

**Council on Postsecondary Education  
Quality and Accountability Policy Group  
November 5, 2007**

## Data Quality Policy

<b>ACTION: The Quality and Accountability Policy Group recommends that the Council approve the attached Data Quality Policy.</b>
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Institutions are required to have regular audits of their financial records and practices. Given that the data and information the public institutions submit to the Council are used in funding calculations and in the way they are evaluated for accountability purposes, there is an expectation that they should be accurate and of the highest quality.

As the Council moves toward the development of a new postsecondary education data system, it is important that all aspects of the information collection process be reviewed.

During the first half of 2007, CPE staff members Al Lind and Charles McGrew met with the Quality and Accountability and the Budget and Finance Policy Groups to discuss the need for a data quality or auditing policy. Council staff then met with staff from KCTCS and each of the public universities to discuss how they ensure data quality within their institutional systems. Since then, a draft policy has been distributed to the Quality and Accountability and the Budget and Finance Policy Groups and the institutions for review. The policy has since been updated based on their concerns and recommendations and also has been reviewed by the Council's external auditing firm. The institutions were given another opportunity to review the policy and provide feedback. The attached policy has at this point been reviewed extensively by the public institutions and their affected staff members.

Approved: November 5, 2007

## **Council on Postsecondary Education Data Quality Policy**

### **Section 1: Purpose**

This policy establishes the principles and practices related to the quality of data collected by Kentucky's public postsecondary education institutions and submitted to the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education's (CPE) comprehensive database system.

This policy is to ensure that all public institutions have adequate policies and processes in place to ensure data quality on their own campuses and to implement a process whereby the Council staff or a designated third party will authenticate the accuracy of the data institutions have submitted to the Council.

### **Section 2: Statutory Authority**

KRS 164.020, KRS 164.095, and KRS 164.283

### **Section 3: Background**

The CPE maintains and manages a unit record database, called the comprehensive database (CDB), containing postsecondary education institutional data used by the CPE for state and federal reporting, policy analysis, and decision-making. These data are used to support the improvement of postsecondary education within the Commonwealth by providing the basis for measures of effectiveness and efficiency. These data are also used in funding calculations for the public institutions. The data collected are part of a comprehensive accountability system that the CPE is required to develop and maintain by KRS 164.020 and KRS 164.095.

Institutions of postsecondary education have the primary responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of the data in their information systems and databases. As institutions are held to high standards by students, faculty, and other constituencies, it is expected that they devote significant attention and resources to the effectiveness of these systems and the quality of their data. Council staff members are available to facilitate the sharing of information and best practices among the institutions to assist them as they strive to improve the quality of data they collect and utilize.

A significant amount of data is collected by the institutions and submitted to the Council. There are hundreds of data elements each with their own unique definitions. There is a need to ensure that all institutions uniformly understand the definitions and parameters for the data being collected. As information is often presented side-by-side for each institution, ultimately it is used for comparison purposes by many different audiences. There is a need to ensure that this

information is comparable from institution to institution. This process will provide support to the institutions to ensure the data that they submit are based on the same interpretations.

#### **Section 4: Definitions**

1. “Accurate” means that the data in electronic systems should match data received from an original source, such as a student’s application or transcript from another institution.
2. “*Comprehensive Database Reporting Guidelines*” is the document produced annually by Council staff that lists all database definitions, formats, and collection schedules used by the Council.
3. “Critical Data Elements” include elements of particular importance due to their policy significance. These Critical Data Elements and the best methods and sources for evaluating their accuracy are discussed annually at the Comprehensive Database Committee meeting. The list will be included in the *Comprehensive Database Reporting Guidelines* beginning in 2008.

#### **Section 5: Policy**

##### **A. General**

1. This policy shall apply to all data submitted to the CPE from the public institutions, whether in electronic, paper, or other formats.
2. The CPE is authorized by KRS 164.020(6) and (26) and KRS 164.095 to perform research on postsecondary education, to maintain an accountability system, and to evaluate the performance of institutions in regard to the goals of the *Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997* and the Public Agenda. As such, there is an expectation that the data submitted to the Council shall be accurate.
3. The CPE *Comprehensive Database Reporting Guidelines* includes the official definitions for data that are submitted by the institutions to the Council.
4. Five years after implementation, the Council will reevaluate this policy.

##### **B. Institutional Policies and Processes**

1. Public institutions must certify that they have practices in place to ensure the quality of their data and that they follow CPE guidelines. The CPE encourages institutions to develop official data quality policies addressing data submitted to the comprehensive database. Each institution should submit a copy of their data quality policy, if they have one, and a report describing their data quality practices to the Council by May 1, 2008. When institutions make changes to these policies or practices, updated copies should be submitted to the Council. KCTCS will submit these for their colleges. The reports should include the following types of provisions:
  - 1.1. A description of the processes that are in place to ensure accurate collection and entry of data by the institution.

- 1.2. A description of the institution's process for checking data quality where staff or designated third parties compare data in the institutional databases to the original records (either paper or electronic) received from its students or other sources to ensure it was entered into its electronic systems accurately. These processes should include checking each of the critical data elements identified in the *Comprehensive Database Reporting Guidelines* from a random sample of at least 100 records for data that had been submitted to the Council within the previous year.
- 1.3. A schedule for how frequently data quality checks will be made by the institution or designated third parties.
- 1.4. A description of how the results of the data quality checks will be utilized by the institution to improve data quality.
2. Each institution will submit a data quality report to the Council staff by May 1<sup>st</sup> of each odd numbered year. This report should contain the following information:
  - 2.1. A list of the data fields checked, the process employed, and the findings.
  - 2.2. A description of any institutional policies and processes that will be changed to improve data quality for any items where inconsistencies were discovered.
  - 2.3. KCTCS shall submit reports for each of their colleges.

### **C. On-Site Data Quality Checks**

1. Council staff or a designated third party will conduct an on-site data quality check at each of the public institutions and KCTCS colleges at least once every five years. The purpose of the on-site visits will be to develop a better understanding of the quality of data that are submitted to the Council and to discuss data collection strategies to improve the consistency of data submitted from the institutions. It will also serve to provide support for campus staff so they may better understand how to classify and categorize data that are submitted to the Council.
2. Data submitted to the Council's comprehensive database within the previous academic year is subject to review and verification against the original records at the institution.
3. On-site data quality checks will be limited to reviewing critical data elements from 100 records. The list of records to be reviewed will be identified by the Council staff.
4. The first on-site data quality checks will occur in 2009.
5. At the end of the on-site visit, the team will meet with the institution's president and other pertinent staff for an exit interview. Following the on-site visit, Council staff will develop a written report of their findings and submit a copy to the president of the appropriate institution. These reports will also be presented to the Council.
6. If inaccurate data are found during the on-site data quality check, the Council reserves the right to revisit that institution for one or more follow-up on-site data quality checks.

Certification: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bradford L. Cowgill

Original Approval \_\_\_\_\_  
Amended: \_\_\_\_\_