

CFLA Standard Terms and Definitions: Revisions Made Based on Stakeholder Feedback

As part of the first phase of implementation of [Minnesota statute 136A.0901](#), also known as the College Financing Literacy Act, OHE created an initial draft of the standard terminology and definitions to be used in financial aid communications, effective for the 2028-2029 academic year. The draft list of terms and definitions was shared with stakeholders for review, comment, and suggestion. OHE received and reviewed comments from over 60 stakeholders.

Based on feedback from campus and system financial aid staff as well as college access partners, the following changes have been made to the list of standard terms and definitions. The current full lists of standard terms and definitions can be found on OHE's website ([LINK](#)).

Terms removed from the original lists

- Financial need
- Living expenses
- Student Aid Index
- Unmet need
- Verification

Term added to the lists based on stakeholder feedback

Special Circumstances and Professional Judgement:

If you or your family have experienced a significant change in your financial circumstances, your school may take these special circumstances into account and perform Professional Judgement by making an adjustment to your financial aid application. Some common examples are loss of employment, pay cuts or significant loss of income, high unreimbursed medical/dental expenses, death of a family member or other unexpected financial hardship. Only the Financial Aid Office may perform professional judgement and they may require documentation, such as proof of unemployment or reduced income.

Based on feedback and suggested language, the following terms and/or definitions below have been revised. Please note that, unless otherwise stated, the term and definition will be the same for both the undergraduate and graduate list.

Term	Original	Revised	Notes
Books, course materials, supplies, and equipment	Items needed to be successful in enrolled classes. The required materials will vary by student and are usually determined by the class instructor. Generally, these are not directly billed expenses and students will have the option to determine where they will purchase needed supplies.	This amount is based on how much a typical student would need to spend on books, course materials, supplies, kits, and equipment in order to complete an average credit load. Generally, these are not directly billed expenses and students will have the option to determine where they will purchase needed supplies.	
Cost of attendance	The estimated cost of a combination of direct, billed expenses like tuition and fees payable to the school and indirect costs associated with being a student, like transportation, personal expenses, and books and supplies that are not billed by the school. The Cost of Attendance sets the limit for the maximum amount of financial aid a student may receive during an award year.	The estimated cost of a combination of direct, billed expenses like tuition and fees payable to the school and indirect costs associated with being a student, like transportation, personal expenses, and books and supplies that are not billed by the school. Costs are set by the school and can vary based on program of study, enrollment status, course fees, and housing choice	
Dependent student	For financial aid purposes, a dependent student is anyone under the age of 24 who does not qualify for any of the exemptions noted on the FAFSA. The financial information of both students and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be used to determine eligibility for need based financial aid for dependent students, regardless of the parent/guardian's ability or willingness to pay for educational expenses.	For financial aid purposes, a dependent student is anyone under the age of 24 who does not qualify for any of the exemptions noted on the FAFSA. The financial information of both students and their contributors will be used to determine eligibility for need based financial aid for dependent students, regardless of the parent/guardian's ability or willingness to pay for educational expenses.	Undergrad list only
Federal Direct PLUS Loan for Parents	A loan option for parents of dependent undergraduate students. Parents must apply for the loan and are responsible for paying it back. Credit checks and loan fees apply. Parent PLUS loans have a higher interest rate than Direct Loans borrowed by the student. Annual and lifetime loan limits apply.	A loan option for parents of dependent undergraduate students. Parents must apply for the loan and are responsible for paying it back. Credit checks and loan fees apply. Parent PLUS loans have a higher interest rate than Direct Loans borrowed by the student. Annual and lifetime loan limits apply.	Undergrad list only

Term	Original	Revised	Notes
Enrollment status	The number of credits, clock hours, or classes the student is enrolled in, whether they are an undergraduate or graduate student, or whether they have withdrawn, graduated, etc. Enrollment status affects the amount and type of financial aid a student may receive. It also affects when the student must begin paying back their student loans.	The number of credits, clock hours, or classes the student is enrolled in, whether they are an undergraduate or graduate student. Enrollment status affects the amount and type of financial aid a student may receive. It also affects when the student must begin paying back their student loans.	
Financial aid	Any source of funding that helps a student pay for college. Financial aid can include money that doesn't need to be paid back (like scholarships and grants) as well as student loans and work-study. Financial aid can come from multiple sources, including the federal government, the state, a college or university, or a private organization. A student's eligibility for financial aid is based on a number of factors, including financial resources, enrollment status, academic record, and the cost of the institution they are attending	Any source of funding that helps a student pay for college. Financial aid can include money that doesn't need to be paid back (like scholarships and grants) as well as work-study and student loans. Financial aid can come from multiple sources, including the federal government, the state, a college or university, or a private organization. A student's eligibility for financial aid is based on a number of factors, including financial resources, enrollment status, academic record, and the cost of the institution they are attending	
Financial aid offer	A financial aid offer is a document sent by a postsecondary institution to a student that outlines the amounts, details, and conditions of the financial aid being offered to the student, which may include scholarships, grants, loans, employment, or other forms of financial assistance to pay for college expenses.	A financial aid offer is a document sent by a school to a student that outlines the amounts, details, and conditions of the financial aid being offered to the student, which may include scholarships, grants, loans, work-study employment, or other forms of financial assistance to pay for college expenses.	
Full-time enrollment	For financial aid purposes, an undergraduate student is considered full-time when they are enrolled in a minimum of 12 credits per term.	For financial aid purposes, an undergraduate student is considered full-time when they are enrolled in a minimum of 12 credits per term or the equivalent of clock hours.	Undergrad list only

