



# Council of Graduate Schools

## Data Sources:

### The Effect of Changes to IPEDS Categories on Graduate Education Data

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Several recent changes to the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) will have significant impacts on the data available to the graduate education community in the United States. The changes affect the definitions of the postbaccalaureate degree categories and the race/ethnicity categories.

#### *Changes to Graduate Degree Categories*

For decades, IPEDS reported postbaccalaureate degree data (excluding certificates) in three main categories: master's degrees, doctorates, and first-professional degrees. The definitions of these categories closely mirrored those used by the CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees. In both surveys, first-professional degrees were not counted as doctorates and were narrowly defined as degrees awarded in the following 10 areas: Chiropractic (D.C. or D.C.M.), Dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.), Law (L.L.B., J.D.), Medicine (M.D.), Optometry (O.D.), Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.), Pharmacy (Pharm.D.), Podiatry (D.P.M., D.P., or Pod.D.), Theology (M.Div., M.H.L.[Rabbinical Studies], B.D., or Ordination), and Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.). In most cases, these are programs that historically have operated outside the domain of the graduate school.

In recent years, there has been significant growth in other professional programs, including the Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T), the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), the Doctor of Audiology (Aud.D.), and the Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.), among others. Partially in response to this growth, IPEDS implemented changes that are now mandatory for degrees awarded in academic year 2009-10 and beyond. These changes eliminate the first-professional degree category and divide doctorates into three distinct categories: doctor's degree—research/scholarship, doctor's degree—professional practice, and doctor's degree—other.

IPEDS defines a doctor's degree—research/scholarship as a "Ph.D. or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement (NCES, 2010)." In addition to the Ph.D., IPEDS lists the Ed.D. (Doctor of Education), D.M.A. (Doctor of Musical Arts), D.B.A. (Doctor of Business Administration), D.Sc. (Doctor of Science), D.A. (Doctor of Arts), and D.M. (Doctor of Management) as examples of doctor's degrees—research/scholarship. Doctor's degrees—professional practice include the degrees formerly classified as first-professional (except M.Div. and M.H.L. degrees) as well as other doctorates that are "...conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice." The final category, doctor's degrees—other, includes any doctorate that "...does not meet the definition of a doctor's degree—research/scholarship or a doctor's degree—professional practice," but no examples are provided by IPEDS to explain what this category might actually include. Master's degrees continue to be reported separately, but they now include M.Div. and M.H.L. degrees that were previously reported as first-professional degrees.

To illustrate the impact of these changes, consider the data shown in Table 1. In 2006-07, IPEDS reported that 60,616 doctorates and 90,064 first-professional degrees were awarded (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, and Ginder, 2008). The following year, when it became an option to provide data using the new categories, IPEDS reported a total of 84,960 doctorates and 68,687 first-professional degrees (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, and Ginder, 2009), and for 2008-09, IPEDS reported 154,425 doctorates and no first-professional degrees (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, and Ginder, 2010). If there was any actual growth in doctoral degree production, it is now completely unclear in the aggregate due to IPEDS' re-categorization of postbaccalaureate degrees.

**Table 1.** IPEDS Data on Doctorates and First-Professional Degrees Awarded, 2006-07 to 2008-09

Year	Doctorates	First-Professional Degrees
2006-07	60,616	90,064
2007-08	84,960	68,687
2008-09	154,425	0

Sources: Knapp, Kelly-Reid, and Ginder, 2008, 2009 and 2010

The changes to the graduate degree categories will also affect the data on graduate enrollment. The IPEDS data were already limited in that they were not able to identify enrollment by degree level (master's vs. doctoral), and now, in the aggregate, they are further constrained by the inability to easily separate out those programs that clearly fall outside the domain of the graduate school at most institutions in the United States.

### *Changes to Race/Ethnicity Categories*

The changes implemented by the U.S. Department of Education for the race/ethnicity categories have less of an effect on the data. The most significant changes are that individuals previously reported as "Asian/Pacific Islander" must now be reported in one of two categories: "Asian" or "Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander." In addition, a "Two or More Races" category was added.

While these changes will provide more detailed data on the race/ethnicity of graduate students than previously available, the changes still fall short of the level of information for which some in the graduate education community have called. For example, the new categories continue to require that all Hispanics be reported in the "Hispanics of any race" category, regardless of whether their race is Black or White. Hispanics also continue to be reported as one single category, even though there are significant differences in the experiences of Cuban Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other Hispanic groups. In addition, students of two or more races cannot be classified according to their actual races, i.e. "White" and "Black" or "Black" and "American Indian," but instead must be reported as "Two or More Races." This category could include a student who is "Asian" and "White" and another who is "Black" and "American Indian;" while the former is a minority student, and the latter is an underrepresented minority, this fact is obscured by the new "Two or More Races" category.

### *Implications*

The implications of the changes in the postbaccalaureate degree and race/ethnicity categories are significant for the graduate education community.

First, while on the surface the new graduate degree categorization scheme might seem to provide more detail about the nature of doctorates awarded, this information likely will not be available in the initial report issued by the U.S. Department of Education each year. The Department's "First Look" publications provide an initial snapshot of degrees awarded in a given academic year, but graduate deans will likely find it impossible to garner any useful information about the programs and fields for which they have responsibility, since all doctorates and first-professional degrees will be reported as one single figure, as

illustrated in Table 1. Detailed data will be available in the *Digest of Education Statistics* and other sources, but their release in these publications generally lags the release of the “First Look” publication by several months. The detailed—and thereby useful—data will also be available online from IPEDS, but, to the lay user, using the IPEDS databases can be a daunting and time-consuming task.

Second, the new graduate degree and race/ethnicity categories will affect the ability of graduate deans and researchers to examine trends, and it is not yet clear how IPEDS will solve these challenges. For example, measuring any real change in doctorates awarded will require accessing the detailed data by field, and it appears unlikely that aggregate trends using the old definition of “doctorate” will be available from IPEDS. It is also unclear how IPEDS will report trend data for Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Finally, graduate deans will clearly see that some of the doctoral programs they oversee are research/scholarship, while others are professional practice. Some may also note that not all professional practice doctorates awarded by their institution, particularly those formerly categorized as first-professional degrees, are under the domain of the graduate school. While the new IPEDS definitions may provide better data in one sense about the nature of the doctorates awarded, they do not take into account the structure of graduate schools and graduate education. Complicating matters further, IPEDS allows institutions to determine how doctorates are categorized. With some degrees, such as the Ed.D., where the line between research/scholarship and professional practice is sometimes blurred, similar degree programs may be reported in different ways by different institutions.

The annual CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees will continue to collect data on all doctorates, excluding the traditional first-professional fields as it historically has done. In addition to providing detailed data on graduate enrollment by degree level (master’s vs. doctoral) that is not available through IPEDS, the CGS/GRE survey will now be the only source of aggregate trend data on all doctorates (research *and* professional) awarded in the United States. The CGS/GRE survey will implement the same new race/ethnicity categories as IPEDS starting with the 2010 data collection cycle in order to reduce the burden on responding institutions, but will aggregate the data for Asians and Pacific Islanders for the time being for trend data. While there are other sources of data on graduate enrollment and degrees, we believe that the CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees provides data that are more timely and more useful than other sources for the graduate education community.

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