***Learning center:** Center offering assistance through tutors, workshops, computer programs, or audiovisual equipment in reading, writing,

***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 majo

Living learning community: Residential programs that allow students to interact with students who share common interests. In addition to

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

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

***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 amb

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

***New student orientation:** Orientation addressing the academic, social, emotional, and intellectual issues involved in beginning college. M

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

***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 a

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 requirement

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

Permanent Resident or other eligible non-citizen: A person who is not a citizen or national of the United States and who has been admitt

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

Post-baccalaureate certificate: An award that requires completion of an organized program of study requiring 18 credit hours beyond the l

Post-master's certificate: An award that requires completion of an organized program of study of 24 credit hours beyond the master's degr

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

Less Than 1 Academic Year : Requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate d

At Least 1 But Less Than 2 Academic Years: Requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the

At Least 2 But Less Than 4 Academic Years: Requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the

Private institution: An educational institution controlled by a private individual(s) or by a nongovernmental agency, usually supported pri

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

Private nonprofit institution: A private institution in which the individual(s) or agency in control receives no compensation, other than wa

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,

Quarter calendar system: A calendar system in which the academic year consists of three sessions called quarters of about 12 weeks each.

Race/ethnicity: Category used to describe groups to which individuals belong, identify with, or belong in the eyes of the community. The c

Race/ethnicity unknown: Category used to classify students or employees whose race/ethnicity is not known and whom institutions are un

Recognized Postsecondary Credential: Includes both Title IV eligible degrees, certificates, and other recognized postsecondary credential

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

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

Required fees: Fixed sum charged to students for items not covered by tuition and required of such a large proportion of all students that th

Secondary school record (as admission factor): Information maintained by the secondary school that may include such things as the stude

Semester calendar system: A calendar system that consists of two semesters during the academic year with about 16 weeks for each semes

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

***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

Talent/ability (as admission factor): Special consideration given to students with demonstrated talent/abilities in areas of interest to the in

Teacher certification program: Program designed to prepare students to meet the requirements for certification as teachers in elementary,

Transfer applicant: An individual who has fulfilled the institution's requirements to be considered for admission (including payment or wa

Transfer student: A student entering the institution for the first time but known to have previously attended a postsecondary institution at t

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

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

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 techn

Undergraduate Research: Opportunities offered to undergraduate students to make original contributions in an academic discipline via the

***Veteran's counseling:** Helps veterans and their dependents obtain benefits for their selected program and provides certifications to the Ve

***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, hospita

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 o

Work experience (as admission factor): Special consideration given to students who have been employed prior to application, whether for

Financial Aid Definitions

External scholarships and grants: Scholarships and grants received from outside (private) sources that students bring with them (e.g., Kiv

Financial aid applicant: Any applicant who submits **any one of** the institutionally required financial aid applications/forms, such as the FA

it normally requires at least four years but *not* more than five years of full-time equivalent college-level work. This includes ALL bachel

ills for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice. The degree is awarded after a period of study such that th

ed as a legal immigrant for the purpose of obtaining permanent resident status (and who holds either a registration card [Form I-551 or I-

s. Any credential that is received after completion of a program that is eligible for Title IV federal student aid. Credentials that are award

or's degrees conferred in a five-year cooperative (work-study plan) program. (A cooperative plan provides for alternate class attendance a

e total time to the degree, including both pre-professional and professional preparation, equals at least six full-time equivalent academic y

151], a Temporary Resident Card [Form I-688], or an Arrival-Departure Record [Form I-94] with a notation that conveys legal immigrar

led to recognize an individual's attainment of measurable technical or industry/occupational skills necessary to obtain employment or adv

and employment in business, industry, or government; thus, it allows students to combine actual work experience with their college studies.

years. Some of these degrees were formerly classified as “first-professional” and may include: Chiropractic (D.C. or D.C.M.); Dentistry (D.)

ance within an industry occupation. (Generally based on standards developed or endorsed by employers or industry associations).

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.