

# Data Collection & Release Procedures

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## About IPEDS

The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) is an annual data collection distributed by the Postsecondary Branch of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a non-partisan center within the Institute of Education Sciences under the U.S. Department of Education. NCES is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations.

Postsecondary institutions submit IPEDS data annually through 12 interrelated survey components. Data in a collection year (cycle) are reported in **3 periods**, and the data for each period are distributed in **3 corresponding releases**.

## What data are collected in each period?

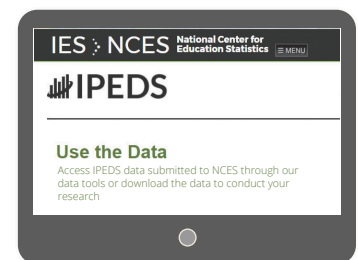
The table below shows the survey components administered during each of the 3 periods in a collection year.<sup>1</sup> As noted, some data are collected for the prior year. This allows institutions time to prepare the most current and complete data prior to reporting to IPEDS. For example, Student Financial Aid data are reported in December 2016 through March 2017 for aid awarded during fall 2015 through summer 2016.

Fall (Aug.–Nov.)	Winter (Dec.–Mar.)	Spring (Dec.–April)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional Characteristics*</li> <li>• Completions</li> <li>• 12-Month Enrollment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions*</li> <li>• Graduation Rates</li> <li>• 200% Graduation Rates</li> <li>• Outcome Measures</li> <li>• Student Financial Aid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall Enrollment*</li> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Human Resources*</li> <li>• Academic Libraries</li> </ul>

\* Indicates where data are reported for the current academic year. Otherwise, data are reported for the prior year.

## Where can I get data?

IPEDS data are publicly available and may be used without cost, though a citation is recommended.<sup>2</sup> They can be accessed via <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>.



## What if I need help using data?

The IPEDS Data Tools Help Desk provides the following services to those interested in using the data:

- Assistance with accessing and retrieving IPEDS data for research and analysis;
- Answers about specific metrics collected; and
- Guidance for locating and using IPEDS data files.




P: (866) 558-0658 | E: [ipedstools@rti.org](mailto:ipedstools@rti.org) | Hours: M–F, 8:30am to 5:00pm, EST

<sup>1</sup> To learn more about the information collected under each survey component, refer to the “What data are collected in IPEDS?” section of <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/about-ipeds>.

<sup>2</sup> Suggested citation if one has not been provided: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), [collection year], [survey component]. Retrieved from [link] on [date].

# What are the data review and validation processes?

For each collection period, IPEDS distributes the data in 3 releases, with each release going through a different review and validation process.

Release 1	Release 2	Release 3
<p><b>Preliminary Data</b></p>  <p>Upon completion of a reporting period (Fall, Winter, or Spring), the data go through an <b>initial review and validation process</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IPEDS staff review data submissions and may follow up with institutions as part of the initial quality control process.</li> <li>• If an institution does not respond to a survey component or an item, the data are left blank (i.e., data are unimputed).</li> <li>• This initial review and validation process—along with the accompanying publication review—takes approximately 6 months.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Provisional Data</b></p>  <p>After the Preliminary release, IPEDS staff completes the <b>full quality control procedures</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional follow-up with institutions may occur. Revisions to the Preliminary data would be minimal.</li> <li>• Missing data due to nonresponse to entire survey components or items are imputed.*</li> <li>• This round of review, validation, and imputation—along with the accompanying publication review—takes approximately 3 months.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Final (Revised) Data</b></p>  <p>In the following collection year, institutions are given an opportunity to <b>revise their data</b> if they believe it was inaccurately reported in the prior year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The percentage of institutions that revise data varies by survey component but usually ranges between 1 and 7 percent.</li> <li>• Provisional data are updated with the revisions.</li> <li>• This process takes approximately 12 months after the Provisional release.</li> </ul>

\* NCES employs statistical imputation techniques to estimate missing data. Learn more about the imputation process in the Methodology report at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/getpubcats.asp?sid=010> or the NCES Handbook at [https://nces.ed.gov/statprog/handbook/ipeds\\_dataquality.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/statprog/handbook/ipeds_dataquality.asp). Watch the video tutorial [http://nces.ed.gov/training/datauser/IPEDS\\_04.html](http://nces.ed.gov/training/datauser/IPEDS_04.html) for guidance on analyses using imputed and unimputed data.

## When can I expect the data release?

The following table highlights **approximate** times for data releases. Delays in the schedule are possible due to various layers of review and revision.

Period	Collection closes	Preliminary data*	Provisional data	Final (Revised) data
FALL	November	Early summer	Approximately 9 months after collection closes	Approximately 9 months after institutions have revised their data the following year
WINTER	March	Early fall		
SPRING	April	Mid-fall		
<i>First Look</i> report released?		Yes	Yes	No

\* Review of Preliminary *First Look* reports may be surpassed by review of Provisional *First Look* reports. At that point, NCES will only release the Provisional (skipping Preliminary) data and accompanying *First Look*. Additionally, Preliminary data will only be available prior to the Provisional release. Once Provisional data has been released, Preliminary data will be replaced with the Provisional data.



### IPEDS *First Look* Reports

IPEDS *First Look* reports, which accompany Preliminary and Provisional data releases, provide summary tables and citation information for the data. These can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/getpubcats.asp?sid=010> under “Shorter Publications”.

For example, the Fall 2015 Preliminary data had an accompanying *First Look* report titled *Postsecondary Institutions and Price of Attendance in 2015–16; Degrees and Other Awards Conferred: 2014–15; and 12-Month Enrollment: 2014–15: First Look (Preliminary Data)*.