



IPEDS Overview

2017-18 Data Collection Cycle



On behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, and the Association for Institutional Research, AIR, welcome to this tutorial on the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. This tutorial will explain the past, and present, of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, also known as IPEDS. It will help you understand which federal agency is in charge of IPEDS; what IPEDS is; and how, and by whom, data are used.

The National Center for Education Statistics oversees IPEDS and is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education. NCES is located within the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences. The structure and activities of the center are detailed in this image. NCES fulfills a Congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report complete statistics on the condition of American education; conduct and publish reports; and review and report on education activities internationally.

IPEDS is the core postsecondary data collection system for NCES and is designed to collect data from all institutions that receive Title IV funding and have a primary mission of providing postsecondary education. IPEDS collects institution-level data in the areas of enrollment, program completion, faculty, staff, graduation rates, financial aid, finances, admissions, libraries, cost, and outcome measures. Together, IPEDS data represent the public face of an institution. Access to information, resources and data tools can be found on the IPEDS homepage.

Prior to the establishment of IPEDS in 1986, data from colleges and universities were collected through the Higher Education General Information Survey, or HEGIS. In fact, the federal government has collected postsecondary data since the 1800s and data collection by the federal government has evolved to meet the changing needs of federal policy questions. Any institution that has or has applied for a Program Participation Agreement with the US Department of Education to participate in federal student financial aid must complete each of the IPEDS surveys in a timely and accurate manner.

The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires that institutions that participate in federal student aid programs report data on enrollments, program completions, graduation rates, faculty and staff, finances, institutional costs, and student financial aid and stipulates, "...institutions will complete surveys conducted as part of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)...in a timely manner and to the satisfaction of the Secretary."

Institutions receiving Title IV funding (student financial aid) must complete the IPEDS surveys. Currently, there are over 7,000 institutions that submit IPEDS surveys, with a number doing so voluntarily. NCES is required to provide a list of noncompliant institutions to the Office of Federal Student Aid. Non-compliance can result in warnings and costly fines or even loss of Title IV funding. More information about fines can be found by following the link on the screen to the statutory requirements page.

The on-screen image representing IPEDS University helps illustrate how the IPEDS survey components fit together. As this tutorial progresses, the survey components will come together and construct the building that comprises IPEDS University! We will begin with the foundation.

The Institutional Characteristics Header survey component, or IC Header, collects general information about the institution, including control or affiliation, calendar system, levels of degrees, awards offered, and types of programs. These data are key to accurate reporting as they are used to determine the reporting for the remaining IPEDS survey components.

Institutional Characteristics collects basic institutional information including mission, student services, and athletic association. IC also collects student charges data including tuition for different levels and cost data for first-time, full-time students either for programs or for an academic year.

The Admissions component is completed by all institutions that do not have an open admissions policy. This component collects data on the admissions requirements for the institution, including 25th and 75th percentile layouts for ACT and SAT math, verbal, and writing sections. Additionally, the number of applicants, admitted students, and enrolled students is collected on this component. Test scores and number of applicants, admissions, and enrollments should only be reported for first-time students. Two survey components collect information on student enrollment – 12-month enrollment and fall enrollment. The purpose of the 12-month Enrollment component is to collect unduplicated student enrollment counts and instructional activity data for an entire 12-month period. Data are collected by level of student and by race and ethnicity and gender. Instructional activity is collected as total credit and/or contact hours attempted at the undergraduate and graduate level.

The Fall Enrollment component collects data on the number of students enrolled for credit in courses and programs that could lead to the awarding of degrees and certificates. Fall enrollment data are collected by level of student, attendance status, race and ethnicity, and gender. Student enrollment by distance education status, including the state in which they live if they are exclusively distance education, is collected as well. Other data collected annually include data on the institution's undergraduate entering class, first-time student retention rates, and the student-to-faculty ratio. Every other year data on enrollment by nine selected fields of study are collected, as is residency of first-time degree and certificate-seeking undergraduate students. In opposite years, enrollment by student age is collected.

Now, we come to the main areas related to the operation of the institution: Human Resources, Student Financial Aid, Academic Libraries, and Finance. The primary purpose of the Human Resources component is to collect the number of staff by employment status, both full-time and part-time, and occupational category. The IPEDS occupational categories are now aligned with the U.S. Department of Labor's 2010 Standard Occupational Classification, or SOC, codes.

The Student Financial Aid component collects information about financial aid provided to various groups of undergraduate students. It collects information on students receiving financial aid, the type of aid, and the average amount of aid. In addition, data from the SFA component are used to calculate an average net price at each institution.

The IPEDS Finance component collects basic financial information from items associated with the institution's General Purpose Financial Statements. Finance collects data on institutional revenues by source, expenditures by category, and assets and liabilities. This information provides context for understanding the cost of providing postsecondary education.

The Academic Libraries component collects basic information on the institution's library. The information collected includes information on collection and circulation for any institution with a library budget greater than 0. For institutions with a library budget greater than \$100,000, additional information on expenditures and interlibrary services are collected.

The top of the building represents the final pieces of the institution, the completions and graduation data for its students. Completions collects data on the number of awards conferred by postsecondary institutions during the 12-month time period beginning July 1 and ending June 30th. Data are collected by race/ethnicity and gender for each award level within each program. Data are collected for both first and second major fields of study. Additionally, Completions collects data on the number of students receiving an award, by award level, race/ethnicity, gender and age. Finally, Completions collects the number of programs that can be taken exclusively via distance education.

