1. Credential Seeking Cohort (defined as 12 completed credits)**:**

The Credential Seeking Cohort is intended to measure students who, based on their course-taking behavior, indicate that they are credential-seeking. It is a subset of the Main Cohort.

For purposes of the VFA, the Credential Seeking Cohort is defined as students in the Main Cohort who have earned 12 semester credit hours (or the equivalent) at the college during the first two academic years (by the end of second academic-year of the tracking period). The 12 completed semester credit hours are inclusive of college-level and developmental education coursework—a college may need to create a semester credit hour equivalency for the developmental education coursework if it is not offered for credit. The 12 completed semester credit hours must be earned at the reporting institution within the first two years enrolled at the college, including the summer prior to fall of the cohort year. Students who earn a certificate or other formal award of less than 12 semester credit hours (such as a short term certificate or diploma) should also be included in the subset. For this Credential Seeking Cohort, report SPO Measures (*Developmental Education Progress*, *Two-Year Progress* and *Six-Year* *Outcomes Measures)* as you would for the Main Cohort.

The VFA uses student behavior to define credential seeking due to inconsistency and unreliability of a student’s self-report of their intentions to complete a credential. VFA follows a process that many state-level accountability systems have used, which tracks student behavior (credit accrual) to indicate if they are seeking a formal credential (degree, certificate, diploma, etc.).

**Notes:**

* Everyone in the *Credential Seeking Cohort* will be in the *Main Cohort*; it is a subset of the *Main Cohort*.
* The *Main Cohort* can be determined based at the initial term of enrollment, while the *Credential Seeking Cohort* cannot be determined until after two complete academic years from the initial enrollment date. The *Credential Seeking Cohort* must be determined after two complete academic years because the college must determine who earned 12 credits by the end of the second academic year for inclusion in the *Credential Seeking Cohort*; *e.g. for a fall 2010 cohort, a college would look to see who earned 12 credits by the end of summer term 2012.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Credits used to calculate Credential Seeking Cohort  (12 earned credits) | |
| College credits earned since initial enrollment | Yes |
| Developmental education credits (converted to semester credit equivalent credits if necessary) | Yes |
| Credits earned in summer bridge/early start programs (summer 2010/summer 2014) | Yes |
| Prior learning credits/prior learning assessment (PLA) awarded within first two years | Yes |
| Credits earned for Advanced Placement (AP) courses | No |
| College credits earned before graduating from high school | No |
| College credits earned at another institution | No |
| ESL course credits or equivalent | No |
| --------------- |  |
| OR completion of Formal Award less than 12 credit hours | Yes |

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| --- |
| Cohort Types  **Students from the two year and six year reporting timeframes will be further categorized into three cohort types:**   1. **Main Cohort** 2. **Credential Seeking Cohort** 3. **First Time in College Cohort** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Measure / Calculation | Definition | Important Notes |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Credential Seeking Cohort**  *Other names:*  Credential Seeking | Students in the Main Cohort (defined above) who, based on their course-taking behavior, indicate that they are credential-seeking  Credential Seeking cohort include students who:   * Earned **12 semester credit hours** (or the equivalent) by the end of the second academic-year of the tracking period * Earned a certificate or other formal award (such as a short-term certificate or diploma) by the end of the second academic-year of the tracking period | **This is a subset of the Main Cohort.**  Credit hours are cumulative of only credits earned at the reporting institution within the cohort tracking period.  This definition is different than that used in IPEDS to identify degree-certificate seeking students. All students who meet the 12 credit threshold are included regardless if they are seeking a degree, certificate, or have no-stated credential goal.  For colleges on a trimester system, please convert the student’s quarter credits earned to semester credit equivalents. |

# Appendix C: Credits Earned vs. Successfully Completed

The VFA uses credits in different ways to calculate the metrics. Please see below for the definitions as well as the metrics that use them.

***Credential Seeking Cohort -*** *based on institutional credit awarding practices*

Credits accumulated are inclusive of college-level and developmental education coursework (converted to credit equivalents, if applicable) completed at your college by the end of their second year [including the summer term]. Credits should be counted according to institutional practice, regardless of the grade awarded. Credits transferred in and credits earned prior to high school completion (e.g. dual enrollment) and transfer credits should not be included.

***Credits Earned*** – *based on institutional credit awarding practices*

Credits accumulated are inclusive of any credits of which the institution is aware (or developmental education courses for which you don’t award credit but are converted to credit equivalents) and are counted according to institutional practice, regardless of the grade awarded. Credits earned are inclusive of earned credits prior to high school completion (e.g. dual enrollment) and transfer credits.

Used to determine:

* + Two-Year Progress: Reached Credit Threshold

***30 Semester Credits Earned* –** *based on institutional credit awarding practices*

Credits accumulated are inclusive of any college-level semester credits of which the institution is aware and are counted according to institutional practice, regardless of the grade awarded. Developmental education credits, except those that are counted towards a credential, should not be included. Credits earned are inclusive of earned college level credits prior to high school completion (e.g. dual enrollment) and transfer credits.

Used to determine:

* + Six-Year Outcomes: Left with ≥ 30 credits
  + Six-Year Outcomes: Left with < 30 credits

***Credits Successfully Completed –*** *based on the following VFA definition*

For credits to count as “successfully” completed, a student must earn a “C-” or better (or a “passing” grade for courses without letter grades) and, according to institutional practices, be considered to have passed the course. If, based on institutional practice, a grade of “C-” cannot be applied toward earning a credential, the course should not be counted as successfully completed. All credits successfully completed must be taken at your institution.

Used to determine:

* Developmental Education Progress: Completed Highest Dev Course
* Developmental Education Progress: Completed College Course
* Two-Year Progress: Credits Attempted/Completed First Term
* Two-Year Progress: Credits Attempted/Completed Year Two