

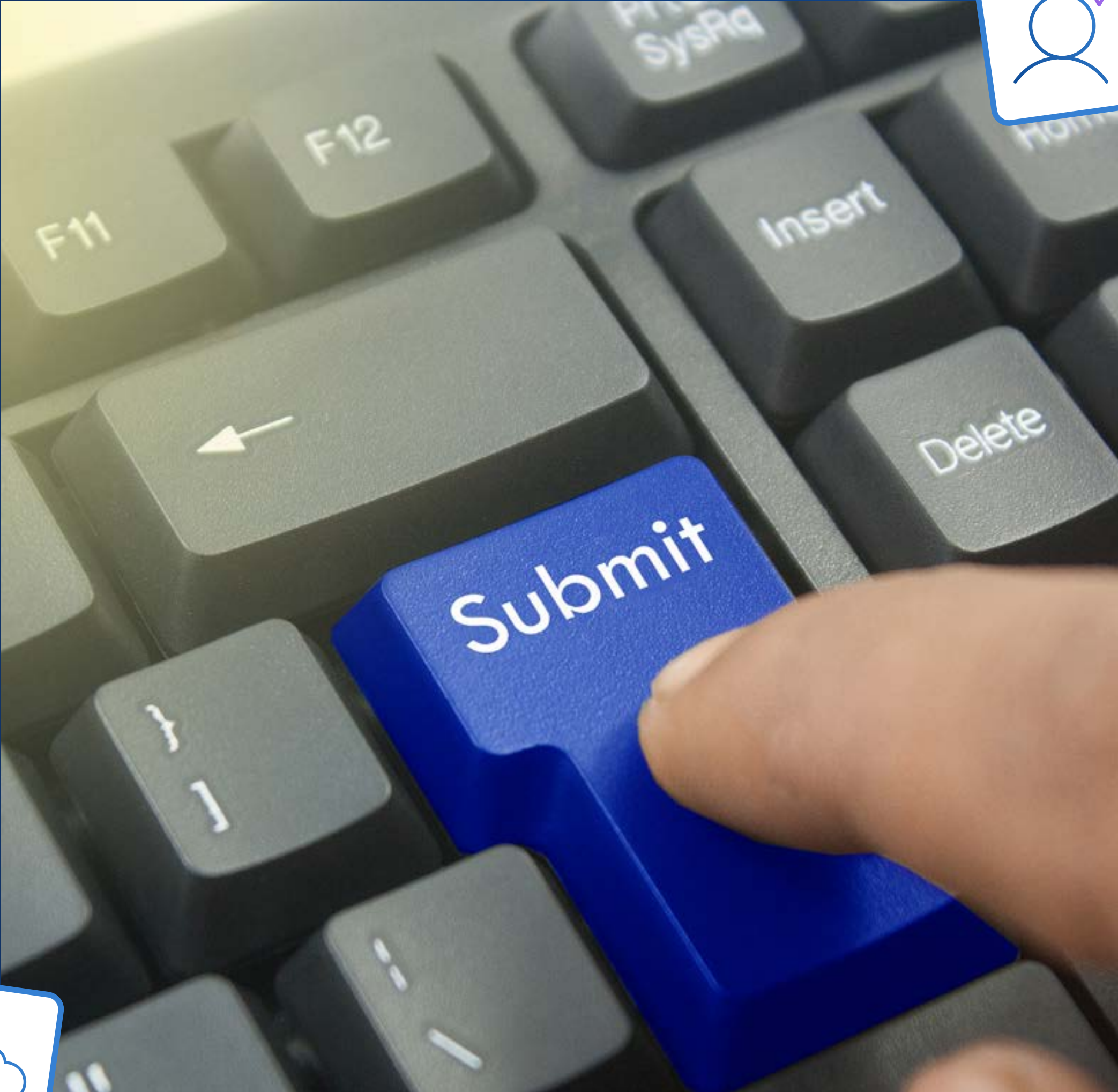
TRIBAL



WHITEPAPER

Student Data Reporting:

Changing Requirements & Modern Solutions



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Summary

The regulatory landscape is shifting around both higher education and vocational education and training providers. One marked shift in recent years is the growing student data reporting requirements imposed by various governments around the world.

This whitepaper explores these changes (and associated challenges), what institutions should expect, and ways to proactively respond to changes in reporting requirements. We go deeper into the Tribal Submissions solution, how it works, and how it's being used by institutions at the forefront of these requirements.



Current Challenges in Reporting for Higher Education & VET

Reporting on student information has always been challenging — but perhaps more so in recent years, with changing regulatory requirements, time constraints, and the increasing volume and complexity of data.

