

Graduate Outcomes User Guide

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to provide district staff with the direction and definitions necessary for the efficient submission of data in order to produce the annual statewide graduate follow-up report. The statewide report is used by a variety of educational professionals, especially guidance counselors in their efforts to provide students with information to make sound career decisions upon their graduation from high school.

The Graduate Follow-Up Information System compiles the results of the annual graduate follow-up survey conducted by the districts. This survey is sent to graduates approximately six months after graduation from Wisconsin's Technical Colleges.

The primary objectives of the survey are to identify the current status of Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) program graduates, and to determine the extent to which this current status is related to the graduates' educational programs. The responses to the survey provide information used as tools in career awareness, planning efforts for those making or assisting in career decisions, and provides data to facilitate program planning, evaluation and development.

In October, the State Office selects the graduate follow-up population for each district from the client reporting records for the previous fiscal year. In cases where an individual has graduated from two programs during the fiscal year and is so reported on the client reporting record, only one program is included in the follow-up sample. The sample contains all graduates with a "best" program selected for those that have graduated from multiple programs for each district and is available through the WTCS portal.

After the follow-up survey is completed, each district should **submit the graduate follow-up records to the State Office by January 15 through the WTCS portal**. These records contain the answers chosen by each graduate to the questions on the follow-up survey form. The State Office uses the follow-up records to compile a statewide follow-up report.

One record for each graduate, whether respondent or non-respondent must be submitted to the State Office. Report graduates from associate degree (10), collegiate transfer (20), short-term (30), one-year technical diploma (31), and two-year technical diploma (32) programs. The records will be edited and validated before being accepted for the State Office files. Records with one or more errors will be rejected and available for correction through the WTCS portal. **All rejected records must be corrected and resubmitted to the State Office by February 28.**

Between January 15 and February 28, the State Office maintains a sequential graduate follow-up file by job ID. The record key consists of the district number and the student identification number assigned by the district. To change records previously accepted by the State Office, completely resubmit all valid graduate follow-up records.

When all records are submitted and error free, each college should verify their data in the portal reports the following day.

Questions regarding the graduate follow-up report, this users' guide and data submission or corrections should be directed to:

Hilary Barker (608) 266-3592 E-mail: hilary.barker@wtcsystem.edu

Follow-Up Timetable

The WTCS Graduate/Apprenticeship Completer/Longitudinal/Employer [Follow-Up Timetable](#) provides deadlines for file submissions.

Submission of Records

These records are to be submitted through the WTCS portal. You will name your file using this scheme:

SSSDDTTTTYYYYMMMM.....txt

Where,

- 'SSS' stands for the data system (FLW for graduate outcomes),
- 'DD' stands for the District Number,
- 'TTTT' stands for the Run Type (FULL or PART),
- 'YYYY' stands for the Fiscal Year,
- 'MMMM' stands for the Mode (PROD or TEST),
- '.....' stands for any number of characters to create a distinct file name, and
- 'txt' is the text file extension.

By February 28th, districts must have corrected and resubmitted all records in error and have verified the WAGE OVER MAXIMUM, WAGE BELOW MINIMUM and WEEKLY HOURS warnings. When all wage and hourly information has been verified the red warning will be removed from the portal reports.

NOTE: Colleges can choose to survey the student as they would any graduate **OR** colleges can choose not to survey the student and submit only the answer to question 3 of the follow up survey with the answer of "not available for employment – student" under these conditions:

- The student is currently enrolled in high school (e.g., high school graduation year is 2019, technical college program graduation was in the 2017-18 academic year)
- Or, the student meets these three criteria:
 1. The student is currently enrolled in your college, and
 2. The student is enrolled in a program, and
 3. The student is taking a credit course.

Some colleges may use National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data to determine whether a student is currently enrolled in a different institution. Yet, it is impossible to determine from NSC data whether the student is still enrolled or whether they have left the institution six months after graduation from a Wisconsin Technical College. Thus, districts can only report these students as “not available for employment – student”, if the student has responded to the graduate outcomes survey indicating that they are in fact still a student.

