

Raw Data Upload Guide

This guide explains how to extract and report the five (5) student-level data files for use in calculating the VFA Student Progress & Outcomes metrics. We encourage you to include all applicable data so that the VFA system can accurately reflect your students' progress and outcomes at your institution.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC FILE	Includes race/ethnicity, age, gender, Pell awards, and prior college experience
STUDENT COURSE FILE	Includes all courses taken at institution within reporting timeframe
STUDENT DEVELOPMENTAL NEED FILE	Includes level of developmental need in math, English, and/or reading
STUDENT COMPLETION FILE	Includes all formal awards conferred by the institution within the reporting timeframe
STUDENT TRANSFER FILE	Includes all instances of transfer to another two- or four-year institutions within reporting timeframe

General Requirements

The following guide contains tables that show the columns and data that must appear in each of the five (5) raw files.

Each data file should contain:

1. One header row
2. Individual student detail rows

All columns in the header row must appear in the order shown in the tables shown below.

Fields containing no value may be left blank, as indicated in the comments column of the layout tables.

Your files must be uploaded as CSV (comma delimited) files; files may be created directly from your ERP using the format specified or converted from an Excel file.

Legend and Notes:

"N" is used to indicate numeric values

"AN" is alphanumeric values

"D" is date values formatted as MM/DD/YYYY (month/day/full year)

Sample Completion file in Excel (.xls):

Cohort_Year_Type	Institution_ID	Student_ID	Award_Type	Award_Description	Award_Date
6	184828	12956	Associate	AA	05/21/2010
6	184828	12961	Certificate		06/01/2011

Sample Completion file in Comma Delimited (.csv):

```
Cohort_Year_Type,Institution_ID,Student_ID,Award_Type,Award_Description,Award_Date  
6,184828,12956,Associate,AA,05/21/2010  
6,184828,12961,Certificate,,06/01/2011
```

Please follow these steps in preparing and uploading your Raw Data files:

- Step 1:** Define your college's Main Cohort of students who entered your institution six years ago (fall 2010). Definition of the Main Cohort begins on pg. 8 of the [VFA Metrics Manual](#).
- Students in the other cohort types (Credential Seeking or First Time in College) will be determined by the VFA system.
- Step 2:** Using the following pages, create 5 comma delimited (csv) files using the Field Name as the column headers.
- Step 3:** Report the cohort and corresponding data using the Student Demographic file. Each student should appear only once.
- Step 4:** Report all courses taken, awards received, and transfer activity within the reporting timeframe using the Student Course, Student Completion, and Student Transfer files. Students may have multiple entries into these files.
- Step 5:** Determine which students in the cohort has a developmental need in math, English, and/or reading. Developmental referral methods are defined starting on pg. 20. Report students' developmental need status and their level of need in the subject(s) in the Student Developmental Need file. Every student in the main cohort will have a single record in this file.
- Step 6:** Log in to the [VFA website](#). From the [My VFA](#) page, click [Input VFA Data](#).
- Click Set-up Data Entry, choosing *Raw Data Files Upload* for the Two Year Cohort and Six Year Cohort. Hit Submit.
 - From the Data Landing page, click Raw Data Files Upload.
- Step 7:** Upload files into the Raw Data Files Upload section of the VFA system. All files must be uploaded as .csv files. Correct any format errors indicated by the upload system.
- Step 8:** Enter your college's fall and second full term start and end dates for the applicable years.
- "Second term" is typically spring for colleges on semester system and winter for colleges on trimester system.
- Step 9:** Click "Validate & Process Raw File Collection" to begin processing the raw files and calculating the metrics.

You will repeat the process for the Two Year Cohort (fall 2014).

Commonly Asked Questions:

Which Student Populations Should Be Reported?

All students in your college's **VFA Main Cohort** of students should be reported in each set of files. The Main Cohort is defined as all students who have completed high school (or the equivalent) who were enrolled for credit at your institution for the first time at any time in the fall of the cohort year, regardless of prior postsecondary education experiences. Please see pg. 8 of the [VFA Metrics Manual](#) for complete definition of the Main Cohort; or pg. 4 of this guide for coding instructions. The Credential Seeking and First Time in College sub-cohorts will be calculated from the data you report in the raw files.

