

2021-22 *Ready Graduate* Data Review and Appeals Frequently Asked Questions

Updated on 3/2/2022

1. *What is the Ready Graduate Indicator?*

The *Ready Graduate* indicator¹ measures the percentage of students who earn a diploma, including a **regular diploma** or an **alternate academic diploma**², from a Tennessee high school and who meet at least one of the *Ready Graduate* criteria. That is, for students to be considered *Ready Graduates*, they must meet at least one of the following criteria (students can only be “counted” once):

- Earn a composite score of 21 or higher on the ACT (or 1060 or higher on the SAT); or
- Complete four [Early Postsecondary Opportunities \(EPSOs\)](#); or
- Complete two EPSOs + earn an industry credential; or
- Complete two EPSOs + earn a score of 31 on military readiness on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT).

Please consult the [2021-22 *Ready Graduate* Process and Appeals Manual](#) (Table 1) for more information related to data sources and inclusion requirements that the department uses to identify *Ready Graduates*. The manual also provides information regarding the Cohort applications that schools and districts shall review and use to validate the data and or submit appeals. When submitting an appeal, additional documentation is required. Please consult the [2021-22 *Ready Graduate* Process and Appeals Manual](#) (Table 2) for guidance on appropriate documentation needed for each *Ready Graduate* data element.

The intent of the *Ready Graduate* Indicator is to recognize and reward schools and districts whose high school graduates demonstrate readiness for meaningful postsecondary education, training programs, and/or workforce entry.

2. *Which cohort of students is included in the 2021-22 Ready Graduate data?*

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. The 2021-22 *Ready Graduate* data focuses on the 2020-21 graduating cohort.

3. *How is the Ready Graduate Rate 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 graduating cohort. The indicator is calculated by dividing the number of students who graduated in four years plus a summer³ that also meet at least

¹ It should be noted that *Ready Graduate* status or meeting *Ready Graduate* indicators is NOT a requirement for graduation.

² Starting with the 2021 graduating cohort, students who earn a *regular diploma* or an *alternate academic diploma* in four years plus a summer are counted as graduates and included in the graduation rate calculation. This change has a significant impact on the *Ready Graduate* rate for the 2021 graduating cohort. That is, students with an alternate academic diploma plus meeting at least one of the four *Ready Graduate* criteria will be counted as *Ready Graduates* starting the 2021-2022 school year for the *Ready Graduate* process.

³ Students have a completion code of 1 (regular diploma), 8 (alternate academic diploma), 11 (regular diploma with foreign language waiver), 12 (regular diploma with fine arts waiver), or 13 (regular diploma with foreign language and fine arts waiver) are

one *Ready Graduate* criterion by the total number of students in that graduating cohort. It is important to note that ***all students who graduated with a regular education diploma or an alternative academic diploma***, including those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), are counted as graduates. The formula to compute the *Ready Graduate* Rate is below:

$$\frac{\text{Number of graduates}^4 \text{ meeting at least one } \textit{Ready Graduate} \text{ criterion}}{\text{Number of students in the graduating cohort}} * 100$$

4. How will cancellations of Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Statewide Dual Credit (SDC) exams during the 2019-20 school year affect the Ready Graduate Indicator for the 2020-21 graduates?

The 2020-21 graduates who completed⁵ courses aligned to Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Statewide Dual Credit (SDC) exams during the 2019-20 school year will automatically earn EPSO credit. Districts will not be required to provide additional documentation demonstrating cancellation for these exams.

5. How will cancellations of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and Local Dual Credit (LDC) exams during the 2019-20 school year affect the Ready Graduate Indicator for the 2020-21 graduates?

If a third party did not administer Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) or Local Dual Credit (LDC) exams due to COVID-19 during the 2019-20 school year, documentation demonstrating exam cancellations will suffice for *Ready Graduate* appeals. Examples may include cancellation notification letters from assessment providers, announcements of waived testing requirements for program entry, etc.

6. 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.

7. 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 to measure 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 [question 1](#)). For additional information, visit the department’s [graduation requirements webpage](#), and read the department’s strategic plan, [Best for All](#), and the [state’s ESSA plan](#).

considered on-time graduates.

⁴ By definition, graduates is defined as students who graduated in four years plus a summer.

⁵ Students must attend at least 50 percent of any of the EPSO courses (i.e., 50 percent enrollment rule) to be considered for their course completion status.

8. 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 the *Ready Graduate* indicator.

9. 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.

10. 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. Please consult the [2021-22 Ready Graduate Process and Appeals Manual](#) (Table 1) for specific inclusion requirements across all eight types of EPSOs specified by the department.

