

## NSSE 2010: Instructions for Providing the NSSE Student Population File

### IMPORTANCE OF THE POPULATION FILE

Population specification is the most important step for an effective survey process. Exacting standards for population files are necessary so that we maintain consistent methodological standards for each participating institution; we cannot meaningfully compare data from different institutions without standardizing population file guidelines.

Population files must adhere to these guidelines in order to participate in NSSE. NSSE 2010 survey administration requires a Fall 2009 first-year and senior population file as described in this document from each participating institution. NSSE billing occurs in February and is based on approved population files/samples.

To account for fall-to-spring attrition, institutions may identify students who have become ineligible, and detailed instructions for this process are available on the Institution Interface Materials page. Deadlines for updating ineligibles are displayed below for quick reference.

Our intent is to assist you in creating and uploading the cleanest file possible to ensure you enjoy a smooth survey administration. For general questions relating to population file specifications, billing, or other aspects of your NSSE administration please contact: your [NSSE Client Service team](#), or call our main office at 1-866-435-6773.

#### IMPORTANT DATES:

**October 30, 2009:** Population file submission deadline.  
**January 15, 2010:** Update of ineligible students that can be replaced in the sample (if available).  
**March 4, 2010:** Update of ineligible students that cannot be replaced in the sample.

We suggest reading this document in its entirety first, but a table of contents is provided for quick access to specific topics.

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## POPULATION SIZE VERIFICATION

Verifying that no students have been mistakenly excluded from your population file ensures the quality of your results and your comparison groups. NSSE uses two sources to verify the size of reported student populations:

1. Enrollment counts your institution provides to the Integrated Postsecondary Information Data System (IPEDS) are used to project the size of your Fall 2009 First-Year and Senior classes (US institutions).
2. When available, we compare new population files with ones used in prior NSSE administration years for institutions that have participated before.

If your reported First-Year and Senior enrollments differ substantially from these reference points, we will contact you to verify all requested student groups have been included with your population file.

Your population file ultimately determines your survey sample size and final pricing for survey administration.

### **NOTE for institutions with multiple campuses:**

Institutions with multiple campuses under the same IPEDS number must include all students at all campuses in the same population file. Institutions interested in aggregating or disaggregating school- or campus-level data should contact NSSE to discuss options.

Institutions with multiple campuses that each have distinct IPEDS numbers must register for NSSE under each number and survey student populations separately at each campus.

## FILE FORMAT

- Go to the “Materials” section on the Institution Interface and use the Excel template spreadsheet to create your student population file.
- Use the column headers in the population template file in Excel to expedite processing of your student population file.
- Upload student population files through the NSSE Institution Interface at <http://nsse.iub.edu/interface/>. This provides greater security than sending files through e-mail. Do not send population files via e-mail.
- Please contact your NSSE Client Services Team if you have questions about submitting your file.

## POPULATION SPECIFICATIONS

NSSE is designed to capture the experience of *all* baccalaureate degree-seeking undergraduate students, not just full-time students in the traditional 18- to 24-year-old age range. Population files must encompass data from all campuses and institutions sharing the same IPEDS number and include:

1. All baccalaureate degree-seeking first-year students within an institution
2. All baccalaureate degree-seeking graduating seniors within an institution

All student categories listed below must be included in your first-year and senior-year population file:

- Traditional age and adult students
- Full-time and part-time students
- Commuters and residents
- Distance education students

Students enrolled in professional programs such as pharmacy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, etc. that terminate as master's or doctoral degrees without earning a baccalaureate degree along the way, are **not considered eligible**.

### ***FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS: further defined***

The desired student profile is **broader than first-time, first-year students**. *Please include transfer, part-time, distance education, and returning students if they are still considered first-year students according to cumulative credit hours earned after completing a high school degree or equivalent.*

- All students must be enrolled in the Fall 2009 semester and be expected to be classified as first-year students in Spring 2010 according to your institution's criteria. Please include any Fall 2009 credit hours being attempted or earned in this calculation, but **do not** count any Advanced Placement (AP) credits or other college credits earned prior to completing high school.
- To ensure that sophomore, junior and senior transfer students are classified correctly (and not as first-year students), please attempt to confirm transfer credit validation before creating your population file.

