



Mason Insight: Data to Analytic Solutions Launching Data Governance

December 5, 2025

MIDAS: Data Transformed

1

Data

Raw information collected in course of core business function, e.g., demographics, financial information, course enrollment.

2

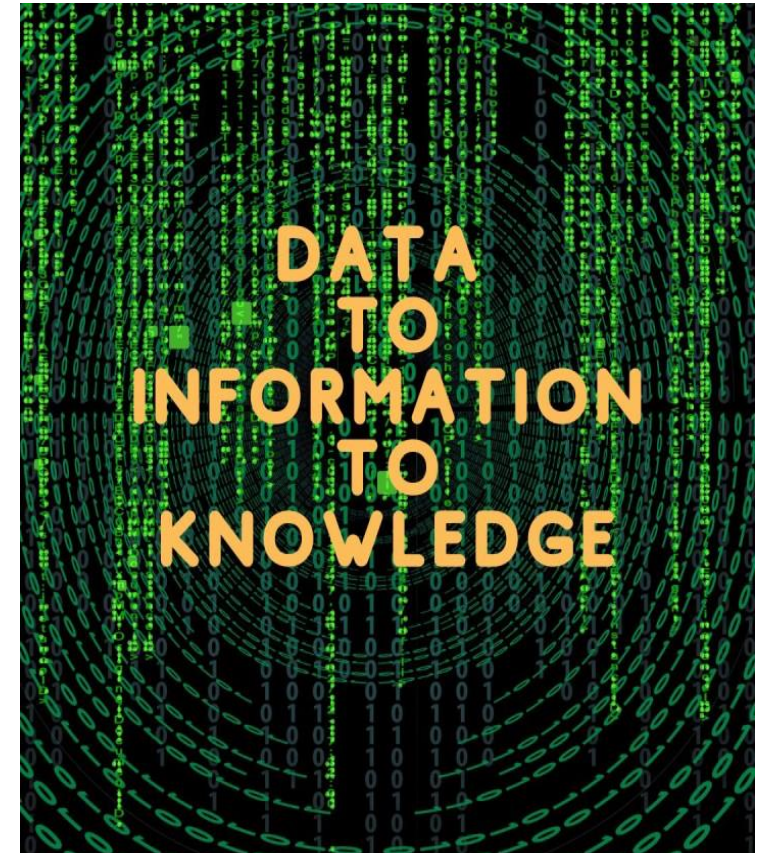
Information

Often aggregated, raw data turned into trends and/or patterns across populations, time, etc.

3

Knowledge

Actionable insights: Uses trends or advanced analytics to strengthen institutional performance and meet strategic goals, e.g., student success, evaluate ROI, mark progress, etc.



MIDAS Purpose, Vision, Mission

Purpose

- Establish that institutional data is a university asset.
 - Gathered and stewarded by a variety of functional orientated offices, the data itself is owned by the institution for the **benefit** and study of all and used for various purposes, e.g., to improve performance, to assess progress in strategic goals, to respond to external bodies in the form of mandatory reporting, etc.
- The absence of strong data governance compromises Mason's ability to meet these objectives
- Strong data governance, aligned with best practice and adapted to Mason culture and operational needs, will enhance collection, reliability, validity, literacy, and enable a wide range of end-users to build reports and analyses with confidence.

Vision

A campus data environment where end-users make informed operational, tactical and strategic decisions and are knowledgeable about how to use data responsibly.

Mission

Promote data governance and data literacy by ensuring that Mason's data are valid and reliable, clearly defined and understood, and accessible as appropriate based on legitimate business needs.

MIDAS Data Governance Goals

- Establish a culture of institutional data as a university asset stewarded for the benefit of all.
- Champion data literacy and good practice.
- Draft and approve data policies and procedures.
- Create processes for new data collections as identified.
- Ensure that data policies align with record retention policies.
- Assign responsibility and accountability to groups and/or individuals for:
 - Processes to improve / ensure valid and reliable data collection and maintenance.
 - Productive engagement in the creation of data element definitions and appropriate use.
 - Document data currently collected and align definitions as needed to official reporting requirements. E.g., IPEDS
 - Create additional data elements with definitions for operational needs as appropriate. E.g., 1st Generation Internal Mason
 - Ensure access and use in a secure environment.

MIDAS Guiding Principles

Transparency: It should be clear how and when decisions are made and processes are created.

Consistency: All decisions should be applied consistently.

