

Glossary

ABILITY TO BENEFIT:

A phrase describing the means by which a student is judged to have the ability to complete successfully a course of postsecondary training. A student may use “ability to benefit” in lieu of having a high school diploma or its equivalent to satisfy the requirement to participate in federal student aid programs.

ACCREDITATION:

The process whereby a non-governmental association recognizes an institution, college, university, or program of study as having voluntarily met established qualifications or standards as determined through initial and periodic evaluations by a peer group.

ACTIVE STUDENT:

An enrolled student who has submitted at least one examination to an institution for servicing during the institution’s designated period of time established as the criteria for making satisfactory progress, or one who has affirmed in writing his/her intent to continue studying.

ASSIGNMENT:

A part of organized study material to be studied and/or performed by the student, according to required techniques and principles; a specific task to be performed by the student and submitted to the institution for evaluation and comment.

ASYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATIONS:

Communications that take place at different times (or non-simultaneously) by different participants.

BONA FIDE DISTANCE EDUCATION INSTITUTION:

The Commission definition of a “bona fide” distance education institution and/or training provider is “an educational institution or organization whose primary purpose is providing education or training which (1) formally enrolls students and maintains student records; (2) retains a qualified faculty to service students; (3) transmits to students organized instructional materials; (4) provides continuous two-way communication on student work, e.g., evaluating students’ examinations, projects, and/or answering queries, with prompt feedback given to students; and (5) offers courses of instruction which must be studied **predominantly at a distance** (51% or more) from the institution or organization. That is, distance education should be the primary method of study for the majority of students and distance education courses should comprise the majority of course offerings.” [added January 2007]

BUSINESS STANDARDS:

DETC Accrediting Commission standards applicable to the business practices and policies of a school referring to such areas as ethical practice in advertising and promotion, sales, tuition cancellation, and settlement policies.

CANCELLATION:

The process of disenrolling a student, reducing the student’s financial obligation in accordance with the institution’s policy, and relieving the institution of further service obligation to the student.

CERTIFICATE:

(1) A document issued by an institution as evidence that a student has successfully completed a prescribed course or program or portion thereof; or a legal document issued by a State authorizing a school to perform certain specific services in the field of education.

COMBINATION COURSE:

A course consisting of a distance study portion (more than 51%) and a residence portion. Normally, the distance study portion precedes the residence period. Residence training is offered to provide students instruction on the use of specialized equipment, learning of manual skills, or the application of certain techniques under supervision.

COMPLETION RATE:

When reporting completion rates to the Accrediting Commission, take the number of students who completed the course/semester and divide it by the number of people who enrolled (do not include those who dropped during the 5-day cancellation period, those who never submitted any required assignments/examinations, those who were cancelled by the institution for non-payment, or those who never provided the required information to be enrolled in the course such as not providing official transcripts). See B.10. Guide to Student Achievement and Satisfaction.

Completion Rate for showing progression through a course is defined as the ratio of assignments completed to the total number of assignments contracted for in a fixed sample of students (Note: *not* the same as graduation rate).

COMPLETION:

For purposes of calculating the completion and graduation rates, the term “completion” indicates that a student completed an individual course or semester, while the term “graduation” means that a student completed the entire degree program (see C.14. Policy on Student Achievement and Satisfaction).

CONTACT HOUR:

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

CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS (CEU):

A statistic that represents ten contact hours of participation in an organized educational experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction, and qualified instruction. A decimal fraction of a unit may be awarded for participation of shorter duration.

COURSE:

A “course” is defined as units of learning activities that result in the award of a diploma, certificate, or academic credit when completed.

CREDIT HOURS:

Semester and quarter hours shall be equivalent to the commonly accepted and traditionally defined units of academic measurement in accredited institutions. Academic degree or academic credit-bearing distance learning courses are normally measured by the learning outcomes normally achieved through 45 hours of student study (one credit/semester hour) or 30 hours of student study (one quarter hour credit). The American Council on Education's Credit Recommendation Evaluative Criteria states, "normally, academic credit is assigned on the basis of one semester credit hour for each 15 classroom contact hours plus 30 hours of outside preparation or equivalent."

