

## Utah Conference FAQ

### Utah Transcript Center (UTC)

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***Is transcript data secure when it is transferred electronically between institutions?***

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Yes, data is uploaded via secure FTP and can only be accessed by authorized users with limited, predefined access privileges to the system. UTC employs advanced security layers including the use of Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) 128 bit encryption—the same security used for online banking.

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***Will the system handle sending multiple transcripts at one time?***

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Yes, the NTC system is capable of sending a single or batch of transcripts to any postsecondary institution in the country.

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***Will all LEAs have the ability to send transcripts to postsecondary institutions?***

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Yes, all LEAs in Utah will be capable of sending secure and authenticated student transcript to postsecondary institutions (plus records to any NTC member LEA in the country).

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***Will admission offices of Utah colleges and universities have an account to receive transcripts?***

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Yes, Pearson will provide an account for the admissions office of every Utah postsecondary institution. This will allow them to electronically receive high school transcripts.

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***What if a postsecondary institution does not have the ability to receive a transcript electronically?***

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LEAs can still send transcripts using the same electronic process. Pearson will print the student transcript on secure transcript paper and send it via U.S. Mail.

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***Will the electronic transcript be sent in a specific format?***

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UTC is designed to translate student transcripts into whatever format the receiving institution desires—SPEEDE/ExPRESS EDI, SIF XML electronic student record, PESC XML high school transcript, PESC XML college transcript—and can provide an authenticated PDF document or a paper document.

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***What is the cost for a high school to send a student's transcript to a college or university?***

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There is no cost to the LEA, students, or parents/guardians to send a student's transcript to a Utah public 2-year college or any Utah public or private 4-year institution.

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***Can students and parents request that transcripts be sent?***

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Yes, using the OrderaTranscript.com interface, students—and parents of students under 18 years of age—can request that transcripts be sent to postsecondary institutions. Transcripts sent to Utah public 2-year colleges and Utah public and private 4-year institutions are free. Transcripts sent to out-of-state institutions will incur an UTC transaction fee. Students can order transcripts sent to nearly 7000 postsecondary institutions across the country.

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***Does the student ordering system accept credit card payments?***

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Yes, OrderaTranscript.com accepts online credit card payments. Credit card information is kept confidential and the system conforms to the strict Payment Card Industry (PCI) data security standard.

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***How does the system track the delivery of transcripts?***

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Unique tracking numbers are randomly generated for every transaction. The algorithm for UTC allows for 260 billion different tracking numbers.

Detailed tracking information is provided for each transaction, including when the transcript was sent, how it was delivered, and when it was accepted by the postsecondary institution. Users can track transcripts within UTC and students can track their orders from OrderaTranscript.com.

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***Can LEAs hold a transcript that a student requested?***

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Yes, UTC will not send anything without the sending institution's approval, and the LEA—or school—can choose to hold transcripts for fees or grades. When an LEA opts to do this, UTC will send an email to the students letting them know their request was held and why.

***Do LEAs need to install any software?***

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No, UTC provides the user with an easy-to-use, secure Web interface that is accessible from many popular browsers.

***Will UTC handle the anticipated number of transactions for Utah?***

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Yes, UTC is an enterprise class solution built for scalability and massive data loads. In a recent performance test, NTC conducted a benchmark performance test as part of its statewide contract with the Texas Education Agency. This contract supports over 1,200 LEAs representing over 9,000 campuses and 4,500,000 students.

For 1,000 simultaneous institutions, the system processed more than 100,000 requests and 100,000 transcripts per hour.

## Data Collector

### *How will LEA's integrate with UTREx?*

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This project is part of the larger UTREx project. All LEAs are required to submit their data using the new Data Collector web portal.

### *What is the benefit for an LEA to integrate with UTREx?*

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While all LEAs are required to upload their data using this new portal we believe this process is more automated and streamlined and will significantly reduce the work required for data submission.

### *How does this new collection process work?*

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Authorized LEA personnel will use the Data Collector web portal to collect, validate, and submit Clearinghouse data.

