

Report and Suggestions from IPEDS Technical Review Panel #22 Collecting Data on Noncredit Instructional Activity

NOTICE CONCERNING THIS SUMMARY:

This report and suggestions were not posted for comment following the Technical Review Panel meeting because NCES resources were dedicated to implementing requirements of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), which became law in August 2008, not long after this meeting was held.

SUMMARY: The technical review panel suggests several changes to the IPEDS 12-month Enrollment survey component to capture a more complete postsecondary portrait by collecting data on noncredit activity.

On March 11-12, 2008, RTI International, the contractor for the IPEDS web-based data collection system, convened a meeting of the IPEDS Technical Review Panel (TRP) in Arlington, VA. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the possibility of collecting noncredit activity within the IPEDS enrollment surveys. The panel members included 39 individuals representing federal government, state government, institutions, national data users, associations, and others. The panel discussed the possibility of including several new data items that would capture noncredit instructional activity in the 12-month Enrollment component.

Background

The IPEDS Institutional Characteristics survey forms used from 1994 to 1999 included checkbox items that asked institutions to indicate the location and facilities where noncredit courses were offered. Another checkbox item asked institutions to identify the modes of instruction used in noncredit activities. No data on headcounts or level of activity were collected, and no data on noncredit activity have been collected since 1999.

IPEDS defines noncredit activity as a course or activity having no credit applicable toward a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award.¹ A national taxonomy of definitions does not exist in the scope of noncredit activity, and a variety of educational activities are implied in the definition of noncredit. RTI called this meeting to discuss possible changes to the survey forms that would allow IPEDS to capture noncredit instructional activity by headcount and contact hours.

Discussion

The TRP discussed how noncredit activity could be captured within the scope of IPEDS. Noncredit activity is not collected in IPEDS enrollment headcounts and is not included in the reported instructional activity in the current IPEDS data collection. However, because it would

¹ <http://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/GlossaryPage.aspx>

be difficult for institutions to accomplish, IPEDS does not ask for noncredit activity to be excluded from the following survey components:

- The **Finance** component includes institutional revenues and expenses associated with aggregated credit and noncredit activity. Thus, when calculating indicators such as instructional expenses per full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment, noncredit activity is included in the numerator but not in the denominator, producing an overestimate.
- The **Human Resources** component includes instructional staff (faculty and non-faculty) totals; however, many instructors in institutions that offer both credit and noncredit activity are involved in both. Additionally, certain courses can contain both credit and noncredit students. These situations may lead to an inaccurate student-to-faculty ratio.

The IPEDS definition of credit is recognition of attendance or performance in an instructional activity (course or program) that can be applied by a recipient toward the requirements for a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award.² Additionally, students who receive federal financial aid are considered to be credit-seeking students. A for-credit award is considered “formal” if the institution has state approval to operate and is accredited.

The panel suggested that IPEDS is the correct collection vehicle for noncredit activity and that noncredit activity should be collected using two categories—*Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement* and *Community/Leisure* (see table 1).

Table 1. Suggested Classifications and Implementation Schedule for Collection of Noncredit Activity (12-month Enrollment)

	Credit Activity	Noncredit Activity	
		Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Community/Leisure
Instructional Activity, measured in Contact Hours	Currently required*	Optional—1 year	Optional—1 year
Duplicated Headcount	Currently required	Optional—1 year	Optional—1 year
Unduplicated Headcount	Currently required	Optional—3 years	Optional—3 years

*Credit activity can be reported in terms of credit hours rather than contact hours, if applicable.

The TRP suggested that if NCES chooses to collect unduplicated headcount enrollment for noncredit activity, reporting should be optional for 3 years. It was further suggested that NCES consider conducting a validity study measuring the data quality of this item, preferably during the optional collection period. The TRP also suggested that initially, IPEDS should collect only total noncredit headcounts and instructional activity. Any attempt to classify noncredit activity by level—such as pre-collegiate, dual enrollment, undergraduate, or graduate—should wait.

² <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/IPEDS/VisGlossary.aspx>

Table 2 provides potential noncredit activity categories along with the curricula to which they belong, their classification in the collection, and a definition of the category.