Cohort Years for the 2017 collection cycle:

- Six Year Cohort = Fall 2010
- Two Year Cohort = Fall 2014

What Is My College's Institution ID?

Your college's VFA Institution ID is located on the Raw Data Files Upload page of the VFA website and on the Data Landing page next to the Raw Data Files Upload button. This numerical ID can be up to 6 characters in length. If you cannot find your Institution ID, please email VFA@aacc.nche.edu.

How Should Student IDs Be Reported?

The Student ID is a unique identifier that the VFA system uses to track a student between the raw files. The Student ID may be a mixture of numbers, letters, or symbols. Social Security Numbers should not be used. It is up to the discretion of the college to decide whether to use the Student IDs from their systems or to mask the IDs.

How Should The Raw Files Be Submitted And Processed?

All five (5) raw files should be uploaded to the VFA system from the Raw Data Files Upload page. Once all five files are uploaded for the college and no errors are found, the user must then process the raw file collection by clicking "Validate and Process Raw Data File Collection".

For entities reporting data for multiple colleges, a combined file can be uploaded using the Multi College Upload. Upon upload, this combined file will be parsed out and loaded into temporary tables for each of the colleges. You must then enter the academic dates and click "Validate and Process Raw Files Collection" for **each** college in order to calculate the metrics. Please see the *Centralized Reporting Guide* below for more details.

When Are The Deadlines For Reporting VFA Data?

VFA data collection begins in March and data must be submitted and locked by the end of August. The VFA system shuts down and all data must be published in September. Please view the [VFA Data Collection Schedule](#) page for the exact dates for this collection cycle.

In What Format Should The Files Be Uploaded?

The raw files must be uploaded as CSV (comma delimited) files. Files may be created directly from your ERP using the format specified; or input into an Excel file and then saved as a CSV (comma delimited) file.

Where Do I Upload The Raw Files?

The raw files should be uploaded to the Raw Data Files Upload area of the VFA data tool. To access this area, sign in to the VFA website (<http://vfa.aacc.nche.edu>) and click on "My VFA". From the My VFA page, click "Input VFA Data". This will bring you to the Data Landing page. From the Data Landing page, click "Raw Data Files Upload."

Questions? If you have a question or need assistance, contact us at VFA@aacc.nche.edu.

Student Demographic File

Which Students Should Be Reported In The Raw Files?

All students in the **VFA Main Cohort** should be reported in the raw files. Each student should only appear once in the Student Demographic file. Students in the Main Cohort are defined as:

- Student has graduated high school (or equivalent); OR demonstrates ability to benefit (as defined by Title IV Federal financial aid eligibility); AND
- Student enrolled in credit or developmental education coursework that began within the traditional fall term parameters of cohort year (2010 or 2014); AND
- Student remained enrolled after the add/drop date of the course; AND
- No record of student enrollment (in credit OR developmental education) at institution prior to the summer term of the cohort year (2010 or 2014)

If the student has not graduated from high school or was exclusively enrolled in non-credit or ESL coursework at your institution, they should not be included in the cohort. However, once these students begin taking credit or developmental coursework at your institution (after graduating high school) they will be eligible for inclusion in the cohorts.

Which Students Should Be Flagged as FTIC?

The FTIC flag tells the system which students should be included in the First Time in College sub-cohort. To be included in the FTIC cohort:

- In the **VFA Main Cohort** ; AND
- Degree seeking (as defined by IPEDS); AND
- First time in post-secondary education after high school; AND
- Does not qualify for any exclusions, as defined by IPEDS.

The student may be enrolled part-time or full-time.

What Types Of Credits Should Be Included In The Additional_Credits Columns?

Additional_Credits is the sum of all semester credit hours that were accepted by the college (based on institutional practice) and applied to the student's record that were not reported in the VFA Student Course file. To be included, the learning activity for which the credits are being awarded must have occurred within the specified timeframe (by the end of the second academic year for Additional_Credits_1to2 or between the start of the third academic year and by the end of the sixth academic year for Additional_Credits_3to6). Examples of additional credits include advanced placement (AP) credits earned while enrolled in high school, credits earned at another institution (i.e. credits transferred in), credit for military experience, and credits awarded through prior learning assessment.

