

Postsecondary Education Transcript Studies (PETS)
Appendix

The purpose of this Appendix is to provide additional information about some common variables found in Postsecondary Education Transcript data collections. While such studies capture a wealth of information from transcripts, many of the variables cannot be used in a data analysis in their raw form. An analyst may need to transform these variables or combine them with other sources prior to using them to generate estimates. There are also multiple versions of the same variable on the data sets. One variable may record what was reported on a transcript and another version may be derived from other sources. This appendix includes tables that list variables and includes recommendations for how these variables should be used.

To prepare for using PETS data, NCES offers online training through the [Distance Learning Dataset Training \(DLDT\) system](#). The self-paced training modules are available for PETS specifically and for the datasets generally. The Common Modules provide information to help users understand NCES data across the education spectrum. They provide general information about NCES, its research methods, the Center's surveys, published data products and reports, how to access public- and restricted-use datasets and provides an overview of many tools that are available help users analyze NCES data. The DLDT also prepares users to analyze PETS data in the [Introduction to the Postsecondary Education Transcript Studies \(PETS\)](#) module.

Institutions Dataset

Variable	Variable Label	Recommendation
__INSTID	Institution IPEDS ID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For most institutions, it is the unitid from IPEDS • Institution IDs that begin with 8 were unable to be coded • The institution name, city, state, and country were manually entered when available • Institution ID 999995 was used for all unknown institutions (this occurred most often for transfer credits that were on transcripts with no indication of the origin institution)
__STATE	Institution State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States were not oversampled and therefore estimates cannot be representative of any one state

Transcript Dataset

Variable	Variable Label	Recommendation
__MCLOK	Cumulative Clock Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• These variables are not reliable for use in their raw form• These values are pulled from the transcript verbatim and are not normalized to account for different calendar systems or program lengths
__MCMENCR	Cumulative Credit Hours	
__CMQUPT	Cumulative Grade Points	
__CUMGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average	

Terms Dataset

- __TMATT – Number of credits attempted during the term
- __TMERN – Number of credits earned during the term
- __TMGPA – Grade point average (GPA) for term
- __TMNUM – Number of courses taken during term
 - The credits/courses variables do not use the term information printed on the transcript – they are derived calculations from the courses dataset
 - These variables are normalized and can be compared across students and institutions

Variable	Variable Label	Recommendation
__TMACDI	Academic dismissal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caution should be used as these values are coded from the transcript almost verbatim • There is no evidence indicating how reliably institutions reported these values on transcripts • A 0 value could indicate that the flag does not apply or that the institution does not report it • These may be fine to use in combination for derived or composite variables, but researchers should use their professional judgment
__TMACPR	Academic probation	
__TMACWD	Academic withdrawal	
__TMOTPR/MTTMPRSP	Other term probation	
__TMCHLI	Chancellor's list	
__TMDELI	Dean's list	
__TMDLWD	Dean's list with distinction	
__TMHNRL	Honor roll	
__TMPRLI	President's list	
__TMOTHN/MTTMHNSP	Other term honors	
__TMATT	Number of credits attempted during the term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The credits/courses variables do not use the term information printed on the transcript – they are derived calculations from the courses dataset • These variables are normalized and can be compared across students and institutions
__TMERN	Number of credits earned during the term	
__TMGPA	Grade point average (GPA) for term	
__TMNUM	Number of courses taken during term	

Courses Dataset

Variable	Variable Label	Recommendation
Direct observation variables		
__CRDCT	Credits count toward GPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caution should be used as these values are coded from the transcript almost verbatim • These variables are not normalized and do not adjust for different calendar systems, grading systems, or program lengths • Researchers are advised not to use these variables unless different assumptions are being used to compute normalized versions of the variables
__HRSERN	Earned clock hours	
__CRDERN	Earned credits	
__GRADE	Grade	
__GRDPT	Grade points	
__NUMGRD	Numeric grade for course	
__NORMCR	Normalized credits received for course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These variables are normalized and can be compared across students and institutions • They were used as source variables for the Derived Dataset and are more reliable for use
__NGRAD	Normalized grade received for course	
__NORMQP	Normalized quality points received for course	
__POTCR	Potential credit for course	
Attributes Variables		
__CRSTRN	Transfer course credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caution should be used as these values are coded from the transcript almost verbatim • There is no evidence indicating how reliably institutions reported these values on transcripts and these variables experience high levels 0 values • A 0 or null value could indicate that the flag does not apply or that the institution does not report it
__CRSCAP	Capstone course attribute	
__CRSCOP	Co-op course attribute	
__CRSCED	Continuing education course attribute	
__CRSDEN	Dual enrollment course attribute	
__CRSFLD	Field work course attribute	
__HONCRS	Honors course attribute	
__CRSIST	Independent study course attribute	
__CRSINT	Internship course attribute	
__CRSLAB	Lab course attribute	
__CRSPBC	Post baccalaureate course attribute	
__CRSPRC	Practicum course attribute	
__CRSREM	Remedial course attribute	
__CRSRCH	Research course attribute	
__CRSSEM	Seminar course attribute	
__CRSSTT	Student teaching course attribute	
__CRSSAB	Study abroad course attribute	
__CRSTA	Teaching assistantship course attribute	
__CRSTH	Thesis course attribute	