The Graduation Rates component tracks the cohort of first-time, full-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates, as well as their completion status at 100% and 150% of normal time at postsecondary institutions. These data are collected to assist institutions in complying with the Student Right to Know Act. Two hundred percent (200%) Graduation Rates collects data on the number of students that graduated within 200% of normal time. Data are collected to calculate this graduation rate for bachelor degree-seeking students at 4-year institutions and for all students at less than 4-year institutions.

Although each component is a unique entity, together they provide researchers, administrators, and the general public with a profile of an institution. In addition, NCES creates a Data Feedback Report, or DFR, for each institution on an annual basis. The report is intended to provide institutions a context for examining the data they submit to IPEDS. NCES' goal is to produce a report that is useful to institutional executives and that may help improve the quality and comparability of IPEDS data. This report is available from the IPEDS Use the Data page.

The IPEDS collection year can be separated into four periods. During the registration period in early August, institutions complete the IC-Header component. The fall collection period, which runs from early September to mid-October, consists of the Institutional Characteristics, Completions, and 12-month Enrollment components. Although the Winter and Spring collection periods close at different times, they open together in early December. During the Winter Collection period, which ends in mid-February, institutions complete the Student Financial Aid, Graduation Rates, and Admissions components. Finally, the

Finance, Human Resources, Fall Enrollment, and Academic Libraries components are completed during the Spring collection period, which ends in late April.

The number of individuals and organizations using IPEDS data is vast and diverse. NCES' College Navigator provides quick and basic information on institutions that can be retrieved by students, guidance counselors, parents, and others. More in-depth information for researchers and administrators is available through the Use the Data portal page on the NCES website.

Accountability groups and accrediting agencies use IPEDS data to compare institutions or to ensure appropriate use of resources. IPEDS data has many audiences and it is increasingly important that the data submitted to IPEDS be accurate. It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that the data are precise and that they accurately reflect the institutions' activities. The impact of low quality data may affect more than just a research project, there may be consequences associated with accrediting agencies and state or federal policies.

More information on IPEDS is available from the AIR Resource Center and NCES' IPEDS website. Institutional data can be viewed through College Navigator, the IPEDS Use the Data, or a number of other sources available from the IPEDS website.

The last stage, Final Data, includes institutional revisions to data in the subsequent data collection year through the prior year revision system. For example, editing 2013-14 Completions data during the 2014- 15 collection cycle. After these revised data are reviewed, final data are made available through the IPEDS Use the Data portal, but the First Look publication is not reissued.

You may be wondering when preliminary and provisional data are accessible. These become available in time frames according to the data collection windows. Although unexpected delays in the approval process can occur, the goal of NCES is to maintain or improve the timelines of data release on an annual basis.

For example, the preliminary data and the first edition of the First Look publication for the fall survey components, which include Institutional Characteristics-Header, Institutional Characteristics, 12- Month Enrollment, and Completions, are available in mid-to-late May following the collection.

The winter survey component data, which include Student Financial Aid, Graduation Rates, 200% Graduation Rates, Admissions, and Outcome Measures, are available in early-to-mid October following the collection.

Finally, spring survey component data for the Human Resources, Finance, Fall Enrollment, and Academic Libraries components are available in early-to-mid October following the collection. In addition, the Provisional data and second edition of the First Look Report are available approximately 4-6 weeks after the preliminary data release.

When all four stages of data release are viewed together, it provides a clearer picture of how IPEDS data are cleaned and made available to the public. These differences are important for data submitters and users to know, especially when accessing data from the IPEDS Use the Data portal.

For more information on the IPEDS Data Release schedule and publications, please contact the IPEDS Help Desk.

The College & Career Tables Library includes a database of over 5,000 tables from NCES' postsecondary publications.

Organized into 12 categories, we can search for tables by keyword, publication title or ID, or perform an advanced search by data source, year, and table release date.

Explore By Topic is a quick way to drill-down to a specific set of data. Many of the 12 categories have subcategories, providing us with more detailed information.

A simple search is good enough for us right now. After entering a keyword, the tables matching the search appear. Here, we see that 193 tables match the keywords Graduation Rates. The number of tables within each of the 12 main categories are displayed in the 'Explore By Topic' area.

Now, we see an actual table for Graduation Rate data. Any notes will be included at the bottom of the table. From here, we can view a printer-friendly version of the table, download it into excel for further analysis, view related tables, or go to the study's website.

The Use the Data Portal tool is the most complicated of the tools, but also offers the most options for analyzing data. Similar to the other tools, we can look up data on a single institution or multiple institutions. Data can also be trended for a single variable and group statistics can be calculated for a user-defined group of institutions. For example, the average enrollment of first-time, full-time students at public institutions in Pennsylvania with an enrollment over 5,000 students. For now, let's look at three of the Use the Data Portal options.

First, the Summary Tables option allows us to generate a wide-range of pre-formatted reports related to a variety of commonly referenced IPEDS data such as directory information, price and admissions trends, student enrollments and demographics, and completion and graduation rates, for one or more institutions in the IPEDS universe.

A second option is the ability to download complete or custom survey data files. Once downloaded, the files can be imported into a variety of statistical software packages, including SAS [said "sass"], SPSS, and STATA.

Finally, the IPEDS Data Feedback Report, or DFR, is an important report provided to all colleges on an annual basis. It is a publicly available document and each president receives a copy of their institution's report. Several years' worth of reports are available in the Use the Data and you can also create your own custom Data Feedback Report with variables not included in the standard DFR.

For more information, view AIR's online tutorials for each specific IPEDS data tool. You may also want to view the Help Guide for each tool, which is available for PDF download on this page. Finally, you can contact the IPEDS Data Tools Help Desk with specific questions.

