

PA 7: Affordability and Access

4 points available

A. Credit Rationale

This credit recognizes institutions that are implementing strategies to improve their accessibility and affordability. Achieving a college degree is a valuable tool in addressing inequity, but in order for higher education to help society move toward greater equity, schools must be accessible to low-income populations and non-traditional students.

B. Criteria

Part 1

Institution has policies and programs in place to make it accessible and affordable to [low-income students](#) and/or to support [non-traditional students](#). Such policies and programs may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Policies and programs to minimize the cost of attendance for low-income students
- Programs to equip the institution's faculty and staff to better serve students from low-income backgrounds
- Programs to guide and prepare students and families from low-income backgrounds for higher education (e.g., U.S. federal TRIO programs)
- Scholarships provided specifically for low-income students
- Targeted outreach to recruit students from low-income backgrounds
- Scholarships provided specifically for part-time students
- An on-site child care facility, a partnership with a local facility, and/or subsidies or financial support to help meet the child care needs of students

Part 2

Institution documents its accessibility and affordability to low-income students as demonstrated by one or more of the following indicators:

- A. The percentage of entering students that are low-income (e.g., the percentage of students receiving Pell Grant funds as reported in the U.S. [IPEDS](#) Student Financial Aid component or the percentage of students receiving the Canada Student Grant for Students from Low-Income Families)
- B. The [graduation/success rate](#) for low-income students
- C. On average, the percentage of need met for students who were awarded any need-based aid (e.g., as reported to the U.S. [Common Data Set](#) initiative, item H2)
- D. The percentage of students graduating without interest-bearing student loan debt or for whom no out-of-pocket tuition is required (i.e., the percentage of graduates who have not taken out interest-bearing loans)

C. Applicability

This credit applies to all institutions.

D. Scoring

Each part is scored independently.

Part 1

An institution earns the maximum of 1 point available for Part 1 of this credit by having policies and programs in place to make it accessible and affordable to low-income students and to support non-traditional students. Partial points are available. For example, an institution that has policies and programs in place to support non-traditional students but not low-income students, would earn 0.5 points (half of the points available for Part 1).

Part 2

Institutions earn up to the maximum of 3 points available for Part 2 of this credit based on performance measured by one or more of the indicators listed. For example, an institution that reports 100 percent for three of the four indicators would earn 3 points for this credit. Likewise, an institution that reports 75 percent or more for all four indicators would earn 3 points. Incremental points are available; for example, an institution that reports 50 percent for 3 of the four indicators would earn 1.5 points (half of the points available for Part 2 of this credit). Points are earned according to the following table:

Accessibility/affordability indicator	Percentage (0-100)		Factor		Points earned for Part 2
A. The percentage of entering students that are low-income	_____	×	0.01	=	
B. The graduation/success rate for low-income students	_____				
C. On average, the percentage of need met for students who were awarded any need-based aid	_____				
D. The percentage of students graduating with no interest-bearing student loan debt or for whom no out-of-pocket tuition is required	_____				
Total points earned →					Up to 3

E. Reporting Fields

Required

- ☐ Does the institution have policies and programs to make it accessible and affordable to low-income students?

If yes, provide at least one of the following:

- A brief description of the institution's policies and programs to minimize the cost of attendance for low-income students
- A brief description of the institution's programs to equip the institution's faculty and staff to better serve students from low-income backgrounds
- A brief description of the institution's programs to guide and prepare students and families from low-income backgrounds for higher education
- A brief description of the institution's scholarships for low-income students
- A brief description of the institution's targeted outreach to recruit students from low-income backgrounds
- A brief description of the institution's other policies or programs to make the institution accessible and affordable to low-income students
- Does the institution have policies and programs to support non-traditional students?
If yes, provide a brief description of at least one of the following:
 - A brief description of the institution's scholarships provided specifically for part-time students
 - A brief description of the institution's onsite child care facility, partnership with a local facility, and/or subsidies or financial support to help meet the child care needs of students
 - A brief description of the institution's other policies and programs to support non-traditional students
- Does the institution wish to pursue Part 2 of this credit (tracking accessibility and affordability)?
If yes, provide at least one of the following:
 - The percentage of entering students that are low-income (e.g., the percentage of students receiving Pell Grant funds as reported in the U.S. IPEDS Student Financial Aid component or the percentage of students receiving the Canada Student Grant for Students from Low-Income Families) (0-100)
 - The graduation/success rate for low-income students aid (0-100)
 - On average, the percentage of need that was met for students who were awarded any need-based aid (e.g., as reported to the U.S. Common Data Set initiative, item H2) (0-100)
 - The percentage of students graduating with no interest-bearing student loan debt or for whom no out-of-pocket tuition is required (i.e., the percentage of graduates who have not taken out interest-bearing loans) (0-100)

Optional

- Estimated percentage of students that participate in or directly benefit from the institution's policies and programs to support low-income and non-traditional students (0-100)
- The website URL where information about the programs or initiatives is available
- Additional documentation to support the submission (upload)
- Data source(s) and notes about the submission
- Contact information for a responsible party (a staff member, faculty member, or administrator who can respond to questions regarding the data once it is submitted and available to the public)

F. Measurement

Timeframe

Part 1

Report on current programs, policies, and practices at the time of submission.