Government organisations can (and often do) change the data requirements. For instance, institutions may be required to report more frequently than before, or they may be required to collect and report on a different type of data in order to stay compliant. These changes are not always simple to implement, and require updates to both data collection processes and internal IT systems. Frequently, any shift in requirements leads to huge manual data entry tasks for the institutions, who simply don't have the staff resources or time to spare.

Another issue in student data reporting is difficulty with managing duplicates and ensuring data accuracy. With such high volumes of data and a strong reliance on manual data entry processes (often across multiple student information systems and data sources), errors and inconsistencies are common.

Many institutions have implemented reporting tools in order to support the reporting process and minimise manual tasks. But the issue with most reporting tools is that they only work with their native student management system (SMS), and these systems are notoriously difficult to switch away from. As a result, institutions often feel stuck with what they've got — even when their reporting solution fails to keep up with current regulatory requirements.

Government Reporting Requirements

To better understand the situation and how institutions are being impacted, let's take a closer look at what government reporting requirements currently look like in early 2024.

Australia Leading the Way

Australia is, in many ways, at the forefront of global changes in student data reporting and regulation. This makes the region a good case study for the rest of the world — and a potential predictor of what may soon be coming to other regions.

So, let's take a look at how Australia has been leading the way on government reporting — and the impact on higher education and VET providers.

In Australia, student data reporting underwent significant changes in 2020. Previously, institutions had generated student data files and uploaded them to the department's HEIMS (Higher Education Information Management System) or HEPCAT (Higher Education Provider Client Assistance Tool) on a monthly or quarterly basis.

All higher education and VET providers in Australia were required to transition to TCSI (Tertiary Collection of Student Information) data reporting by May 31, 2020. TCSI is a data exchange system used to collect and share accurate, near real-time information. The transition to TCSI was meant to simplify

reporting and reduce duplication of providers' efforts across the department and Services Australia. The new system also supports improved student payment accuracy and helps to simplify student claims.

Providers can follow one of two paths to submit their data. They can manually upload a .xlsx file to the Provider Portal. Or if their student management system (SMS) has a TCSI integration, they can use the Business-to-Government (B2G) API channel to submit data to the government portal via APIs.

Unfortunately, the transition to TCSI reporting hasn't been smooth sailing. Three years in, many institutions are still experiencing challenges with their data submission processes.

Perhaps the most common issue is the **lack of data validations and notifications for incorrect data record submissions**. This frequently leads to compromised data quality and delayed or incorrect data reporting.

Incorrect student data submissions are also notoriously **difficult and inefficient to handle**. The lack of automated processes means manual intervention is often required, which adds to the risk of data inconsistencies and reporting errors. Not to mention the data security risks associated with manual handling.

Many TCSI-integrated solutions also **lack visibility over record submissions**. With no version history, track changes, or real-time

overview of submitted records, it's hard to see what records have been submitted or deleted. This leads to confusion, mismanagement, and inaccuracies.

Most TCSI solutions also **don't provide institutions sufficient access to their statutory data return dataset**. This access is necessary for universities to integrate and reconcile their data for various purposes, including compliance, student success analysis, and strategic planning. As a result, institutions are forced to manually reconcile the data — a time-consuming task that slows down any data-driven decisions (and also leads to inaccuracies).

In addition, most TCSI solutions are also very rigid, forcing institutions to **fit a generic data model** instead of adapting to the unique processes and needs of the organisation. Their lack of flexibility to edit records and override data items makes users less effective and less efficient.

Finally, it's common for institutions to run into barriers with their TCSI solution and its **complex maze of integrations with other systems**. Even just managing PRODA (Provider Digital Access) accounts to securely access government online services can be a challenge.

The good news is that not all institutions have been experiencing these teething problems. A select few proactively upgraded their submissions solution prior to the new TCSI requirements, which allowed them to update their reporting processes and ensure a smooth transition. We'll share more about this solution later on.



The Global Situation

As of early 2024, Australia's centralised approach to collecting higher education and VET data requirements is perhaps the strictest and most comprehensive in the world. However, similar requirements have been established in other regions, too.

New Zealand

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) requires all tertiary education organisations (TEOs) to complete an [SDR](#) (Single Data Return) three times a year if they have students with student loans or allowances.

United States

In the states, institution-level data on student enrolment, graduation, staffing, and finances is collected via [IPEDS](#) (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System). Data collection is required for institutions accepting federal aid.

Canada

[PSIS](#) (Postsecondary Student Information System) operated by Statistics Canada was established to centralise student data from colleges and universities. Data collected includes information on students, programs/ courses, and continuing education.

Europe

The EU's centralised dataset is [ETER](#) (European Tertiary Education Register). It provides data on nearly 3,500 higher education institutions from around 40 European countries. [Data](#) collected by ETER includes students and graduates, geographical information, descriptive information, personnel, research activities, revenues, and expenditures. This information is used for analysis, research, policymaking, and quality assurance.