Accountability: Progress toward institutional data management goals will be measured and tracked and compliance with policies, procedures, and standards shall be auditable in accordance with current data governance best practices. Clear roles, responsibilities, and enforcement mechanisms ensure everyone understands their governance obligations.

Agility: All processes and requirements will be adaptable to the ever-changing data and technology environment.

Availability: The appropriate availability and usage of institutional data will be promoted and encouraged in the conduct of university business.

Change Management: Implementation of new processes and requirements will include a concerted effort in managing change among campus staff

MIDAS Data Governance and Data Literacy

Data literacy is required to make informed decisions and includes skills such as the ability to identify data sources, interpret charts, use data to tell a story, etc.

MIDAS will enable data literacy at Mason by:

- Providing definitional clarity and refinement of terms.
- Improve quality and reliability of data collected and stored for campus use.
- Cross-unit collaboration and discussion to uncover disparity of data use and reconciliation.
- Transparency and accountability that ensures campus data producers and users act in concert for the best use of this campus asset.

MIDAS Program Timeline

2023

MIDAS Begins

- Recognized the critical need for a Data Governance Program at GMU
- Socialized the MIDAS concept to engage stakeholders and establish alignment

2024

Berry Dunn Consultation

- GMU consulted with Berry Dunn
- Program Objectives were developed
- Executive Leadership agreed on next steps
- MIDAS Program Kicks Off

2025

MIDAS Program Planning Began

- MIDAS Program received DC1 and DC2 approval
- Project Manager Assigned
- Initial Program Planning is completed
- Data Governance specialist onboarded