CURRICULUM:

The program of instruction, i.e., the overall set of courses or programs offered by an institution that comprises a specific area of study.

DEGREE:

An authorized recognition conferred by an approved educational institution acknowledging the satisfactory completion of a course of study or program.

DIPLOMA:

A document given by an educational institution certifying the completion of a course of study.

DISTANCE EDUCATION:

Refers to a formal approach to learning in which a majority of the instruction occurs while educator and learner are at a distance from one another.

DISTANCE LEARNING:

Is a system and a process that connects learners with providers via distributed learning resources. While distance learning take a wide variety of forms, all distance learning is characterized by:

- Separation of place and/or time between instructor and learner, among learners, and/or between learners and learning resources.
- Interaction between the learner and the instructor and/or interaction among learners conducted through one or more media; use of electronic media is not necessarily required.

DROP OUT

A student who registers/enrolls in an institution's course/program and elects to cancel his or her enrollment (during or after the cooling-off period).

EDUCATIONAL RECORDS:

Records and files maintained by an institution for each student's educational activity, which include the student's name, address, basic education, date of enrollment, course, grades, current academic achievement, enrollment agreements, and other relevant information.

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS:

DETC Accrediting Commission Standards applicable to the educational program of an institution, referring to the level of learning expected from such areas as educational materials, educational services, student services, qualifications of the faculty, and research.

ENROLLMENT AGREEMENT (APPLICATION, CONTRACT):

A form containing the specific obligations of the institution and the student. Enrollment applications may or may not become valid contracts before the institution accepts them at its main office.

ENROLLMENT PROCESS:

The process whereby a person becomes enrolled as a student in a distance education course, generally consisting of the following steps:

- (1) Application for enrollment: Submission by a person of an enrollment application (or contract) to a school, requesting enrollment in a course.
- (2) Registration and Acceptance: The review and approval by an institution of an enrollment/application agreement, in which the institution agrees to accept the applicant as an enrollee/student and registers the applicant. Registration is conditional to applicable affirmation and cooling-off provisions.
- (3) Affirmation: In some instances students must affirm their enrollment by notifying an institution of their intent to pursue a course. In these cases, students are usually required to wait a designated period of time after submitting their enrollment application before they may affirm their enrollment. Students failing to affirm are canceled from the course.
- (4) Cooling-Off: Most states have laws that provide students' periods ranging from 3 to 15 days in which they may reconsider their application for enrollment. Students electing not to proceed with a course notify the institution of their decision and are thus not considered as having enrolled in the course.
- (5) Matriculation: A formal process in which a student has applied for enrollment in a course, has been accepted for enrollment by an institution, has been registered as a student, and has formally submitted at least one required examination or lesson for servicing to the institution.

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

A committee appointed by the DETC Accrediting Commission for the purpose of visiting an institution to gather data about the institution's operation, such as its educational program and its business practices. Using these and other data, the Accrediting Commission decides whether or not the institution meets the published standards for accredited institutions.

FACULTY:

Those people who present instruction, prepare instructional material, evaluate assignments, and counsel students in academic selection and progress. Faculties are assumed to have full responsibility for an academic program and student progress.

FICE CODE:

The six-digit institutional identifier that is assigned to each higher education (two-year and above) institution by the Federal Interagency Committee on Education and is used in all Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reports. The FICE was established by Executive Order in 1982 to "study and make recommendations for assuring effective coordination of Federal programs, policies, and administrative practices affecting education."

FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREE:

A degree that signifies both completion of the academic requirement for beginning practice in a given profession and a level of professional skill beyond that normally required for a bachelor's degree. This degree usually is based on a program requiring at least two academic years of work before entrance and a total of at least six academic years of work to complete the degree program, including both prior required college work and the professional program itself. By the National Center for Education Statistics definition, First Professional degrees are awarded in the fields of dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.), medicine (M.D.), optometry (O.D.), osteopathic medicine (D.O.), pharmacy (D.Pharm.), pediatric medicine (D.P.M.), veterinary medicine (D.V.M.), chiropractic (D.C. or D.C.M.), law (LL.B. or J.D.) and theological professionals (M.Div. or M.H.L.)."

GRADUATE:

A person who has satisfied the prescribed requirements (e.g., assignments or examinations of an educational course or program) and has been awarded a certificate, diploma, or degree affirming this.

GRADUATION:

For purposes of calculating the completion and graduation rates, the term "completion" indicates that a student completed an individual course or semester, while the term "graduation" means that a student completed the entire degree program (see C.14. Policy on Student Achievement and Satisfaction).

GRADUATION RATE:

When reporting graduation rates to the Accrediting Commission, take the number of students who completed the degree program and divide it by the number of people who enrolled in the entire degree program (do not include those who dropped during the 5-day cancellation period, those who never submitted any required assignments/examinations, those who were cancelled by the institution for non-payment, or those who never provided the required information to be enrolled in the course such as not providing official transcripts. See B.10. Guide to Student Achievement and Satisfaction. Graduation rate is also the percentage of students in a fixed sample of an institution's course or courses that have satisfactorily completed all of the prescribed requirements of a given course or program.

HYBRID COURSE:

A hybrid course is any program of instruction that blends face-to-face, in-class sessions with distance learning, Web-based activities or virtual classes (see also "combination course"). [added January 2007]

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS:

Those specialized resources which make up a curriculum of study, such as textbooks, workbooks, study guides, computer software, CD ROMs, kits, supplies, etc. used in the instructional program as necessary materials which may either be required or recommended.

INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK OF UNIVERSITIES:

A handbook published by the International Association of Universities, which lists institutions that are accepted as foreign equivalents to U.S. institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (See C.9. Policy on Degree Programs.)

(The International Handbook of Universities. 18th ed. ISBN:1-403-906-882, IAU: 92-9002-175-6, London: International Association of Universities; New York: Stockton Press, September 2005. Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 6XS, England, <http://www.palgrave.com>.)

KIT:

A collection of predominantly non-textual materials included in a distance study course/program to augment or enhance instruction. These materials may consist of tools, equipment, instruments, audiovisual aids, components, accessories, and so forth.

NON-START RATE:

Percentage of enrolled/registered students in a fixed sample of an institution's courses/programs who did not submit any required examination or lesson assignment for grading or servicing. Non-starts are students who are disenrolled in a course after registration and after the applicable cooling-off period but prior to matriculation.

OBJECTIVE, EDUCATIONAL:

A statement of what an education program can do for reasonably diligent students. For distance study courses/programs, objectives are goals or aims attainable through the distance study method and provide a description of skills to be acquired, information to be learned, training to be received, and attitudes and habits to be developed.

OUTCOME:

A specified knowledge, skill, ability, or attitude that a student has achieved as a result of taking a course or program.

PROCTOR:

A person who administers or supervises the testing process. The proctor must verify that the person taking the examination is who he/she says he/she is by reviewing the appropriate documentation (i.e., driver's license or government-issued identification with photo).

PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL DEGREE:

A "professional doctoral degree" is a post-master's, graduate level academic degree such as the Doctor of Business Administration or the Doctor of Education that prepares individuals for professional practice as opposed to research-type degrees, such as the Doctor of Philosophy.

QUARTER HOUR/UNIT:

One quarter hour credit is equal to 30 hours of student study time. Normally, one quarter hour/unit requires 10 classroom contact hours plus 20 of outside preparation or equivalent. (See C.9. Policy on Degree Programs.)

READING LEVEL:

The level of a person's reading comprehension as assessed by a standardized test or that equivalent level at which a program of study is written.

RECRUITING PERSONNEL:

The personnel who enroll prospective students in a distance study course/program. They could be telemarketers, enrollment advisors, etc.