College-level Reporting of Graduate Outcomes Data

When publicly reporting student information, such as graduate outcomes data, care must be taken to ensure that the identity of the students is protected. To comply with FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) regulations, any ‘subgroup disaggregations of the data may not be published if the results would yield personally identifiable information about an individual student’ ([NCES 2010 Brief](#)). Thus, subgroups of fewer than five students need to be suppressed and their information cannot be reported.

Also, any personally identifiable information such as a graduate’s job title and employer cannot be published in a way that is identifiable (e.g., listing each job title and employer for every student who responds). If colleges would like to report job titles and employers, this can be done by listing just the most common titles and employer groups for programs that have at least 10 or more graduates. For example,

Graduates of the Marketing Program are often employed as advertising specialists, account managers, assistant managers and business development specialists six months after graduation. These graduates are commonly employed at A&G Consulting, Newtron Digital, Fly Media and Ace Studio.

If there are fewer than 10 graduates in a given year, then first aggregate graduate job title and employer information across the most recent (e.g., five) years of graduate survey data to identify and report these common (e.g., top five) job titles and employer groups.

Best Practices

To help students understand the importance of the graduate outcomes survey, provide college faculty with talking points to share with graduating students. These talking points should address: (1) what the graduate outcomes report is, (2) why it is important (e.g.,

program improvement, track student graduation success, use information to help future students, etc.), and (3) how the information is used. This best practice is highlighted from Northeast Wisconsin Technical College.

Additionally, colleges could send postcards to graduates prior to the graduate outcomes survey to (1) continue to convey the importance of the survey to students and (2) determine which addresses may be invalid. This best practice is highlighted from Nicolet Area Technical College.

Recommendations for Gathering Employer Information

To collect employer information and consent to contact the graduates' employers, it appears that the best option is to provide an opt out check box. In this option, the supervisor/department name is part of the employer contact information, and then there is a checkbox provided to opt out of allowing the college to contact the employer for the Employer Satisfaction survey. See this example from BTC:

9. Please provide the following job information:	Note: Sometimes BTC will contact employers for input on programs or to serve on advisory committees. In larger organizations, it can be very difficult unless we can address the request to a specific person. If you do NOT want BTC to contact your supervisor, please check the box at right. <input type="checkbox"/>
Job Title _____	
Employer _____	
Work Address _____	
City _____ State _____ Zip _____	
Name of Immediate Supervisor or Department _____	

Three key considerations for this opt out check box are:

1. Wording. We recommend a short explanation, such as:
 - a. "The college sometimes contacts employers to determine whether we are meeting workforce needs. The survey is not an evaluation of you as an employee. If you do not want us to contact your employer, check the box at right." Or
 - b. "The college sometimes contacts employers to determine whether we are meeting workforce needs. If you do not want us to contact your employer, check the box at right."
2. Appearance. It does seem that colleges that draw more attention to the opt out language by italicizing the opt out text, for instance, have a lower percentage of graduates who consent to allowing us to contact their employer.
3. Location. Most colleges put the opt out directly after/beside the employer contact information. Yet, one college provides the opt out after the wage and weekly hours

questions. It is currently unclear whether having the opt out later in the survey increases the percent of graduates who provide consent to contact their employer.

Based on the survey instruments and employer response rates, we do not recommend asking a yes/no question for whether the college can contact the graduate's employer. This approach appeared to have a lower percent of graduates consenting to allow us to contact their employer.

Some colleges' approach involved opting in – if a graduate supplied supervisor/department information then they were consenting to the Employer Survey. This approach may work well, but there needs to be transparency to the graduate about how the supervisor information will be used. (e.g., adding something like: 'Why do we ask? We will send the Employer Survey to your supervisor. The college contacts employers to determine whether we are meeting workforce needs.')

Wage Conversion

In the Graduate Outcomes Survey, we ask students to report both an hourly wage and yearly earnings, if available. If the graduate only provides one of these, then the portal will estimate the missing wage value based on the below calculation. Due to this calculation, file submissions can take a long time to process in the Portal, and if the wage calculation results in an extremely high wage (\$1 million per year or more) then the file upload will fail altogether.