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

No. Students who are participating in CTE courses aligned to an industry credential will be more likely to earn those certifications. 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.

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

Yes, if they graduated on time with a regular education diploma or an alternate academic 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.

13. 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 industrial credentials will be pulled no earlier than Aug. 1 each year. After a student graduates, they have the following 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.

14. What if a student who has taken and passed an EPSO or an 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.

15. 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](#).

16. 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. Please consult the [Industry Credential and EPSO conversion Chart](#)⁶ for more information.

17. What do districts need to do if they have an additional Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or agreement with a postsecondary higher education institution for an industry credential to earn postsecondary credit?

Districts can submit the MOU/agreement along with the evidence of student(s) passing the credential during the appeals process.

18. 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 an 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.

19. Will the WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) count in the 2021-22 reporting?

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

⁶ The conversion chart was last updated in 2019. If districts have established additional agreements with local postsecondary higher education institutions since then, districts can submit a statement detailing the conversion agreement on postsecondary institution letterhead for appeals.

20. Is Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (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.

21. Does an industry certification and 31 on AFQT meet Ready Graduate criteria?

No. Students must meet one of the four *Ready Graduate* criterion to be counted as Ready Graduates (see [Question 1](#)). In some cases, an industry credential can be converted to postsecondary credit; in these cases, the credential can count as either +1 or +2 EPSOs. Please consult the [Industry Credential and EPSO conversion Chart](#)⁷ for appropriate conversion.

22. Will transcripts with official ACT scores be acceptable for ACT documentation?

Transcripts that list ACT or SAT scores generated by districts will not be accepted. However, if the transcripts include the official ACT or SAT score report stickers, the documentation is appropriate.

23. Do students who did not take the Local Dual Credit (LDC) exam due to the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2019-20 school year need documentation?

Yes. Districts will need to provide third-party documentation if the exam was cancelled.

24. Will the department accept transcripts as evidence of students earning industry credentials?

No. Districts must provide evidence of the credential (i.e., exam score, certificate, or license) from the certifying organization.

25. What should districts do when the Local Dual Credit (LDC) or Statewide Dual Credit records do not appear on the Ready Graduate page?

LDC and SDC records will only be shown on the *Ready Graduate* page when correct course codes were entered and flagged in EIS. Check the course codes first and make sure these courses are accurately flagged in EIS. Additional completed courses and issues with course codes and flags can be resolved by submitting appeals with appropriate evidence as suggested in the [2021-22 Ready Graduate Process and Appeals Manual](#) (Table 1).

26. Why are some students' Ready Graduate records not appearing on the Ready Graduate page?

There are several possible scenarios when student records are not appearing on the *Ready Graduate* page. First, students must attend at least 50 percent of the course (i.e., 50 percent enrollment rule) to be considered for their course completion status. Second, records of students who withdrew from the course will not appear on the *Ready Graduate* page even if they had attended at least 50 percent of the

⁷ The conversion chart was last updated in 2019. If districts have established additional agreements with local postsecondary higher education institutions since then, districts can submit a statement detailing the conversion agreement on postsecondary institution letterhead for appeals.

course. Third, student records may not appear on the *Ready Graduate* page due to inconsistencies with the student identifying information across various data systems and files (e.g., misspelled name, incorrect date of birth, etc.). These records may be appealed with the appropriate evidence, such as an EIS screenshot or statement on district letterhead confirming the correction. Any issues regarding changes to cohort are ineligible for appeal, as the 2020-21 cohort was finalized after the Graduation Cohort cycle was completed.

27. Why is ASVAB AFQT blank on the Ready Graduate page?

The U.S. Department of Defense does not share ASVAB AFQT data with the department due to maintaining the security of personal identifiable information. It is the district's responsibility to provide the data to the department. During the appeals window, districts must provide score reports and/or data files provided by the U.S. Department of Defense. This data will only be reflected on the *Ready Graduate* page if districts submit them during the *Ready Graduate* appeals window.

28. Where should districts start the review and appeals process?

The department recommends districts filter the CSV file down to the students who do not currently identify as *Ready Graduates* and review their *Ready Graduate* data elements to make sure data are accurate. If errors are found, districts should consult the [2021-22 Ready Graduate Process and Appeals Manual](#) (Table 1) and provide appropriate documentation to support the appeals. To make the appeal process easier for districts, the department updated the Cohort application to highlight students who may be considered for appeals. Students highlighted in green met at least one of the *Ready Graduate* criteria. Students that are "greyed out" and missing an "attach" link have been removed from the original cohort and will not count for or against the school or district's *Ready Graduate* calculation.