### *Who is responsible for entering the data for each submission?*

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Data is extracted directly from your Student Information System (e.g. SIS2000+, PowerSchool, Skyward) either in the Clearinghouse flat-file format or via SIF. There is no need to enter the data in another system.

### *What is the difference between a Clearinghouse file and a SIF collection?*

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The Data Collector supports the use of one of two different data sources. Using a Clearinghouse extraction file requires the user to first create the extract file, something that may be available from within your SIS or may be something that has to be generated separately. Using SIF requires no additional effort but assumes that you have a working SIF agent from your SIS vendor that can provide all the data needed for the collection.

### *Who is going to clean up the data LEAs submit?*

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Because the data is being collected directly from your Student Information System, each LEA will be responsible for cleaning up its own data.

### *How do I fix data errors?*

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As part of the general workflow, the Data Collector software runs validation checks on all collected data and provides immediate feedback to the LEA in the form of a validation report. Data that does not pass validation will be specifically excluded from the collection if submitted

to USOE. The LEA has the opportunity to correct any data issues at the source (SIS) and then recollect the data. This process can iterate any number of times until the LEA is comfortable with the data set. The Data Collector software simply prevents any data that does not pass validation to be submitted to USOE.

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***How does my data get submitted to the Clearinghouse?***

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The Data Collector portal guides the LEA user through the process of collecting, preparing, and submitting data to the Clearinghouse database.

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***Do we still need to use the USOE provided Edit software to check for data errors?***

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The Data Collector portal provides this functionality as part of its core workflow. LEA-level edit software will no longer be used.

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***What is the difference between a Level 1 and a Level 2 validation check?***

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These are new terms. Level 1 validation checks are performed against just the data collected from the LEA (either SIF or flat-file). These include making sure each data element conforms to expected list of values, lengths, date ranges, etc. These may also include checking that an SSID or other identifier is valid. Level 1 validation results are reported to the LEA via the Data Collector software.

Level 2 validation checks are performed at USOE across submitted data received by all LEAs. Among other things, this process ensures that a single student is only associated with one LEA. Level 2 validation results are reported to the LEA via the Data Collector software. They are also available by report in the Clearinghouse ODS database.

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***How often are LEAs required to submit data?***

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USOE would like LEAs to submit their data as often as possible, daily if possible. The VRF Data Collector software supports scheduling this task so automation will relieve the LEA of much of the data handling activities assuming data is clean and readily available to this process.

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***What is the time requirement for LEA personnel to prepare for each data submission?***

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Once the LEA is comfortable with the new collection process it will take little or no time (depending on LEA configuration) to submit data.

***What is the benefit to an LEA to submitting data daily? Previously we were required only to submit data 3 times per year.***

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The more often an LEA submits data, the more current and accurate its data will be in the Clearinghouse. LEAs won't have to worry about submitting by a particular day because their data is being kept up daily. More frequent submission will allow up-to-date and accurate electronic transcripts to be sent to postsecondary institutions on demand.

***What does our SIS vendor need to do to help us with this new process?***

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The SIS vendors play a very important role in this process. The short answer is that they need to support at least one of the two formats (flat-file, SIF) described in the most current version of the Clearinghouse Specification. Most vendors already support an older version of the Clearinghouse extraction file format which has now been updated for School Year 2010-11.

The latest Clearinghouse Specification also documents a new methodology based on the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF). Vendors who already offer a SIF agent could modify their agent to support these new data element mappings. Vendors who do not yet offer SIF agent software with their application should consider the benefits of doing so.

***What are the benefits for a vendor to provide a SIF agent?***

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Currently, SIS vendors must support each of its customers by writing custom extraction software for each state implementation. Depending on the provider this usually equates to a very large number of unique releases per year. SIF allows for a vendor to provide data in a more generic way where it can be requested, transformed, and consumed independent of the Clearinghouse format. Instead, the Data Collector portal transforms the data it receives via SIF into the format expected by the Clearinghouse database. SIS vendors only need to worry about making sure all needed data elements are provided via SIF.

