

A stack of five books with a black graduation cap and a yellow tassel on top. A rolled-up diploma with a purple ribbon is in front of the books. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

How are NCAA Graduation Rates Calculated?

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NCAA Graduation Rates



- Federal Graduation Rate: Federally mandated calculation for all schools that offer athletic scholarships. Counts all transfers as academic failures, so essentially measures the percentage of students who complete a BA/BS from their initial school within six years.
- Graduation Success Rate (GSR): Division I rate that accounts for transfers in/out. Also tracks graduation over six years.
- Academic Success Rate (ASR): Division II, III variations of the GSR. More inclusive cohort definition reflecting that many Division II and all Division III student-athletes do not receive athletic scholarships.




Example 1: GSR Calculation for Team (Single Cohort)

	Federal Rate	GSR
First-Year Participants 	$\frac{12}{20}$	$\frac{12}{16}$
Transfers In+ (Only used in GSR calculation) 		$\frac{4}{6}$
Overall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal Rate = (Green) / (Green + White + Red) GSR = (Green) / (Green + Red) 	$\frac{12}{20}$ (60%)	$\frac{16}{22}$ (73%)



-  = Graduates
-  = Likely transfers (Departed in good academic standing)
-  = Likely nongraduates (Departed in poor academic standing)


Example 2: GSR Calculation for Team (Single Cohort)

	Federal Rate	GSR
First-Year Participants 	$\frac{1}{1}$	$\frac{1}{1}$
Transfers In+ (Only used in GSR calculation) 		$\frac{0}{3}$
Overall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal Rate = (Green) / (Green + White + Red) GSR = (Green) / (Green + Red) 	$\frac{1}{1}$ (100%)	$\frac{1}{4}$ (25%)

-  = Graduates
-  = Likely transfers (Departed in good academic standing)
-  = Likely nongraduates (Departed in poor academic standing)

Example 3: GSR Calculation for Team (Single Cohort)

	Federal Rate	GSR
First-Year Participants 	$\frac{4}{6}$	$\frac{4}{6}$
Transfers In+ (Only used in GSR calculation) 		$\frac{2}{3}$
Overall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal Rate = (Green) / (Green + White + Red) GSR = (Green) / (Green + Red) 	$\frac{4}{6}$ (67%)	$\frac{6}{9}$ (67%)

-  = Graduates
-  = Likely transfers (Departed in good academic standing)
-  = Likely nongraduates (Departed in poor academic standing)

Division I Graduation Success Rate (GSR)

- Graduation metric developed by NCAA presidents.
- Calculation mandated for student-athletes only. Should not be compared to the federal rate.
- Graduation must occur within six years of initial entry.
- More inclusive than the federal rate because it includes transfers into the school, midyear enrollees and nonscholarship students at schools that do not offer athletics aid.
- Student-athletes who leave school while academically eligible to compete are removed from the calculation (assumed transfers passed on to another school's cohort). Student-athletes who leave school while ineligible to compete are coded as nongraduates (even though many are known to transfer). Both assumptions are imperfect but lead to a graduation rate that better approximates a true student-centered graduation rate (student earns a degree from some college within six years of entering higher education).



Division I Graduation Success Rate (GSR)

- In addition to accounting for likely transfers in/out, the GSR also includes mid-year enrollees (not included in the Federal calculation) and nonscholarship athletes at Division I schools that do not offer athletics scholarships.

Comparison of Graduation Success Rate and Federal Rate Cohorts in Division I

(2018-21 Reporting Cohorts)

	Federal Rate	GSR
Enrolled (Under Federal Definition)	94,470	94,470
Enrolled as Freshman in January	0	3,632
Two-Year College Transfers	0	10,098
Four-Year College Transfers	0	8,320
Nonscholarship Athletes (Only at Schools Not Offering Aid)	0	10,198
Total Enrolled	94,470	126,718 (+34%)
Allowable Exclusions (Death, Military, Church Mission, etc.)	286	370
Left Eligible	0	25,628
Participants on Teams No Longer Sponsored by School	0	2,188
Total Denominator	94,184	98,532 (+5%)

Division II Academic Success Rate (ASR)

- Division II Academic Success Rate (ASR) is calculated in much the same way as the Division I GSR. The primary difference is:
 - The ASR includes all nonscholarship freshmen (“walk-ons”).
 - Whether or not the school or squad offers aid does not matter.
 - As a result, the ASR counts about 50% more student-athletes than the federal graduation rate.

Comparison of Academic Success Rate and Federal Rate Cohorts in Division II

(2018-21 Reporting Cohorts)

	Federal Rate	ASR
Enrolled (Under Federal Definition)	75,548	75,548
Enrolled as Freshman in January	0	1,568
Two-Year College Transfers	0	18,186
Four-Year College Transfers	0	15,416
Nonscholarship Athletes (Only at Schools Not Offering Aid)	0	31,107
Total Enrolled	75,548	141,825 (+88%)
Allowable Exclusions (Death, Military, Church Mission, etc.)	95	281
Left Eligible	0	33,741
Participants on Teams No Longer Sponsored by School	0	3,426
Total Denominator	75,453	104,377 (+38%)

Division III Academic Success Rate (ASR)

- Division III Academic Success Rate (ASR) is calculated in much the same way as the Division I GSR and the Division II ASR. Primary differences include :
 - The 2020 reporting cycle was the first year FGR/ASR data submission was required for all Division III institutions.
 - Data submission was voluntary for the 2016 through 2019 reporting cycles. In each of those years, more than half of Division III institutions reported. The submitted data are representative of the broader Division III membership.
 - The student-athlete cohort is different. Since Division III prohibits athletics scholarships, a student-athlete must be listed on an official roster on or after the first date of competition during the championship season to be included in the cohort.



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