# HEDAC- EMSAS Subcomittee

**Minutes: March 29, 2010**

**Created by MDHE staff: Tim Wittmann and Jeffrey Smith**

# Participants

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# Recommendations and Resolutions

* Institutions should have the option of including a header record in any future EMSAS data transmitted to the MDHE that indicates the version of the EMSAS manual (e.g., 2005, 2008) to which the data correspond.
* The Total Term Enrolled/Earned Degree Credit Hours (TOTRMHRE/R) should be revised to include all course credit hours other than audited hours. Current (2008) definition indicates that the field includes only those hours creditable toward a formal award.
* The committee voiced support for examining ways to improve the EMSAS manual to provide greater value and accessibility as an informational resource.

# Action Steps

* MDHE agreed to further examine the NONCOLE (Other Non-College-Level Credit Hours) field to determine its current functionality and the extent of its use.
* MDHE agreed to work up EMSAS manual-style definitions of newly proposed fields and revised fields per committee recommendations (TOTRMHRE/R new DEV\* fields, new PREP\* fields, and NONCOLE/R. **Draft versions were sent to subcommittee on 3/30/2010.**
* Institutions interested in revising previous TOTRMHRE/R data (due to implications for the calculation of FTE) agreed to send revised TOTRMHRE/R data in a format that permits easy updating of MDHE’s extant EMSAS data. **This action will be deferred until final approval of TOTRMHRE/R revision by HEDAC.**
* MDHE agreed to follow up with organizations that track student participation in developmental education sequences to determine the feasibility and value of this level of detail over reporting which only tracks participation in any developmental education (by discipline).
* MDHE will work in consultation with HEDAC to refine its data sharing agreements with institutions of higher education in an expedient timeframe, preferably by the time the annual Class A data request letter is released. **A draft of the data agreement based on the former MAC-DHE agreement was sent to committee members to review on 3/20/2010.**

# MEETING OUTLINE

**Preliminaries / Announcements / General Discussion**

* MDHE remarked on the status of its data coordination staff. No staff reductions in this area are anticipated through the end of FY 2010. Announced addition of Damon Ferlazzo to MDHE data coordination staff.
* MDHE announced that it intends to work in consultation with HEDAC to refine its data sharing agreements with institutions of higher education in an expedient timeframe, preferably by the time the annual Class A data request letter is released.
* Discussion was initiated about how best to share information about MDHE’s methods for cleaning EMSAS data. Committee expressed an interest in a variety of tools, including SAS routines, SPSS syntax, and “pseudocode” for lay users. MDHE expressed a willingness to cooperate with institutions to provide this information via the DHE website or other means.
* Members remarked throughout meeting that they had been frustrated by the lack of communication between MDHE and institutional data users and administrators in the past. Some speculated or verified from experience that these communication issues are a cause of inconsistency in the application of EMSAS definitions. MDHE indicated that it is interested in improving its working relationship and communication with institutional data users and administrators.
* Members suggested future meetings should be held remotely using online conferencing tools and should be kept to around 2 hours.

**Improvements to EMSAS Manual**

* Committee members expressed the desire that a “change log” or “revision history” be added in future versions of the EMSAS manual. Members contended that improvements to EMSAS must be informed by an understanding of the historical situatedness of current definitions versus past definitions to facilitate good decision-making. MDHE indicated an interest in revision tracking, but suggested that the agency may not be in a position to prioritize this task at this time.
* Members expressed frustration with current format of EMSAS manual in that “Comments” could at times contain the bulk of the information necessary to define a field, etc. Members reached consensus that they would be open to improvements in the format of the EMSAS manual. **This proposal has been recorded as a committee resolution.**
* Clarification (fine-tuning, correcting confusing verbiage) of definitions, comments, etc., in manual was described by MDHE as lower-priority.

**Improvements to EMSAS – Priorities**

* Members suggested that any changes to EMSAS that are intended for implementation by Fall collections should be minimal due to the need for planning and IT involvement commensurate with the scope of changes.
* Members suggested that the EMSAS data dictionary be reviewed page-for-page to facilitate a thorough revision in time for 2011 Fall collections. Some members suggested that such a task would be a massive undertaking, requiring division of labor among members.
* Member suggested that it is vital that MDHE be aware of which version of the EMSAS manual is being referenced in any EMSAS data transmitted from an institution to the agency. Consensus among committee members is that institutions should have the option of including a header record in any future EMSAS data transmitted to the MDHE that indicates the version of the EMSAS manual (e.g., 2005, 2008) to which the data correspond. **This proposal has been recorded as a recommendation**, to be implemented at the option of Missouri public institutions **in time for Fall 2010** EMSAS collections, pending approval by full HEDAC group.
  + Discussion participants suggested that optional header could become mandatory over time, as interest in greater accountability for data was voiced by most.
* Revision of developmental education definitions, credit hour definitions (particularly Total Term Enrolled/Earned Degree Credit Hours [TOTRMHRE/R]), and full-time/part-time override were proposed as immediate priorities to be resolved, if possible, in time for Fall 2010 EMSAS collections. Discussion of full-time/part-time override was limited at this time.

