



**Additional Guidance Note:
Meeting ICP Data Requirements for the
Private Education Survey
during the COVID-19 pandemic**

International Comparison Program Inter-Agency Coordination Group

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The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges for the implementation of the International Comparison Program (ICP). This note presents guidance to assist National Implementing Agencies (NIAs) in meeting ICP data requirements for private education in the context of the pandemic and related lockdown measures.

1. Introduction

Education systems have been significantly disrupted by the global pandemic, and resultant school closures have been reported around the world. The practices of virtual and hybrid schooling have been adopted at all educational levels from pre-school to tertiary education. The standard guiding principles and methodology of the International Comparison Program's (ICP) private education survey remain valid and unchanged; however, some participating economies have reported difficulties arising from inconsistency in data and metadata availability.

This note provides additional clarification and guidance to ICP National Implementing Agencies (NIAs) on the ICP 2021 cycle data collection and processing for the private education survey in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and addresses specific issues such as unusual schooling practices. It is an addition to the previously circulated COVID-19 guidance on ICP price surveys [Guidance Note: Meeting ICP Price Data Requirements During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

Regional and national responses to COVID-19 have varied in terms of restrictions and lockdowns and ICP regions and economies may have needed to adopt tailored approaches to data collection and processing. Nonetheless, there is value in having a common set of general guiding principles and recommendations that are of interest and relevance to economies across all ICP regions, and this guidance note can provide the basis for region-specific guidelines.

2. Standard ICP price data requirements and approach

[Chapter 8: Private Education: Approach and Data Requirements, ICP Operational Guide](#) provides detailed guidance on the standard approach and data requirements for the private education survey. In this note, only the portions of the guidance related to the following potential issues during the pandemic are summarized. Therefore, it is strongly encouraged to review the whole chapter for the details of education data collection and processing.

Data requirements

The ICP 2021 cycle requires national annual average tuition data for the reference year 2021 to compute PPPs for the private education component under household consumption. For the five formal education items for primary to tertiary education, each individual price observation is expected to be the price a private educational institution charges to a household for the purpose of education in 2021. For other education program items, such as foreign language courses or private lessons in mathematics, the price observation is hourly fees charged by the program to a household. The tuition data should exclude (1) educational materials such as textbooks and stationery and (2) educational support services such as health care, transport, catering, and accommodation.

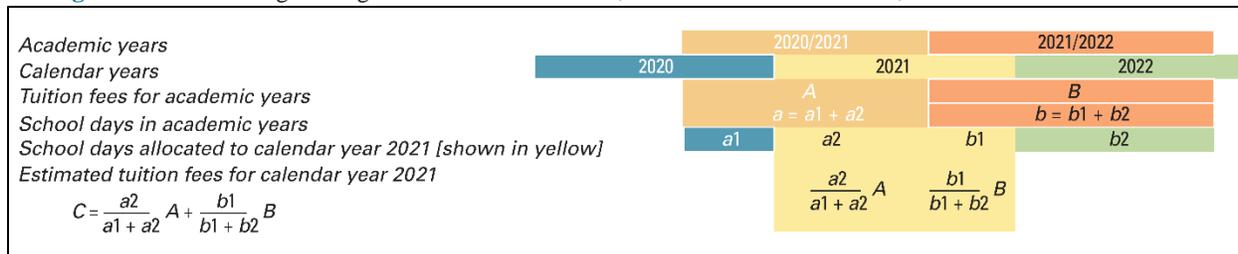
Estimation of annual tuition for the reference calendar year

As noted above, for the ICP 2021 cycle data for the reference year 2021 should be collected. For this purpose, if the academic year 2021 is different from the calendar year 2021, a calculation based on (i) the tuition for each of the two academic years that span the period January 1st to December 31st, 2021, and (ii) the number of school days of each of the two academic years that fall under the calendar year 2021 is necessary.

Figure 1.1 of the ICP [Operational Guide](#) (page 195) illustrates this calculation and is reproduced below. Applying this to 2021, the academic year 2020-2021 runs from late in the calendar year 2020 to mid-2021. Days for the academic year ("a") consists of school days in both 2020 ("a1") and in 2021 ("a2"). Similarly,

the academic year 2021-2022 runs from late 2021 to mid-2022, and thus days for the academic year ("b") are made up of days in 2021 ("b1") and days in 2022 ("b2"). The respective tuition fees for the two academic years are "A" and "B". The actual cost of education for the calendar year 2021, or "C", is estimated by adding the portions of "A" and "B" corresponding to "a2" and "b1" as shown below.

