

2020-21 *Ready Graduate* Indicator (2019-20 Graduates) Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is the Ready Graduate Indicator?**

The *Ready Graduate* indicator measures the percentage of students who earn a diploma from a Tennessee high school and who meet the criteria of success outlined in [question 3](#) of this document. The intent of this indicator is to recognize and reward schools and districts whose high school graduates demonstrate readiness for meaningful postsecondary education, training program, and/or workforce entry.

2. **Which cohort of students is included in the Ready Graduate data for 2021?**

The data used for the *Ready Graduate* indicator is reported one year after the graduation of the cohort to provide students and districts sufficient time to demonstrate postsecondary readiness. This year's user guide highlights adjustments to the *Ready Graduate* indicator for 2019-20 graduates resulting from the cumulative impacts of COVID-19 and does not guarantee that the same guidance would pertain to the 2020-21 graduates.

3. **How is a student determined to be a Ready Graduate?**

For students to be considered *Ready Graduates*, they must meet at least one of the following criteria (students can only be "counted" once):

1. Earn a composite score of **21 or higher on the ACT** (or 1060 or higher on the SAT); or
2. Complete **four [Early Postsecondary Opportunities \(EPSOs\)](#)**; or
3. Complete **two EPSOs + earn an industry credential**; or
4. Complete two EPSOs + earn a score of military readiness on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT).

The [Ready Graduate elements for inclusion](#) table provides an overview of the elements that make up these criteria and adjustments to the *Ready Graduate* criteria for the class of 2020.

4. **How is the Ready Graduate Indicator calculated?**

As outlined in Tennessee's state Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan, the *Ready Graduate* indicator is calculated for all schools with at least 30 students in a graduation cohort. The indicator is calculated by dividing the number of on-time graduates meeting at least one *Ready Graduate* criterion by the total number of students in that cohort.

$$\frac{\text{\# of graduates meeting } \textit{Ready Graduate} \text{ criteria}}{\text{\# in the graduation cohort}}$$

5. How will Spring 2020 ACT cancellations affect the Ready Graduate Indicator for the 2019-20 graduates?

The State Board of Education promulgated a [decision](#) waiving the requirement of student participation in the ACT or SAT to earn a Tennessee high school diploma. For seniors who intended to take the ACT or SAT in spring 2020 and were unable to do so due to school closures or exam cancellations, the department will include them in the 2020 cohort and will accept appeals to exclude them from ACT participation rate calculations. ACT/SAT will remain an element in *Ready Graduate* calculations to benefit students who were able to test and meet the ACT threshold for *Ready Graduate* classification.

6. How will cancellations of AP, IB, and SDC exams in Spring 2020 affect the Ready Graduate Indicator for the 2019-20 graduates?

2019-20 graduates who were enrolled in and completed courses aligned to Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Statewide Dual Credit (SDC) exams will automatically earn EPSO credit, and districts will not be required to provide additional documentation demonstrating cancellation for these exams.

7. What about other exam cancellations in Spring 2020?

If a third party did not administer exams due to COVID-19 during the Spring of 2020, documentation demonstrating cancellation of EPSO-aligned exams from March-June 2020 will suffice for *Ready Graduate* appeals. Examples may include **cancellation notification letters from assessment providers, announcements of waived testing requirements for program entry**, etc.

8. What changes will there be to the Ready Graduate Indicator for the 2020-21 graduating class?

There is no new or additional guidance at this time for the graduating class of 2020-21.

9. Is work-based learning (WBL) included in the Ready Graduate indicator as an EPSO?

No. EPSOs are opportunities that award students documented credit that is transferable to a postsecondary institution. Most WBL placements do not award such credit and are therefore not included in this indicator.

However, a WBL placement may be included as an EPSO if an articulation agreement exists with a local postsecondary institution to award postsecondary credit through the postsecondary institution's course and exam. For this to be included in *Ready Graduate* calculations, students must be enrolled in a high school course code and course section that is "flagged" as a local dual credit course in their student information system. Districts should retain any relevant documentation for appeals.