**Priority Item – Total Term Enrolled/Earned Degree Credit Hours**

* Members expressed frustration regarding changes over time to the definition of Total Term Enrolled/Earned Degree Credit Hours (TOTRMHRE/R).
* Members reached consensus that the Total Term Enrolled/Earned Degree Credit Hours (TOTRMHRE/R) field should be revised to include all course credit hours (including dev. ed) except audited hours. Current (2008) definition indicates that the field includes only those hours creditable toward a formal award. **This proposal has been recorded as a recommendation** to be implemented at the option of Missouri public institutions **in time for Fall 2010** EMSAS collections, pending approval by full HEDAC group.
* Members suggested that FTE figures as reported to IPEDS include audited hours, except in the case of exclusive-auditors (which would be excluded). In other words, TOTRMHRE/R is only one piece of the calculation; in most cases, FTE will be underestimated if TOTRMHRE/R alone is used as a basis for this calculation.
* MDHE indicated intent to retain current 15 semester-credit-hour basis for determining FTE based off EMSAS data.
* Schools indicated interest in resending EMSAS data to align previous TOTRMHRE/R reporting with clarified definitions. MDHE expressed an interest in the same as well as a willingness to revise public references to FTE according to revised definition.

**Priority Item – Developmental Coursework**

* MDHE expressed an interest in (1) tracking student participation in dev. ed sequences (highest level, next highest, and all other levels); and (2) tracking student participation in “preparatory” coursework—coursework that does not meet the general education requirements for any degree or 42-hour transfer block and is not considered developmental coursework by the institution.
* MDHE indicated that MODEC is interested in measuring progress within developmental education sequences. Institutions expressed hesitation about determining which courses to associate which each “stage” of the sequence. Some members questioned the value added by collecting this data with this level of detail. MDHE agreed to follow-up with organizations that already track developmental education in stages to gather information about the value and feasibility of this approach.
* Members questioned the value of tracking participation in “preparatory” coursework. MDHE indicated that collecting this information would permit a more complete analysis of college readiness issues. Committee representatives expressed concern about the maintenance of data on coursework with a preparatory designation and suggested that further research is necessary to determine how courses are currently classified, how many would receive the new designation, and whether annual maintenance of these designations is feasible.
* Members expressed particular concern about the challenges associated with expedient implementation of changes in the way participation in dev. ed is tracked. Some members indicated that, depending on the system (e.g., Peoplesoft, Banner, etc.) and the relationship of IT personnel to institutional research (e.g., contractual or in-house), implementation would need to begin now in order to provide appropriate data in time for Fall 2010 EMSAS collections.
* Members speculated that Other Non-College-Level Credit Hours (NONCOLE) was intended to encompass reporting on dev ed outside of math, English, and reading disciplines. MDHE agreed to investigate further.
* MDHE agreed to work up EMSAS manual-style definitions of newly proposed fields and revised fields to facilitate continued discussion.

**Further Data Challenges**

* MDHE presented current “optional” fields (per EMSAS 2008) in an effort to initiate discussion about the value of particular fields and the feasibility of more consistent reporting. Several of the optional fields may have been discontinued in previous versions of EMSAS.
  + Feasibility of collecting MOSIS IDs on a more consistent basis was discussed. Members expressed concern about the general procedure for requesting MOSIS IDs from DESE, including time and effort involved. Members also indicated that duplicate IDs could be created without sufficient coordination among institutions and MDHE in cases in which available identifiers do not readily match information in DESE databases. Committee members indicated support for a solution in which MDHE acts as a clearinghouse for MOSIS IDs.
  + Data on student withdrawals (WITHDRAW) is currently collected on an optional basis. Members expressed concern about the feasibility and accuracy of mandatory reporting status. Members contend that boom in online education has caused a shift in students’ willingness to engage in a formal withdrawal process. Some members suggested that informal withdrawals (student “disappears” without notice) are typically not adequately documented.
* CORE is an EMSAS field that flags whether a student has completed the CBHE-recommended core high school curriculum. Current reporting of this data is sporadic, but May 2010 high school graduates must meet CORE requirements. CORE course participation is collected by subject area.
  + Members expressed concern about the availability of CORE data. Reporting is likely to continue to be sporadic if some institutions do not receive reports that indicate CORE participation by discipline.
  + Members further expressed concern about inability to report CORE participation for upper-level registrants who were not required to complete CORE.
  + Member indicated that it is currently unclear that CORE reporting will only apply to MO high school graduates.
  + CORE participation by subject area has undergone confusing changes across recent EMSAS revisions, according to institutional representatives. Foreign-language coursework had previously been recorded under CORELECT, for example, but is now recorded in its own field.
* Cumulative credit hours and cumulative grade point average were also met with much discussion by HEDAC-EMSAS members.
  + Current definitions indicate that student’s entire collegiate career should be tracked in EMSAS using cumulative credit hours and cumulative GPA fields. Representatives believe this approach is confusing, unreasonable, and misaligned with actual transcription practices in many cases.
* MDHE described a desire to develop a “data clean-up” policy. This suggestion met with some approval, but was not considered a priority by a consensus of members at this time.