

AIR ACTS FAQ: December 18, 2025

*The information on this page is offered as a resource for the higher education community. It is not intended to be official guidance or a substitute for information from the U.S. Department of Education. This document is based on information available as of **December 18, 2025**.*

Q: When is the data collection period for ACTS?

The ACTS data collection period opened on December 18, 2025, and closes on March 18, 2026.

Source: This Week in IPEDS, 12/18/2025

Q: If I have more questions, who do I contact?

Please contact the IPEDS Help Desk at ipedshelp@rti.org or 877-225-2568.

Q: Which institutions are required to report the ACTS data?

Institutions required to complete ACTS are those that are four-year degree-granting public, private for-profit, and private not-for-profit institutions that primarily award bachelor's degrees or above (inclusive of institutions that award only graduate degrees).

Data are to be collected for the current 2025-26 academic year, as well as previous years. Institutions may be exempted from completing ACTS in a particular year if they (1) were open admission or admitted 100 percent of applicants in that year, and (2) did not award non-need-based aid in that year.

A notification email is being sent to IPEDS keyholders and CEOs of institutions meeting the requirement criteria and are required to report the ACTS data. Institutions required to report will also see the individual ACTS survey years shown in the list of required survey components, once logged into the IPEDS data collection system.

Source: This Week in IPEDS, 12/18/2025

Q: Who should be included in the undergraduate admissions applicant cohort?

Include all first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate applicants who fulfilled all requirements for consideration for Fall admission in the data reporting year (including payment or waiving of the application fee, if any) and who have been notified of one of the following actions: admission, non-admission, placement on a wait list, or application withdrawn (by applicant or institution).

- Institutions operating on a traditional academic year calendar (semester, trimester, quarter, or 4-1-4) should include all students who applied for enrollment if they would have been considered first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students as of the institution's official fall reporting date, or October 15.
- Institutions operating on a calendar that differs by program or that enrolls students on a continuous basis (referred to as program reporters) should include all students who applied for enrollment if they would have been considered first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students any time during the period of August 1 through October 31.

INCLUDE applicants who applied for fall admission in the reporting year but deferred enrollment to a later academic year.

DO NOT INCLUDE transfer-in students or any applicants who would not be considered first-time degree/certificate-seeking students if enrolled.

Degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students are students enrolled in courses for credit who are seeking a degree, certificate, or other recognized postsecondary credential. This includes students who: received any type of federal financial aid, regardless of what courses they took at any time; received any state or locally based financial aid with an eligibility requirement that the student be enrolled in a degree, certificate, or transfer-seeking program; or obtained a student visa to study at a U.S. postsecondary institution. High school students also enrolled in postsecondary courses for credit are not considered degree/certificate-seeking. Applicants who would not be first-time degree-seeking students should not be included.

First-time undergraduate students have no prior postsecondary experience (except as noted below) attending any institution for the first time at the undergraduate level. This includes students enrolled in academic or occupational programs. It also includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended college for the first time in the prior summer session, and students who entered with advanced standing (college credits or recognized postsecondary credential earned before graduation from high school).

Source: ACTS Template

Q: Who should be included in the graduate admissions applicant cohort?

Include all degree/certificate-seeking graduate applicants who fulfilled all requirements for consideration for fall admission into a graduate program of study (including payment or waiving of the application fee, if any) and who have been notified of one of the following actions: admission, non-admission, placement on a wait list, or application withdrawn (by applicant or institution).

- Institutions operating on a traditional academic year calendar (semester, trimester, quarter, or 4-1-4) should include all students who applied for enrollment if they would have been considered

degree/certificate-seeking graduate students as of the institution's official fall reporting date, or October 15.

- Institutions operating on a calendar that differs by program or that enrolls students on a continuous basis (referred to as program reporters) should include all students who applied for enrollment if they would have been considered degree/certificate-seeking graduate students any time during the period of August 1 through October 31.

INCLUDE applicants who applied for fall admission in the reporting year but deferred enrollment to a later academic year.

DO NOT INCLUDE transfer-in students or any applicants who would not be considered degree/certificate-seeking graduate students if enrolled.

Source: ACTS Template

Q: What race and ethnicity categories are used for reporting ACTS data?

Institutions will report race and ethnicity data to ACTS using the nine categories below—per OMB 2007.

- U.S. Nonresident
- Hispanic/Latino
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Two or more races
- Race and ethnicity unknown

Source: ACTS Template

Q: How should an institution handle test scores that are reported for “test score optional” admissions processes?

If test scores are considered as part of the admissions decision, they should be reported in ACTS—regardless of whether the institution has a test-optional policy. This is consistent with the instructions for the current [IPEDS Admissions](#) survey.

In cases where test scores may have been used, but the institution does not have documentation indicating which applicants’ scores were considered, institutions should report the data to the best of their ability and clearly document any limitations. If incomplete documentation makes it impossible to report test score usage accurately, institutions should explain that limitation in their submission, noting that the need for such documentation was not known at the time admissions decisions were made.

If the data are known to contain significant inaccuracies, institutions should indicate that the data are not available—either by marking the section as unavailable for the entire cohort year or by using the “-1” (unknown) code for individual data elements, as applicable—and provide a detailed explanation in the student-level data collection file. These explanations will be retained with the file submitted to IPEDS.

Source: ACTS Template

Q: When will the reporting templates, the Python script, and the aggregator tool be available?

The reporting templates and aggregator tool are available with the opening of the collection December 18. The Python script is undergoing final testing and may be released shortly after the collection opens. Institutions that contact the IPEDS Help Desk can be added to a notification list and will be informed when the script becomes available.

Source: RTI

Q: Is there a recommended method to convert an unweighted high school GPA if a student or transcript only reports a weighted GPA?

No additional guidance is available on this question as of 12/18/2025.

Q: How should institutions report available data on sex without using the previously available “unknown” and “another” categories?

All students must be allocated to male or female, even those whose sex is unknown. Institutions should not ask students that do not select a binary sex to allocate themselves to a binary sex; it is up to the institution to allocate unknown students into the binary categories throughout IPEDS where required.

One method commonly used by institutions is to allocate these students to the binary categories using the proportion of male to female reported elsewhere.

Source: ACTS Template

Q: Can FAFSA data be used for IPEDS reporting?

Yes. FAFSA data can be used for IPEDS reporting. For guidance on permitted access, disclosure, and use of FAFSA and other types of financial aid data, see the [9/30/2025 Dear Colleague Letter](#) issued by Federal Student Aid (FSA).