Layout Table: Student Demographic File

Column	Field Name	Field Length	Type	Comments
A	Cohort_Year_Type	1	N	Code indicating whether student is in the Two Year Cohort or the Six Year Cohort. 2 = Two Year Cohort, 6 = Six Year Cohort
B	Institution_ID	6	N	Unique ID assigned to the college by AACC. This ID can be found on the top of the college's <i>Raw Data Files Upload</i> data tool. (This is different from IPEDS ID)
C	Student_ID	16	AN	The unique ID assigned to the student by the college
D	Race	1	AN	Code indicating the student's race: I = American Indian or Alaska Native, A = Asian, B = Black, P = Hawaiian Native or Pacific Islander, H = Hispanic, W = White, 2 = Two or more, U = Unknown, N = Nonresident Alien
E	Gender	1	AN	Code indicating the student's gender: M = Male, F = Female, U = Unknown or other
F	Pell	1	AN	Code indicating if Pell grant was awarded at any time within cohort tracking period: Y = Yes, N = No
G	Age	2	N	Age of the student at the start of the first, fall term at the college. <i>Nulls will be processed as 'unknown'.</i>
H	Enrollment_Status	1	AN	Code indicating enrollment status of the student during first, fall term of enrollment: F = Full Time, P = Part Time
I	FTIC	1	AN	Student is degree seeking and first time in post-secondary education, as defined by IPEDS (First Time in College): Y = Yes, N = No
J	Additional_Credits_1to2	6	N	Sum of all other semester credits applied to the student's record by the end of the second academic year that are not reported in the VFA Student Course file. Values can be a mix of integers and decimals. <i>Nulls will be processed as zeroes. ###.##</i>
K	Additional_Credits_3to6	6	N	Sum of all other semester credits applied to the student's record between the start of year three and the end of the tracking period that are not reported in the VFA Student Course file. Valid values can be a mix of integers and decimals. <i>###.##</i> <i>This column is only reported for the Six Year Cohort.</i> <i>Nulls will be processed as zeroes.</i>

Student Course File

What Coursework Should Be Included In The Student Course File?

The Student Course file should include all developmental education and credit learning activities attempted by students in the **VFA Main Cohort** (defined above).

- Non-credit, “audited” courses, or courses attempted for 0 credits (i.e. labs) should not be included in the file.
- ESL courses not offered as developmental education or for credit should not be included in the file.

How Do I Report Developmental Education Coursework Not Offered As Credit?

Developmental education coursework not offered for credit should be converted to credit equivalents, based on institutional practices.

How Do I Report Courses That Are Offered On A Quarter System (Not Semester)?

For colleges on quarter systems, convert the Credits_Attempted and Credits_Completed fields to semester credit hours. To convert to semester credit hours, multiply by two thirds. *Please note: This is different than how to report enrollment intensity (full time/part time) in the Demographic File.*

How Do I Report Credits of Dual Enrolled Students?

Once a student graduates from high school and begins courses at the college, the student is eligible for inclusion in the VFA cohorts and the credits they obtained while in high school will be counted in the relevant measures. Please include these dual enrollment coursework in the Student Course file with the date that the student enrolled in the courses. If you do not have all the information needed to enter these credits in the Student Course file, please include the summation of Dual Enrollment credits in the Additional_Credits_1to2 field in the Student Demographic file.

How Do I Report Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Credits?

Prior Learning Assessment Credits should be reported in the “Additional Credits” fields in the Student Demographic file based on the date that the credits was awarded.

How Do I Report “Highest Level Dev Course” If The Highest Level Course Varies By Program?

If a significant portion of your student population does not need to complete the highest level developmental education course for their program, we encourage the college to report the highest developmental education course required for that student.