REGISTRATION (REGISTERED STUDENT):

A person who has made formal application for enrollment with an institution, has been found to meet stated admissions and enrollment criteria or their equivalent, and has been accepted by the institution for a designated course or program. (See also *Enrollment Process*)

REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION:

Special instruction designed and delivered to alleviate deficiencies in basic skills (usually verbal and computational) needed to complete a course.

SALES REPRESENTATIVES, SALES AGENTS:

The personnel who contact prospective students for the purpose of enrolling them in a distance study course/program, plus the district sales managers, regional sales managers, and other salespeople. Also see Recruiting Personnel.

SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (SER):

A report prepared by an institution after a careful study of its operations. The Accrediting Commission of the DETC outlines the major aspects of this self-study in the “Guide to Self-Evaluation Report.” This report reveals the philosophy, organization, specific practices and procedures, the success of different operations, the degree to which the school is accomplishing its stated objectives, and the degree to which it meets accrediting standards.

SELF-STUDY COURSE:

A series of texts and other materials designed for individualized study. Examination/evaluation services are not offered by the publisher or institution providing the course/program.

SOUND PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING:

Valid research focusing on the principles of learning and/or learner-centered psychological principles. The principles may contain any model that helps to demonstrate the practical applications of research into educational settings.

STUDENT SERVICES:

Supplemental activities and resources provided for a student or group of students by an educational institution. These services are designed to assist the student to perform to his/her potential, motivate a student to study, or respond to student questions of a nonacademic nature.

STUDENT GUIDE (TRAINING GUIDE, INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE):

A written supplement to course materials designed to facilitate learning. It may include directions on how-to-study, suggested readings, research topics, self-check tests, problems, and study projects, all of which are keyed to the basic course texts.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME:

A particular/specified level of knowledge, skill, and ability that a student has achieved as a result of his/her engagement in a particular/specific instructional experience or set of instructional experiences.

STUDENT SATISFACTION:

Evidence presented by an institution that shows that the students and graduates of the institution have expressed their overall satisfaction with the courses and services as they have experienced them.

SUBJECT SPECIALIST EVALUATOR (SUBJECT MATTER SPECIALIST):

A person whose background, education, training, experience, occupation, and/or profession qualifies him as a reliable authority or expert on a given subject, and who is appointed by the Accrediting Commission of the DETC to evaluate distance study courses/programs in terms of the published standards for accredited institutions.

SYNCHRONOUS:

Communication in which interaction between participants is simultaneous or in “real time.”

TEACH-OUT

The formal, planned process whereby an educational institution: (1) ceases enrolling any new students and (2) conducts, or arranges for, an orderly conduct of instruction for all active students. In a “teach-out mode,” students receive all the services, materials, tutoring, etc., for which they had contracted. At the conclusion of a teach-out, the institution normally ceases all operations.

TERMINAL DEGREE:

The highest academic degree in a given subject matter area or teaching discipline available to individuals who desire to instruct courses and teach in the subject. Normally a doctoral-level degree, specialized fields may only have a master’s degree available in certain disciplines.

TOEFL:

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) measures the ability of nonnative speakers of English to use and understand North American English as it is used in college and university settings. Scores on the test are required by more than 4,300 two- and four-year colleges and universities, professional schools, and sponsoring institutions. The Educational Testing Service sponsors the TOEFL Testing Program. Please check their web site at <http://www.toefl.org> or call 1-800-468-6335 for more information.

TOTAL COURSE PRICE:

Total Course Price includes tuition, fees, educational services and instruction, any other services (such as proctored examinations or placement), any required books, kits, and equipment, any optional or required resident training, and charges applied to all students such as application fees, registration fees, and finance charges. Institutions will use Total Course Price in preparing enrollment agreements, calculating refund amounts, and collecting student accounts.

TRANSCRIPT:

An official copy of a student’s educational record at an educational institution; it usually lists all courses taken, final grades received, and credits (and honors) earned.

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