OP 01.30 DATA GOVERNANCE

PURPOSE

Mississippi State University generates, collects, and relies on data across every dimension of its mission: academic, research, administrative, and operational. That data is an institutional asset. Its quality, integrity, and appropriate use directly affect the university's ability to make sound decisions, fulfill its obligations to students and faculty, comply with applicable law, and maintain the trust of the public it serves.

Institutional data exists in both structured and unstructured forms. Structured data includes records, fields, and datasets held in enterprise systems, databases, and reporting environments. Unstructured data includes documents, presentations, spreadsheets, email, code files, and other working files used to carry out university business regardless of where those files are stored. If a file is created, used, or maintained during university work, it may be considered institutional data.

POLICY

A. Scope

This policy applies to all data created, collected, stored, maintained, processed, or used by Mississippi State University or on its behalf in support of the university's institutional mission. This includes data held in enterprise systems, departmental systems, cloud platforms, and any other environment in which university data resides or flows.

Tools and systems that access, process, or surface institutional data are subject to this policy with respect to their use of that data. This includes enterprise level systems, artificial intelligence tools, workflow automation tools, reporting applications, and third-party platforms. Stand alone or integrated with other systems, artificial intelligence tools and capabilities are not a special category; they consume institutional data as any enterprise system does and are governed accordingly.

Procedures implementing this policy may establish phased applicability across systems or domains. Phased scope does not limit the authority of this policy.

B. Governing Principles

The following principles govern how Mississippi State University approaches institutional data. They are stable across systems and technologies and apply regardless of how data is accessed or processed.

- **Data as institutional asset.** Institutional data belongs to Mississippi State University, not to the individual, office, or system that created or collected it. Stewardship is a responsibility, not ownership.

- **Accountability for quality and responsible use.** Every individual and unit that creates, uses, or manages institutional data is accountable for both its quality and its responsible use. This means applying governance-approved definitions, using sanctioned sources, and ensuring that data products are reliable for those who depend on them. Ungoverned data practices undermine quality and shift risk downstream.
- **Definitional consistency.** One term means one thing. Conflicting definitions produce conflicting reports and erode institutional credibility. Governance-approved definitions are the standard for all institutional data products.
- **Least-privilege, purpose-driven access.** Access to institutional data is granted based on legitimate need and defined purpose. Access is not permanent by default and is subject to review.
- **Transparency and auditability.** Data used in institutional decision-making, reporting, or external delivery should carry a clear record of its source, the definitions applied, and the process through which it was produced.
- **Governance enables.** The goal of data governance is to make institutional data more useful, more trusted, and more accessible, not to restrict it. Governing processes are designed to build a foundation for broader, self-service access over time.

C. Governance Structure

Mississippi State University's data governance operates through a two-tier structure formed by the Data Governance Executive Council that holds institutional authority and a Data Governance Committee that exercises that authority through active oversight, standards-setting, and recommendation.

- **Data Governance Executive Council**

  The Data Governance Executive Council is composed of the university's division vice presidents, the Chief Information Officer, the Associate Vice President for Institutional Strategy and Effectiveness, the University General Counsel, the Risk and Compliance Officer, and Internal Audit.

  The DG Executive Council is responsible for the university data policies and governance. The Council appoints the Data Governance Committee that oversees implementation of data related policies and procedures.

- **Data Governance Committee**

  The Data Governance Committee and the Chair are appointed by the Data Governance Executive Council. The Committee is charged with translating the university's data governance policies and principles into actionable standards, definitions, and recommendations. Its standing responsibilities include but are not limited to:

    - Approving and maintaining governance-standard definitions for institutional data terms used in reporting and decision-making

    - Recommending policies, procedures, and standards for data quality, access, security, archival and retention, and responsible use across structured and unstructured data

    - Reviewing and approving data classification standards and the frameworks that implement them, in coordination with the data classification framework maintained under OP 01.10

    - Overseeing the development of a comprehensive inventory of the university's key data assets

    - Monitoring the effectiveness of data governance practices and recommending improvements

    - Establishing and maintaining a governed process for institutional data requests, including the authority to approve, route, restrict, or deny requests for data from university systems

The Data Governance Committee may establish subcommittees and working groups to carry out specific responsibilities. The scope, membership, and authority of any subcommittee are defined by the Committee and documented in implementing procedures.

PROCEDURE

The Data Governance Committee establishes the procedures and standards through which this policy is implemented. They include, but are not limited to:

- Institutional data request procedures governing how selected data is requested, reviewed, and fulfilled from university systems

- Data classification standards defining categories of institutional data and the access, handling, and protection requirements that apply to each

- Microsoft 365 and AI frameworks governing the management of institutional knowledge, tools, and automated systems that access or process institutional data

- Standards for the designation, responsibilities, and accountability of data stewardship roles across university units

- Standards and procedures for good data retention, archival, and disposition that comply with State and Federal requirements

- Coordinating relationships between related university bodies, including the AI Academic Committee, the IT Governance Committee, and the Records and Retention Committee

Procedures and standards implementing this policy do not require separate University Executive Council approval. Revisions that would alter the scope, authority, or governing principles established by this policy require Executive Council approval.

RELATED POLICIES

The following MSU policies have relevance and application to data governance:

- OP 01.10 Information Security
- OP 01.11 Access to Information Technology Resources
- OP 01.12 Use of Information Technology Resources
- OP 01.25 Privacy of Electronic Information
- OP 01.26 Access to Systems Containing Sensitive Information
- AOP 30.02 Education Records
- HRM 60.109 Records Management and Security

REVIEW

This OP will be reviewed every 4 years, or sooner if needed, by the designated chair of the Data Governance Committee.

REVIEWED BY:

/s/ Trey Breckenridge — 06/26/2026
Chief Information Officer — Date

/s/ David Shaw — 06/26/2026
Provost and Executive Vice President — Date

/s/ Tracey N. Baham — 06/26/2026
Associate Vice President, Institutional Strategy & Effectiveness — Date

/s/ Joan Lucas — 06/26/2026
General Counsel — Date

APPROVED BY:

/s/ Mark E. Keenum — 07/27/2026
President — Date