Layout Table: Student Course File

Column	Field Name	Field Length	Type*	Comments
A	Cohort_Year_Type	1	N	Code indicating whether student is in the Two Year Cohort or the Six Year Cohort. 2 = Two Year Cohort, 6 = Six Year Cohort
B	Institution_ID	6	N	The unique ID assigned to the college by AACC. (This is different from IPEDS ID)
C	Student_ID	16	AN	The unique ID assigned to the student by the college
D	Course_Begin_Date	10	D	Date the course began
E	Course_End_Date	10	D	Date the course ended

F	Course_Number	10	AN	Course Number <i>Optional: for college use only.</i>
G	Course_Name	50	AN	Course Name <i>Optional: for college use only.</i>
H	Credits_Attempted	5	N	Number of credits (or credit equivalents) attempted for course. ###.##
I	Credits_Completed	5	N	Number of credits (or credit equivalents) completed for course based on institutional practices of awarding credits. ###.##
J	Grade_Received	5	AN	Grade received in course: A, A+, A- B, B+, B- C, C+, C- D, D+, D- F = Fail, P = Pass, I = Incomplete, W = Withdraw
K	Subject	1	AN	Code indicating the subject for the course (math, English, reading, or other); if course is a combined English/reading course, enter as E = English. M = Math, E = English, R = Reading, O = Other
L	Dev_Course	1	AN	Is this a Developmental Education course? Y = Yes, N = No
M	Highest_Level_Dev_Course	1	AN	Is this course the highest level course for Developmental in a subject? Y = Yes, N = No

Student Completion File

Which Awards Should Be Included In The Student Completion File?

The Student Completion file should include all awards conferred by your institution to all students in the VFA **Main Cohort** (defined above).

- Student may be awarded a Bachelor's degree, Associates degree, Certificate, or any combination

How Should Degrees Conferred Simultaneously Be Reported?

If a student receives, for example, a certificate and an associate degree at the same time, you should report them as separate records in your file.

- Multiple rows may be reported if student is awarded more than one degree of the same type
- Multiple rows may be reported if student is awarded an Associate AND a certificate
- Multiple rows may be reported if student is awarded more than one certificate

Should I Include Awards Conferred At Another Institution?

No. Only awards the student received at your institution should be reported.

Layout Table: Student Completion File

Column	Field Name	Field Length	Type*	Comments
A	Cohort_Year_Type	1	N	Code indicating whether student is in the Two Year Cohort or the Six Year Cohort. 2 = Two Year Cohort, 6 = Six Year Cohort
B	Institution_ID	6	N	The unique ID assigned to the college by AACC. This ID can be found on the top of the college's <i>Raw Data Files Upload</i> data tool. (This is different from IPEDS ID)
C	Student_ID	16	AN	The unique ID assigned to the student by the college
D	Award_Type	11	AN	Award Received (Bachelor's, Associate, or Certificate). Values are: Bachelor, Associate, Certificate
E	Award_Description	30	AN	Description of the Award <i>Optional: This data is for college use only and does not have to be included in the file.</i>
F	Award_Date	10	D	Date Award was conferred

Student Developmental Need File

Which Student Records Should Be Reported?

All students in the **VFA Main Cohort** should have a record in the Developmental Need file. Each student should have only one record.

How Should Developmental Need Be Determined?

The college may report developmental need based on referral practices of the institution, course-taking behavior of the students, or a combination of the two methods.

- For the progress and outcomes of the students based on your institution's referral practices, use numbers 0 through 3 and 9 to report developmental need in each of the subjects.
- For the progress and outcomes of all students enrolled in developmental education, regardless of referral/placement (by course-taking behavior), use numbers 4 through 6 and 9.
- For the combination of the two methods, use the number that you used to determine need for the student.

How Do I Code A Developmental Subject That I Do Not Have Data For?

If the college is unable report one or more of the developmental education subjects, please code all students as 9 (developmental need is not determined).

How Do I Code Dev_Level_Reading If My College Only Offers Developmental Reading In Combination With Developmental English?

If Developmental Reading is only offered with Developmental English, please report all student need and developmental education activities under Developmental English and code the Dev_Level_Reading column as 9s.

