Student Course Scheduler (SCS) — Frequently Asked Questions

September 26, 2011
v.1.6
# REVISION HISTORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Date Posted</th>
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<td>09/26/11</td>
<td>09/26/11</td>
<td>Sent for posting. Updated cover date and footer date. Corrected first row in H from Longitudinal Requirements to Analytical Reports.</td>
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<td>09/22/11</td>
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<td>Updated cover date and footer date. Light Edit. Reformatted footers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>09/20/11</td>
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<td>Updated Title, Date, and Version Number. Fixed footers and page numbering.</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
<td>10/1/2010</td>
<td>10/1/2010</td>
<td>Removed Pilot Watermark. Updated cover to October 1, 2010. Updated version to 1.5 Fixed TOC</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
<td>07/15/10</td>
<td>07/13/2010</td>
<td>Incorporated the following updates:</td>
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<td>• Re-phrased heading for section, B6.</td>
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<td>• Removed sections F, H, I, and Q.</td>
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<td>• Clarified the Longitudinal Requirements section (now section, H), with this edit: “At this time, there is no means to update previously submitted data.”</td>
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<td>• Updated EPIMS Application section (now Section L), with a note to reflect that there may only be two 2306s reported for an individual class.</td>
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<td>• Clarified examples, under EPIMS Term Status.</td>
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<td>• Completed light punctuation and grammar edit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>06/02/2010</td>
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<td>Reformatted FAQs in the standard doc template, with Revision History. Fixed broken links in the EPIMS Term Status section.</td>
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This document provides the following frequently asked questions for the Student Course Scheduler (SCS - SIMS Expansion) project:

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O. SIMS SPED, on page 17
A. WHAT NEEDS TO BE REPORTED?

A. The State Assigned Student Identifier (SASID)

A.1 Why does the Department collect the names of students, when each student has a unique student identifier?

The name and the date of birth are collected each time to check that the provided SASID is accurate. This ensures the integrity of the unique ID and the collected data.

A.2 Can school districts require a birth certificate to confirm the student’s identity?

Massachusetts law does not require presentation of a birth certificate for school entry. However, a school district may request a birth certificate or a baptismal certificate showing the date of birth, as proof that a child meets its minimum school entry age.

A.3 Can a school district display the State Assigned Student Identifier (SASID) on student identification cards?

No. It is the Department’s opinion that the placement of the SASID on a student identification card is prohibited by the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and the Massachusetts Student Record Regulations.

Since the SASID is information that is directly related to a student, is organized in a way that the student may be individually identified, and is kept or maintained by the schools, the SASID qualifies as an education record under FERPA, and under the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations. Therefore, school districts are required by both state and federal laws to protect the confidentiality of the SASID. It would be impossible for a school district to ensure the confidentiality of the SASID, if it were placed on a student identification card, or if it were displayed on any other type of identification system.
B. WHO NEEDS TO BE REPORTED?

B. Who Needs To Be Reported

B.1 Do we need to report Kindergarten or Pre-K students in SCS?

Yes, if they are reported as enrolled in SIMS, Kindergarten and Pre-K students must be reported in SCS.

B.2 How do we handle home-tutoring? If temporary?

Students who are still enrolled in regularly scheduled classes, but are home-tutored on a temporary basis, should be reported.

B.3 Do services only provisions need to be reported?

No. Course Schedule records only need to be reported, if a class is provided and reported in EPIMS. At this time, reporting will be done at the classroom level, not the service level.

B.4 What if a student tests out of a course? Does the course need to be reported as completed and a mark given?

No. At this time, courses that a student tests out of do not need to be reported.

B.5 How do we handle special education students and classes?

The student course schedule does not need to be reported for out-placed special education students. Special education students taking courses offered within the district must be reported. The special education services that a student receives that is documented in their IEP does not need to be reported.

B.6 How will we report course data for students attending out of district courses?

Course schedule information does not need to be reported for out of district students. However, this information can be reported through the SCS application if the district would like to.
C. SCS SUMMARY REPORTS

C. SCS Summary Report

C.1 Add/Drop Merge: Districts have a very large number of schedule changes during add/drop periods. Can the missing courses report be based at the course level, so that withdrawals do not have to be handled manually?

Yes. Based on input received from the pilot districts, the missing courses report, which ensures that all courses reported in the previous period are reported in the next period, will be based on the course and term rather than the course, class section, and term.

C.2 Can local course number be added to the summary reports?

Yes. Local course number will be added to all of the summary reports.

C.3 What information does Report #1: Missing Course report provide? When is it available?

Report #1: Missing Course report compares courses reported in a collection period, with courses reported in the previous period, within a school year.

This report will be available to pilot districts, beginning in June 2010, when it will compare courses collected in the June period to courses collected in the previous March collection.