UK

In the UK, data from universities, colleges, and other providers is collected by [HESA](#) (Higher Education Statistics Agency). Data collected includes students, staffing, courses, finances, and outcomes.

China

In China, [CHSI](#) (China Higher Education Student Information) maintains a nationwide database covering all Ministry of Education-recognised academic institutions and post-secondary school students. The database includes student records, qualification certificates, employment data, and Gaokao scores.

As the environment shifts towards global academic competition in higher education, universities around the world could expect new instruments for [academic quality assurance](#). Increased government insight via more in-depth and frequent data collection and reporting will likely have a role to play in academic standards assurance, policymaking, financial support, and more.

Modern Student Data Reporting: *Discover Tribal Submissions*

[Tribal Submissions](#) is a SaaS-based B2G application that minimises the risks and resources associated with managing and delivering government data returns. Capable of sending data from any student management system to government systems with minimal manual intervention, Tribal Submission saves universities and VET providers time and money.

Already used by 16+ higher education and VET providers in Australia, our feature-rich product sits at the forefront of global changes in student data reporting to government organisations. Our Australian customers benefit from safer, more secure automation supporting the TCSI submission process, freeing up resources so they can focus on other areas. And we anticipate similar benefits for our customers all over the world, as we begin to use Tribal Submissions as the basis for reporting solutions in other jurisdictions.

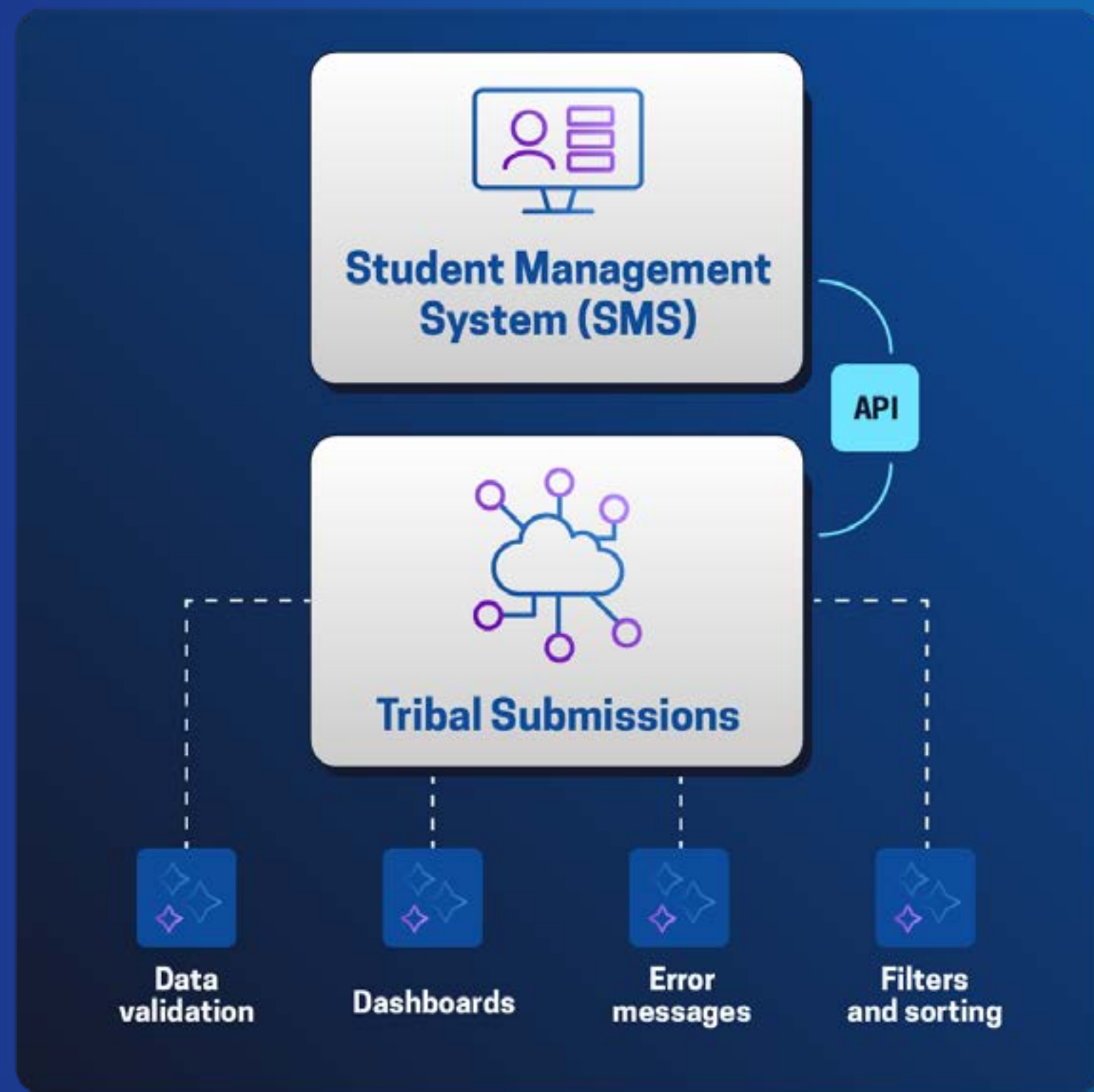
To better understand how Tribal Submissions works, we've summarised its functionality across six main areas:



