1. What is a “four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate”?

The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class.

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\frac{\text{Spring Cohort Graduates + Summer Cohort Graduates}}{\text{9th-Grade Cohort + Transfers In – Transfers Out}}
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2. What defines a “regular high school diploma”?

A “regular high school diploma” means the standard high school diploma awarded to students is fully aligned with the State’s academic content standards. Alabama has two diploma options: the Alabama High School Diploma, which has four endorsements, and the Alabama Occupational Diploma.

_This definition does not include a GED credential, certificate of graduation, certificate of attendance, or any other alternative diploma/award._

3. How is the cohort “adjusted”?

The cohort is “adjusted” by adding students that transfer in and by subtracting any student that transfers out, emigrates to another country, or dies during the years covered by the graduation rate.

4. What defines a “transfer”?

A “transfers in” student is one who enrolls after the beginning of the entering cohort’s first year in high school, up to and including in Grade 12. The student will be assigned to the cohort in which the student started 9th grade for the _first_ time, regardless of where the student started 9th grade.
A “transfers out” student is one who leaves school and enrolls in another school (public, private, or qualified home school) or in an educational program that culminates in the award of a regular high school diploma.

5. What documentation is required to confirm that a student has transferred out?

The school must have “official written documentation” that the student has transferred to another school within the U.S. or to an educational program that culminates with a regular high school diploma within the U.S.

Official written documentation would include a request for transcripts, a written response from an official in the receiving school acknowledging the student’s enrollment, documentation of enrollment recorded in the STI, or a letter of withdrawal/written confirmation from the parent verifying student enrollment in a home school. Verbal confirmation would not be considered official written documentation.

A student cannot be removed from the cohort simply because the student’s status cannot be documented.

6. What documentation is required to confirm that a student has emigrated to another country?

The school must have written confirmation that a student has emigrated to another country. Recognizing that it may be difficult to obtain transcripts or other official documentation from another country, the Department can accept written documentation of instances such as a conversation held between a school administrator and parent notifying the school that the family is leaving the country.

7. What documentation is required to confirm that a student is deceased?

A school or LEA should have written confirmation on file that a student is deceased, such as a copy of the obituary or letter. A copy of a death certificate is not necessary.

8. How does an LEA document the transfer of a migrant student?

The U.S. Department of Education’s Migrant Student Information Exchange includes information on migrant students that can be accessed by the LEA.

9. Why must the state base the four-year graduation rate on “first time in 9th grade” cohorts?
Cohort-based graduation rates are accurate only if each student is assigned to a single cohort. Therefore, to ensure an accurate measure of a four-year graduation rate, the cohort must be based only on students who are first-time 9th graders.

10. Will the four-year graduation rate include students who graduate in the summer after their fourth year of high school?

Yes, the student will count as a graduate in his or her original cohort. The school must document the graduation status for these students on the Summer School Completers Report.

11. Does the four-year graduation rate include students who graduate in less than four years?

Yes. The student’s graduation information is “banked” until his/her cohort graduates.

12. How is a student who graduates in more than four years counted in the four-year graduation rate?

A student who graduates in more than four years is counted as a non-graduate in the four-year graduation rate. The student may not be removed from the cohort or assigned to a different cohort when calculating the four-year graduation rate.

Only students who graduate with a regular high school diploma in four years or less may be counted in the numerator. Thus, a student who takes more than four years to graduate, regardless of the reason (i.e., insufficient credits, IEP determinations), must be included in the denominator, but may not be counted in the numerator when calculating the four year-graduation rate.

13. If a student re-enrolls in a public high school after having dropped out of school, how does a school or LEA count that student in the four-year graduation rate?

The student should be assigned to the cohort in which the student was a first-time 9th grader. As long as the student re-enrolls before the State determines the graduation rate for that student’s cohort, the student is no longer recorded as a drop-out for graduation rate.