



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS | GRADUATION RATE METHODOLOGY

1. Why are we changing the graduation rate now?

In 2018-19, the Department began its mid-point evaluation of Education Renewal and Innovation (ERI) to determine what is working, where the gaps are and whether any programs require course correction.

It was decided that the high school graduation rate methodology should be reviewed at the same time as ERI to determine whether the data could be better reflective of the education system as a whole, and whether student outcomes and achievements are improving.

2. Why is the new approach better?

To date, the graduation rate has been a percentage of the 18 year-old students across the NWT. This approach has led to inflated numbers because it was sensitive to population fluctuations and socio-economic issues. Also, due to varied population sizes across the NWT, a small difference in numbers can significantly skew numbers.

The new approach takes a more precise snapshot of grade 12 graduates within a given year. This new approach is not overly influenced by population fluctuations (such as out-migration), is easier to understand and allows different pathways to graduation by considering grads up to 21 years old.

3. Does this mean all previous data was inaccurate?

The previous methodology, based on population, was similar to models used in other jurisdictions across Canada. That approach was based on a population that included 18 year-olds, mature students and those that graduated from Aurora College upgrading programs, and was determined to be the best methodology for the NWT at the time.

In recent years, the data have become more sensitive to fluctuations in the population of 18 year-olds in the NWT. This meant that while our graduation rates appeared to be increasing, those increases might actually have been a result of the 18 year-old population decreasing rather than a rise in the actual number of graduates.

4. Why won't a cohort-based approach work?

Cohort-based methodologies, like the ones used by the Council for Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) and recommended by the Office of the Auditor General, follow a population of students who may or may not graduate. These methodologies would not provide an accurate snapshot of graduation rates in the NWT in that given year, because they do not use an accurate out-migration rate for the NWT and they also impose a 3-year "on-time" vs. anytime graduation schedule, despite the fact that high school students in the NWT can take a variety of pathways to graduation.