



Exemplary Student Pathways

An initiative of The University of Texas System

Data Agency Topics to Explore with the ESP Team

This document outlines key data agency topics to discuss with ESP team members throughout the project. Each topic includes a brief description and a reflective question to support capacity-building and collaborative inquiry. These prompts are intended to cultivate a culture of inquiry, improve data literacy, and strengthen institutional data agency—an essential component of the ESP Change Model.

Data Quality

Reliable data is foundational to effective decision-making. Inaccurate, incomplete, or inconsistent data can undermine trust and hamper the redesign process. Institutions should have formal processes for data validation, quality control, and consistent interpretation across users.

Reflective Question: How confident are you in the accuracy and completeness of the data you use?

Definitions and Documentation

Clear, shared definitions ensure that stakeholders interpret data consistently. Data documentation should be vetted and maintained collaboratively across units.

Reflective Question: Do you have access to well-documented definitions for the data you use?

Access to Data

Effective data use requires timely access to relevant data by the right people. Institutions should establish transparent access protocols.

Reflective Question: Do you know how to access the data you need to support your project?

Privacy and Security

Protecting student information and complying with FERPA and other regulations is critical. Teams must be aware of data privacy requirements and responsible data handling practices.

Reflective Question: Are you familiar with the protocols for protecting data privacy and security?

Requesting Data Access

A well-communicated process should guide faculty, staff, and administrators in understanding what data is available and how to request access.

Reflective Question: Is there a clear process at your institution for requesting access to data?

Creating a Culture of Data Use

Leaders should set clear expectations and foster a campus culture that values data-informed decision-making. This includes aligning data use with strategic planning and providing opportunities for professional development.

Reflective Question: How does your institution promote and support a culture of data use?

Data Usability

Data should be presented in formats that are accessible, interpretable, and actionable. This includes ensuring compatibility with standard tools such as Excel or Tableau.

Reflective Question: Is the data you use presented in a format that is easy to interpret and apply?

Data Visualization and Analysis Tools

Institutions should provide tools that enhance data consumption, interpretation, and communication—supporting a wider range of users.

Reflective Question: What tools are available at your institution to support data visualization and analysis?

Confirmation Bias

ESP teams should use data to interrogate assumptions, not just confirm them. This requires critical reflection and openness to new insights.

Reflective Question: Do you actively seek data that challenges existing assumptions or narratives?

Professional Development and Training

Ongoing professional development supports data literacy and analytic skill-building across roles.

Reflective Question: What opportunities are available to build your data skills and confidence?

Data Literacy

Data literacy includes the ability to read, interpret, communicate, and act on data in context. Building this capacity across teams supports more equitable and informed decision-making.

Reflective Question: How confident are you in interpreting and communicating data findings?

Types of Data Analysis

Different questions require different methods. Understanding various analytical approaches supports stronger insights and better alignment between questions and evidence.

Reflective Question: Are you familiar with different types of data analysis and when to use them?

Data Communication and Decision Support

How data is shared matters. Data products—dashboards, reports, visualizations—should be designed to inform decision-making and support institutional improvement.

Reflective Question: How do you present or communicate data to support decision-making at your institution?