Stacked Credentials Model
Data Entry Guidelines

The Stacked Credentials Model reports the highest undergraduate degree earned by students within six years of their initial enrollment at your institution. Rather than placing emphasis on the institution, the SAM Stacked Model instead prioritizes the outcomes achieved by students. The Stacked Model will report outcomes for students who earn their highest undergraduate degree at your institution and those students who may transfer and earn a degree elsewhere. This guide provides the definitions and guidelines for compiling the data needed to create the SAM Stacked Credentials Model.

Like the SAM Bachelor's Model, the Stacked Model is created by uploading aggregate data returned to your institution when you submit a National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) Cohort Query. The cohorts should only include all certificate or degree-seeking students seeking students, whether they started their studies full-time or part-time. The two required cohorts for the Stacked Credentials Model that should be submitted to the NSC using the Cohort Query are:

- Fall 2018 first-time-in-college, attending either full-time or part-time in their first term (less allowable exclusions)
- Fall 2018 transfer-in undergraduate degree-seeking students attending the institution for the first time, attending either full-time or part-time in their first term at the institution (less allowable exclusions)

For purposes of SAM, allowable exclusions per IPEDS should be removed from cohorts prior to submitting cohort files to the NSC. Exclusions are students who may be removed from a cohort if they left the institution for one of the following reasons:

(1)   death or total and permanent disability;
(2)   service in the armed forces (including those called to active duty);
(3)   service with a foreign aid service of the federal government, such as the Peace Corps; or
(4)   service on official church missions.

Students who leave the institution for one of the above reasons and subsequently return may be included in the cohort at the institution's discretion.

Submit separate files (one for each cohort) through the NSC StudentTracker system as a **Cohort Query** (not a Subsequent Enrollment Query).

- Use September 15, 2018 as the Cohort Search Date for both cohorts.
- For questions regarding the structure of the cohort query submission file – see StudentTracker Cohort Query Guide.pdf.
- For questions about how to access StudentTracker or to submit or retrieve your files from StudentTracker contact NSC at studenttracker@studentclearinghouse.org.

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The files you will upload to SAM are the Cohort Report files you receive back from the NSC. The original file names from the Clearinghouse will look similar to:

XXXXXXST_T36310CohortRpt.2014XXXX1059_CO.csv

- The first set of X's is your school code, and the second is the date of the report.
- Please be sure that you upload the Cohort Report, not the student detail file.
- You should have separate Cohort report files for each cohort.

Institutions who are reporting the Stacked Model as their primary SAM model are required to report **both** the first-time-in-college and transfer-in cohorts on their SAM page unless the number of students in one of the cohorts is too small to report without risking individual student identification. If your institution meets this exception, please contact SAM Support at support@studentachievementmeasure.org.

A Note on the Differences Between the SAM Bachelor's Model and the Stacked Credentials Model
Because students included in the Bachelor's model entered college seeking a Bachelor's degree, the SAM calculations for the Bachelor's model is set to preference continued enrollment in pursuit of a Bachelor's degree above receipt of a lower credential or degree. In the Bachelor's model, if a student earns an Associate degree and subsequently re-enrolls for continued study, they will be shown as "Still Enrolled" instead of "Graduated." If they stop out prior to receiving a Bachelor's degree, they will show as "Graduated," and listed as having received a 2-year degree in the SAM Detail Table.

In the Stacked Model, completion of any degree is prioritized over continued enrollment, so a student who earns an Associate degree and subsequently re-enrolls for continued study will be shown as "Graduated: 2-year Degree." Their status will only change if they subsequently earn a Bachelor's Degree.

SAM data entry fields are denoted in blue text below. Please note that if you upload the Cohort Report file from the NSC, the only field you will need to enter is the Full Cohort size.

Full Cohort size: The Full Cohort Size should be the total number of students in the original cohort, less any allowable exclusions. Exclusions are students who may be removed from a cohort if they left the institution for one of the following reasons:

(1) death or total and permanent disability;
(2) service in the armed forces (including those called to active duty);
(3) service with a foreign aid service of the federal government, such as the Peace Corps; or
(4) service on official church missions.

NSC Match Rate: Enter the NSC Match Rate from cell N4 of the NSC Cohort Report. If you are uploading your data directly from the Cohort Report, you do not need to enter this field manually; it will be automatically read in as part of the file upload.