Figure 1.1 Calculating Average Private School Tuition, 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, ICP 2021



Source: ICP, <http://icp.worldbank.org/>.

The actual calculation is done in the following manner. First, the tuition for each academic year ("A" | "B") is divided by the number of scheduled school days in each academic year ("a" | "b") to obtain the average daily fee for each academic year ("A/a" | "B/b"). Then, the average daily fee is tallied up for the number of days that fall under the calendar year for each academic year ("a2*A/a" | "b1*B/b"), which will be summed up to obtain the annual tuition cost for 2021 ("C").

$$C = \frac{a2}{a1+a2} * A + \frac{b1}{b1+b2} * B$$

The private education survey form prepared by the ICP Global Office incorporates this formula into the data collection form. The form additionally requires national standard information for the number of school days. The form allows the information for each observation to be adjusted. Once all the necessary inputs are entered, the average annual tuition for the calendar year 2021 is calculated automatically by the Data Collection Form tab.

3. Challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic

According to UNESCO's database, [Global Monitoring of School Closures Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), only 54 of 210 economies surveyed were fully open for all school days in 2021, excluding scheduled academic breaks. In addition, 117 economies reported "closed due to COVID-19" for some school days, amounting to 68 days of closure on average. This unusual situation may pose difficulties for some NIAs in collecting comparable annual average tuition data for ICP purposes.

This section discusses the main challenges of collecting data specifically for the private education survey while the next section intends to provide general guidelines and potential responses and recommendations to the challenges. However, the challenges discussed are not exhaustive and each case should be reviewed carefully to address potential issues.

Changing status of the form or delivery of schooling

Many school systems utilized remote learning modalities during the pandemic to ensure continuity of the delivery of schooling. These remote learning modalities include virtual classes accessed by students who were physically outside the school location or off-campus as well as using take-home learning materials. Many schools across the globe adopted a hybrid approach of both remote learning and physical classes. For ICP purposes all days in which students were engaged in educational activities regardless of location should be considered as school days. However, it may be difficult in some cases to demarcate school days, where

students were off-campus but schooling was delivered remotely, from non-school days, where no schooling was delivered in any form.

Ambiguous number of school days

Many schools experienced full or partial closures during the pandemic, even though most economies have an officially required number of school days for all formal education levels, regardless of public or private schooling. Due to repeated policy changes in response to the changing pandemic situation, there could be cases where the number of school days delivered in 2021 is unclear as noted in the section above.

Different practices on the collection of tuition

For many private schools, the tuition paid by households for 2021 is unlikely to have changed from that which would have been billed for a normal year covering all scheduled days as these monies would be needed for teacher salaries and other school expenditures such as ongoing building maintenance costs regardless of whether students were in attendance. In these cases, the actual tuition paid reflects the anticipated or scheduled tuition and no reduction in tuition is given for pandemic-related non-school days. However, there may be cases where an entire semester was canceled, or a school was closed for a month or for an extended period during the pandemic and tuition paid by households for the affected period may have been reimbursed or reduced. Varying practices of the collection or reimbursement of tuition may pose difficulties in assuring consistency of observations.

The rising cost of education-related services and materials

Many economies experienced higher inflation during the pandemic period. This may have resulted in rapidly changing costs of education-related services and materials. As noted in the data requirement, related services and materials should not be included in the tuition estimate. However, if tuition includes those costs, it is required to estimate such costs and subtract them from the tuition, as stipulated in the [Operational Guide](#) and the private education survey form. Rapidly changing costs can make it difficult to accurately estimate the costs to be subtracted.

Also, due to new modalities of delivery of schooling, there may have been special payments charged by educational institutions to cover those new expenses related to the provision of educational services in special circumstances. Those special charges would require assessment to see if it should be treated as additional educational materials/services, or as a part of tuition.