Part 2

Report the most recent data available from within the three years prior to the anticipated date of submission.

Sampling and Data Standards

Part 1

In addition to institution-wide policies or programs, report on policies and programs pertaining to the institution's largest admissions group or student cohort (e.g., undergraduate students). Institutions may choose to include or omit programs and policies offered by smaller schools or departments within the institution.

Part 2

Report on the institution's largest admissions group or student cohort (e.g., undergraduate students). Institutions may choose to include or omit smaller schools or departments within the institution.

For guidance in identifying low-income students, see G. Standards and Terms. Institutions may report graduation rates, success rates and/or combined graduation/success rates as appropriate to their particular context and types of programs offered.

Institutions may meet student financial need in a variety of ways, for example:

- Scholarships and grants
- Self-help (e.g. work study, employment)
- Tuition waivers or not requiring tuition
- Subsidized or no-interest loans
- Athletic awards

Exclude non-need-based aid, any aid awarded in excess of need, and unsubsidized or interest-bearing loans. Institutions that do not assess student need as a matter of standard practice may report the percentage of cost met, on average, for low-income students.

G. Standards and Terms

Common Data Set

The [Common Data Set \(CDS\) initiative](#) is a collaborative effort among data providers in the U.S. higher education community and publishers as represented by the College Board, Peterson's, and U.S. News & World Report.

Graduation/success rate

Graduation rate is defined as the percentage of first-time, first-year students who complete their program within 150 percent of the published time for the program. For example, for a 4-year Baccalaureate degree

program, entering students who successfully complete the program within 6 years are counted as graduates.

Success rate (i.e., completion/graduation/transfer rate) is defined as the percentage of students who successfully complete their program or transfer to another institution within 150 percent of the published or expected time for the program. For example, for a two-year Associate degree or certificate program, students that successfully complete the program or transfer to another institution within 3 years are counted as successes.

Institutions may report graduation rates, success rates and/or combined graduation/success rates as appropriate to their particular context and the types of programs offered.

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

The [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System](#) (IPEDS) is a system of interrelated surveys conducted annually by the U.S. Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). IPEDS gathers information from every college, university, and technical and vocational institution that participates in the federal student financial aid programs.

Low-income students

In the U.S., low income students are defined as those students who are receiving [Pell Grant funds](#) (as reported in the IPEDS Student Financial Aid component) and/or meet Pell Grant eligibility criteria, i.e. students whose estimated family contribution (EFC) does not exceed the maximum allowed for Pell Grant eligibility.

In Canada, low income students are defined as those students who are receiving the [Canada Student Grant for Students from Low-Income Families](#) and/or meet the Canada Student Grant for Students from Low-Income Families eligibility criteria.

Institutions outside the U.S. and Canada may use equivalent student grant eligibility criteria and/or family income thresholds to identify low-income students.

Non-traditional students

Consistent with the [National Center for Educational Statistics](#) (U.S.), non-traditional students include students who "have family and work responsibilities as well as other life circumstances that can interfere with successful completion of educational objectives." The definition of non-traditional students may vary according to institution type and context, however examples may include:

- Students who attend part-time
- Students with dependents other than a spouse or partner
- Single parents
- Students who work full-time while enrolled
- Students who are financially independent from parents
- Students who did not receive a standard secondary school diploma but who earned some type of certificate of completion

Scoring Example: Affordability and Access (Part 2)

The following data describe Example University:

- The percentage of entering students that are low-income = 15
- The graduation/success rate for low-income students =72
- The percentage of student financial need met, on average =80
- The percentage of students graduating with no interest-bearing student loan debt = 12

Accessibility/affordability indicator	Percentage (0-100)		Factor		Points earned for Part 2
A. The percentage of entering students that are low-income	<u>15</u>	×	0.01	=	0.15
B. The graduation/success rate for low-income students	<u>72</u>				0.72
C. On average, the percentage of need met for students who were awarded any need-based aid	<u>80</u>				0.8
D. The percentage of students graduating with no interest-bearing student loan debt (or for whom no out-of-pocket tuition was required)	<u>12</u>				0.12
Total points earned →					1.79