Term	Original	Revised	Notes
Indirect Costs	An estimate of the costs associated with being a student that aren't billed directly by the school. Indirect costs may include things like books, supplies, transportation to and from campus, childcare, and other personal expenses. If eligible, students may use financial aid funds to assist with these costs.	An estimate of the costs associated with being a student that aren't billed directly by the school. Indirect costs may include things like books, supplies, transportation to and from campus, childcare, and other personal expenses. This also includes housing and meals/food for students not residing on campus. If eligible, students may use financial aid funds to assist with these costs.	
Part-time enrollment	For financial aid purposes, enrollment of less than 12 credits per academic term.	For financial aid purposes, enrollment of less than 12 credits per academic term or the equivalent of clock hours. Some financial aid types will be reduced or prorated based on less than full-time enrollment.	Undergrad letter only
Private loan	A student or parent loan from a bank, credit union, private company, a nonprofit or state-affiliated lender, or from the college or university directly to pay for educational costs. Interest begins to accrue when the loan is disbursed, and repayment often begins while the student is still enrolled in school.	A student or parent loan from a bank, credit union, private company, a nonprofit lender, or from the college or university used to directly pay for educational costs. Interest may begin to accrue when the loan is disbursed, and payments may be required while the student is still enrolled in school.	
Satisfactory Academic Progress	If you are receiving federal or state aid, you must maintain a "C" average and stay within your institution's academic standards. You must be completing enough courses each term to graduate in a timely manner. Each school has a Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for financial aid; check your school's website to review the policy.	The minimum standards that must be met to continue to receive federal or state (and often institutional) financial aid. The components include a minimum grade point average, completion percentage (also referred to as pace), and a maximum-timeframe requirement. Each school will have different standards; refer to your school's policy.	

Term	Original	Revised	Notes
Scholarship	Money provided to students, often based on academic merit or special talent, that does not have to be repaid, provided the student meets any requirements noted in the financial aid offer.	Money provided to students, often based on academic merit or other criteria, that does not have to be repaid, provided the student meets any requirements noted in the financial aid offer.	
State Loan Program SELF loan	The SELF Loan is a long-term, low-interest loan program administered by the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. Because it is administered by the state, interest rates tend to be lower than private loans and some federal loans. Rates are the same for everyone and are not based on credit scores like most private loans.	A student loan offered through the Minnesota Office of Higher Education to pay for educational costs. It is not based on financial need. Students select a repayment term and a fixed or variable interest rate. A creditworthy co-signer is required. Interest begins to accrue when the loan is disbursed. Monthly minimum payments are required during in-school and transition periods. Annual and cumulative limits apply.	
Tuition and fees	Tuition and fees are charged to students to pay for classes and instruction provided by the school and for campus services such as IT, health center, library, or student activities. These are billed expenses.	Tuition and fees set by the school are charged to students to pay for classes and instruction provided by the school and for campus services such as IT, health center, library, or student activities. These are billed expenses that can vary based on program of study, residency classification, and enrollment status.	
Transportation	Costs associated with getting to campus. This could include costs for travel, parking, or gas. Generally, with the exception of any on-campus parking pass costs, these are not directly billed expenses and will vary by student.	Costs associated with getting to campus. This could include costs for travel, parking, public transportation, or gas. Generally, with the exception of any on-campus parking pass costs, these are not directly billed expenses and will vary by student.	

Term	Original	Revised	Notes
Work-study	Work study provides funding for eligible part-time jobs, for undergraduate and graduate students who have completed a financial aid application and have financial need. Work study from the college or university may or may not require demonstrated financial need. Unlike grants and loans, work study is paid to students as they earn the funds by working in eligible jobs. Eligibility for work study funds is not a guarantee of employment and students who do not obtain employment in a work study eligible position will not be paid these funds.	Work study provides funding for eligible part-time jobs, for students who qualify. Unlike grants and loans, work study is paid directly to students working in eligible jobs. Eligibility for work study funds is not a guarantee of employment and students who do not obtain employment in a work study eligible position will not be paid these funds	

Next Steps

The next phase of the CFLA implementation will be the initial drafting of sample templates, which will then be shared with external stakeholders for review, comment, and feedback. This work will take place in spring and summer 2026, with final drafts available for public comment in September 2026.