

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has been notified of one of the following actions: admission, nonadmission, placement on waiting list, or application withdrawn (by applicant or institution).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

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.

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**\*Career and placement services:** A range of services, including (often) the following: coordination of visits of

**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.

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.

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

**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 grades in advanced or honors courses.

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

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



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**Private institution:** An educational institution controlled by a private individual(s) or by a nongovernmental

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**\*Summer session:** A summer session is shorter than a regular semester and not considered part of the

**External scholarships and grants:** Scholarships and grants received from outside (private) sources that students bring with them (e.g., Kiwanis, National Merit scholarships). The institution may process paperwork to receive the dollars, but it has no role in determining the recipient or the dollar amount awarded.

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

**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 both institutional and noninstitutional student aid (grants, jobs, and loans).

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

**Note: Suggested order of precedence for counting non-need money as need-based:**

Non-need institutional grants

Non-need tuition waivers

Non-need athletic awards

Non-need federal grants

Non-need state grants

Non-need outside grants

Non-need student loans

Non-need parent loans

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.