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The outcomes reported in the SAM Stacked model chart and detail table are calculated using the NSC Match Rate so as not to disadvantage institutions unnecessarily for students who cannot be tracked by the NSC. For most institutions, the match rate is very close to their total cohort size. Because the National Student Clearinghouse uses an algorithm for matching students based on name and date of birth, rather than student Social Security Number – which is a FERPA protected data element – there is no reason to believe the non-matched students are systematically different from the rest of the student population. Therefore, it is assumed that their behavior would be equally distributed among the various outcome categories and not alter the underlying rates in a meaningful way.

Category 1: Graduated with a 2-year Credential

Students are counted as having graduated with a 2-year credential if they receive a certificate or an associate degree granted either by your institution or by another institution. Degrees granted during any term are counted in the NSC Cohort Report. These data are shown in rows 18, 19, 21, and 22 in the NSC Cohort Report. The main SAM chart will show all students who received a 2-year credential, with the option to click on the bar to reveal the percent who earned their degree either from your institution or another institution.

Students who are included in the bachelor's-degree seeking cohort who earn a certificate or an associate degree are enumerated on the SAM Detail Tables. If a student who earns a certificate or an associate degree re-enrolls for continued study, however, their continued enrollment will not be shown in the SAM Stacked Model. To accomplish this, Tables 2a and 2b from the NSC Cohort Report show the students that have earned a certificate or an associate degree that have subsequently re-enrolled. These students are subtracted from the data reported on SAM to avoid double-counting students.

Category 2: Graduated with a Bachelor's Degree

Students are counted as having graduated with a 4-year degree if they receive a bachelor's degree granted either by your institution or by another institution. Degrees granted during any term are counted in the NSC Cohort Report. These data are shown in rows 17 and 20 in the NSC Cohort Report. The main SAM chart will show all students who received a 4-year credential, with the option to click on the bar to reveal the percent who earned their degree either from your institution or another institution.

Category 3: Enrolled

The number of students that were still enrolled at any time during the academic year is shown in rows 23, 24, and 25 of the NSC Cohort Report. Students who enroll at both your institution and another institution will be counted as retained at your institution only in order to avoid double-counting students. The main SAM chart will show all students who are still enrolled, with the option to click on the bar to reveal the percent enrolled either at your institution or at another 2-year or 4-year institution.

Category 4: Current Status Unknown

The final SAM outcome will be calculated as the NSC Match Rate less the previous groups to avoid reporting totals over 100% due to rounding.

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In order to create the categories above, you will be asked to upload or enter the following data from the NSC Cohort Report:

Enrollment and Graduation Summary: Enter the data from Table 1 of the Cohort Report into the Enrollment and Graduation Summary table in SAM. If you are uploading your data directly from the Cohort Report, you do not need to enter this table manually; it will be automatically read in as part of the file upload.

Subsequent Enrollment and Graduation Summary for 2-Year Graduates from SUBMITTING Institution only: Enter the data from Table 2A of the Cohort Report into the Subsequent Enrollment and Graduation Summary for 2-Year Graduates from SUBMITTED Institution only table in SAM. If you are uploading your data directly from the Cohort Report, you do not need to enter this table manually; it will be automatically read in as part of the file upload. *Data from Table 2 of the Cohort Report is **not** used to calculate the Student Achievement Measure and is not entered*.

Subsequent Enrollment and Graduation Summary for 2-Year Graduates from OTHER Institution only: Enter the data from Table 2B of the Cohort Report into the Subsequent Enrollment and Graduation Summary for 2-Year Graduates from OTHER Institution only table in SAM. If you are uploading your data directly from the Cohort Report, you do not need to enter this table manually; it will be automatically read in as part of the file upload. *Data from Table 2 of the Cohort Report is **not** used to calculate the Student Achievement Measure and is not entered*.

Once you have entered and saved data for a cohort, click **Validate** to check that all required data are present. You must validate each cohort separately. Both your full-time cohorts must be validated in order to publish your SAM page. If you make changes to your data, you must re-validate and re-publish your SAM page for them to appear on the public SAM web site.

Additional Cohort Reporting. SAM institutions have the option to report outcomes for Pell students, students who receive veterans' benefits, and students of color to all models. These additional disaggregated cohorts help institutions publicly and visible demonstrate their commitment to closing achievement gaps and ensuring all our students succeed. To report additional cohorts, you will need data for students who meet the criteria for inclusion in the Stacked Credentials Model **and** the criteria listed below:

- **Pell student cohort**: Students who received a Pell Grant in their first term of enrollment at the institution.
- **Students who receive veterans' benefits**: Students who reported to the institution that they received veterans' benefits at any point during their enrollment at the institution.
- **Students of color**: Students who identify all or in part with a race and/or ethnicity that is non-white. Students who are international/nonresident aliens or for whom race/ethnicity is unknown should not be included in the cohort.