

Appendix 9

Policy on Use and Release of Data from the Institutional Database

I. Preamble on Data Sharing Principles and Practices

- A. The Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools (“Commission”) maintains a comprehensive institutional database on theological schools in North America. These data are provided by the member schools on Annual Report Forms in the fall of each year as a condition of membership. The database contains information related to a range of educational and accrediting issues, and it supports the mission of the Commission “to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools.” In addition, it provides data central to the administrative and programmatic work of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (“Association”). As appropriate, it also serves as a valuable resource for researchers and organizations that share an interest in theological education, church and denominational bodies, representatives of the media, and the general public. The Commission shares all data in the institutional database with the Association for its use.
- B. The information in the database that is considered public information is published in individually or institutionally identifiable forms in the Commission’s Annual Data Tables and in the *Membership List*, as published on the ATS website. The only individual school data published by the Commission or Association includes Annual Data Table 1.2 “Significant Institutional Characteristics of Each Member School,” Table 2.15 “Head Count and Full-Time Equivalent Enrollments by Degree Category in All Member Schools,” and individual contact information, selected statistics, and the accreditation status of each member institution in the *Membership List*.
- C. The Commission collects, protects, and shares data based on key principles and practices, as described below. This policy applies to all data collected as described in “I.A” above.

II. Principles of Data Sharing

- A. The Commission provides data to member schools and others for the following purposes:
 1. improving theological education;
 2. promoting appropriate openness and transparency, as well as cultivating more substantive and diverse conversations, among member schools, their constituencies, researchers, and the broader public; and
 3. addressing key issues in theological education.
- B. Recognizing data can be used for multiple purposes, the Commission, the Association, and others shall use the data only for purposes stated in “II.A.1-3”.
- C. The Commission protects the confidentiality of sensitive data (e.g., individual salaries, school and individual names, data that are not already public).

III. Practices of Data Sharing

- A. Honoring of requests for data is contingent upon adequate resources of ATS, including financial and human resources. Charges for data may apply: see ATS website's Research page for current list of fees. The Commission shares the following data with the following constituencies under the following conditions (see Addendum to Appendix 9 for approval requirements):
1. Individual constituents at ATS member schools
 - Raw data from own school—per approval each year from chief administrative officer(s) of school
 - Raw data from peer schools, up to 15—per approval from each requested school's chief administrative officer(s)
 - Digested data from peer schools, minimum 5, maximum 15
 2. ATS-affiliated groups (e.g., ADME, ATLA, etc.) & Lilly ecology partners (e.g., FTE, HTI, Wabash, InTrust, etc.)
 - Email/contact information only; no charge
 3. Individual researchers (e.g., doctoral students)
 - Select datasets—de-identified raw data from a set of schools, per request and approval
 4. Research organizations (e.g., Auburn Center, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, etc.)
 - Select datasets—de-identified raw data from a set of schools, per request and approval
 5. Religious groups (e.g., PCUSA, ELCA, SBC, etc.)
 - Digested data about particular schools, per request and approval
 - Select datasets—de-identified raw data from a set of schools, per request and approval
 6. News media (e.g., Christian Century, Christianity Today, journalists, etc.)
 - Digested data about particular schools or the association of schools, per request and approval
 7. Broader public
 - Digested data about particular schools or the association of schools, per request and approval
- B. Data Use
- Data that are provided according to "II.A" above must be used in the following ways:
1. Data are for one-time use (e.g., one news article, one research project);
 2. Data must be used solely for the purpose(s) named in the request and consistent with the principles outlined in "II" above;
 3. Data in the original form as provided by ATS may not be shared with any other organization(s) or individual(s);
 4. When data are reported, the Commission is to be identified in the following manner as the source of any published data: "Source: The Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools, Pittsburgh, PA". Also, the following disclaimer notice is to be included whenever data are reported: "Analyses and interpretations of the Commission's data are the researcher's and may not reflect those of the Commission on Accrediting or the Association of Theological Schools". The Commission reserves the right to clarify

analyses or interpretations when it perceives that data have been used incorrectly or have led to misleading inferences, and such data misuse will be taken into account for all future requests from this individual, researcher, or research organization.

