# Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual A-500: Measurable Skill Gains

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## Introduction

Measurable Skill Gains (MSGs) are a measure of the documented progress (academic, technical, occupational, or other) that a customer makes in a training or education program toward obtaining a recognized postsecondary credential or reaching employment-related performance outcome. This progress is captured in ReHabWorks and reported throughout the life of the case.

## A-501: Legal Authority and References

20 CFR Part 677 (and reprinted in 34 CFR Parts 361 and 463)

US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 10-16, issued December 19, 2016, and entitled "Performance Accountability Guidance for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I, Title II, Title III and Title IV Core Programs"

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, §116, Performance Accountability System establishes performance accountability indicators and performance reporting requirements to assess the effectiveness of states and local workforce development areas in achieving positive outcomes for individuals served by the workforce development system's six core programs. Measurable Skill Gains (MSGs) measure the outcomes of WIOA program participants in education or training programs that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment.

Requirements related to the implementation and operation of the performance accountability system are described under WIOA §116, including implementing joint regulations in 20 CFR Part 677 (and reprinted in 34 CFR Parts 361 and 463).

## A-502: What Can Be Reported as MSG?

The following are accepted as MSGs for federal reporting:

* educational functioning level progress;
* secondary diploma or recognized credential;
* secondary or postsecondary transcript/report card showing achievement of academic standards;
* satisfactory or better progress report toward established milestones; and
* passage of an exam required for a specific occupation.

Refer to VRSM A-504: Types of Documented Progress for Measurable Skills Gains for additional information on documentation requirements.

## A-503: What Cannot be Reported as MSG?

The following are not considered MSG's for federal reporting:

* yearly progression in special education courses working toward a Special Education Certificate of Attendance;
* transportation skills attainment;
* soft skills training;
* pretests and posttests demonstrating mastery of orientation and mobility training; and
* Documentation of attainment of Microsoft Office skills in JAWS.

In addition to the above list, pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) will not generally be associated with MSGs. For more information about Pre-ETS, refer to VRSM C-1305-6: Providing Pre-Employment Transition Services.

### 18+ Programs

Traditional 18+ high school programs, in which students who have completed their academic requirements participate in a variety of work based learning and other job readiness activities that do not qualify as a MSG because the students do not earn credits or meet training milestones. For more information about 18+ programs, refer to VRSM C-1302-4: Local Education Agency.

## A-504: Types of Documented Progress for Measurable Skill Gains

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act identifies the following five types of documented progress for Measurable Skill Gains (MSGs):

1. Achievement of at least one educational functioning level (EFL) by a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level.

An EFL gain is advancement of an educational level by making measurable improvement in educational attainment as measured by:

* + a pretest and posttest;
  + awarding credits or units; or
  + enrollment in a postsecondary education or training program after completion of a secondary school program.

An example of an EFL would be moving from a 9th grade reading level to a 10th grade reading level. The tests typically used for this include the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and the Basic English Skills Test (BEST).

Examples of documentation that confirm an EFL MSG include:

* + pretest and post-test results measuring an EFL gain (for example, TABE, BEST Plus);
  + an adult high school transcript showing the EFL gain through awarding credits or units; or
  + enrollment in postsecondary education or training determined through data match, survey documentation, or program notes.

1. Attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.

An example of attainment of a secondary diploma would be graduating from high school or obtaining a GED. Examples of documentation to confirm this MSG would include a:

* + high school transcript;
  + secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; or
  + report card.

1. Secondary or postsecondary progress toward a recognized credential.

An example of secondary or postsecondary progress towards a recognized credential would be successfully completing a semester of academic training. Examples of documentation to confirm this MSG include a:

* + transcript; or
  + report card.

Note: There must be a sufficient number of credit hours documented to show that the customer is meeting standards identified in the customer's Individualized Plan for Employment.

1. Satisfactory or better progress toward established milestones.

An example of satisfactory progress towards established milestones would be completion of On-the-Job-Training (OJT) or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones. Examples of documentation to confirm this MSG include:

* + progress reports or evaluations from an employer or training provider documenting satisfactory or better progress toward established milestones; or
  + satisfactory completion of a training period.

1. Successfully passing an exam that is required for an occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills.

An example of successfully passing an exam that is required for an occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills would be attaining a plumbing apprentice license or other occupational license or certification. Examples of documentation to confirm this MSG include:

* + results of a knowledge-based exam or certification of completion;
  + documentation from the employer or training provider;
  + documentation demonstrating progress in attaining technical or occupational skills; or
  + a copy of a credential that is required for a particular occupation and is only earned after the passage of an exam (for example, an occupational license or certification).

## A-505: Documenting Measurable Skill Gains

Measurable Skill Gains (MSGs) must be clearly documented in ReHabWorks (RHW) and in the case file.

MSGs are captured in RHW from the Education History page, the Training Information page, and the Semester/Grading Period page. These pages must be updated after the customer completes each semester or grading period to ensure accurate reporting to the Rehabilitation Services Administration and other stakeholders. Additionally, all information entered in these pages, including “date registered”, must have verifying source documentation.

For date registered, if the customer was already enrolled in a training or education program at the time of VR application, use the application date. If the customer enrolls in a training or education program after completing the application but before IPE, use the IPE date for “date registered”. For customers who enroll in a training or education program any time after the IPE date, the date registered field should reflect the actual date of program enrollment. The following examples of source documentation are acceptable for verifying enrollment date:

* a copy of the enrollment record;
* file documentation with notes from training program staff;
* school records;
* a transcript or report card; or
* data match with postsecondary data system.

An MSG is captured in RHW when VR staff enters an end date for the semester or grading period in the RHW Semester/Grading Period page. The end date in RHW must match the end date on the supporting documentation. If there is no end date on supporting documentation (for example, the screenshot of final grades has no end date), then the final day of the semester/grading period noted on the training institution’s academic calendar is used as the end date in RHW. A copy of the calendar must be included with the supporting documentation in the case file. For more information, refer to ReHabWorks Users Guide B-300: Education History.

VR staff must also document MSGs in RHW case notes to provide specific details about the customers progress and the reason for the update to the Education History page. This may be captured in the system-generated case note from the comments entered by VR staff when the pages are updated.

VR counselors explain the customer’s responsibilities when developing an individualized plan for employment (IPE). Customers who participate in secondary and post-secondary training programs that support their IPE educational and employment goals are responsible for providing supporting documentation at the end of the semester or grading period. Counselors are encouraged to schedule check-in meetings with customers shortly after each semester or grading period. These meetings are used to ensure that the required supporting documentation is included in the case file and in RHW; they may also serve as an opportunity for counseling and guidance.

Copies of supporting documentation, such as grade reports, transcripts, certificates, and diplomas, must be obtained from the customer as soon as the documentation becomes available at the end of the semester or grading period. Staff must attempt to contact the customer to obtain the required documents for the type of MSG within eight weeks of the end of the semester or grading period, but no later than the start of the next semester or grading period. Electronic documents are acceptable and must be maintained in the customer's case file. Multiple documents to show proof of the MSG are preferred but not required.

## A-506: Calculating Measurable Skill Gains

All VR customers enrolled in education programs that lead to secondary, recognized postsecondary credentials, or employment identified by their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) are counted in the denominator for that program year. This includes customers whose cases are closed during a program year as well as those who continue to receive services.

MSGs are captured and reported throughout the life of the case and at case closure. Customers who continue to receive services as well as those whose cases are closed during the reporting period are included in the measure.