



Frequently Asked Questions: Inclusive Access Course Fees

1. What is Inclusive Access?

Inclusive Access is a model of providing students digital course materials in lieu of print textbooks at a reduced price through consolidated purchasing. Sometimes referred to as “day-one access,” Inclusive Access is a name given by commercial publishers to automatic billing programs where a time-limited subscription to digital learning materials is automatically charged to students on their tuition and fee bill as part of their enrollment in a course. This fee may cover a variety of materials, from digital textbooks to homework sets.

As a rule, individual faculty members and/or departments make decisions to purchase Inclusive Access products (course materials) and they are provided to students when they register for courses through the LMS. As the price of printed textbooks continue to rise, leading some students to forgo purchasing critical and necessary course materials altogether, some faculty have turned to this model as a way to reduce costs while ensuring equitable access.

2. Why is the UT System Office of Academic Affairs asking academic institutions to assess Inclusive Access textbook charges as course fees?

When a faculty member adopts an Inclusive Access digital textbook, they eliminate, or severely restrict, students’ typical range of options for accessing course materials. For example, with traditional textbooks, students generally have multiple options for accessing the materials, including purchasing or renting new or used versions from the bookstore or other retailers, sharing with fellow students, and checking out loaner copies from the library. Comparatively, courses that use Inclusive Access digital textbooks typically leave students only one option for accessing course materials (although at a discounted rate). Further, it is often impossible for a student who does not purchase the required Inclusive Access digital textbook to participate and succeed in the course because homework sets, quizzes and other assessments are embedded within the digital materials.

Because students do not have any alternative purchasing options with Inclusive Access courses and because these digital materials are typically required to reasonably participate and succeed in a course, these charges are best handled as course fees that are automatically billed to students. Further, in accordance with the Department of Education Code of Federal Regulations on Disbursing Funds [34 CFR 668.164(c)(2)], assessing course fees assessing course fees for Inclusive Access digital course materials enables institutions to credit students’ accounts with Title IV funds to cover these costs.

3. Some faculty at my institution have adopted Inclusive Access digital textbooks, but we are not requiring the student charges for these materials to be set up as automatic billing programs (i.e., the institution is not collecting a fee). How should we proceed?

Effective Spring 2021, the Office of Academic Affairs is asking UT System academic institutions to identify all courses/sections that use an Inclusive Access digital textbook and transition to assessing

the associated charges as course fees. Exceptions may include courses in which the Inclusive Access digital textbook is not required to reasonably participate and succeed in the course (e.g., a student could be reasonably expected to receive a passing grade without purchasing the Inclusive Access materials, or where the faculty member makes alternative materials available), or for when there are alternative purchase options available.

4. Why are institutions required to allow students to opt out of Inclusive Access course fees?

As required by 34 CFR 668.164(c)(2), institutions must have transparent policies and procedures that allow students to decline or opt out of the fee in a timely fashion. However, because the Inclusive Access materials are often necessary for a student to reasonably participate and succeed in a course, instructors should place appropriate disclaimers of their course syllabus. Students should understand the consequences of opting out of the Inclusive Access course fee.

5. Students who opt out will need to be issued a refund. How should we go about this process?

Refunds for Inclusive Access fees should be processed consistent with your institutions process for refunding other course fees. In general, the opt-out refund request period should begin on the course start date and end on the census date for every semester. Institutions may establish a process where students can submit their request to opt out through the course's LMS site.

See Austin Community College's process for enabling students to opt out by [clicking here](#).

6. Some faculty at my institution use access codes for homework sets, quizzes and other assessments. Do these need to be assessed as course fees?

Not at this time.

Access Codes—also referred to as Course Codes—are passwords that grant access to a variety of online course materials including textbooks, tests, quizzes, homework and problem sets, student guides, videos, and other resources. Unlike “Inclusive Access,” students purchase access codes directly from the campus store or other vendors. Access code costs may be offered separately from, and in addition to, a required textbook, or may be bundled with a print or electronic text. Like Inclusive Access course materials, access codes are generally valid only through the end of the course; after that, the student no longer has access to course materials.

7. Do I have to submit the full list of Inclusive Access courses and section each semester?

Yes. The notification template your institution submits each semester should include the full inventory of courses and sections using Inclusive Access textbooks.