5. All reasonable steps must be taken to protect the confidentiality of the database as a whole and the data that are provided. In the event of a breach of confidentiality, the requesting individual or organization must notify ATS in writing within 15 calendar days of knowledge of the likely breach, with a description of the extent, and potential effects, of the breach;
6. Access to the data must be limited to staff who are qualified to carry out the sole purpose stated in the request;
7. Additional data-use requirements stated in the request protocol must be followed.

C. Appeals

Any appeals of denials for access to the Commission's data should be directed to the Appeals Panel of the Commission on Accrediting.

IV. Glossary

The following are definitions of terms used in this document:

Dataset	Collection of raw data pulled from a database, with multiple cases (e.g., individuals, schools) and multiple variables (e.g., administrative role, student headcount, individual's denomination, school's structure); defining of datasets involves identifying the type of cases and specifying the variables being requested.
De-identified	At the most basic level, removal of names and titles (of individuals or organizations) for purposes of confidentiality; other forms of de-identification may include removal of variables beyond names and titles
Digested data	Database information that has been collated to identify counts, frequencies, percentages, and averages (mean, median, or mode) or interpretations about the population inferred from the sample dataset (e.g., predictions, statistically significant differences) and reported most commonly in table or graph form
Raw data	Non-digested information that is pulled straight from a database and most commonly provided in an Excel sheet, SPSS file, or other comma-separated value (csv) file
Variables	Factors, quantities, conditions, and other characteristics that are liable to vary and that are identified for purposes of study or research

Addendum to Appendix 9: Approval Requirements by Type of Data and Category of Data Users

Types of Data	Category of Data User					
	ATS Research Staff/Consultant	Individual from ATS School	Individual Researcher (ATS- or non-ATS school)	Research Organization	Religious Groups	Media or General Public
	Publically available raw data ¹ (collations from ATS' or schools' websites)	None	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1
	Data from Selected Schools					
	Raw data for a particular school (select variables, one school)	None/Contract	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3	Not available
	Raw data for selected schools (select variables, up to 15 schools)	None/Contract	Level 3 (Request protocol)	Level 3 (Request protocol)	Level 3 (Request protocol)	Not available
	Digested data for selected schools—commonly requested data (frequencies, averages, inferential statistics, minimum 5 schools)	None/Contract	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1
	Digested data for selected schools—new types of data (frequencies, averages, inferential statistics, minimum 5 schools)	None/Contract	Level 1 (two ATS staff)	Level 1 (two ATS staff)	Level 1 (two ATS staff)	Level 1 (two ATS staff)
	Data from All or Sets of ATS Schools					
	De-identified <i>school</i> -level raw datasets (select variables, per school, school de-identified)	None/Contract	Level 2	Level 2	Level 2	Not available
	De-identified <i>individual</i> -level raw datasets (select variables, per individual, school and individual de-identified)	None/Contract	Level 2	Level 2	Level 2	Not available
	Institutional raw data connected to other ATS data (institutional variables attached to Qs, survey data)	None/Contract	Level 2	Level 2	Level 2	Not available

Approval Levels and Requirements:

- Level 1** Written or email request and approval by any ATS research staff
- Level 2** Submission of request protocol and approval by ATS director of research, in conjunction with one other ATS research staff
- Level 3** Written or email request and approval by ATS executive director and requested school's chief administrative officers

¹ Data per school that are already publically available on the Association's website include variables found in Annual Data Tables 1.2 and 2.15: school's accreditation status, embeddedness, predominant racial composition, state, denominational affiliation, total expenditures, long-term investments, faculty full-time and FTE, library holdings, student enrollment by headcount and FTE, and MDiv tuition and fees. Additional data per school are available publically through organizations such as the National Center for Education Statistics (through the IPEDS process, which is required of all institutions of higher education receiving Title IV funding), regional accrediting agencies, and the American Association of University Professors (average faculty salaries per school).