Hourly wage reported: $\text{Hourly Wage} \times \text{Weekly Work Hours} \times 4.333 \times 12$

Yearly Earnings reported: $\text{Yearly Earnings} / 12 / 4.333 / \text{Weekly Work Hours}$

Where 4.333 is the average number of weeks per month.

State Board Overview & Reports

Graduate follow-up data will be edited by the WTCS to ensure that it is valid. Refer to the Graduate Follow-Up Record Layout for a description of each data element and the reporting codes. Edit violations will result in rejection of the record. All rejected records must be corrected and resubmitted to the WTCS office by **February 28**.

When all records have been corrected, the WTCS closes the graduate follow-up file to submissions and the reports in the portal are finalized. These reports include:

- FLW300 – Program Snap-Shot Report: labor information, salary, and location by program, division and statewide
- FLW305 – Employed Related Occupational Titles Report by program, division and statewide

- FLW372 – Satisfaction Report
- FLW414 – Graduates Surveyed by sex, ethnic, Degree, Division and age
- FLW500 –Job Placement, Wages and Hours worked by Program by Division
- FLW502 –number of graduates, respondents, labor, employment, wage and hour information grouped by type of Job Placement, Wages and Hours worked by Program by degree.

Because the survey sample file excludes graduates who completed the same program at your college within the past 10 years (see [Sample File Description](#)), it will not match the counts shown in the FLW portal reports. The portal reports display the total number of graduates by program or overall, including all graduates, even those who completed the same program at your college within the past 10 years. As a result, graduate counts in the FLW portal reports may be higher than the number of students included in your survey sample file.

A statewide compilation of this data is published and distributed to the approximately 1,200 high schools, legislature and other agencies throughout the state.

Graduate Outcomes Survey

Please check one answer.

1. How do you feel about the training you received at our school?
 - Very Satisfied
 - Satisfied
 - Unsatisfied
 - Very Unsatisfied

2. What was your primary reason for attending our school?
 - Preparation for getting a job
 - Career change
 - Improvement of existing job skills
 - Preparation for further education
 - Personal interest
 - Other: _____

3. Which **one** of the below best describes you?
 - I am employed** (I may also be taking courses, but my job is my main focus).
 - I am a student** (I may also have one or more jobs but attending school/college is my main focus).
 - I am not employed** but am looking for a job.
 - I am not employed** and not looking for a job.
 - I am on active duty in the military.**

NOTE: If you are currently employed or in the military, please continue with Question 4. If not, please stop here.

4. When did you start working in your present occupation?
 - Before enrolling at our college
 - While attending our college
 - After leaving our college

5. Is your job related to the training you received at our college?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Yes, I work as an EMT or Firefighter, but it is NOT my primary occupation (optional)

6. Please list the following job information:
 - A. Job Title:

- B. Name of employer:

Company or Firm

Work address:

Street

City, State, Zip

Name of immediate supervisor:

First name Last name

- C. What is your present wage? If available, please provide both.

Hourly base wage: \$_____

Yearly Earnings: \$_____

- D. How many hours do you work during an average work week?

_____ Hours per week

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sample File Description

The sample file for who to survey is available in the WTCS portal for the specific fiscal year. Note that this uses the best program methodology to match each graduate to their most terminal completed program. *Please note, that the sample file for who to survey will exclude students who have graduated from the same program from your college in the prior 10 years.* Yet, the following programs are excluded from this and thus if the student graduated from one of these programs twice in the past 10 year, they would still show up in our sample file:

- AAA (20-800-1) or AAS (20-800-2)
- Criminal Justice (30-504-1)
- EMT programs (30-531-1; 30-531-2 and 30-531-3)
- CNA program (30-543-1)

Position	Description
1	Record Identifier "S"
2-3	District Number
4-12	District Student Identification Number
13-30	Client Name
31-36 (or 37 if a 7-digit number)	Program Number