Error Management

Tribal Submissions makes it easier to discover, manage, and fix errors in data with the following functions:

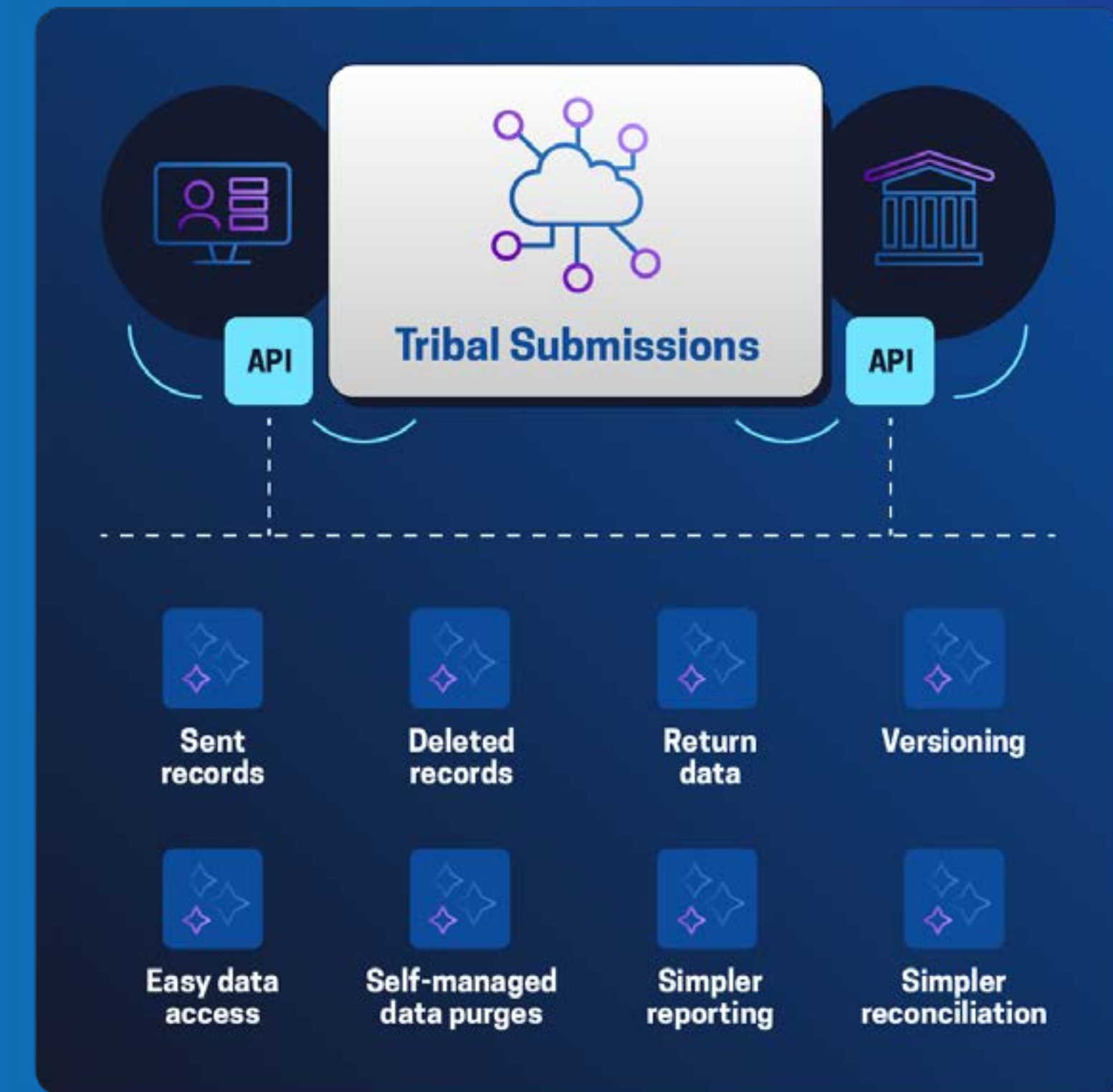
- Checking and validating data records, returning a message if an error is found
- Preventing records submission if its required predecessor record is not submitted
- Status icons, filter options, and easy-to-understand error details for easy error identification
- Data filters and sorting to quickly prioritise errors based on urgency