2026

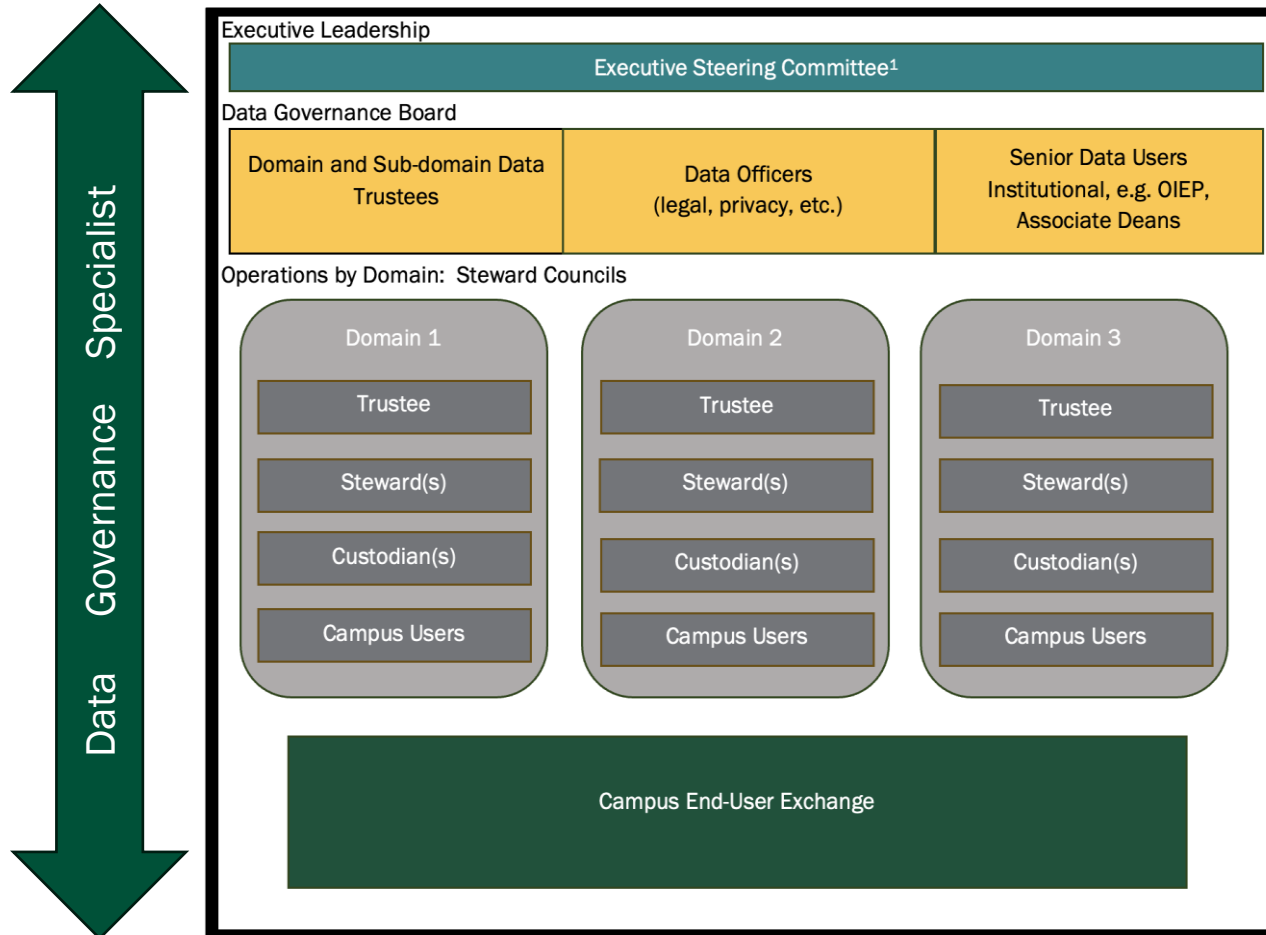
MIDAS Now

- Common request portal drafted and built out
- Governance Board created
- DG Charter finalized
- Data Governance Structure Developed
- MIDAS Online presence draft in progress
- Implementation of MIDAS program objectives in progress

MIDAS Objectives and Progress

Objective	Progress Update
Common Request Portal	OIEP, Registrar, and ITS/BI using same portal/intake process.
Improved Data Quality	ITS/BI and OIEP and others have created several data audit reports to alert highlight areas that require attention/clean up.
Clear Security and Access Protocols	Identity and Access Management tool will form the basis of new processes across campus.
Identify and Incorporate New Data Elements	Patriot Connect will capture student engagement data centrally for incorporation into common well. Further work in this area will evolve as we build out data governance activities.
Enhance and Codify the Visualization and Reporting Toolbox	Finding from an informal survey of who uses what tool was administered this past year confirmed that the lack of a common tool chest has created the opportunity for different tools to be used in different ways across campus.
Build End-User Friendly and Focused Data Dictionary	SharePoint data dictionary focused on metadata elements as well as a data glossary started. Next stage is to create a glossary designed to ensure all use the same terminology for data including metrics, calculations, and synonyms. Requires engagement with stewards and stakeholders to reflect functional office and end-user perspectives. Also requires exploration of current tools, e.g., Informatica, or the acquisition of a new tool, for the dictionary/glossary.
Common Well	The capstone work of MIDAS and requiring investments of both time and financial resources.

Launching MIDAS Governance



¹ESC= Executive Sponsors (CIO and VP OIEP) and Leadership, e.g. VP of EM, UL, Finance, HR, Facilities, S/C representation, etc.

Designed to be flexible for diverse data needs while maintaining enterprise consistency.

- Enables cross domain collaboration between academic and administrative units
- Establishes clear accountability at every organizational level
- Ensures security and regulatory compliance throughout the data lifecycle
- Promotes data literacy and responsible use campus-wide

Data Steward Councils (DSC)

The Data Steward Councils serve as the operational engine of MIDAS governance, bringing together functional and technical expertise. Established by domain, members include Data Stewards, Data Custodians, End-users and Trustees as appropriate.

- Identifying and understanding data issues
 - Set quality dimensions
 - Manage data quality
 - Conduct root cause analysis of data quality issues
- ❑ Collaborating with dedicated working groups when specific issues arise
- ❑ Initial drafting of policies, standards, and guidelines
- ❑ Identifying and documenting the metadata in the data glossary

*Meets Weekly

Data Literacy Expectations

DSC members require deep understanding of data meaning, lineage, business rules, and proper usage to execute their governance responsibilities effectively.

Data Governance Board (DGB)

- ❑ As informed by the Data Steward Council, prioritizes data solutions and actions for resolution of data quality issues.
- ❑ Is comprised of Trustees, Data Officers, and Senior Data Users.
- ❑ Define, review, and approve policies to address data quality issues.
- ❑ Charges working groups as appropriate to DGB needs, e.g., research, drafting policies, etc.
- ❑ Promotes the value for data governance across the institution.
- ❑ Updates and informs the ESC regarding:
 - Resources need to advance objectives and goals related to data governance.
 - Escalates issues for resolution and/or approval

*Meets monthly



Data Literacy Expectations

DGB members must be able to interpret definitions, approve standards, and identify institutional data needs that support mission-critical operations.