Ready Graduate Element and 2019-20 Adjustment Quick Reference

Ready Graduate Element	Evidence of Completion	Adjustments for Class of 2019-20
ACT	Earn a composite score of 21 or higher	
Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)	Earn a composite score of 1060 or higher	
Advanced Placement (AP)	Complete course and attempt exam	Automatic credit for course completion
Cambridge International Examinations (CIE)	Complete course and attempt exam ¹	Submit third party documentation
College Level Examination Program (CLEP)	Earn a passing score of 50 or higher on exam	
International Baccalaureate (IB)	Complete course and attempt exam ²	Automatic credit for course completion
Dual Enrollment (DE)	Complete course	
Local Dual Credit (LDC)	Complete course and attempt exam	
Statewide Dual Credit (SDC)	Complete course and attempt exam ³	Automatic credit for course completion
Industry Credential (IC)	Earn passing score on exam and/or complete licensure requirements.	
Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)	Earn a score of 31 or higher ⁴	Submit third party documentation

¹ This requirement may be dependent on third party administration of the exam. If the responsible third party (i.e., postsecondary institution) does not administer a normally required EPSO exam, documentation from the responsible third party will be required for appeals.

² Dependent on postsecondary institution testing protocols.

³ Dependent on postsecondary institution testing protocols.

⁴ The “passing” score for military aptitude may change in the future. Annual determination of military readiness will be the minimum ASVAB AFQT score required to qualify for admission into at least one branch of the military as of June 1 following a student’s graduation. Scores will be determined on June 1 annually for the following year’s accountability.

10. Are the elements outlined in the Ready Graduate indicator new graduation requirements?

No. Tennessee's ESSA plan outlines the state's approach to use EPSOs as an indicator for student readiness for postsecondary pathways. The *Ready Graduate* indicator is a part of the accountability model that points to Tennessee's vision for postsecondary and career readiness while addressing Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements. There are four ways in which students can demonstrate readiness (see above), only one of which (ACT/SAT) is required for high school graduation. For additional information, visit the department's [graduation requirements website](#), and read the department's strategic plan, [Best for All](#) and the [state's ESSA plan](#).

11. If a student followed a career and technical education (CTE) program of study and is planning to earn a department-promoted industry credential, do the two EPSOs for the indicator have to be within the CTE program of study?

No. Two EPSOs can come from within the CTE program of study or from general education courses. For example, a student could take courses within the *Office Management* program of study, earn the *Microsoft Office Specialist* certification, take *Statewide Dual Credit Statistics* to meet their fourth-year math requirement, and take a *Dual Enrollment Spanish* course to meet this indicator.

12. Does a student have to complete a CTE program of study for an industry credential to count?

No. The department believes students who possess documentation of their knowledge and skills are demonstrating readiness for postsecondary pathways. If a student feels confident sitting for an industry credential because of their experience outside the classroom, we encourage them to test. All students who earn a credential will be included, regardless of the courses they completed or their elective focus of study. Please note that students who have completed a CTE program of study are more likely to successfully earn the credential than students who have not had the experience of aligned coursework and training.

13. Do students have to pass the EPSO exam and earn credit to meet Ready Graduate criteria?

This depends upon the specific EPSO, though the majority only require course completion and exam participation.

CLEP and industry credentials are exceptions to this and require passing the EPSO exam and earning college credit, since these opportunities are not aligned to a specific course, but a sequence of courses.

These EPSO requirements will continue for 2020-21 data reporting unless the testing agency did not administer exams due to COVID-19 and documentation can be provided. Students will automatically earn EPSO credit for IB, AP, and SDC for course completion in the 2019-20 school year, without third-party documentation demonstrating exam opportunities were not given.

14. Is the third pathway in the Ready Graduate indicator (two EPSOs and an industry credential) the only path for students in CTE courses?