### ***SENIORS: further defined***

- Students currently enrolled in Fall 2009 and considered probable graduates for Spring or Summer 2010.
- For most institutions, seniors will be within 12-24 hours/6-8 courses of graduation (based on semesters) at the start of Spring semester, but use your own institutional guidelines to determine likely graduating seniors.
- Fall 2009 graduating seniors should **not** be included in the file.

Criteria for first-year student and senior definitions require projections of anticipated fall course completion and transfer credit validation. Because there is an opportunity to update student information before survey administration, it is better to use more inclusive interpretations using the best data available when creating your population file. Updates to student survey eligibility can be made in December and January, prior to the survey launch.

## **FILE CONTENT**

Please note that provision of this information is compliant with FERPA regulations. See <http://nsse.iub.edu/faq/ifaq.cfm#ferpa> for more information.

### **1) Student ID**

- Must be unique for each student in your population (to eliminate confusion over duplicate records and to ensure students with same names are correctly identified).
- **Must NOT be social security numbers (SSN)**. Your file will be checked in real time as it is uploaded for the appearance of SSN's. If it appears SSN's have been included, you will be asked to confirm SSN's were not in fact used.
  - If your institution currently uses social security numbers to identify students, generate alternative student ID numbers for your NSSE student population file.
  - Maintain records that will allow you to link the alternate student ID number with the SSN. NSSE will not have records to assist you with this match after the fact.
  - If you generate new ID numbers for students, please confirm that duplicate ID numbers are not assigned to different students.

## 2) Student Name

- Include first and last names in **separate** columns.

## 3) E-mail Addresses

Web and Web-plus administrations are required to provide e-mail addresses, and it is strongly recommended that institutions participating via paper mode provide e-mail addresses if available. Please follow these guidelines:

- Provide either the student's school-provided e-mail address or their address from outside Internet service providers. Use the e-mail addresses which you believe students are most likely to check.
- If you have two e-mail addresses available, provide both for each student in the "Primary e-mail address" and "Secondary e-mail address" columns; NSSE will utilize both addresses to try and ensure message delivery to students.
- Always be sure to include domain names (e.g., studentname@indiana.edu).
- We encourage you to verify student e-mail addresses before submitting your population file.

## 4) Current (Local) Mailing Address

- Use the current street address where the students live during the school year.
- Use separate fields for each component of the address—see below.
- The current (local) mailing address is preferred if students have both campus mailboxes and current (local) mailing addresses.
- Web-Only Mode institutions do not need to provide postal mailing addresses.

### Format for Campus Addresses as Local Addresses:

For campus addresses, make sure to include all information in the appropriate address field needed for proper US Postal Service mail delivery. For US institutions, we mail to US addresses only. Note that all fields may not be applicable (for example, not all addresses include a Campus Box).

Field	Example
Address line 1	Indiana University
Address line 2	123 University Lane
Address line 3	Campus Box 123
City	Bloomington
State	IN
Zip	47406

## 7) Required Demographic Information: Student Class, Enrollment Status and Gender

Student class, enrollment status, and gender are required for sample selection and report weighting. If your institution uses non-traditional enrollment or class status, like those typical of many online institutions, please contact your client service team prior to submitting your file.

<i>Student Class</i>	<i>Enrollment Status</i>	<i>Gender</i>
Use <b>FY</b> for First Year students Use <b>SR</b> for Senior Year students	Use <b>FT</b> for Full-Time Use <b>PT</b> for Part-Time	Use <b>F</b> for Female Use <b>M</b> for Male

### 8) Highly Recommended Additional Fields: Race, ACT/SAT scores, and Credit Hours

Although these fields are not required, institutions often find the inclusion of race and standardized test scores within their final NSSE data set to be useful. In addition, these fields are often used for a variety of research projects conducted by NSSE staff.