For the statewide collection, Report #1 will be available each March, and then again each June, starting in March 2011, and again in June 2011.

C.4 Can I view the SCS Summary Reports in any browser?

Cognos is the professional report authoring tool, which generates SCS Summary Reports. Cognos supports Firefox 3.5 or higher, and IE 6 or higher. Safari is not supported.
D. SCS DATA ELEMENTS

D. SCS Data Element

D.1 Course Level: Is this element needed? Is course level information already captured in SCS03, and in the course code?

At this time, the Course Level data element will be required as part of the pilot collections. Any changes to this element may be implemented after ESE reviews and analyzes the data from the pilot collections.

D.2 How should classes containing multiple levels be reported?

In circumstances in which students within the same classroom, taking the same subject-area course are doing different coursework (for example, some take honors while the majority take general coursework), the data element “Course Level” should be used to distinguish between the coursework being taken within the classroom. A single work assignment record should be reported rather than multiple work assignment records, which would result from changing either the course or the section, and reporting these classrooms separately.

D.3 Are course credits required for elementary or middle school courses?

Course credit data elements (Credit Available and Credit Earned) are not required for non-secondary or secondary school courses. Districts can submit records with default values for these elements.

D.4 Will codes for multiple mini sessions be defined within the Course Term data element?

Yes. The Course Term data element in EPIMS and SCS will include codes to support multiple mini sessions. They are 61 (Mini-term 1), 62 (Mini-term 2), 63 (Mini-term 3), 64 (Mini-term 4), 65 (Mini-term 5), 66 (Mini-term 6), 67 (Mini-term 7), 68 (Mini-term 8), 69 (Mini-term 9), 78 (Multiple Mini-terms), and 79 (Multiple Non-consecutive Mini-terms).
E. RE-ENROLLMENTS

E  Re-Enrollments

E.1 How do districts manage intra-school/district elementary school transfers? For example, active year-long students that transfer mid-year to another school in the district.

If students are reported in SCS as enrolled in courses at a school, at the beginning of the year, and then transfer to another school within the district, the courses in the original school must be reported as withdrawn (or otherwise completed) in the subsequent collections, and the courses taken at the new school must be reported.

E.2 How do districts handle class section changes within a term?

- If students transfer from one section of the same subject-area course to another section of the same subject area course, districts are not required to reconcile these class section changes.
- If students transfer from one subject area-course to another, the original course must be reported as withdrawn (or otherwise completed) in the subsequent collections, and the new course must be reported.
F. STUDENT SCHEDULES/GRADES

F. Student Schedules/Grades

F.1 How do districts deal with students in temporary placement (that is, the teen parent program), or are with tutors/teachers not reported in EPIMS (maybe for the whole year)?

Students who are still enrolled in regularly scheduled classes, but are home-tutored on a temporary basis, should be reported as taking their scheduled classes.

Students in temporary placement and not enrolled in regularly scheduled classes, should not be reported.

F.2 How do districts handle exploratory classes/shops for vocational students? These classes are not included as part of the student schedule, or report card, but students get a final grade at the end of the year with no teacher of record.

We hope to gain a better understanding of this issue during the pilot project. In the March collection, we will require vocational schools to report work assignment records for teachers of the exploratory courses in EPIMS, but SCS will not require records for students in these exploratory programs.

SCS will accept these student records from the districts, but ESE will modify the business rule, requiring a student record for each teacher record for the vocational exploratory programs.

In June, work assignment records for these programs will be required in EPIMS, and records for students that participated in an exploratory program, along with their final marks will be required in SCS.

Based on the information we learn from the pilot project, we will decide how to handle reporting requirements for these programs in the statewide collection.
G. LONGITUDINAL REQUIREMENTS

G. Longitudinal Requirements

G.1 Is there a means to update previously submitted data?

No, you can not update previously submitted data.

Instead, districts have the opportunity to load local data to the Education Data Warehouse (EDW), at any time. The SIMS/EPIMS/SCS collections are designed to be complete and accurate as of the date of collection, and are not transactional.

H. ANALYTICAL REPORTS

H. Analytical Reports

H.1 Can EPIMS provide a report that displays teacher retention data in all schools, broken down by exit reason?

ESE is currently working on a new report that will provide retention data and organize the results by exit reason.

H.2 Can EPIMS or SCS provide a report that displays average class size by grade level, broken down by grade and subject?

From a practical standpoint this is not possible, however:

- It is possible to calculate Elementary Class Size by grade, but not by subject because the majority of elementary classes are not configured by subjects.

- It is possible to calculate Secondary Class Size by subject, but not by grade because the majority of Secondary classes are not configured by grade.
I. ADMINISTRATION

I. Administration

I.1 Is the district data coordinator a new position that must be hired for school districts?