Table 2. Noncredit Activity Categories with Curriculum, Classification, and Definition*

Category	Curriculum	Classification	Definition
ABE	Literacy	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Adult basic education (ABE) instruction in the basic skills of reading, writing, and math. There are different types of literacy, including citizenship, English as a second language (ESL), and workplace.
ABE w/ ESL	Literacy/ESL	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	ABE in combination with ESL
ABE w/ ESL w/ workforce training	Literacy/ESL/ other	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	ABE in combination with ESL and workforce training
Apprenticeships	Trades	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Formal, on-the-job training and other related instruction leading to a journeyman status in a skilled trade or craft
Basic skills	Literacy	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Basic skills; varies by state/agency from literacy to remediation to basic workplace literacy
Career advancement	Career/tech	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Career advancement, promotion, or skill upgrade
Career/technical education and training/workforce development	Career/tech	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Career, technical, and occupational skills, as well as workforce development training and education to prepare individuals for employment or to enhance skills (Van Noy et al., 2008) “Framework for a unique national workforce preparation and employment system designed to meet both the needs of the nation’s businesses and the needs of job seekers and those who want to further their careers” (Workforce Investment Act [WIA])
Community education	Subject specific	Community/Leisure	Recreation, leisure, hobby, personal enrichment, family, social, community education, adult education, and lifelong learning
Continuing education	Subject-specific	Will not be captured in classification	Strategies to help the expanding numbers of adults and nontraditional students seek continuous learning opportunities (University Council for Educational Administration [UCEA])

Category	Curriculum	Classification	Definition
Contract training	Career/tech	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Instructional activities conducted for a specific client company/organization in a range of formats
Correspondence courses	Subject specific	Will not be captured in classification	Correspondence courses
Customized training	Career/tech	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Contract training that is tailored to the specific client company/organization in terms of content or schedule
Dislocated/displaced worker training	Career/tech	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Dislocated/displaced workers training, skills upgrading
Entrepreneurial training	Career/tech	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Training to start a business, including establishing and running a business, creating a business plan, and management
ESL general	English	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Programs that provide intensive instruction in English for students with limited English proficiency (NCES)
ESL to advance	English	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	ESL necessary to advance in the workplace
ESL to enter work	English	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	ESL necessary to enter the workforce
Extension/outreach	Agriculture/forestry/home economics	Will not be captured in classification	Extension/outreach by land grant institutions and federal/state extension service as part of agricultural mission
GED	High school	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Instruction for the General Educational Development (GED) test by ACE to measure knowledge and academic skills against those of today's traditional high school graduates
Job placement	Job entry	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Job placement assistance and educational/vocational training programs for people looking for work, including how to find a job and develop required workplace skills
National Emergency Grant training	Job entry	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	WIA grants "to provide supplemental dislocated worker funds to respond to the needs of dislocated workers and communities affected by major economic dislocations and other worker dislocation events"
Professional development/training	Profession-specific	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement*	Activities to sustain competence by keeping informed and complying with standards in the function of practice relative to the profession

Category	Curriculum	Classification	Definition
Remedial education	Remedial	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement*	Courses provided in reading, writing, mathematics, and other subjects for college students lacking those skills necessary to perform college-level work at the level required by the attended institution (NCES)
Student support services	Basic skills	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement*	Programs include instruction in basic study skills, tutorial services, and academic, financial, or personal counseling for disadvantaged, high-risk, and low-income students
Work-based learning	Career/tech	Workforce Preparation and/or Advancement	Instruction at work to incorporate work and learning. Examples include internships, job shadowing, mentoring, and on-the-job training programs.

* Depending on the state, some of these courses may be considered credit-bearing.

What Are the Reporting Implications of These Suggestions?

If the suggestions are implemented, the 12-month Enrollment survey forms for all institutions would be modified by adding a page to capture the following three measures of noncredit activity:

1. instructional activity measured in contact hours,
2. duplicated headcount, and
3. unduplicated headcount.

Additionally, reporting of instructional activity and duplicated headcount would be optional in the first collection year and mandatory in all subsequent collections. The reporting of unduplicated headcount would be optional in the first three collection years and mandatory in all subsequent collections. Institutions would not be required to report noncredit activity disaggregated by level.

Comments

RTI is concerned about providing the most accurate possible postsecondary data and has suggested that collecting noncredit activity will lead to a more accurate portrait of postsecondary education activity without creating an undue burden on institutions. RTI will take no action on the suggestions offered until interested parties have had the opportunity to comment.