**Race** – Designate race/ethnicity for each student using the following three-letter abbreviations:

AFR	African American/Black
IND	American Indiana/Alaska Native
API	Asian/Pacific Islander
WHI	Caucasian/White
HIS	Hispanic/Latino

OTH	Other
FOR	Foreign
MUL	Multi-racial
UNK	Unknown

**ACT/SAT score** – Use the following four fields to submit standardized test scores. Recent studies by the College Board indicate comparability between the older (pre-2005) and newer versions of the SAT test; therefore, we do not distinguish between these types of scores any longer as we have done in prior years. The presence of a SAT writing score will indicate that a particular student's set of scores come from the newest version of the test. If you have technical difficulties combining both new and old SAT scores into a single field, please let us know. Lastly, we advise checking your data against the score ranges listed below before making your submission. In instances in which you have multiple sets of scores for individual students, simply provide the most recent set of scores.

Field	Description	Score Range
ACTcomp	Composite ACT score	1-36
SAT_V	SAT verbal or critical reading score	200-800
SAT_M	SAT math score	200-800
SAT_W	SAT writing score (if student took the newer SAT test version)	200-800

**Credit hours** – Provide the **cumulative** number of credit hours for each student, inclusive of Fall 2009 credit hours attempted. Providing cumulative credit hours provides a useful validation of class level.

### 9) BCSSE Identifier - bsurvid (BCSSE identification number)

**For BCSSE 2009 participants only. Non-BCSSE participants skip to item #10 below.**

Institutions that participated in the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) this past summer should include the unique BCSSE survey identification number for students who responded to BCSSE. This variable is found in the initial BCSSE data set you received this fall. BCSSE identifier is required in order for institutions to receive the BCSSE-NSSE comparison in their Institutional Reports.

The NSSE population file template contains a field named “bsurvid” for the BCSSE respondent survey identification number. The Institution Interface provides separate, detailed instructions on matching respondents from your BCSSE data with your NSSE population file.

### 10) Optional Group Variable Information

Institutions often include additional fields in their population files for oversampling or their own post hoc analysis. Examples in the past have included honors college enrollment, participation in TRIO programs, and learning communities.

#### How to include optional variable information:

- Add up to five additional fields of your choice in your population file.
- Label the columns so that your institution will understand the meaning, avoiding spaces or unusual characters.  
(example: use *GPA*, *Honors*, *TRIO* but do not use *Greek Life*, *Live@home*, etc)

### POPULATION SUBMISSION

- **The population file should be submitted using the Institution Interface. We will not accept files by e-mail.**
- The population file upload feature on the Institution Interface will guide you through a series of steps to help confirm that your file is properly populated. If there are missing values or inconsistencies in formatting, you will be notified at that time to make the necessary corrections. Your client services team can assist you if you have any difficulties.
- Any needed corrections must be completed quickly to avoid delays in survey administration and will be communicated to you via your client services team.

### CHECKLIST

**To ensure population files are complete and accurate when you submit them, please run through these checks to make sure they meet minimum expectations for quicker processing.**

- **Population Size:**  
Does the number of students in your file reflect the number you would expect based on the criteria described above? Check the numbers for both first-year and senior populations. Your numbers will be matched against data provided by IPEDS for accuracy so be sure to include both traditional and non-traditional students.
- **File Format:**  
Do the columns in the Excel file use the same field names as the template we provided?
- **Field Population:**  
Are all necessary fields completed? Although we prefer information in all fields, at minimum we need:
  - Student name
  - Student ID – no social security numbers!
  - Student mailing address and/or e-mail address
  - Student class level
  - Enrollment status
  - Gender

- **Field Format:**  
Is all information in the requested format, using the same codes for variables such as class and race as noted above?
- **Additional Fields:**  
If there are additional fields in your population file, have they been limited to five additional fields or less? Are they properly noted and coded in a way that NSSE staff can interpret?
- **BCSSE 2009 Participants:**  
Did you include BCSSE identifiers under the “bsurvid” field?