
ASSIST

Instructions for Requesting Special Use Tables

There are times when an ASSIST user may want to study the transfer patterns of a particular group of students who cannot be identified using existing data elements in the ASSIST database. These needs can be addressed through the establishment of separate tables referred to as *special use tables*.

Institutions first identify the group of students from their own student information systems, and then provide a file containing any data element needed for their analysis that is not captured in one of the standard ASSIST tables. ***Please note that the group of students studied must be of sufficient size to safeguard the privacy rights of the students. The ASSIST Security Plan prohibits matching ASSIST records with local data.*** Therefore, requests for special use tables that could result in identification or matching of ASSIST student data with local student database information will not be accommodated.

The records are loaded into a new table and access is granted to the institution. Special use tables are designed to be limited in function, and only the submitting institution will be able to view and access them.

Because these tables fall outside the scope of the original set of ASSIST project deliverables, the ASSIST Production team may or may not be able to accommodate an institutional request for a new table.

Decisions to incorporate special use tables will be made on a case-by-case basis and will depend on the purpose and complexity of individual requests.

Listed below are the steps to be followed for all institutional requests:

Step 1. Consult with the ASSIST Production team to determine the feasibility of the request, including the length of time the special use table will be needed. Due to storage limitations, tables will not be permitted to remain permanently in the ASSIST database unless prior arrangements are made.

Step 2. Identify the list of data elements to be included in the special use table. In addition to any unique data elements not found in the existing ASSIST database, certain data elements are required for matching records against previously loaded records in order to find and extract an existing ASSISTID. Consequently, every file **MUST INCLUDE** the following items:

- Student First Name
- Student Last Name
- Student Middle Initial
- Student Date of Birth
- Institutional Student ID

The ASSIST Production team will determine an acceptable format for the file, typically either a fixed format or an agreed-upon delimited format. The requestor will then receive an e-mail specifying the final format for submission, including a specified set of coding values for individual data elements if required.

Step 3. Ensure that all student records to be included in the file have a matching record in the ASSIST database from a previous load of the institution's regular ASSIST files. If a match cannot be found in the existing database, the record **WILL BE EXCLUDED** from the table.

Step 4. Submit the file in the assigned format using the same security measures as those used for regular ASSIST file submission. Two options are available: (1) send the file to the ASSIST server via file transfer protocol (ftp), or (2) zip, encrypt (password-protect), and submit the file via e-mail. If submitted via e-mail, the password should be sent in a separate e-mail message or communicated via telephone.

The ASSIST Production team will run the file through a matching process to identify an ASSISTID. The ASSISTID will be incorporated into the special use table, replacing all of the personally identifiable student data elements submitted in the original file.

The minimal time required for processing a special use table request will be ***ten (10) business days***. Depending upon the size and complexity of the request, turnaround time may vary considerably. Once the table has been created and loaded, the ASSIST Production team will notify the requestor that it is ready for use.

Step 5. When research with the special use table is completed, export all records for local storage and notify the ASSIST Production team that the table is no longer needed. If no notification is received, the table will be truncated and dropped from the ASSIST database after **180 days** unless prior arrangements have been made.

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