Reporting & Integration API

With Tribal Submissions' Reporting & Integration API, providers can do more with their data records, including:

- Transparency into what records were sent from the SMS, what version was submitted, and what was deleted
- Easier access to data, enabling better reporting and reconciliation
- Access to all datasets required for reporting and reconciliation with a single API call, including return data for submissions SMS tables, staging tables, government tables, and statutory body
- Self-managing data purges (authorised, logged, and auditable) in the event that incorrect student data is received from the SMS



Fully Integrated PRODA Management

Tribal Submissions minimises the number of people that need access to TCSI data entry or analytics, with integrated PRODA features, including:

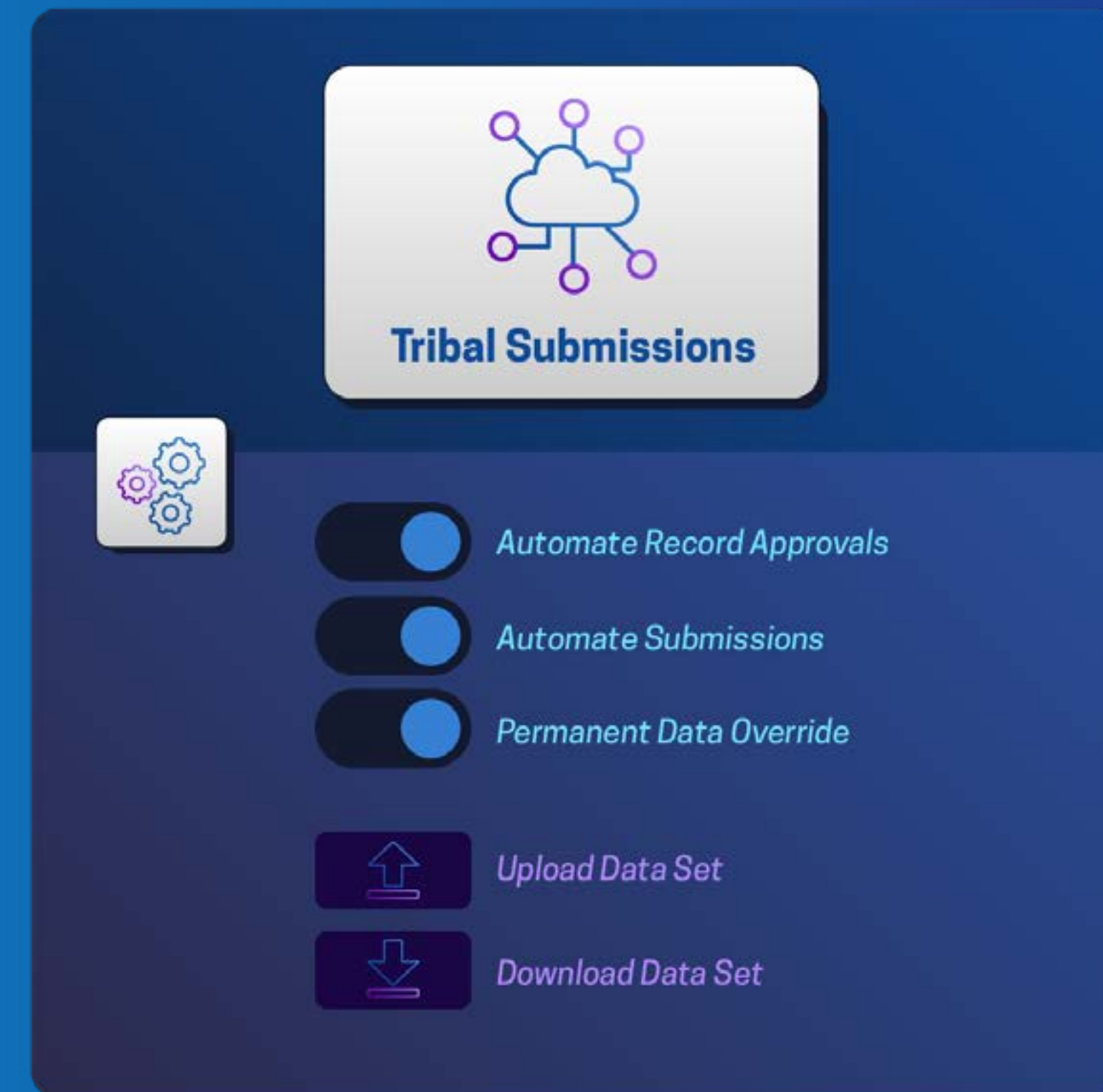
- The ability to add PRODA registration details
- Generating and managing private and public keys
- Generating and renewing access tokens
- Notifying impending device expiration