No. Though students who are participating in CTE courses aligned to an industry credential will be more likely to earn those certifications, some CTE programs do not have an aligned industry credential. Students progressing through these programs would need to either meet the minimum requirement of a 21 on the ACT (or 1060 on SAT), earn four EPSOs, or earn two EPSOs and a score of military readiness to count toward the *Ready Graduate* indicator. EPSOs may be obtained through a combination of both general education and CTE subjects.

15. Are students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) included in the Ready Graduate indicator?

Yes, if they graduated on time with a regular education diploma. Students who are not on track to graduate within four years, or who have received or are planning to receive an occupational or special education diploma, are not included.

The department encourages districts to support all their students in completing EPSOs. Tennessee data shows that disadvantaged students who participate in EPSOs enroll in postsecondary programs at a higher rate than those who do not, even those who may not reach the college-readiness scores on academic achievement tests, such as the ACT and SAT.

16. What if a student is not allowed to test for an industry credential until after graduation?

We understand that there may be some factors (such as age or work experience) that prevent a student from completing the credential exam or licensing process prior to high school graduation. To ensure students who obtain credentials the summer after their high school graduation are included in a school's *Ready Graduate* count, the data for credentials will be pulled no earlier than Aug. 1 each year. After a student graduates, they have the summer to complete the requirements of the credential, prior to the department running the accountability data. This timeframe is similar to the time allotted for students to complete graduation requirements to receive their high school diploma.

17. What if a student who has taken and passed an EPSO/industry credential exam is not listed in the department's data?

Data obtained from third party credentialing agencies and EPSO vendors will be matched with our student information system data. However, we do not collect data from all third-party credentialing agencies, and we understand there may be changes in student information that impact the matching process. To ensure all students who have earned a credential and college credit are included, the department offers an appeals process through which a district may upload documentation to the Cohort application's *Ready Graduate* page to verify the student received the credential/credit.

Data for dual enrollment, statewide dual credit, and local dual credit opportunities will be pulled directly from a district's student information system (SIS). Districts should use the [correct course codes](#) and appropriately "flag" courses that have local articulation agreements with postsecondary institutions. Courses that do not use the correct course code and/or are not appropriately flagged as a dual credit course in the SIS will not pull data for EPSO enrollment. If you have questions about this, please contact Early.Postsecondary@tn.gov.

18. Do industry credentials count as EPSOs? If a student earns more than one industry credential, does that count as one of their two EPSOs?

Some industry credentials may align to a Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) or other postsecondary institutions and convert to EPSO credit.

19. What criteria do students have to meet in order to obtain an industry credential?

Each industry credential is different, so the department has developed resources to aid in the implementation of each credential, which includes criteria for obtaining the credential. More information on these resources may be found on the department's industry credential [webpage](#).

20. If my district has a local dual credit articulation agreement with a postsecondary institution that awards credit through the passing of an industry credential exam, does that count as both industry credential and an EPSO?

Potentially. A student would receive credit for the local dual credit opportunity if they were enrolled in a course marked as a local dual credit course in the district's student information system. If the student also passed the industry credential exam, that could also be captured in the indicator. A student would need to complete both the course and the exam for both opportunities to be recognized. Districts should retain any relevant documentation for appeals.

21. Will the WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) count in 2020-21 reporting?

No. The department continues to explore statewide options with Tennessee postsecondary institutions to develop a statewide articulation policy for workforce readiness exams.

22. Is JROTC an element in the Ready Graduate indicator as an EPSO?

No. As mentioned with work-based learning above, EPSOs are opportunities that award students documented credit transferable to a postsecondary institution. Most JROTC programs do not award such credit and are therefore not included in this indicator. A JROTC course may be included as an EPSO if an articulation agreement exists with a local postsecondary institution to award postsecondary credit through the institution's course and exam. For this to be included in the *Ready Graduate* calculations, students must be enrolled in a high school course code and course section that is "flagged" as a local dual credit course in their student information system. Districts should retain any relevant documentation for appeals.