



**APLU'S**

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SCALING STUDENT SUCCESS

## **Postsecondary Data Partnership (PDP) Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Who owns the data?**

**Answer:** The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) creates, maintains, and owns the dashboards that displays aggregated data on each institution. The institution owns the data.

### **Will my student-level data be shared with other institutions?**

**Answer:** No. As part of this project, the **aggregated** data will be shared with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and **de-identified** student data will be shared with APLU. APLU will not share student data outside of individuals who are part of the data analytics team.

### **The submission requires lots of demographic data on our students including address, phone number and email address, are students going to be contacted?**

**Answer:** No, Students will **not** be contacted. The purpose of these fields is to match records to calculate reliable enrollment, retention, degrees, 6-year outcomes. NSC uses an algorithm to match students that are submitted through the PDP with students already in the NSC database. For example, if a student left your institution and continued their education elsewhere, NSC will more likely be able to find them with these matching criteria.

### **Our institution doesn't collect all of the demographic information that is requested for each student, or we have it for some students but not all. What should we do?**

**Answer:** Submit what is available. For the data that is not available, leave fields blank or populate with "NA" following NSC guidelines. The demographic information requested is used in the dashboards, but also used for matching. Without the information, it may result in a lower probability that NSC will find those students in the NSC database.

### **The cohort file asks about a student's first-generation status, our student information system does not have the level of granularity that NSC requests, how should we submit data for this field?**

**Answer:** If your institution collects first generation status as a binary field you can recode students who are first generation to "N" and students who are not first generation to "B". If your institution does not collect first generation status, you can leave the field blank following NSC guidelines.

**We already participate with the NSC degree-tracker program. The current data request for the PDP overlaps a lot with the data sets we already send to NSC – which creates unnecessary work for our colleagues in IR. Is there a way to send only the new fields we do not already share with the NSC?**

**Answer:** The data that is submitted through the PDP allows institutions to create cohorts that include all students. These cohorts may include students that are not included in the NSC degree-tracker program. To ensure high quality metrics in the PDP, institutions define the cohorts themselves and submit them through the PDP.

**Procurement/legal is asking that someone show us the FERPA provision that permits us to share student PII data with other institutions.**

**Answer:** FERPA allows you to share individual student level data for research purposes and to support initiatives that are designed to help students succeed. The U.S. Department of Education manages information about FERPA. [Click here to get more information.](#) NSC also provides details of the data sharing parameters in the Master Services Agreement, which are in line with FERPA regulations. However, for PDP, you decide who sees your aggregate or de-identified student data.

**We are concerned about sharing student's personally identifying information with other institutions. Can you describe what the minimal sharing agreement of student-level (non-aggregated) data sharing might be?**

**Answer:** APLU and the American Institute of Research will have access to your de-identified student level data. These data will be used to 1) evaluate your progress and participation in the IFS cohort, and 2) to determine specific services that would support institutional needs. Data will be reported out only at the institution-level. Your de-identified student level data will be accessible to the APLU data analytics team and contractors who support APLU reporting tools. No student-level data will be shared with other institutions.

**Federal guidelines limit us from sharing financial aid information such as Pell status.**

**Answer:** This is not a problem. Other institutions are in the same boat.

**We would like to submit a financial aid file, but the data won't be available as quickly as our course and cohort files, can we submit financial aid data at a later time?**

**Answer:** Yes, you may submit financial aid data later. Financial aid files do not need to be submitted at the same time as your course and cohort files.

**The course file has a field that asks about course delivery method and gives the options as online, face-to-face, or hybrid, what about our courses that began face-to-face but were forced remote due to COVID-19?**

**Answer:** Currently NSC does not distinguish this unique circumstance. You have the option to leave the field blank or enter whichever value will be most meaningful for your institutional context. NSC is considering ways to accommodate new values for this field to support analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on course delivery.

**The submission guide has a field for course CIP, but we only collect CIP at the program level.**

**Answer:** You can use the program level CIP code for courses in that program. It will not have a negative impact on your data submission or data quality. NSC is interested in creating metrics and reports that use this field, but this data element is not currently used in the PDP dashboards or reports.

**How many years of data do I need to submit?**

**Answer:** APLU is currently asking IFS institutions to submit six cohorts of data, beginning with Fall 2014-15 through Fall 2019/Spring 2020.

**In the submission guide some fields are marked as required for reverse transfer, do we need to submit data for these fields?**

**Answer:** If your institution does not participate in reverse transfer you do not need to provide data in these fields unless it is also marked as a required field for the PDP submission.

**I'm having difficulty logging in to submit my data, who should I contact?**

**Answer:** For problems with login contact [implementation@studentclearinghouse.org](mailto:implementation@studentclearinghouse.org) . For other questions you may contact [pdpsupport@aplu.org](mailto:pdpsupport@aplu.org).

**How do we guarantee that students under the age of 18 or with an appointed guardian will be excluded from the PDP data collection?**

**Answer:** When you create the cohort files, you can remove any student under the age of 18.

**NSC will be doing studies with the data. Do we have to get an IRB for sharing student data with the NSC?**

**Answer:** You do not need an IRB. Your institution will not be doing studies with the data. NSC has been collecting student level data for year and conducting studies to support higher education. They have a robust privacy policy, which can be found [here](#). NSC would not be engaged in this work if it did not comply with FERPA; it complies under the "studies" exception, which allows NSC to act in an institution's stead as a "school official" when they use institutional data to populate the dashboards. That is a legitimate exception that does not require approval. NSC's Research Center may publish national studies but will never report identifiable institutional information without permission. The information contained in the dashboards are aggregated and used by the institution and APLU to identify areas where strategic focus can support student success.

**The Scope of Work provided by the NSC indicates a fee - item 14 - for the service. Do we have to pay a fee to participate in the PDP?**

**Answer:** APLU will cover the participation fee for the dashboards for the 16 institutions in the Intermediaries for Scale cohort. This fee will be covered for the 2021-2022 academic year only. Starting in July 2022, it will be up to each institution to pay the fee to continue participation and retain access to the dashboards, if they so choose.