Layout Table: Student Developmental Need File

Column	Field Name	Field Length	Type*	Comments
A	Cohort_Year_Type	1	N	Code indicating whether student is in the Two Year Cohort or the Six Year Cohort. 2 = Two Year Cohort 6 = Six Year Cohort
B	Institution_ID	6	N	The unique ID assigned to the college by AACC. This ID can be found on the top of the college's Raw Data Files Upload data tool. (This is different from IPEDS ID)
C	Student_ID	16	AN	The unique ID assigned to the student by the college
D	Dev_Level_Math	1	N	Level below college ready in math: <i>If need is determined by placement/referral:</i> 1 = one level below in math; 2 = two levels below in math; 3 = three or more levels below in math <i>If need is determined by course-taking:</i> 4 = one level below in math; 5 = two levels below in math; 6 = three or more levels below in math 0 = College Ready in math; 9 = Developmental need in math was not determined
E	Dev_Level_English	1	N	Level below college ready in English: <i>If need is determined by placement/referral:</i> 1 = one level below in English;

				<p>2 = two levels below in English; 3 = three or more levels below in English</p> <p><i>If need is determined by course-taking:</i> 4 = one level below in English; 5 = two levels below in English; 6 = three or more levels below in English</p> <p>0 = College Ready in English; 9 = Developmental need in English was not determined</p>
F	Dev_Level_Reading	1	N	<p>Level below college ready in reading:</p> <p><i>If need is determined by placement/referral:</i> 1 = one level below in reading; 2 = two levels below in reading; 3 = three or more levels below in reading</p> <p><i>If need is determined by course-taking:</i> 4 = one level below in reading; 5 = two levels below in reading; 6 = three or more levels below in reading</p> <p>0 = College Ready in reading; 9 = Developmental need in reading was not determined</p> <p><i>If the college is unable report Developmental reading, all students should be coded 9.</i></p>

Student Transfer File

Which Records of Transfer Should Be Reported?

- Student is in **VFA Main Cohort** for the cohort year; AND
- Student has a record of enrolling at another post-secondary institution, based on data received from the National Student Clearinghouse or collected in other means. Institution may be a four-year or two-year college.

Enter all rows of enrollment at another institution. For instance, if you received data that separates the data in multiple rows by term, pull the Enrollment Start Date and Enrollment End Date for each term. Each student may appear multiple times in the file. Do not include enrollment at your college in this file.

Should I Include Identifying Information On The Transfer College?

No. The VFA system does not capture any identifying information on the college the student transferred to. The Institution ID in the *Student Transfer* file must contain your college's ID.

How Should Transfers Without Begin Or End Dates Be Reported?

Transfer begin and transfer end date must be supplied for each record. If:

- End date is unknown and begin date is within the cohort tracking period: Enter the last day of the cohort tracking period.
- Begin date is unknown and end date is within the cohort tracking period: Enter the first day of the cohort tracking period.
- Begin and end date is unknown: The transfer record should be excluded from the *Student Transfer* file, as there is no way of knowing if this enrollment was prior to, after, or during enrollment at your institution.

Where Should I Report The Credits Transferred In From Another College?

All credits that were accepted by your college but originated at another institution should be reported under the applicable 'Additional_Credits' columns in the *Student Demographic* file.

Layout Table: Student Transfer File

Column	Field Name	Field Length	Type*	Comments
A	Cohort_Year_Type	1	N	Code indicating whether student is in the Two Year Cohort or the Six Year Cohort. 2 = Two Year Cohort, 6 = Six Year Cohort
B	Institution_ID	6	N	The unique ID assigned to the college by AACC. This ID can be found on the top of the college's <i>Raw Data Files Upload</i> data tool. (This is different from IPEDS ID)
C	Student_ID	16	AN	The unique ID assigned to the student by the college
D	Enrollment_Start_Date	10	D	Start date of enrollment at another post-secondary institution . Please include all records of enrollment at another institution you have data for.
E	Enrollment_End_Date	10	D	End date of enrollment at another post-secondary institution . Please include all records of enrollment at another institution you have data for.

Centralized Reporting Guide

This guide is for state-level entities who are reporting data on behalf of more than one college. This guide will explain the raw files upload tools that allow an entity to reporting the data for multiple colleges at once. The data requested within each of the files are the same; see the *Raw Files Upload Guide* complete details for more information on the data supplied in each of the Raw Data Files.