Varying information within an economy

For any of the elements mentioned above, the degree of pandemic-related impacts may differ widely both across economies and within an economy. Some economies' subnational areas may have been impacted by the pandemic more than others. Some schools may have had more closures than other schools due to observed infections, or close contacts with infection, in their classrooms. Therefore, collecting consistent and comparable information nationally could be more challenging than during the non-pandemic period.

4. Guiding principles and recommendations

As emphasized in the introduction, there is no change in the guiding principles and methodology of the ICP private education survey, even during the pandemic period. However, the disruption to the delivery of education by the pandemic may pose specific concerns about the consistency and comparability of private education datasets. Thus, additional in-depth checks on collected data and metadata are highly recommended.

Forms of schooling

The different delivery modalities of education under the pandemic do not directly impact the ICP's data collection and processing. This is because in-person classes, remote or virtual learning of any form, or a combination, are regarded as relevant education, as far as it meets the definitions in the structured product descriptions (SPDs) provided in the ICP survey form. Furthermore, all days in which students were in receipt of education, regardless of in-person or remote status, are considered a school day. The SPDs provide descriptions of education levels and fields of study following ISCED's definition. The items are, in principle, the same as for the ICP 2017 cycle. Therefore, the identification of corresponding items would not differ from previous cycles.

However, it is possible that the tuition would be adjusted following changes in the form of classes. For example, online classes may cost less per student when the scale of the class is enlarged. Or it may be higher if the schools need, for example, more investment in their IT infrastructure. When scheduled tuition and actual tuition differs due to change in forms of schooling, actual tuition paid needs to be reported to reflect the actual prices faced by households.

It is highly recommended to report and record the forms of schooling for each observation if it is different from in-person teaching, in the "17 Explanatory Note (if any):" section of the Data Collection Form tabs in the ICP survey form so that the data can be further reviewed. In addition, if classes or school days were hybrid – that is, part in-person and part virtual – the delivery types and their estimated weights should be recorded. If tuition also varies depending on the delivery of schooling, the breakdown of tuition by schooling delivery should also be provided. Recording such metadata is highly important since it explains the change in prices specific to the pandemic period.

Also, if any special payments are charged due to change in forms of schooling, the treatment of special charges is required to be in line with the recording under national accounts. If it is not treated as part of tuition in national accounts, then it should not be included in the tuition for ICP reporting neither. For example, if a purchase of a tablet computer by each student is required for remote learning and if the cost is included in tuition, the estimated cost of the tablet should be subtracted from the tuition, in the same manner as required for other educational materials.

Treatment of school closure due to the pandemic

When closures (that is, no delivery of schooling in any form) due to the pandemic were observed in an economy in the reference year, the period of closure due to the pandemic needs to be regarded as active school days. Suppose a school or government revised its school calendar or tuition due to closure after the original or scheduled school plan had been published. In that case, it is recommended to obtain the number of school days from the original schooling plan (without closures except for scheduled academic breaks) to achieve a meaningful allocation of academic year tuition to calendar year. Recording the scheduled school days regardless of closures is important to ensure consistency of observations.

As noted in the previous section, the tuition paid by households for calendar year 2021 is unlikely to have changed due to closures in most of the cases; however, when actual tuition paid differs from scheduled tuition due to school closures, actual tuition paid needs to be reported. In this case, careful assessment is required so that data are comparable, and it needs to be clarified in metadata so that information can be checked whenever needed. It is recommended reporting the scheduled tuition in metadata if it differs from the actual tuition paid.

Additional check on the number of school days

It is worth emphasizing that the number of school days in the academic year and the number of school days that fall under the calendar reference year should be in line. If these numbers are not consistent, then they distort the resulting tuition from each academic year, and thus annual tuition cannot be estimated accurately. The standard methodology explained in the previous section worked well in the previous ICP cycles. However, the 2021 exercise requires extra caution, since there are cases where the number of school days was unclear due to changing academic plans. Hence an additional check on these data is recommended.

In the following example, the number of days in the calendar year 2021, which is 198 (= [2] + [4]), is lower than 200 ([1]), which is the smallest of the number of days in either of the two academic years. This indicates that the number of school days in the academic and calendar years are not reported consistently. Therefore, this additional check to test if the number of school days in calendar year 2021 falls under the range of days in academic years ($[3] \geq ([2] + [4]) \geq [1]$) would be useful in flagging possible errors in the reporting of the number of school days,¹ especially for the pandemic-impacted reference year.

