

# SAN DIEGO MIRAMAR COLLEGE

## Guidelines for Protecting Data Sensitivity (GPDS) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### Q1. What is the purpose of the GPDS?

San Diego Miramar College encourages research on education issues and believes that information should be transparent and available to students, faculty, staff, and the general public. At the same time, the College upholds these guidelines on the access, security, use, and dissemination of sensitive data in order to assure the integrity of research and protect the rights and privacy of personnel and students. The GPDS reinforces the exercise of sound judgment and the professionalism of data stewards.

### Q2. What determines the “need-to-know”?

The research question determines the “need-to-know.”

- A research question generally is a problem to be solved, decision to be made, or knowledge to be gained through the gathering, analysis, and consideration of information.
- A good research question guides the process of seeking information to contribute to knowledge and/or practice.

If a requestor has a research question that can only

- be answered with Level III data and
- the requested data are necessary for
  - reasonable operation,
  - strategic planning,
  - the accomplishment of the requestor’s expected and stated job duties, and/or
  - serving a legitimate educational interest, then there is a need-to-know. Examples include, but are not limited to, schedule development, Program Review, and data-driven decision-making by School Deans or Department Chairs.

### Q3. Where do I consult when I am not sure about the level of confidentiality or sensitivity associated with a research request?

You may contact the San Diego Miramar College Research and Planning Analyst, Xi Zhang, at (619) 388-7333 or email at [xzhang@sdccd.edu](mailto:xzhang@sdccd.edu).

### Q4. What are the requirements to obtain research data?

- There is a “need-to-know”.
- The Research and Planning Analyst requires a minimum of two to six weeks for general research questions.
- Complete and sign a Research Request Form (RRF). Contact Miramar College’s Research and Planning Analyst, as needed.
- Check the San Diego Miramar College Institutional Research website for existing research reports at <http://www.sdmiramar.edu/institution/research> to avoid duplication of requests.
- Obtain your manager’s signature.

### Q5. What is the meaning of aggregated/disaggregated data?

Data specificity is on a continuum with extremes of aggregated data on one end and disaggregated data on the other. The following example illustrates this principle of data specificity:

- Aggregate data in the extreme would be data such as an institution-wide success rate (Level I).
- This institution-wide success rate can be disaggregated, or broken out, at the school and program level to yield success rates by school and program (Level II).
- If we disaggregate further and break it out by CRN, we would be able to see the success rate for a single professor’s class (Level III).

- We may disaggregate even further and determine the success rates for individual students (Level III).

While aggregate data in the extreme would include data such as institution-wide figures, disaggregated data in its extreme would comprise any data that are personally identifiable to individual personnel or students. Rarely do research questions necessitate personally identifiable information; most research questions can be answered with Level I or Level II data.

**Q6. Can I access Level I data generated for others?**

YES. The Miramar College Office of Institutional Research and Planning keeps copies of all reports it produces. Your access is dependent upon your need-to-know.

**Q7. Where can I access existing research and information stored online?**

Visit Miramar College Institutional Research website (<http://www.sdmiramar.edu/institution/research>)  
Visit the District's Institutional Research and Planning website (<http://research.sdccd.edu/>)

**Q8. If my school, department, program, unit, or discipline generates and maintains Level III data, does GPDS apply to all these data?**

YES. Good research practices dictate ethical and professional behavior. All sources of Level III data demand adherence to existing GPDS policy. Although all data (including data used for SLO assessment) are not generated or maintained by Miramar College's Office of Planning, Research, & Institutional Effectiveness, GPDS guides the access, security, use, and dissemination of all levels of data including sensitive data throughout the college.

**Q9. What are the consequences for unauthorized dissemination of Level III data?**

Failure to comply with these precautions and restrictions shall meet with serious consequences, as per [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#). Individuals receiving Level III data from the Miramar College Office of Planning, Research, & Institutional Effectiveness must comply with the GPDS policy. Standards of good judgment and professionalism are required when working with highly disaggregated information. Existing District disciplinary procedures will be enforced when inappropriate dissemination of Level III data occurs.

**Q10. May Level III data be shared with my colleagues?**

NO. Unauthorized reproductions and dissemination of Level III data are prohibited. Please see GPDS for additional dissemination guidelines.

**Q11. How does GPDS differ from the District Institutional Review Board (IRB)?**

Requests for data from the Miramar College Office of Planning, Research, & Institutional Effectiveness are under the auspices of the GPDS. External research requests involving Miramar students or personnel as human subjects must be reviewed and approved by the SDCCD Institutional Review Board (IRB).

**Q12. What is the process for requesting research?**

A Research Request Form (RRF) should be completed and forwarded to Miramar College's Research and Planning Analyst, Xi Zhang, at (619) 388-7333 or email at [xzhang@sdccd.edu](mailto:xzhang@sdccd.edu).