No. Since SIMS, EPIMS and the new student course schedule application have interdependencies and cross-validations, ESE is asking districts to identify a single point of contact for all three systems. Some districts have already identified a person who coordinates the current SIMS and EPIMS data collections. All districts should identify a person to fill this role before the new student course schedule application is released.

I.2 What is ESE going to do with data that will link students and teachers at the classroom level?

There are several levels of data analysis that this type of data will support. Districts will be able to use this data to identify performance factors to help improve the quality of education for their students. ESE is interested in using aggregate data to identify key performance factors such as the impact of class size on student performance, relationships between student marks and MCAS scores, and the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. ESE is not going to use this data to evaluate teacher performance at an individual level.
J. VENDORS

J. Vendors

J.1 Have you identified any minimum level of compliance that vendors will have to reach for the new student course schedule data collection?

No. We anticipate that ESE will work with vendors to identify compliant platforms similar to the way we currently identify SIMS compliant platforms.

J.2 Are you working with the vendors on this initiative?

Yes. We will maintain contact with these vendors over the course of the pilot project. We will work as closely as possible with the vendors to facilitate a smooth transition for the pilot project, and the expanded SIMS statewide data collections in 2010 and 2011.
K. EPIMS APPLICATION

K. EPIMS Application

K.1 What are the reporting requirements for Work Assignment (WA) records for exited staff? Some SIS do not provide history or allow 2 teachers assigned to the same course during the same year.

Districts must provide WA records for exited staff within a school year, if their SIS supports this capability.

We realize that some SIS will not be able to retain this information, if an individual exits and is replaced in the identical work assignment (including the identical course, section, term for teachers), so we will not require that these work assignments be reported.

All work assignments for exited employees that are not replaced in the identical work assignments within the school year must be reported.

K.2 Are WA records required for staff members that are on and off leave repeatedly?

Yes. The reporting requirements for staff that are on leave repeatedly are the same as for exited staff. Districts must provide WA records for these employees within a school year, unless the work assignment is replaced by an identical work assignment.

K.3 What value will we use to report term in EPIMS for non-instructional staff?

The correct term value for non-instructional staff is “01” – full year.

K.4 How will we report co-teachers or team teaching assignments in EPIMS?

Beginning in March 2010, districts started using a new EPIMS job classification for co-teaching assignments (job classification 2306). Districts should use this new job classification to report co-teaching assignments, by assigning both co-teachers to the same subject-area course, class section, and term within a school.

New validation rules will be created to accept the co-teaching assignments and to ensure that if one co-teacher is identified for a class, at least one other co-teacher must be assigned to the same class. Multiple teachers with job classification 2305 will not be accepted with the same subject-area course, class section, and term within a school.
**Note:** There may only be two 2306s reported for an individual class.
L. VIRTUAL CLASSES

L. Virtual Classes

L.1 How are virtual classes taught by out of district teachers collected in EPIMS?

At this time, virtual classes taught by out of district teachers are not collected in EPIMS.

L.2. How do districts treat online courses in EPIMS taught by in-district teachers, but not necessarily attended by in-district students?

Records for virtual classes taught by in-district teachers and attended by students within the district will be collected by both EPIMS and SCS. Records for out-of-district students will not be reported.
M. EPIMS TERM STATUS

M.1 What are the “X” Course Term codes (TRIX, QTRX, MINIX, etc.), and how should they be used?

The “X” Course Term codes are used to identify courses that cover multiple terms, but are not full-year courses. For example, a course that spans only the 1st and 2nd trimester, but not the 3rd would be reported as 34 – TRIX. Such a course would have a single work assignment record, even though it meets in two trimesters.

For more information on the Course Term data element, please refer to the EPIMS Data Handbook.

M.2 What are the “N” Course Term codes (TRIN, QTRN, MININ, etc.), and how should they be used?

The “N” Course Term codes are used to identify courses that cover multiple non-consecutive terms.

For example, a course that meets during the 1st and 3rd quarters would be reported as 46 – QTRN. Such a course would have a single work assignment record, even though it meets in two quarters. For more information on the Course Term data element, please refer to the EPIMS Data Handbook.
N. SIMS CONTACTS

N. SIMS Contacts

N.1 How can districts add multiple SIMS contacts to Directory Administration (DA)?

ESE is currently working to enable multiple SIMS contacts. Details will be posted once development is completed.

O. SIMS/SPED

O. SIMS/SPED

O.1 What SCS code should be used for a residential SPED student if every SIMS entry must have a record is SCS?

At this time, out-of-district SPED students are not required to be reported in SCS. They should continue to be reported in the SIMS52 file.