

PA 8: Affordability and Access

4 points available

Rationale

This credit recognizes institutions that are affordable to low-income students. Achieving a post-secondary 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.

Applicability

This credit applies to all institutions.

Criteria

Institution is affordable and accessible to low-income students as demonstrated by one or more of the following indicators:

- A. Percentage of need met, on average, for students who were awarded any need-based aid
- B. Percentage of students graduating without student loan debt
- C. Percentage of entering students that are *low-income*
- D. *Graduation/success rate* for low-income students

These indicators are scored together to form a multi-dimensional index of affordability and accessibility that is relevant to institutions in diverse contexts. It is not expected that every institution will necessarily have the data required to report on all four indicators or achieve 100 percent on each indicator that it reports on. See Measurement for specific guidance on completing each indicator.

Scoring

An institution earns the maximum of 4 points available for this credit based on its combined performance on the indicators listed. For example, an institution that reports 100 percent for three of the four indicators would earn all 4 points for this credit. Likewise, an institution that reports 75 percent or more for all four indicators would earn 4 points. Incremental points are available; for example, an institution that reports 50 percent for 3 of the four indicators would earn 2 points (half of the points available for the credit). Points are earned according to the following table:

Indicator	Percentage (0-100)		Factor		Points earned
A. Percentage of need met, on average, for students who were awarded any need-based aid	_____	×	0.0133	=	
B. Percentage of students graduating without student loan debt	_____				
C. Percentage of entering students that are low-income	_____				

D. Graduation/success rate for low-income students	_____			
Total points earned →				Up to 4

Reporting Fields

Required

Provide at least one of the following figures (0-100):

- ☐ Percentage of need met, on average, for students who were awarded any need-based aid
- ☐ Percentage of students graduating without student loan debt
- ☐ Percentage of entering students that are low-income
- ☐ Graduation/success rate for low-income students

Optional

- ☐ A brief description of notable policies or programs to make the institution accessible and affordable to low-income students
- ☐ A brief description of notable policies or programs to support *non-traditional students*
- ☐ 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)
- ☐ Website URL where information about the institution's accessibility and affordability initiatives is available
- ☐ Additional documentation to support the submission (upload)
- ☐ Data source(s) and notes about the submission
- ☐ Contact information for a responsible party (an employee who can respond to questions regarding the data once it is submitted and available to the public)

Measurement

Timeframe

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

Sampling and Data Standards

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.

Indicator A

An institution 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 any aid awarded in excess of need, as well as any resources awarded to replace expected family contribution (e.g., unsubsidized loans and private loans).

U.S. institutions may provide the value of item H2 as reported to the U.S. Common Data Set (CDS) initiative. An institution that does not assess student need as a matter of standard practice may report the percentage of total cost met, on average, for low-income students.

Indicator B

Students that graduate without student loan debt may be defined as students for whom 100 percent of total cost, demonstrated financial need (in excess of expected family contribution), or the equivalent is met without resort to student loans. Private loans taken out to replace expected family contribution are excluded, i.e., not counted as student loans.

Indicator C

Low-income students may be identified by student grant eligibility criteria, family income thresholds, or the equivalent (see Standards and Terms).

Indicator D

An institution may report the graduation rate, success rate, or combined graduation/success rate for low-income students, as appropriate to its particular context and the types of programs offered.

Standards and Terms

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 a higher tier 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 a Baccalaureate institution within 3 years are counted as successes.

Low-income students

Low-income students may be identified by student grant eligibility criteria, family income thresholds, or the equivalent. For example:

- 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 a Full-Time or Part-Time Student Grant OR meet the eligibility criteria for a national or provincial assistance program based on financial need.

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