2023-24 *Ready Graduate* Appeals

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated on 1/24/2024

This document aims to address common questions that arise during the *Ready Graduate* Appeals process. For more information on timelines and procedures for submitting appeals, please reference the [2023-2024 *Ready Graduate* Appeals Guide](#).

Indicator Overview and Calculation Procedures

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

   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.

   The *Ready Graduate* indicator measures the percentage of students who earn a **regular diploma** or an **alternate academic diploma** from a Tennessee high school and meet at least one of four *Ready Graduate* criteria. 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 and earn an industry credential; or
   - Complete two EPSOs and earn a score of 31 on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT), indicating military readiness.

   Please consult Section 1 of the [2023-2024 *Ready Graduate* Appeals Guide](#) for more information related to criteria that the department uses to identify *Ready Graduate*s. The guide also provides information regarding the process and timeline for submitting appeals to student *Ready Graduate* data.

2. ***Which cohort of students is included in the 2023-24* Ready Graduate *indicator?***

   The data used for the *Ready Graduate* indicator uses students from the previous year's graduation cohort to provide students and districts sufficient time to demonstrate postsecondary readiness. The 2023-24 *Ready Graduate* indicator includes students from the 2022-23 graduation cohort.

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

   Yes. All students in the graduating cohort – including students with IEPs – are included in the denominator of the *Ready Graduate* indicator.

   A student with an IEP could be included in the numerator of the *Ready Graduate* indicator (and therefore counted as a *Ready Graduate)* if they graduated on time with a regular or alternate academic diploma and met the requirements for *Ready Graduate* status (see [What is the Ready Graduate Indicator?](#) for more information on how students attain *Ready Graduate* status)

   The following students with IEPs are not counted as *Ready Graduate*s:

   - Students who did not graduate within four years and a summer
   - Students who have received or are planning to receive an [occupational diploma](#)

- Students who have received or are planning to receive a [special education diploma](#)

4. *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 summer that met at least one *Ready Graduate* criterion by the total number of students in that graduating cohort.[1]

The formula to compute the *Ready Graduate* Rate is below:

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

It is important to note that the numerator of the *Ready Graduate* indicator utilizes the definition of a graduate used in Tennessee graduation rate for its calculations. This means that *all students who graduated with a regular diploma or an alternative academic diploma*, including those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that obtained a regular diploma while utilizing SBE-allowed substitutions for required coursework,[2] are counted as graduates for the purposes of this indicator. For more information on the difference between the federal graduation rate and the Tennessee graduation rate, please consult Section 2 of the [2023-2024 Graduation Cohort Protocol](#).

5. *Is* Ready Graduate *status or any of the elements outlined in the* Ready Graduate *indicator a new graduation requirement?*

No. The *Ready Graduate* indicator is a part of Tennessee's federally mandated accountability system for the annual meaningful differentiation of schools and includes criterion elements (including EPSOs) as measures of readiness for postsecondary pathways among students who graduate. For additional information on Tennessee's system of federal accountability, please consult the [state ESSA plan.](#) For information on graduation requirements, please visit the department's [graduation requirements webpage.](#)

Pathways to *Ready Graduate* Status

6. *If a student followed a career and technical education (CTE) program of study and earned an aligned department-promoted industry credential, do that student's EPSOs need to be within the same CTE program of study in order to count in the Ready Graduate indicator?*

No. EPSOs applied toward *Ready Graduate* status may be earned within a CTE program of study or from general education courses; they do not need to be aligned with each other or with any other element in the indicator, including Industry Credentials. 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 requirements of the third pathway in the *Ready Graduate* indicator (one Industry Credential plus two EPSOs).

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

No. While students who are participating in CTE courses aligned to an industry credential may be more

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[1] The graduation cohort includes graduates and non-graduates. See the [2023-2024 Graduation Cohort Protocol](#) for more information.
[2] See [SBE Rule 0520-01-03-.06-12-c](#) and [SBE Rule 0520-01-03-.06-13-a.](#)

likely to earn those certifications than other students, students in CTE courses may utilize any of the four pathways to achieve *Ready Graduate* status. Students progressing through these programs can also earn *Ready Graduate* status by meeting the minimum required composite of a 21 on the ACT (or 1060 on SAT), earning four EPSOs, or earning two EPSOs and an ASVAB score that indicates military readiness. EPSOs may be obtained through a combination of both general education and CTE subjects.

