

University of North Florida Data Dictionary
and Data Specifications Standards Guide



The following standards guide is intended for Data Stewards and Editors creating data definitions and specifications in the Data Cookbook. The purpose of the guide is to ensure the University of North Florida data dictionary and specifications are created in a uniform way increasing the accessibility and usability of the services. The standards guide is not exhaustive but covers most frequent issues encountered.

Standards for Definitions

Naming Conventions

- **Use UNF when referring to the University**
 - “UNF” instead of “the university”
- **Be descriptive**
 - “Academic Department” instead of “Department”
- **Use Title Case**
 - “Accounts Receivable” instead of “accounts receivable”
- **Use complete words**
 - “Average GPA” instead of “Avg GPA”
- **Avoid numbers and special symbols**
 - “Returning Student Percentage” instead of “% Returning Students”
- **Do not use underscores in multi-word names**
 - “Student Graduation Date” instead of “Student_Graduation_Date”
- **Combine elements into 1 definition**
 - “Address” instead of “Street line 1”; “Street line 2”; “Zip Code”
 - “Student Name” instead of “Student First Name”; “Student Last Name”
 - “Admissions Status” instead of “admit status code” and “admit status code description”

Functional Definition

- **Identify a category or describe a process**
- **Include values (optional)**
 - If fewer than 10 values, list them in functional definition.
 - If more than 10 values, choose one
 - Point to a values list via a URL
 - Identify the office that can supply a values list
- **Be candid, not sensational**
- **Use business language, not technical language**
- *Optional:*
 - *Make wiki linkages to other definitions*
 - *Include business rules*

Technical Definition

- **Identify the intended audience for your Data system and scope the information for that audience.**
- **Identify technical layer and scope for it**
- **A technical definition has these components:**
 - **Schema:** The schema/username associated with the data element in the system. In some systems, this might also be called a virtual database or database.

- **Table name(s):** The table name, or a list of table names, in which a data element resides. For clarity of reference, the best practice is to separate lookup/valid values tables and transactional tables into distinct entries within the technical definition.
- **Table type:** Specifies whether this entry is a lookup/valid value table or a transactional table. The valid values are "Valid Value" and "Transaction".
- **Field name:** The specific technical name of the field in the system. If there is more than one technical name within a system for the same definition, the best practice is to separate entries within the technical definition.
- **Data type:** The system-specific data type for the data element.
- **SQL or logic:** Information related to how the data is retrieved, filtered, calculated, or transformed (e.g., SQL statements, where clauses, case statements).
- **Notes:** Any details that explain and clarify the information above, such as when a data element has more than one technical name within a system.

Functional Area

- **Select the area relevant to the definition.** More than one can be selected. The functional area manager has the final decision as to the assignment of functional area.

Optional

- **Tags.** Used to casually categorize definitions, serve as a filter to retrieve definitions by category
- **Synonyms.** Alternative words for a definition (e.g., "Freshman" for the definition "First Year Student").

Case Studies for Definitions

Active Student. The term "active student" is commonly used in the fields and data dictionaries of data systems. It usually means different things, depending on the context within the data system. In an Admissions system, it can mean an individual who has been accepted and has made a tuition payment. In the Registrar Office, it can mean a student who is enrolled in at least 1 course in a current term. When dual definitions exist for the same term or phrase, it is up to the functional area managers to assign unique definition labels that differentiate the definitions, and record the field label, in this case "active student", as a technical definition. In this example, the Admissions manager might choose "Registered Student", and use "active student" in the technical definition for the Admissions system. The Registrar might choose "Enrolled student", and use "active student" as a technical definition for the student system(s).

Graduate vs Alumni. The Registrar Office refers to an "alum" as a person who has earned a degree or certificate. The Advancement Office refers to an "alum" as any person who has completed at least 1 course. To resolve this dual use of the word alum, assign the term "Graduate" to the definition from the Registrar Office. Assign the term "Alumni" to the definition from the Advancement Office. When dual usage occurs, it is up to the functional area managers to negotiate definition names and to define each unique concept.

Specifications

Create a Specification Worksheet

- **Name.** Match the report name.
- **Specification Type.** *Optional. Select from list.*
- **Functional Area.** Select from list.
- **Purpose.** Identify who makes decisions based data in this report. Identify what decisions are made.
 - Example: “The Director of Admissions uses this report to determine if weekly admissions target goals are being met.”
- **Description.** Describe the report layout and summarize the data contained. Do not provide a detailed list of data elements. “This report lists in column format all enrolled students, basic biographical and demographic data elements, and major.”
- Do not use fields: **Due Date, Priority, Comment.**

Overview Tab

- **Name.** Match the report name.
- **Functional Area.** Select from list.
- **Purpose.** Identify who makes decisions based data in this report. Identify what decisions are made.
 - Example: “The Director of Admissions uses this report to determine if weekly admissions target goals are being met.”
- **Description.** Describe the report layout and summarize the data contained. Do not provide a detailed list of data elements.
 - Example: “This report lists in column format all enrolled students, basic biographical and demographic data elements, and major.”
- **Data System.** Select the system that produces the report.
- **Specification Type.** Select from list.
- **Access Details.** Describe the staff or offices that access this report. Indicate the likelihood of others gaining access. Indicate how to request access.
- Do not use fields: **Owner, Additional Info.**

Definitions Tab

- Connect definitions that correspond to the elements on your report or dashboard. Use the Location and Reference fields to connect to actual language on your report.
- Use the Location (**Loc**) field to indicate where the data appears on the report.
 - Examples: Header, Column label, X Axis, Row label
- Use the Reference (**Ref**) fields to indicate the exact language in a label used in this report for the data that corresponds to the definition.
 - Examples: Definition is Ethnicity, but the report uses “Race”;
 - Definition is “First Year Student”, but the report uses “Freshman”.
- Describe calculations unique to this report in the Aggregation section.

Optional Tabs

- **Selections Tab.** Identify filters used to generate the data in this report.

- Examples: For a report listing employees, does the list include part timers? Contract workers? Faculty? Student employees?
- **Attachments Tab.** Attach a copy or mockup of the report. Block or mask any sensitive data within the report. You may provide a header of the report in order to avoid exposing data.

Version	State	Author	Date	Revision Description
1.0	Draft	J. Jones	11/27/2017	Placed standards in UNF branded word document. Drafted introduction. Still need to address reference to UNF.
1.1	Draft	A. Willcox	12-4-17	Addressed how to refer to UNF.