Cost of Private School	Academic Year 1 (2020)	Academic Year 2 (2021)
Tuition (course fee only)	19,200	21,600
Number of school days	200 [1]	202 [3]
...of which fall in the survey reference year (2021)	100 [2]	98 [4]

Furthermore, checking the consistency of the number of days in the two academic years would be needed to ensure that the closures due to COVID-19 are included. These numbers can be different in different academic years, but the margin of difference is supposed to be only a few days, unless the education system is completely restructured. Therefore, if [1] and [3] are different for several days or more, it is recommended to check the data closely.

Utilization of national standard information on the number of school days

Where there are difficulties in obtaining the precise number of school days for individual observations, municipal-level or national-level information is recommended. As mentioned in section 2, the ICP private education survey form requires national standard information on the number of school days. National standard information should be available from each economy’s ministry of education or its equivalent. However, suppose the relevant authority has not released comparable information due to difficulties with

¹ This ensures that the average daily fee for the calendar year 2021 falls in the range of average daily fees from the academic years 2020 and 2021 ($34.6 < \mathbf{34.9} < 35.0$). Please note that this is not necessarily the case with the “annual average” fee. In cases where the number of days in the two academic year differs to a certain degree, resulting annual tuition for the calendar year 2021 can be larger or smaller than the annual tuition for academic years, as in the following example ($\mathbf{7,146} > 7,100$). Even though it is not intuitive, this calculation is correct since it is measuring the cost that falls within the calendar year 2021. However, this happens only in rare circumstances where (1) the number of days in academic years are different to a larger degree, and (2) the number of days that fall under the calendar year is at the largest/smallest end compared to that of academic years. Therefore, if the resulting annual tuition for 2021 is larger or smaller than the annual academic year tuitions, then it is recommended to first check if the number of days provided are consistent.

	Academic year annual tuition	Days in the academic year	Daily fee	Days fall under the calendar year	Tuition falls under the calendar year
Academic year 2020	7,000	200	35.0	125	4,375
Academic year 2021	7,100	205	34.6	80	2,771
Calendar year 2021			34.9	205	7,146

the pandemic. In that case, it is recommended to refer to international databases such as UNESCO's [*Global Monitoring of School Closures Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic*](#), which reports the daily status of national level school operating status.

Other considerations

If the number of school days is hard to estimate due to the pandemic, using the number of school months instead of school days could be considered. Although it is less precise, using the monthly allocation of academic year tuition can be intuitive and also would produce acceptable estimates. The ICP survey form can be utilized for this purpose without alteration and where information by month is used throughout the form, it returns appropriate annual averages as it does with information by day. It is important to make sure that the number of months in 2021 is consistent with the number of months in each academic year. It should have the same total number of months for each academic year and for the calendar year 2021 to avoid unnecessary errors. For economies where the academic year starts mid-calendar year, the simple average of tuitions from the two academic years could also be an option, although not preferable.

The importance of metadata

As emphasized in [*Guidance Note: Meeting ICP Price Data Requirements During the COVID-19 Pandemic*](#) it is imperative to have an explanatory note describing how the prices are compiled and computed when the data collection or computation method differs from the standard method.

5. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unusual challenges to the implementation of the ICP 2021 cycle at the global, regional, and national levels. The situation requires additional efforts on data quality assurance, and unique and alternative solutions. While the standard ICP guiding principles and methodology are valid for the pandemic period, this note attempted to support implementation of ICP private education survey by describing potential challenges in the current context of COVID-19 and outlining the guiding principles and recommendations to address them.

Annex

ICP Guidance Notes on ICP practices during the COVID-19 pandemic:

ICP Inter-Agency Coordination Group (IACG)

Guidance Note: Meeting ICP Price Data Requirements During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Guidance Note: Meeting ICP National Accounts Expenditure Data Requirements During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Referenced papers and databases on the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Education

UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Education disrupted: The second year of the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures

COVID-19 and School Closures: One year of education disruption

UNESCO COVID-19 Education Response

UNESCO map on school closures (<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>) and UIS, December 2021 (<http://data.uis.unesco.org>)”