

Creating the Net Price Calculator Tutorial Script 2020-21 Data Collection Cycle

Now, we will demonstrate how to develop a net price calculator using NCES's template.

To assist institutions in preparing a net price calculator, a web application was built that allows each institution to populate a template with their own data and then convert that to a set of files and computer codes. These products can be transferred to the institution's website where they provide a functional net price calculator built from the institution's own data.

In this part of the presentation, we will demonstrate how to use the Web-based application to build your net price calculator and how it can be uploaded to your institution's website.

To get started, an institution can access the net price calculator through NCES' Net Price Calculator Information Center, the page we are currently viewing. From there, scroll down or click the link. The Net Price Calculator template can be accessed by clicking the link under Template.

We are now at the first page of the net price calculator template. It is a good idea to download and read the Quick Start Guide available on the front page.

The document includes directions for hosting a customized Net Price Calculator on your institution's website, a glossary of important terms, and contact information if you have specific questions or need more assistance.

Now, let's walk through the process of creating a Net Price Calculator.

Step 1. The law requires institutions to use data from the most recent year available. For the first question, indicate the year of data being used. Depending on data availability, institutions will use data from either the 2017-18 or 2018-19 time period. The Department will update the application annually to allow for new years of data to be used.

The second question is about the predominant calendar system for the institution. Indicate whether your institution predominantly operates on an academic calendar or whether the calendar is different for each program or continuous. Your IPEDS Keyholder will understand the differences.

For the purposes of this demonstration, we will select 2018-19 as the representative year and academic as the predominant calendar system.

When finished, click continue.

Notice that our selections from the previous screen are now indicated at the top of the page.

In Step 2, indicate the student housing options your institution offers. If your campus offers institutionally controlled housing, you will also be asked if the institution requires full-time, first-time students to live on campus. If all full-time, first-time students are not required to live on campus, then data will be requested later for the costs of living off

campus. For our demonstration example, we will indicate that we offer institutionally controlled housing and that full-time, first time students are not required to live on campus.

The final question on this screen asks whether different tuition rates are charged for in-district, in-state, or out-of-state students. Selecting “yes” requires you to further indicate the levels of tuition differentiation involved. We will indicate that we have different tuition rates for in-state and out-of- state students.

Depending on how you answer these questions about housing and differential pricing, you will be asked to provide data for as few as one column of data on later screens, or as many as nine columns of data.

For example, an institution that offers on-campus housing that is required of all full-time, first-time students and does not charge different tuitions based on district, or state of residence would have only one column of data to enter.

Or, for example, an institution that charges in-state and out-of-state tuition and offers on campus housing, which is not required of all full-time, first-time students would need six columns of data to include all their pricing options.

In addition, your answers to these questions on the institution application will customize what questions will be asked of users of the net price calculator that is produced by this tool.

We now continue to the next step.

In Step 3, the answers to the questions on the previous page determine which data are collected in Table 1. We will enter the price of attendance for 2018-19 full-time, first-time undergraduate students. As required, we will use data from the Cost of Attendance report used by the financial aid office in determining financial need of students. The data are also reported on the IPEDS Institutional Characteristics survey form.

Data are required for the costs of tuition and required fees, books and supplies, room and board, and other expenses such as personal transportation.

Enter data in all cells that are applicable.

Below Table 1 is Table 2, which collects Grants & Scholarships data for full-time, first-time undergraduate students. You should enter the median amount of both need and non-need grant & scholarship aid from Federal, State, or local governments, or the institution that was awarded to, and accepted by, all full-time, first-time students. You should exclude private source grant or scholarship aid.

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Each row in Table 2 collects Grant & Scholarship data for a specific range of Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The last row collects data for students who did not complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or for whom the EFC is unknown.

You should not enter data in any cell for which the corresponding number of observations is less than three. Leave the cell blank and the system will calculate and insert the average of the surrounding cells.

Click “Continue” once you have completed data entry in Table 1 & 2.

In Step 4, a standard set of explanations, some of which are required by law, are provided to insert into the calculator as you build it. For example, the standard explanation notes that the estimates apply to full-time, first-time undergraduate students only. The standard explanation also notes that in “2016-17” xx% of our full-time students enrolling for college for the first time received grant or scholarship aid. You should enter the information for your institution in the box in section 1. We will enter 87% for our example.

Institutions may choose to add further explanations and caveats in the boxes in section 2. The language you add for each explanation will be incorporated into the net price calculator and displayed as part of the results that will be seen by end users – your students, prospective students, and others. Obviously, you will want to be clear and concise in providing additional caveats.

We will add a sentence under Explanation #1 which indicates that athletic and employee tuition remission grants were not included in the calculation.

Once we have finished, click “Continue”.

All of the data entered are displayed for your final review. Since these are the data that will be used by your Net Price Calculator, it is important to review these carefully.

This completes the data entry for building your institution’s Net Price Calculator.

Press “Continue” and indicate whether you would like to include a welcome message about the net price calculator.

After reviewing the data, the template uses your data to produce the code for your net price calculator. A zip file containing the code and files can be downloaded to your local computer.

This file contains the computer code that can be transferred to your institution's website.

We’ll save the zip file to our desktop.

Next, we’ll open and extract all files. When extracting the files, be sure to preserve the structure of the directory.

The final step is to upload the Net Price Calculator to your institution’s website.

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Start by creating a new folder for the Net Price Calculator within your website’s home directory. Note: The name chosen for this folder will be included in the link used to access the application, therefore a simple name, such as NetPrice, is recommended.

Move the extracted files to this new folder.

The Net Price Calculator will show as in this example.

If you have trouble uploading the calculator to your website or you do not have administrative rights to do so, your institution’s IT staff can assist you.

This concludes our demonstration of the process of building and deploying the Net Price Calculator on your institution’s website.