Combined File Set-up & Overview

The VFA Raw Files Upload system allows a state-level entity to report all colleges' student level data in one, combined file. The data and data headers for the file remains the same; however, for state-level files it will contain all the data for all students within each of the colleges.

Note: Files uploaded using the Multi College feature will contain multiple Institution IDs, while those uploaded for a single college will only have one.

Directions

1. Create and populate the (5) raw data files according to the headers and rules outlined in the *Raw File Upload Guide*. These files should contain the data for all students within the cohort for all of the colleges for whom the state-entity is reporting data.
 - o Alternatively, the state-entity may choose to upload separate raw files for each of the colleges. To do this, skip to step 4.
2. Upload the files into the Multi College Upload page.
3. Upon upload, the files will be parsed into separate files for each of the institutions. This may take several minutes.

Upload Multi-Institution Files for Six Year Cohort (2008)

File Status	File Type	File Action	Information
✓ Parsed to Individual Institutions	Student Demographics	<input type="button" value="Choose File"/> No file chosen <input type="button" value="REPLACE FILE"/> <input type="button" value="DELETE FILE"/>	Date File Uploaded: 3/12/2015 11:00:32 AM Filename: 6Y-Demog-multi.csv

4. Once all five files are parsed out, the state entity will visit the *Raw Files Upload* page for each of the colleges.
5. On the institution's Raw Files page, enter the academic dates requested and then click "Validate & Process Raw Files Collection".
6. Repeat Steps 1 – 5 for the other Cohort Year.

Upon processing, the VFA metrics will be calculated, written to the VFA database, and viewable on the Data Online Forms and other outputs (exports and dashboards).

Reporting State-level Data

As a state-entity reporting data on behalf of the colleges in the state, you have the option to report the state-level data in one of two ways: as an aggregate of all colleges' outcomes or as unduplicated outcomes of students across the state.

To report data as an aggregate, please simply inform AACC staff and we will aggregate the reported data on behalf of the state. Aggregation occurs after all colleges publish their VFA data.

To report state-level data as unduplicated student outcomes, the state entity will need to submit another set of raw files to correctly de-duplicate the data. Instructions for each of the files are below. Additional FAQs can be found in the *Raw File Upload Guide* above.

1. Check Student IDs

In order for the state-level entity to report state-level outcomes through the Raw Files Upload, there must be a single, unique identifier per student or another method that allows the state to track the same student between colleges.

2. Create the state-level files

- a. **Student Demographic File:** Submit an unduplicated file containing the data for all students that began at each of the institutions in the fall of the cohort year. The INSTITUTION_ID of all records in the file must be the state entity's ID, not the colleges.
- b. **Student Course File:** Submit a combined file containing all the course-taking data for all students in the cohort at each college. Students will most likely appear multiple times within the file.
 - i. If the state entity used the Multi-College feature (defined above), the state may re-use the combined *Student Course File*. Prior to resubmitting the file, change the INSTITUTION_ID for each row to the state entity's ID.
- c. **Student Completion File:** Submit a combined file containing the credential completions (certificate, associate, and bachelor) for all students in the cohort at each college. Students may appear multiple times within the file.
 - i. If the state entity used the Multi-College feature (defined above), the state may re-use the combined *Student Completion File*. Prior to resubmitting the file, change the INSTITUTION_ID for each row to the state entity's ID.
- d. **Student Developmental Need File:** Submit an unduplicated file containing the developmental information for all students in the cohort at each college. The INSTITUTION_ID of all records in the file must be the state entity's ID, not the colleges.
 - i. If each college uses a different developmental referral method (by referral or by course-taking), the state-level file should capture both methods (use the combination referral method).
 - ii. If the same student is assessed differently at two (or more) institutions, please use the level below that is most relevant to the student's program of study at the time of reporting
- e. **Student Transfer File:** Submit a combined student transfer file for all students in the cohort at each college. Only transfers outside of the state or system should be included. Students may appear multiple times within the file.