Flexible Configuration

Flexible configuration options allow institutions to adapt Tribal Submissions to suit their existing data processes and evolving submission requirements. These include:

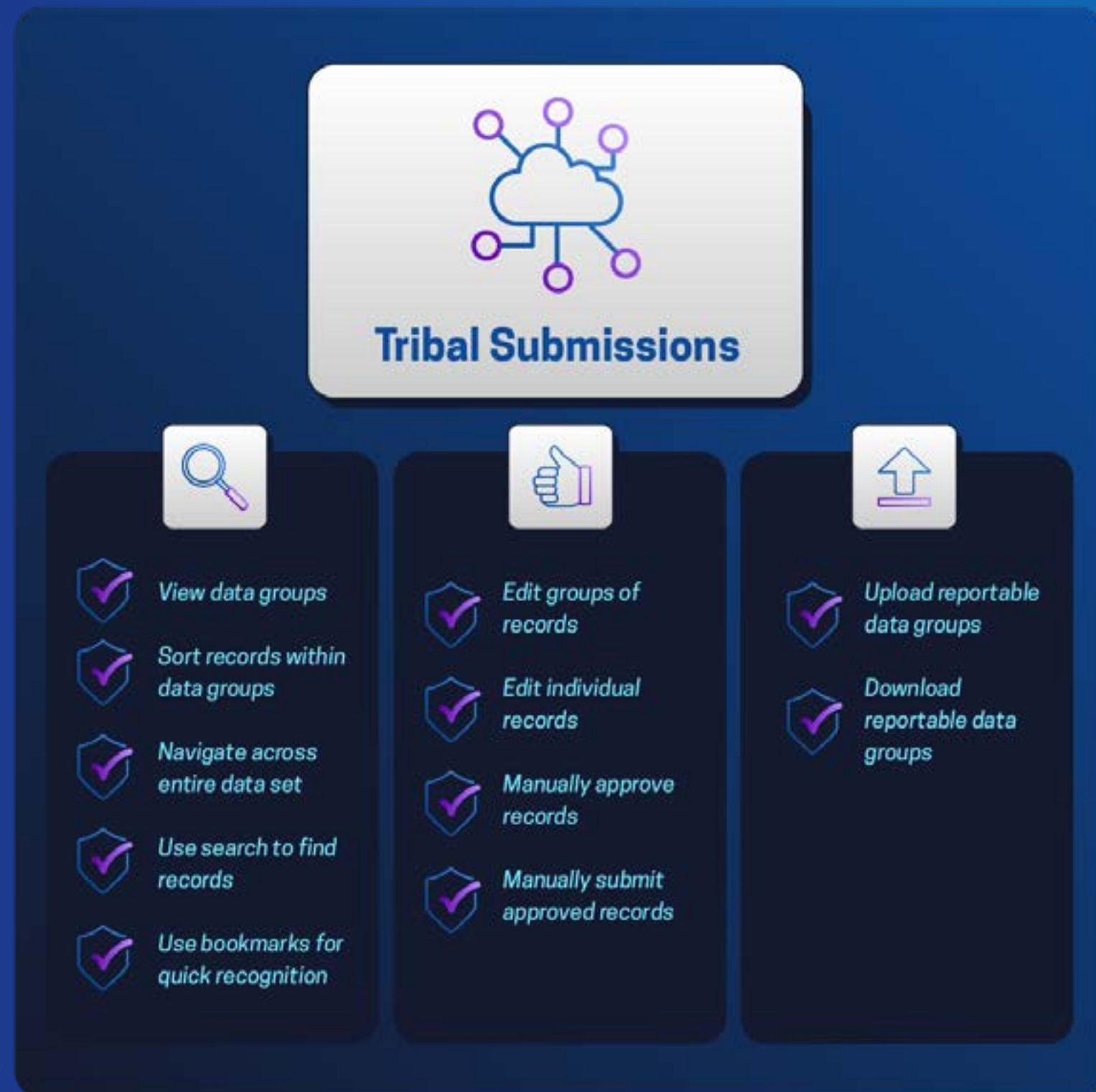
- The option to automate record approvals and/or submissions
- The option to place a permanent data override on items sent from the SMS
- Single and batch record editing
- Uploading and downloading data sets



Record Management

Tribal Submissions enables more efficient record management. Its built-in functions include:

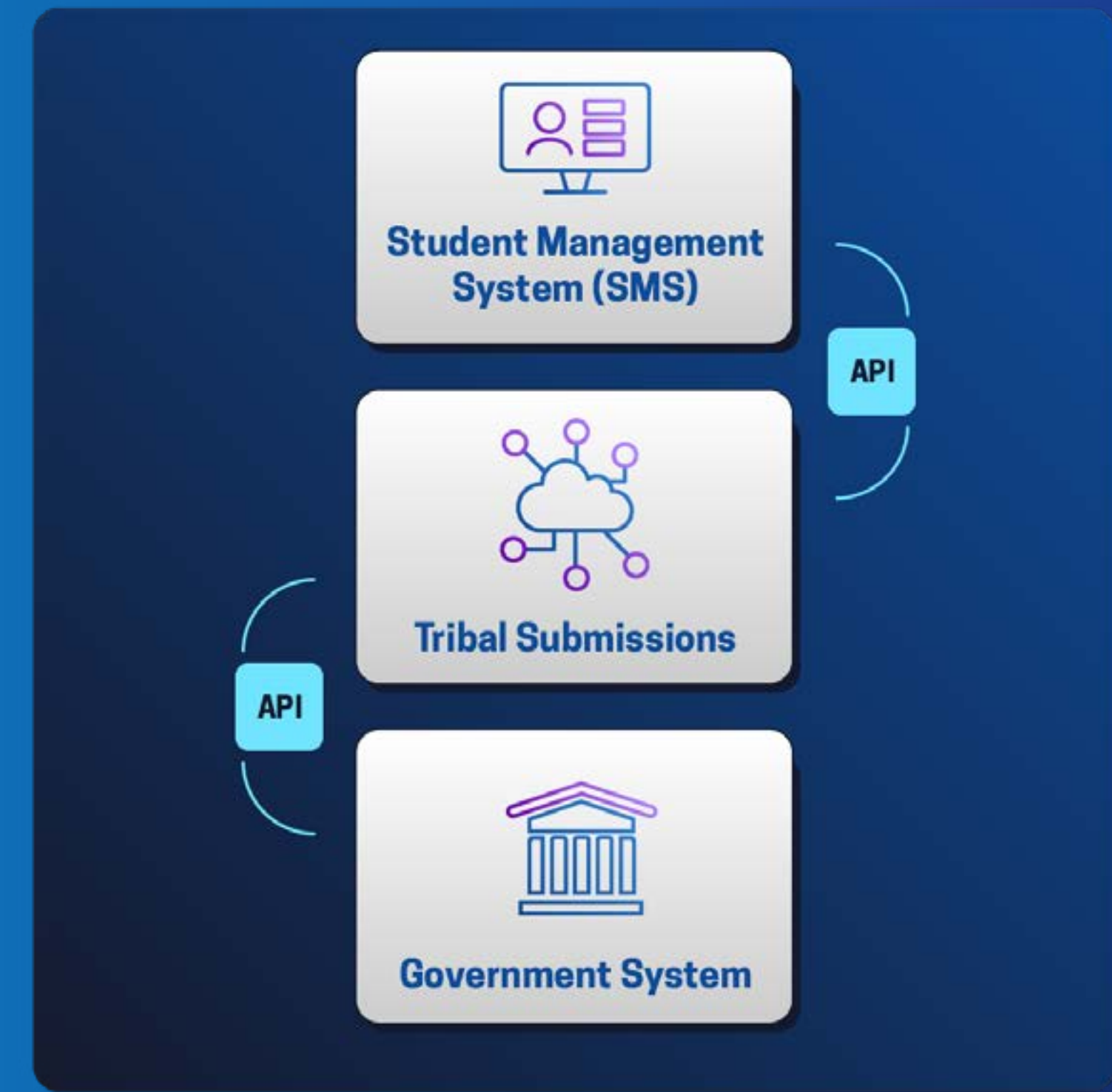
- The ability to view data groups and sort records within a data group
- The option to navigate across the entire data set or find records using search
- Uploading and downloading reportable data groups
- Editing individual records or group of records by placing permanent overrides on data fields
- Manually approving records to prepare for submission
- Manually submitting approved records to B2G APIs
- Bookmarking for quick navigation to frequently used operations



SMS Integration

Tribal Submissions is a cloud-based SaaS solution designed to integrate with any student management system via APIs. This means:

- An institution's existing SMS solution is not required to manage UIDs for TCSI reporting
- Managing B2G APIs becomes less complex, with Tribal Submissions accepting records from the SMS that may contain reportable changes
- Simplified SMS processing because Tribal Submissions determines delta, calls the appropriate B2G API, and manages all B2G interactions



More Institutions Are Using Tribal Submissions



Tribal Submissions is fast becoming the standard reporting solution for Australian Institutions, covering an estimated 936,000 students across 16+ providers. In early 2024, several of the largest education providers in Australia are using the platform to report their TCSI data, along with a number of niche providers. But this isn't surprising when you consider the alternatives.

Some institutions are still attempting to manually submit data with their existing SMS, or to enter their data using the provided TCSI spreadsheet. Unfortunately, these solutions tend to lack critical functionality, such as error management, report generation, bulk editing, and real-time data validation. The process of manually extracting data records, checking the data, getting it in the right format, then uploading the spreadsheet can take a staff member 3+ hours every week.

