

# Student Transitions Project Data Use and Reporting Protocol

## Purpose

This protocol outlines the terms and conditions for using and reporting data collected under the Student Transitions Project (STP) [Information Sharing Agreement \(ISA\)](#). The intent is to ensure that public post-secondary institutions have an opportunity to review data about their institution before it is released publicly.

## Background

STP is a partnership between British Columbia's education ministries, public post-secondary institutions, and the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT). STP links data to study student movement from K-12 into and among post-secondary institutions, while protecting individual privacy. The STP Steering Committee includes representatives from each partner organization and has overall authority for reporting.

## Definitions

This protocol recognizes two main types of users based on the [STP Data Access Policy](#):

- 1) **STP Partners** – STP Steering Committee members and individuals employed by BC's education ministries, public post-secondary institutions or institutional consortia and BCCAT; and researchers/contractors working on behalf of an organization that has access to STP data. This includes the Data Steward and Authorized Users Level 1, 2 and 3 defined in the STP Data Access Policy.
- 2) **Third Parties** - Individuals not employed by BC's education ministries, public post-secondary institutions, institutional consortia or BCCAT, who are authorized to access STP data for a limited time, under a research agreement. This includes academic researchers and contractors designated by the Steering Committee as Authorized Users Level 2.

In keeping with the Data Access Policy, Third Parties are granted read-only access to the minimum data needed to perform the research.

## Data Use

Use of STP data must be consistent with the purpose for which it was collected – to understand, improve and plan for K-12 to post-secondary student transitions. As described in sections 2, 4.2 and 4.3 of the STP ISA, the data may be used to:

- Study student movement through the education system
- Plan and evaluate programs
- Inform government and institution policy

Use of the data is restricted by the conditions set out in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (see below). The data may not be used to make decisions about an individual student.

## Reporting Guidelines:

To protect the privacy of individuals, small population numbers must be suppressed (masked) when reporting or otherwise publicly releasing information. Numbers or percentages must be masked of any and all cells of fewer than 10 observations. See the ministry responsible for K-12 education's policy for details: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/public-schools/protection-of-personal-information-when-reporting-on-small-populations>

Reports must indicate the source of the data, the date on which it was obtained and the name of the organization responsible for the report. Prior to disseminating reports based on STP data, users should check that the results are consistent with existing STP research (i.e. annual reports; special topic reports) available at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/data-research/student-transitions-project>

#### **For STP Partners:**

- In general, analyses such as static tables and reports created from STP pivot tables can be distributed internally within institutions without Steering Committee approval.
- Where the user intends to externally release or publish a report that identifies individual public post-secondary institutions, the user must give those institutions an opportunity to review the draft report prior to publication. The institutional research director at each institution (identified in the STP ISA) will have at least 14 calendar days to review and provide comments on the draft before it is published.
- Reports, newsletters, pivot tables and other documents prepared under STP's work plan are not subject to advance review by each institution as these items are vetted by the STP Steering Committee. STP publications and research are available to institutions on the STP website and/or SharePoint site.

#### **For Third Parties:**

- Third party users who intend to publish a report using STP data will provide a draft to the STP Steering Committee along with a description of the methodology used to conduct the analysis. The Steering Committee will have at least 14 calendar days to review the draft and methodology and provide comments before final report is published.
- Where the draft report identifies individual public post-secondary institutions, the researcher will, after receiving the Steering Committee's feedback, provide a copy of the draft report to the appropriate institutional research directors, who will have 14 calendar days to review the draft.
- A copy of the final report will be provided to the Steering Committee.

### **Relevant Legislation**

Relevant sections from the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)

#### **Protection of personal information**

30 The head of a public body must protect personal information by making reasonable security arrangements against such risks as unauthorized access, collection, use, disclosure or disposal.

#### **Use and Disclosure of Personal Information by Public Bodies**

32 A public body may use personal information only

- (a) for the purpose for which that information was obtained or compiled, or for a use consistent with that purpose (see section 34),
- (b) if the individual the information is about has identified the information and has consented, in the prescribed manner, to the use, or
- (c) for a purpose for which that information may be disclosed to that public body.