8. ***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, +2, or +4 EPSOs. Please consult the [Industry Credential and EPSO conversion Chart](#) for appropriate conversion.

Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSOs)

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.

10. ***Will the WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) count towards Ready Graduate status in 2023-24?***

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

11. ***Does Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) count as an EPSO in the* Ready Graduate *indicator?***

    No. 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.

12. ***Can a district submit documented Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) clock hours completed by a student to earn EPSO credit toward* Ready Graduate *status?***

    No. However, if a student completes dual enrollment courses and/or earns an approved industry credential while enrolled at a TCAT, these achievements can be used to progress toward *Ready Graduate* status. Additionally, some industry credentials may convert to bonus conversion EPSO credits. Districts should be sure to flag dual enrollment courses appropriately in EIS and submit official evidence of any industry credentials students earn while enrolled at a TCAT institution. Consult the [department's promoted list](#) for more information on approved industry credentials, as well as the [Industry Credential and EPSO Conversion Chart](#) for more information on what industry credentials convert to additional EPSO credits.

EPSO-Aligned Exams

13. ***Do students have to pass an EPSO's aligned exam in order for that EPSO to count toward meeting***

Ready Graduate *criteria?*

This depends upon the specific EPSO. For the AP, CIE, DE, IB, LDC, and SDC EPSOs, students are only required to complete the course and attempt the aligned exam. For the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), students are required to pass the exam with a score of 50 or higher. Please consult Table 2 of the [2023-2024 Ready Graduate Appeals Guide](#) for the specific inclusion requirements for each type of EPSO recognized by the department.

Note: Unlike EPSOs, industry credentials are not necessarily aligned to a specific course; therefore, the student must pass any industry credential-aligned exams to demonstrate readiness.

14. ***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 2022-23 graduates?***

    2022-23 graduates who completed[3] 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 do not need to provide additional documentation demonstrating cancellation for these exams.

15. ***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 2022-23 graduates?***

    If a responsible 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, official documentation demonstrating exam cancellations will suffice for *Ready Graduate* appeals. Examples may include cancellation notification letters from assessment providers or official announcements of waived testing requirements.

Industry Credentials (ICs)

16. ***What criteria must students meet in order to obtain an industry credential?***

    Each industry credential is different. Students must complete all of the requirements for earning that credential, including passing any aligned exams. 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 is on the department's industry credential [webpage](#).

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

    No. The department believes students who possess documented proof (i.e., a certificate) 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.

18. ***Do industry credentials count as EPSOs? If a student earns more than one industry credential, does***

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[3] 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. Students who withdrew from the course will not be considered for completion status, even if they meet the 50 percent enrollment rule.

that count as one of their two EPSOs?

For most industry credentials, no. However, some select certifications, in addition to counting as industry credentials, align to a Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) course or courses offered at other postsecondary institutions and convert to EPSO credit. Please consult the [Industry Credential and EPSO conversion Chart](#)[4] for more information, including a list of industry credentials that convert to EPSO credit.

19. **Can Industry Credentials earned by students before entering high school (e.g., in 8th grade) count toward Ready Graduate status?**

    Yes, provided districts submit appropriate documentation. Consult Section 2.2.3 of [2023-2024 Ready Graduate Appeals Guide](#) for more information on what documentation is accepted.

20. **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, he or she would have the following summer to complete the requirements of the credential, prior to the department compiling the accountability data. This timeframe parallels the time allotted for students to complete graduation requirements to receive their high school diplomas (i.e., four years plus a summer).

21. **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 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. Please consult the [2023-2024 *Ready Graduate* Appeals Guide](#) for more information on timelines and procedures for appealing student *Ready Graduate* data.

    Data for dual enrollment, statewide dual credit, and local dual credit opportunities is 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 process, please contact Early.Postsecondary@tn.gov.

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

    No. Districts must provide evidence of the credential (i.e., a copy of a certificate, license, or an official score report indicating a passing exam score) from the certifying organization.

