

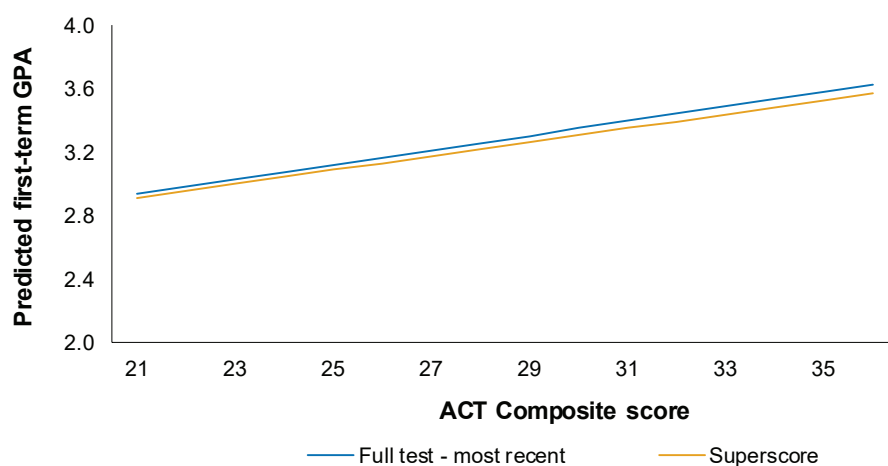
# ACT Superscores Based on Section Retest Scores Are Predictive of First-Year Grades

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Beginning in September 2020, three new testing options will be available on national ACT® test dates: online testing, section retesting, and superscoring. Students who have tested more than once will have the option to send an ACT Superscore score report to postsecondary institutions of their choice. The option of superscoring is supported by results from prior research that found ACT superscoring to be as predictive – if not more predictive – of first-year grades than other ACT Composite scoring methods.<sup>1</sup> Given that ACT scores are used to help inform college admissions, scholarship, and course placement decisions, it is of interest to examine how ACT Superscores that combine scores – not only across full ACT test administrations but also across section retests – relate to first-year college outcomes. Results from a recent case study provide empirical support for the use of ACT Superscores for these purposes and are examined in this brief.

The study was conducted in collaboration with a four-year public university with a highly selective admissions policy.<sup>2</sup> The institution recruited 118 first-time entering students who previously took the ACT test while in high school to take one or more single-section ACT test(s) during the first few weeks of classes and subsequently provided data on students' course grades at the end of their first term. ACT Superscores were computed by combining the highest subject scores across full test administrations from a students' sophomore, junior, and senior year in high school, and their section tests taken during the first few weeks of college.

**Figure 1.** Predicted First-Term GPA by ACT Composite Score and Scoring Method



As shown in Figure 1, ACT Superscores were found to be predictive of first-term grade point average (GPA). Moreover, the regression line for ACT Superscores was similar to that obtained from using students' most recent ACT Composite scores from high school ( $R = .32$  vs.  $.34$ , respectively;  $p = .205$ ).<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the incremental validity of ACT scores above high school GPA to predict first-term GPA for ACT Superscores was similar to that for students' most recent Composite scores ( $\Delta R = .11$  vs.  $.13$ ). These findings suggest that ACT Superscores that are computed across test administrations including section retests are as predictive of first-year grades as students' most recent full ACT test scores.

## Notes

1. For more details, see Mattern, K., Radunzel, J., Bertling, M., & Ho, A. D. (2018). How should colleges treat multiple admissions test scores? *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 37(3), 11–23. Other scoring methods included average Composite score, most recent Composite score, and highest Composite score.
2. For more details, refer to the full report: Radunzel, J., & Mattern, K. (2020). *A case study: ACT section retest scores and superscores are predictive of first-term grades*. Iowa City, IA: ACT.
3.  $R$  refers to the Pearson correlation coefficient and measures the strength of the linear relationship between ACT scores and first-term GPA. These correlations are consistent with that computed for the institution's entire freshman cohort based on students' most recent ACT Composite score earned while in high school ( $R = .30$ , 95% confidence interval =  $.26, .33$ )

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