*Best Program Graduate Follow-Up calculation, used for graduate follow up sample:

1. If Student graduated from 1 program, then this is the Graduate Follow-Up Program (GFP).
2. If Student graduated from multiple programs, use the following tiebreakers (in the order listed):
 - a. Highest program rigor by aid code (10, 20, 32, 31, 30, 50) becomes GFP. If equal,
 - b. Total course credits reported in Client Reporting that are attributable to the program using the approved program curriculum determines GFP. If equal,
 - c. Total number of courses reported in Client Reporting that are attributable to the program using the approved program curriculum determines GFP. If equal,
 - d. Total credits in the Program Curriculum file for the approved program curriculum determines GFP. If equal,
 - e. Total number of courses in the Program Curriculum file for the approved program curriculum determines GFP. If equal,
 - f. Lowest Instructional Area number in the programs reported in Client Reporting.

Record Layout

This section defines the data elements, indicates the position and applicable codes and corresponding questionnaire item numbers which the districts should use when creating the graduate follow-up survey questionnaire.

Position 1: Record Identifier

“C” is the record identifier that specifies the type of record submitted.

Positions 2-3: District Number

The District Number must identify your district. The Wisconsin Technical College System has 16 districts, each of which is assigned a number. The district numbers and names are as follows:

Technical College Number	Technical College Name
01	Chippewa Valley
02	Western
03	Southwest Wisconsin
04	Madison Area
05	Blackhawk
06	Gateway
08	Waukesha County Area
09	Milwaukee Area
10	Moraine Park
11	Lakeshore
12	Fox Valley
13	Northeast Wisconsin
14	Mid-State
15	Northcentral
16	Nicolet Area
17	Northwood Tech

Positions 4-12: Client Identification Number

The Client Identification Number is a unique number assigned to each client (the student's college ID number) upon enrollment in a course. This unique number is entered on all client reporting records, apprenticeship completer, graduate follow-up and longitudinal follow-up records. This number does not change regardless of when or in which courses the person is enrolled.

This must be numeric and match the ID given in the graduate sample.

Positions 13-18: Program Number

The Program Number is a unique six-digit number assigned when a program is approved for operation in a district. The number identifies one or more integrated courses which supply the student with the knowledge, skills or competencies needed to achieve occupational goals.

For associate degree (10), collegiate transfer (20), short-term (30), one-year technical diploma (31), and two-year technical diploma (32) programs, the program number from his or her client reporting record is to be entered on the graduate follow-up record. In cases where an individual has graduated from two programs, the district must use the program shown on the follow up sample for the graduate follow-up record. Only one follow-up record should be submitted per graduate.

Position 19: Blank (not used)

Unless the graduate completed a 7-digit program, in this case the 7th digit will be in this position followed directly by the reply status code.

Position 20: Reply Status

The Reply Status code specifies if the graduate filled in the follow-up survey. It is also the district's indication as to whether the follow-up questionnaire was sent to a graduate.

- 1 = Questionnaire filled in
- 2 = Questionnaire not filled in/not returned
- Leave blank if no questionnaire was sent to graduate.

Position 21: Satisfaction with Training (Question 1)

The Satisfaction With Training Code expresses the opinion of the graduate as indicated on the graduate follow-up survey.

- 1 = Very satisfied
- 2 = Satisfied
- 3 = Unsatisfied
- 4 = Very unsatisfied
- Blank = No response

Position 22: Reason for Attending (Question 2)

The Reason for Attending Code expresses the primary reason why the graduate attended a WTCS college as indicated on the graduate follow-up survey.

- 1 = Preparation for job

- 2 = Career change
- 3 = Improvement of existing job skills
- 4 = Preparation for further education
- 5 = Personal interest
- 6 = Other
- Blank = No response

Position 23: Present Status (Question 3)

The Present Status Code is the current employment status of a student as reported on the follow-up survey.