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[4] 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.

Local Agreements with Postsecondary Institutions

23. ***What should districts do if they have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or agreement with a postsecondary higher education institution for an industry credential to earn postsecondary credit that is not reflected in the department's EPSO conversion chart?***

Currently, only Industry Credentials listed on the [Industry Credential and EPSO conversion Chart](#) can be converted to additional EPSO credit.

24. ***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?***

No – local dual credit articulation agreements should specify an aligned exam coordinated by that postsecondary institution. While local dual credit courses may help prepare a student for a national industry credential exam, the aligned examinations for such courses should be different.

Ready Graduate Appeals Process

25. ***Has data submitted during 2023 College and Career Readiness (CCR) Data Verification Process been applied towards student Ready Graduate Status?***

Yes. During the 2023 College and Career Readiness (CCR) Data Verification Process, the department collected additional EPSO data from districts. All applicable data for students in the 2023 Graduating Cohort provided by districts and verified by the department during the 2023 College and Career Readiness Data Verification Process is included in the initial Ready Graduate data. As course enrollment was not verified during the CCR process, districts may need to submit additional evidence of enrollment to have EPSO data count toward Ready Graduate status.

Note. While the department collected information regarding student exam performance on aligned exams for the AP, CIE, IB and SDC EPSOs, it did not verify information regarding course enrollment. To receive credit for AP, CIE, IB, and SDC EPSOs not in a district's initial *Ready Graduate* file, districts must submit documentation that a student completed an AP, CIE, IB, or SDC course. For more information on supporting documentation, please see [Section 2.2.3](#). For more information on the 2023 College and Career Readiness Data Verification Process, please consult the [2023 College and Career Readiness Guide](#).

26. ***When appealing Ready Graduate data, are districts required to submit documentation directly to the department or maintain it for a later audit?***

Districts are required to submit documentation directly to the *Ready Graduate* page of the Cohort Application application as they submit appeals. For more information on submitting documentation, please consult Section 4.1 of the [2023-2024 Ready Graduate Appeals Guide](#). For more information on what documentation is required to be submitted for each EPSO type, please consult Section 2.23 of the [2023-2024 Ready Graduate Appeals Guide](#).

Note. Districts do not need to submit documentation for any EPSOs a student is *already* being credited for in his or her EPSO file, including EPSOs appealed during the 2022-2023 College and Career Readiness Data Verification Process.

27. ***How should districts start the review and appeals process?***

The department recommends districts filter their *Ready Graduate* CSV file down to the students who are not currently identified as *Ready Graduates* and review their *Ready Graduate* data elements to make

sure data are accurate. If errors are found, districts should consult Section 2.2.3 of the [2023-2024 *Ready Graduate* Appeals Guide](#) 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 who 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.

28. *Why are some students' EPSO course records not appearing on the* Ready Graduate *page?*

There are several possible reasons why a student's course records may not appear 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 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 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 during the *Ready Graduate* appeal window (January 22, 2024 – June 14, 2024) with the appropriate evidence, such as an EIS screenshot or statement on district letterhead confirming the correction. Any issues regarding changes to the graduation cohort (e.g., student in the wrong cohort, student missing completion or withdrawal status), are ineligible for appeal, as the 2022-23 cohort was finalized after the Graduation Cohort cycle was completed.

29. *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 are entered and flagged in EIS. Check the course codes and make sure these courses are accurately flagged in EIS. Then, submit an appeal with appropriate evidence as described in Table 5 of the [2023-2024 *Ready Graduate* Appeals Guide](#).

30. *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 U.S. military policies regarding the security of personal identifiable information. It is the district's responsibility to provide AFQT data to the department during the *Ready Graduate* appeals window. During the appeals window, districts must provide official score reports and/or data files provided by the U.S. Department of Defense. These data will only be reflected on the *Ready Graduate* page if districts submit them during the *Ready Graduate* appeals window, or if data was previously submitted during the 2022-23 College and Career Readiness Data Verification Process.

To provide feedback on any of the information in this document or to ask clarifying questions, please email TNED.Graduates@tn.gov.