In contrast, Tribal Submission provides an efficient way to submit data, with **bulk actions, automatic real-time submissions, real-time error management, intuitive interfaces, reporting via Power BI, and secure, cloud-based access**. Because the data is automatically extracted from the SMS, prepared, approved, and submitted, the total time each week is **0 hours**.

It's clear from customer feedback that Tribal Submissions provides immense value. Not only because it contains so much functionality in one application, but because it frees up time and reduces the risk of errors and non-compliance.



Case Study: Edith Cowan University

Edith Cowan University (ECU) has 30,000+ undergraduate and postgraduate students across three campuses in Western Australia. ECU has been using Tribal products since 2004 — in particular, the Callista student management system. With the Australian government introducing new reporting requirements with TCSI, ECU found that they needed to update their manual approach to student data reporting so they could manage the process efficiently.

According to Peter Corbett, Director of Student Administration,

“TCSI was a massive change in the way that we had to report to the government. The mechanism changed entirely. It became near real-time reporting, and the volume of the data that we had to supply increased markedly.”

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated staffing and budget challenges further highlighted the importance of an efficient solution. As an existing customer, ECU was invited to join the working group to develop Tribal Submissions, with Tribal collaborating with both ECU and the government to meet the requirements. After implementation in 2021, ECU was able to deliver student data directly into the Australian government’s TCSI B2B API suite, via an intuitive user interface that minimises risk and streamlines the submissions process.

Fabia Baroni, Team Leader of Business Support, ECU, shared,

“You’ve got the ability to configure any packet to auto-submit, auto-approve and edit certain fields, which we find really useful. We can download up to 10,000 records at a time, edit those records if need be and upload them again back into Tribal Submissions without any performance problems whatsoever.”



[Read the full Case Study](#)

*Image have been provided courtesy of Edith Cowan University

Case Study: Monash University

Monash university has over 86,000 students across multiple campuses in Melbourne, as well as an international presence. As existing Tribal customers on the Callista student management system, Monash had the opportunity to join the TCSI User Group, as Tribal worked with institutions and the government to design and build the Tribal Submissions solution.

The project was challenging, with many layers of complexity — further complicated by COVID-19 and a shift to remote work. On top of this, the government introduced several late changes to specifications and validations rules that meant Tribal and Callista needed to rework and retest the solution, ensuring that it would meet the requirements. On top of this, government data migration rules created some barriers to error-free reporting. After the 3 year project, Monash went live with Tribal Submissions in May 2021 and very quickly began processing a large volume for the institution on a regular basis.

Lisa Davis, Senior Director of Student and Education Business Services, shared,

“The project has not only transformed batch reporting into real time but also required reconciliation and validation of a great deal of previously reported government data. The strength of the Callista consortium was evident through the TCSI User Group. Tribal were able to understand and adapt solutions based on business processes and clients could share and resolve common issues.”



[Read the full Case Study](#)

Case Study: University of Sydney

The University of Sydney has over 70,000 students and is the oldest university in Australia and Oceania. Long-time customers of Tribal, the university had been using the on-premises SITS student management system since 2009, before deciding to migrate to Tribal Cloud in 2020. This would result in a robust, secure service, while enabling cost efficiencies with Tribal responsible for maintaining and maintaining the systems, application, upgrades, and more.

According to Caroline Hungerford, ICT Director at the University of Sydney,

“Moving our largest and most crucial on-premise system to Tribal Cloud managed service aligns perfectly with the University’s cloud-first system strategy.”

As part of the move, the university also adopted Tribal’s TCSI solution. Through the intuitive user interface and connected APIs, Tribal Submissions enabled them to deliver critical student data directly into TCSI to streamline submissions, reduce risk, and stay compliant with the new reporting obligations.



[Read the full Case Study](#)

Checklist for Education Reporting Systems

Shortlisting reporting solutions for your institution? Use the following checklist when enquiring with providers and demoing solutions to ensure it ticks all the right boxes.



Flexible Integration

It can be integrated with (or configured with) your existing SMS so that you can retain your existing systems.



Real-Time Reporting

It offers real-time reporting capabilities so that your data is always up-to-date.



User-Friendly

The user-interface is modern and non-technical users can easily interact with the product.



Supports Students

Contributes to a positive student experience by supporting smooth processing of student claims and payments.



Continual Improvement

Is continually being improved and developed so that your institution will continue to meet reporting requirements, even as they change.

TRIBAL

Get Started with Tribal Submissions

*Interested in learning more about Tribal Submissions?
Reach out to our team to request a demo or to find out more
about how it could help your institution with government
reporting requirements like TCSI.*

Contact
hello@tribalgroup.com | tribalgroup.com