***What questions do we need to ask our SIS vendor in order to support the new Clearinghouse formats?***

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When can they support the latest Clearinghouse Specification?  
Do they offer a SIF agent, and if so, when will the SIF agent software be available?

***What happens if we don't work with our SIS vendor?***

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The responsibility for submitting one of the authorized data formats rests with the LEA. If the SIS vendor does not support at least one of these methods then the LEA must create the Clearinghouse extract file independent of the SIS.

### ***If we don't use SIF how do we automate our collection process?***

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LEAs that are unable to take advantage of SIF will need to generate the flat-file extract defined by the Clearinghouse Specification. Ideally, a new file will be generated and made available to the Data Collector each day. Automation of this process is specific and unique to the LEA and it is recognized that a few sites will find it difficult to automate this process given their current SIS solution.

Once generated, the Clearinghouse extract file must be placed into a folder at USOE where it can be picked up and used by the Data Collector software. The Data Collector software provides a way to manually upload this file via the web browser. Automating this task can be accomplished using a scheduled SFTP process in concert with USOE. Other solutions are also possible and both Pearson and USOE can help coordinate this effort.

### ***How do I access the new VRF Data Collector portal?***

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Each LEA will be provided with this information as it becomes available along with necessary documentation and training. Exact timing is still to be determined.

### ***Is my data secure?***

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All data is collected, transported, and delivered using secure SSL data encryption and industry standard security protocols.

### ***Am I notified when there are validation errors?***

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Once the SIF data or flat-file collection has finished, the data is “prepared”. This preparation phase is similar to the Edit program you have used in the past. It will create an online validation report for you that you should use to correct the data in your SIS. Records that did not pass this level 1 validation will not be submitted to the Clearinghouse. You will be notified of Level 2 validations via email. Level 2 validations are those that compare existing Clearinghouse data to your newly submitted data.

### ***Can the collection be configured to run automatically?***

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Yes. There are options within the Data Collector to automate the collection process and only notify an LEA when there are errors or other issues with the submission. Scheduling options include what data source to use (SIF or flat-file) and under what circumstances the process should submit valid data.

### ***Can I submit both a flat-file and a SIF collection?***

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As part of the Data Collector workflow the LEA user must decide whether to base the collection on a Clearinghouse formatted (flat) file or to use SIF. Only one method may be used per collection.

***Can I preview the collection before submitting it to the Clearinghouse database?***

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Yes. Several different preview reports are available after the data has been collected and validation checks performed. These reports have been designed to assist the LEA in determining whether the data set is complete and ready for submission.

## SSID Extension

### ***What is the new SSID Extension?***

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Using SIF, the Student Locator (SLF) addition to the SSID system will automate the process of obtaining SSID's, including informing your SIS electronically of the requested SSID. You will have access to a Web Portal to allow you to view, request, update, and write back a student's SSID.

### ***What are the requirements for taking advantage of this new functionality?***

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Each LEA will need to employ SIF agent software that supports publishing student demographic information and updating the SIS when the SSID is returned. Not all SIF agents support these functions. More detailed technical information is available to assist SIS vendors. USOE provides all other software components required for this solution, including the Zone Integration Server (ZIS) software.

### ***Does the LEA need to install any software or is this new functionality hosted by USOE?***

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USOE will host this software and make it available to all SIF-enabled LEAs.

### ***How do I know that the system is working or not?***

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Using the Student Locator, you can see who doesn't have an SSID, dated transactions with the SSID system and there is an email notification system for students that have near matches or may need additional data before being processed.

### ***How does the system handle "No Match" or multiple possible matches for a given student?***

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A "No Match" should result in a new SSID being issued for the student and that ID getting written back into your SIS. Possible matches will be resolved in much the same way as they are today. A big difference is that once a near match is resolved in the SSID system, the Student Locator will complete the initial transaction and write the correct SSID into your SIS.

### ***Can I still use the existing SSID web site to obtain SSIDs?***

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Yes. The existing SSID will still be available to obtain SSID's in the same manner as you do today.

*How are user accounts created and maintained for this portal?*

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This solution leverages the same credential database as the VRF Data Collector and the ODS web portal. Accounts will be managed by USOE.