__CRSVOC	Vocational course attribute	
__CATOTH/ __CATSP	Other course attribute	

Student Schools Dataset

Variable	Variable Label	Recommendation
__CR*	Credits earned variables (by course clusters)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlike other credit or GPA related variables, all the variables that begin with MTCR____ or MTGPA____ in the Student Schools dataset are normalized and can be compared across institution calendar and grading systems
__GPA*	Grade point average variables (by course clusters)	
__TCATT	Transfer credits attempted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These variables are not reliably reported on transcripts and should not be used in their raw form These variables are not normalized and cannot be compared across students and institutions MTTCATT was used to impute missing data for institutions that didn't itemize transfer courses on their transcript (see MTACCNRM)
__TCACC	Transfer credits accepted	
__TFRGPA	Transfer credits for GPA	
__ACCNRM	Normalized transfer credits accepted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researchers are advised not to use the MTACCNRM variable unless different assumptions are being used to compute the number of credits transferred. NCES recommends using the Derived Dataset Transcripts did not reliably report the number of credits transferred into the institution in bulk – especially if courses were itemized on the transcript Use this variable only when an institution does not list transfer credits in the courses dataset
__FAMY	First attended month/year	
__LAMY	Last attended month/year	
__SCHOFA	Attendance order (based on first attended date)	

__SCHOLA	Attendance order (based on last attended date)	
__TOTCR	Credit hours earned at institution	
__ACCRM	Normalized transfer credits accepted (use with caution)	
__TRNFR	First transfer from NPSAS institution	

Transfer Dataset

Variable	Variable Label	Recommendation
__INCTRF	Incidental Transfer Indicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This variable identifies opportunities for credit transfer that NCES considers incidental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These cases are not used in determining if a student has transferred or not • A transfer was defined as incidental when the student spent 4 months or less at the destination school and eventually returns to the destination institution or drops out
__ACCREL	Accreditation Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally, these variables are reliable for use in analysis, but analysts should track missingness when using the variables as missing variables from one institution's variable get added to the second
__CTLCHG	Control Relationship	
__LVLCHG	Level Relationship	
__SELREL	Selectivity Relationship	
__MAJCHG	Major change during transfer indicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major was not consistently report on transcripts - it was more reliably reported if a student earned a credential • Missingness of the component variables QGMAJSS (major at sending institution) and QGMAJRS (major at receiving institutions) ranged from 40% to 50% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resulted in high levels of missing values in QGMAJCHG • This variable carries over into the Derived Dataset (QDMAJCHG)
__PROCHG	Degree program change during transfer indicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree program is also not reliably reported on transcripts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More than a quarter of values are listed in QGPRTYPE come from students with Undergraduate Courses/No Program at their first institution of attendance • Students at 2-year public colleges without Associate's degrees had higher levels of no program classifications • Students may have degree intentions, but they are not reported on the transcript. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This results in possible higher variables in the degree change variable
__PRTYPE	Degree program change type	
__PRORS / __PROSS	Degree program at receiving/sending	