Executive Steering Committee (ESC)

- ❑ Positions the overall direction
- ❑ Advocates and securing funding to advocate the goals and objectives.
- ❑ Establishes priorities.
- ❑ Reviews and approves policy decisions reached by the Data Governance Board including resolving issues outside the scope of knowledge/authority of the Board or for which the board is unable to come to agreement.
- ❑ Ensures policies and standards are consistently and equitably applied.

*Meets quarterly.



Data Literacy Expectations

- ❑ Must understand enterprise-level data risks, compliance obligations, and the strategic value of governance.
- ❑ Serve as visible champions who communicate the importance of data as a university asset and foster a culture of accountability.

Data Stewards

Core to MIDAS data governance, stewards serve as the bridge between business needs and technical implementation.

Core Knowledge

- Data definition within unit and how to decode data for end-users.
- Ability to respond to data quality issues
- Ability to assist in data dictionary and glossary development including metadata and lineage
- SME regarding data literacy within their departments



Data Literacy Expectations

Stewards must possess expert level understanding of definitions, quality dimensions, lineage documentation, reporting requirements, and usage rules for their assigned data domains.

Data Trustees



Data Trustees are accountable for accuracy, validity, and integrity of data generated within their unit.

- Ensures data quality and reliability
- Empowers and aligns stewards and custodians to execute governance activities
- Seeks practices that improves data quality and reliability within their units by supporting audits, compliance reviews, and data validation efforts
- Appoints Data Stewards within their units to act as subject matter experts at a granular level
- Ensures both time and staff resources are allocated to address data quality and definition issues as well as participation in governance activities.

Data Literacy Expectations

Trustees must understand the operational consequences of poor data quality and actively support continuous improvement initiatives that protect the university's data assets.

Data Custodian

ITS, DBAs, ETL Engineers, Platform Administrators



Security & Access

- Access and security management



System Management

- Provide technical expertise around source systems ETL processes, data stores, data warehouses, and BI tools
- Check codes and internal database structures



Technical Metadata

- Document technical specifications in the data dictionary for transparency and troubleshooting



Quality Automation/ Integration

- Partner to create tools and automation to check, clean, and report data quality issues
- Data integration and architecture support



Compliance Support

- Implement technical measures to meet regulatory requirements

Data Literacy Expectations

Custodians must understand how technical processes affect data quality, lineage, and reporting to ensure systems support governance objectives effectively.

Campus End-User Exchange (CEUE)

Comprised of any and all data users on campus

- Share best practices, innovations, and assist in the resolution of data “problems”.
- Protect the privacy, security, and confidentiality of the data they use throughout its lifecycle and ensure it is managed responsibly in accordance with Mason policies.
- Provide feedback and escalation to inform the work of the DSC, DGB, and ESC.
- Participate in MIDAS activities such as data literacy, training, and awareness programs.



Data Literacy Expectations

End-Users must know where to find trusted data sources, how to interpret definition correctly, and how to use data properly within their role-based access permissions.

Data Governance Specialist

The Data Governance Specialist serves as the central coordinator for all governance activities, ensuring smooth operations across the MIDAS framework.

1

Council Coordination

Planning and organizing meetings for councils and committees, and ensuring communication across the MIDAS committees.

2

Performance Tracking

Collecting KPIs related to governance and data quality, and tracking progress towards program goals.

3

Documentation

Developing training and onboarding for new members

4

Portal Management

Maintaining a central MIDAS portal where resources, policies, and updates are available.

5

Roster Maintenance

Keeping governance council and board populated with trustees and stewards.

6

Facilitate

Facilitates the escalation of data policies, standards, and procedures across the governance framework and coordinate agendas for ESC, DGB, and DSC.

Data Literacy Expectations

The DGS requires deep knowledge of roles, workflows, policies, definitions, lineage, quality methods, and compliance requirements to effectively coordinate the entire governance program.

Project Manager



Key Responsibilities

The Project Manager ensures governance activities are executed efficiently and on schedule

- Track progress toward program goals.
- Communicate across the MIDAS committees.
- Assisting with planning and organizing meetings for council and committees including preparing agendas, creating summary projects, supporting policy documents, and ensuring decisions are addressed and resolved on time.

Data Literacy Expectations

The PM must understand governance workflows well enough to coordinate stakeholders effectively and keep initiatives on track toward successful outcomes.

Next Steps

- Review current list of data quality audits
- Explore current data dictionary / glossary
- Meetings will launch January 2026 (more to come!)
- [Data Quality Inventory](#)
- [Mason Data Catalog](#)



Questions?

Contact OIEP at oiiep@gmu.edu