- 1 = both 'I am Employed' & 'I am on active duty in the military'
- 2 = I am not employed but am looking for a job
- 3 = I am a student
- 6 = I am not employed and not looking for a job
- Blank = no response
- Codes 4 and 5 are not used for survey response files (these are historic codes for previous survey formats)

Position 24: When Work Started (Question 4)

The When Work Started Code indicates when the graduate began working on his/her job as reported on the graduate follow-up survey.

- 1 = Before enrolling at college
- 2 = While at college
- 3 = After leaving college
- Blank = No response

Position 25: Job Related to Training (Question 5)

The Job Related to Training Code indicates if the graduate's job is related to his/her training received at the college.

- 1 = Yes
- 2 = No
- 3 = Yes, I work as an EMT or Firefighter, but it is NOT my primary occupation
- Blank = No response

Note, that the use of code 3 is optional to use at the discretion of the district. It will not be included in the "generic" survey, but districts can add it to their survey if they wish.

If a student's response of whether their job is related to their training seems questionable, you can follow-up with the student to confirm their answer. If you are unable to follow-up with the student, then keep their answer as is – do not change their response. This question is assessing the student's perception of how their training and employment are related.

Position 26: Employer Location (Question 6B)

The Employer Location Code specifies where the graduate's employer is located in relation to the district and the state as reported on the follow-up survey.

- 1 = In district
- 2 = In Wisconsin, outside of district
- 3 = Outside of Wisconsin
- 4 = Cannot determine where respondent is employed
- Blank = No response

Positions 27-33: Base Hourly Wage

Enter wage amounts as whole numbers representing dollars and cents without a decimal point in the following format: 99999999 (seven digits total).

For example, base hourly wages of \$35.00 would be recorded as: 0003500

If the graduate did not supply their base hourly wage, please leave this field blank.

NOTE: If there is a valid Wage for an individual that falls outside the standard minimum and maximum range (above \$1000/month and below \$7000/month), this record will generate a Wage warning message. All Wage warnings should be confirmed as valid wages.

Position 34: Blank (not used)

Positions 35-42: Yearly Earnings

Enter wage amounts as whole numbers representing dollars and cents without a decimal point in the following format: 99999999 (seven digits total).

For example, yearly earnings of \$114,200.00 would be recorded as: 11420000

And yearly earnings of \$80997.00 would be recorded as: 08099700

If the graduate did not supply their yearly earnings, please leave this field blank.

NOTE: If there is a valid Wage for an individual that falls outside the standard minimum and maximum range (above \$1000/month and below \$7000/month), this record will generate a Wage warning message. All Wage warnings should be confirmed as valid wages.

Position 43: Blank (not used)

Positions 44-45: Weekly Work Hours

This should be 01-80, rounded to the nearest whole hour. Leave blank if question was not answered. **If the graduate does not provide any wage information, then also leave blank even if they do provide weekly hours** (otherwise the portal will interpret this as the graduate working for free).

NOTE: If hours fall outside the standard 00-80 range, the record will generate a Weekly Work Hours warning message.

Positions 46-48: Blank (not used)

Positions 49-88: Occupational Title

This is a 40-character field which states the apprenticeship graduate's occupational title. Leave blank if questionnaire was not filled in.