		(QGPROCHG)
__SEC9CG	Sector relationship between schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These sector variables are generally reliable for use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Analysts need to be careful with small cell sizes in the sector relationship variable (QGSEC9CG) • While reliable for use, these variables use the NPSAS stratification schema which does not disaggregate for-profit sectors and private nonprofit sectors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ They also disaggregate doctoral and non-doctoral institutions • These variables carry over into the Derived Dataset (QDSEC9CG, QDSEC9RS, and QDSEC9SS)
__SEC9RS / __SEC9SS	Sector at sending/receiving institutions	
__TCRSS	Course taken at origin institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This variable is derived from the Courses Dataset and computes the sum of credits taken at each origin institution in each transfer opportunity • The variable is normalized and is generally acceptable for use in analyzing the transfer of credit
__CRSUCG	Transfer credits listed on bulk on the transcript	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QGCRSUCG is derived from MTACCNRM in the Student Schools dataset <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ It only reports a normalized value when a transcript lists bulk credit or totals the credit from transfer courses itemized on the transcript - generally this variable is not recommended for use alone • QGCRRS only uses the Courses dataset to determine the number of credits transferred and does not take into account credits that aren't listed course by course on a transcript (i.e. bulk credit) - this variable is also not recommended for use alone as well • QGBTCRRS is equal to QGCRRS for cases where course credits are itemized because this is deemed as the most reliable source of information with the most accurate computation of normalized credits
__CRRS	Course credits transferred to destination institution	
__BTCRRS	Overall credits transferred to destination institution	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When QGCRRS is missing, QGCRSUCC is used to fill in the missing cases to create a variable that accounts for most credit transfers ● QGBTCRRS is the variable recommend for use in analysis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The first transfer version of the variable in the Derived Dataset is QDBTCRRS
__TRSANY	Credit transfer indicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● QGTRSANY is derived from QGTRRAT (ratio of credits earned to transferred) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cases coded as zero on QDTRSANY may indicate no credits transferred OR the ratio of credits transferred was not observed due to missing values ● Users can distinguish between no credits transferred (QGTRRAT = 0) and unobserved values (QGTRRAT < 0) by filtering on QGTRRAT ● Variable should be used with caution - as an alternative, recode QGBTCRRS as an indicator for credit transfer

NOTE: To create a sector relationship variable that does not aggregate for-profit and not-for-profit levels, use __LEVEL and __CTRL in the Student Institutions Dataset.

Derived Dataset

The following variables are carried over from the Transfer Dataset for the first transfer:

Variable	Variable Label
__TCRSS → __TCRSS	Credits attempted at origin
__TRRAT → __TRRAT	Percent of credits transferred
__BTCRRS → __BTCRRS	Credits transferred
__PROCHG/ __PRTYPE → __PROCHG/ __PRTYPE	Degree program change variables
__ACCREL → __ACCREL	Accreditation relationship
__SELREL → __SELREL	Selectivity relationship
__CTLCHG → __CTLCHG	Control relationship
__LVLCHG → __LVLCHG	Level relationship
__MAJRS/ __MAJSS/ __MAJCHG → __MAJRS/ __MAJSS/ __MAJCHG	Major change variables
__SEC9CG/ __SEC9RS / __SEC9SS → __SEC9CG/ __SEC9RS / __SEC9SS	Sector relationship variables

These variables are summed or computed from the Courses Dataset

Variable	Variable Label	Recommendation
_____NUM	Number of courses taken by course cluster	
_____ATT	Credits attempted by course cluster and institution control, level, and sector	
_____ERN	Credits earned by course cluster, and institution control, level, and sector	
# ___STM	Credits earned in STEM by year	
_____###ERN	Credits earned during time periods (in years)	
_____RAT	Ratio of credits earned to total by course cluster	
__TRPTMS	Total Missing Transcripts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This variable can be used as a filter for an analysis of students who have complete transcript records (approximately 14,700 students) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ About 2,300 students do not have complete transcript records and would need to be evaluated in a missing data analysis • Analyses using the first known transfer allow for the inclusion of these student records
__PSEERN	Postsecondary career credits earned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This variable captures all the credits earned from all sources

		<p>and at all institutions. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pass/Fail courses - AP, IB, or other credit awarded by exam - Non-course credit <p>• QEPSEERN is normalized and can be compared across institutions and calendar systems - the variable is generally reliable for analysis</p>
__ENROLL	72 month enrollment indicator string (July 2003 – June 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This variable is a visual representation of enrollment from June 2003 through June 2009 • Each 1 represents a month of enrollment and 0 represents a month of non-enrollment • A student enrolled for the 72 months tacked in the study at an institution with a traditional semester system without taking summer courses would look something like this: 001111111111000111111 111000111111111100011
__TRSANY	Credit transfer indicator for first transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QGTRSANY (used to created QDTRSANY) is derived from QGTRRAT (ratio of credits earned to transferred) • Cases coded as 0 on QDTRSANY may indicate no credits transferred OR the ratio of credits transferred was not observed due to missing values • Users can distinguish between no credits transferred (QDTRRAT = 0) and unobserved values (QDTRRAT < 0) by filtering on QDTRRAT • Variable should be used with caution - as an alternative, recode QGBTCRRS as an indicator for credit transfer