

## **Technical Review Panel No. 47 Clarifying Study Abroad Enrollment**

### **Final Actions**

Questions have been asked about how institutions should report study abroad students in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data collection. Feedback from the IPEDS community suggests that institutions interpret the instructions in multiple ways, resulting in different reporting practices across institutions. Although study abroad represents a small fraction of the nation's enrollment and aid disbursement, this activity affects the overall comparability of IPEDS data in several areas, particularly on enrollment counts; student-to-faculty ratios; retention rates; student charges and average net price; graduation rates and outcome measures; and revenues and expenses per full-time equivalent (FTE) student by function. Differences in how institutions account for study abroad students make comparing institutional data difficult.

On June 23 and 24, 2015, RTI International, the contractor for the IPEDS web-based data collection system, convened a meeting of the IPEDS Technical Review Panel (TRP)<sup>1</sup> in Washington, DC to discuss potential changes to current guidance on reporting study abroad students throughout IPEDS, and how changes would impact institutions, researchers, and the Department of Education. The panel consisted of 38 individuals representing institutions, researchers and other data users, state governments, the federal government, higher education associations, and other experts. A number of panelists came from a study abroad background and had expert knowledge of postsecondary study abroad policies and practices.

The panel discussed actions that could improve IPEDS instructions related to study abroad students. Despite the variation in the types and requirements of study abroad programs offered by institutions, the panel agreed that clarifications related to counting study abroad students would address reporting inconsistencies and improve the overall quality of data reported to IPEDS. Following the meeting, RTI posted a summary of the TRP suggestions to the web for public comment. RTI solicited comments by notifying keyholders and coordinators through a "This Week in IPEDS" email announcement and encouraged member associations involved in the TRP to notify their constituents and stakeholders. Comments were left open for approximately 30 days and the comment period closed on September 10, 2015. RTI received 12 comments from interested parties in response to the posting. Following the comment period, RTI outlined recommendations for National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) based on the outcome of the TRP meetings and subsequent public comment period. NCES has taken the actions listed below.

### **Proposed Changes to the IPEDS Survey Components for All Institutions**

NCES requested clearance from the Office of Management and Budget for the 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 IPEDS data collections. The clearance package includes a number of proposed changes to the data collection, including the following proposed changes related to reporting study abroad students. If approved, the items will be implemented in 2016-17.

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<sup>1</sup> Meetings of the IPEDS TRP are conducted by RTI to solicit expert discussion and suggestions on a broad range of issues related to postsecondary education and the conduct of IPEDS. The TRP is designed to allow the public to advise and work with RTI to improve IPEDS data collection and products, data quality, and user-friendliness. The TRP does not report to or advise the Department of Education.

### **Outcome Measures (OM) Form**

NCES proposed allowing institutions to include students who are studying abroad during their first year of postsecondary education when reporting data involving the creation of cohorts. Currently, the OM survey component instructs institutions to exclude these students from its cohorts. OM also draws from the Fall Enrollment (EF) survey component's full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students, where study abroad students are excluded. In order to include full-time, first-year degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students who study abroad, NCES proposes the following changes to the instructions:

1. Delete in current instructions on **Who to Exclude from the Cohort:**

DO NOT include students in the cohort who are:

- Enrolled exclusively in courses not creditable toward a formal award or the completion of a vocational program.
- Exclusively taking CEUs.
- Exclusively auditing classes.
- ~~Studying abroad (e.g., at a foreign university) if their enrollment at this institution is only an administrative record.~~
- ~~In any branch campus located in a foreign country.~~

2. Add the following inclusion criterion to the instructions for the **Revised Cohort** column:

Include:

- Students who studied abroad their first year upon entering the institution

### **Graduation Rates (GR) Form – All Versions**

NCES proposed allowing institutions to include students who study abroad their first year of entering a postsecondary institution in data collections involving the creation of cohorts. Currently, the GR survey component uses the fall and 12-month full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate enrollments, which exclude full-time, first-time study abroad students, to establish the initial cohorts. In order to include full-time, first-year degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students who study abroad, NCES proposed the following changes to the instructions:

1. Delete in current instructions on **Who to Exclude:**

Exclude students who are not enrolled for credit. For example, exclude:

- Students enrolled exclusively in courses that cannot be applied toward a formal award
- Students enrolled exclusively in Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
- Students exclusively auditing classes
- Residents or interns in doctor's professional practice programs, because they have already received their doctor's degree

~~In addition, the following students should be excluded:~~

- ~~Any student studying abroad (e.g., at a foreign university) if their enrollment at the 'home' institution serves as an administrative record~~
- ~~Students in any branch campus located in a foreign country~~

2. Add the following inclusion criterion to the instructions for the **Revised Cohort** column:

Include:

- Students who studied abroad their first year upon entering the institution

## Fall Enrollment (EF) Form – All Versions

Students enrolled in study abroad programs their freshman year may not be included in the institution's first-time cohort, causing them to be excluded from the calculation of the institution's retention rate. NCES proposed revising the retention calculation to include students who studied abroad their freshman year in the first-time cohort and students who studied abroad their sophomore year in the retained cohort.

1. Add the following item to the retention screen to allow institutions to include, in their first-time cohort, students who studied abroad their freshman year and reenrolled or completed their program at the same institution the following year:
  - Inclusions to the Fall 20xx cohort:
    - Include eligible students who studied abroad their first year upon entering the institution
2. Clarify in the instructions that students studying abroad their sophomore year should still be included in the institution's cohort of returning students.

## Additional Guidance on Reporting Study Abroad Students

NCES will post additional guidance to the NCES IPEDS website for reporting study abroad students enrolled for credit at the institution, by role of the institution and IPEDS survey component:

Survey component	Role of the institution where the student is enrolled for credit	
	Home institution	Host institution
Fall Enrollment	Include as degree-seeking only if student is taking courses for credit at the institution or if the institution provides the instructional resource (classroom, instructors) at the foreign location; Include in retention calculations (freshman study abroad students can be added to the first-time cohort and sophomore study abroad students can be considered part of the retained cohort)	Include as non-degree-seeking; Exclude from retention calculations
12-month Enrollment	Include in enrollment if student is taking courses for credit at the institution or if the institution provides the instructional resources (classroom, instructors) at the foreign location	Include in enrollment
Graduation Rates and Graduation Rates 200	Include in first-time cohort and completion	Include in first-time cohort and completion
Outcome Measures	Include in first-time cohort and outcomes	Include in first-time cohort and outcomes
Institutional Characteristics	Exclude students' cost of attendance	Exclude students' cost of attendance
Student Financial Aid	Exclude students' cost of attendance	Exclude students' cost of attendance
Finance	Include in FTE and scholarships/fellowships processed by the institution	Include in FTE and scholarships/fellowships processed by the institution

**NOTES:** For student to be reported by either the home or host institution, the student must be enrolled for credit at that institution. Study abroad students can include U.S. students taking courses abroad or foreign students taking courses at a U.S. institution.

**Home institution** – student is seeking a degree at that institution but may be taking classes at a foreign location.

**Host institution** – student is visiting and taking courses for credit, but not seeking a degree at that institution.

**Foreign students who are only taking coursework at a host institution** - If these students are not enrolled at a U.S. institution (home institution), these students are not counted in any IPEDS survey components.