Error/Warning Messages

Error Number	Error Name	Troubleshooting
03	Invalid Client ID	Change to all numeric. This must be numeric, and the ID given in the sample. If the ID on the sample is less than 9 digits long add leading zeros as needed.
04	Invalid Program Number	Resubmit with valid Program Number. The Program Number from which the client graduated must be approved for your district and match the program on the graduate sample.
06	Invalid Reply Status	Resubmit with valid Reply Status Code (1, 2, or blank).
07	Invalid Question 1 – Satisfaction with Training	Resubmit with valid Satisfaction with Training Code (1, 2, 3, 4, or blank).
08	Invalid Question 2 – Reason for Attending	Resubmit with valid Reason for Attending Code (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or blank).
09	Invalid Question 2 – Present Status	Resubmit with valid Present Status Code (1, 2, 3, 6 or blank).
10	Invalid Question 4 – When Work Started	Resubmit with valid When Work Started Code (1, 2, 3 or blank).
11	Invalid Question 5 – Job Related to Training	Resubmit with valid Job Related to Training Code (1, 2, 3 or blank).
12	Invalid Question 6B – Employer Location	Resubmit with valid Employer Location Code (1, 2, 3, 4 or blank).
13	Invalid Question 6C – Wages Not Numeric	Resubmit with valid numeric wages or leave blank if questionnaire was not filled in. Format is 99999V99.
14	Invalid Question 6C – Wages Below Minimum Warning	If wages are below \$1,000 per month (or \$12k per year), then this warning will display. Please verify that the wages were correctly entered in the 99999999 format.
15	Invalid Question 6C – Wages Above Maximum Warning	If wages are above \$7,000 per month (or \$84k per year), then this warning will display. Please verify that the wages were correctly entered in the 99999999 format.
17	Invalid Question 6D – Weekly Work Hours	Resubmit with numeric Weekly Work Hours or leave blank.

Error Number	Error Name	Troubleshooting
18	Invalid Question 6D – Weekly Work Hours Warning	If above 80, please verify for accuracy.
20	Duplicate Records – Resubmit One	Resubmit one record for the identified graduate. Only one record per graduate may be submitted to the WTCSB. If duplicate records are submitted, both will be rejected. The program and client ID must match the information provided in the graduate sample.
21	No Client Master Record	If Client Identification Number is incorrect on the graduate follow-up record, correct and resubmit. The Client Identification Number must be present in the College’s Sample File for graduates to survey for the specific fiscal year.
22	Not Reporting in this Program	Verify that student graduated from this program and matches the ‘best program’ number that is provided within the Sample File. If Program Number error is found, correct and resubmit.
24	Incompatible Reply & Present Statuses & Reason	Reconcile incompatibility and resubmit. If the Reply Status Code is 2 (questionnaire not filled in), the Reason for Attending Code is 1-6 and Present Status Code is 1-6, the record will be rejected on the basis that a questionnaire that was not filled in should not have a Reason for Attending Code or a Present Status Code. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C 20 Reply Status Code • C 22 Reason for Attending Code • C 23 Present Status Code
25	Incompatible Present Status and Employer Location	Reconcile incompatibility and resubmit. If the graduate is not employed (Present Status Code = blank, 2, 3, or 6), then the Employer Location Code must be blank. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C 23 Present Status Code • C 26 Employer Location Code

Error Number	Error Name	Troubleshooting
26	Incompatible Statuses	<p>Reconcile incompatibility and resubmit. If one or more of questions 4-6D indicate the person is employed, and question 3, Present Status, is anything other than (1) employed, the record will be rejected with incompatible statuses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C 23 Present Status Code • C 24 When Work Started Code • C 25 Job Related to Training Code • C 26 Employer Location Code • C 27-33 and 35-42 Wage • C 44-45 Weekly Work Hours

Relationship with Other Information Systems

Client Reporting

When the client reporting file is closed in the fall, the WTCS produces a file of all accepted graduates for each district. One program per graduate will be identified on the graduate follow up sample using the best program calculation when necessary and available in the WTCS portal. One survey is to be sent to each graduate on the graduate follow up sample file. Only graduates on the graduate follow-up sample file will be accepted for the graduate follow-up report.

Employer Satisfaction

Once every four years, an employer satisfaction survey is conducted to collect data on employers' perceptions of recent graduates of the Wisconsin Technical College System. Participants in the employer survey consist only of employers of graduate respondents who gave the information for the district to contact their employer and who reported being employed in an occupation related to their training.

5-Year Follow-up

Once every four years, a five-year longitudinal follow-up survey is conducted to gather data regarding the activities and perceptions of graduates five years after their graduation from Wisconsin's Technical Colleges. The WTCS generates a file of graduates from five years ago who were surveyed at that time. The objectives of this survey include examining the changes in selected characteristics, employment, and educational circumstances five years after graduation.