

2023-24 Graduation Cohort: Phase II-III Appeals

Frequently Asked Questions

June 7, 2024

1. What are the key dates for the 2023-24 Cohort Phase II-III Appeals Process?

Phase II Key Dates

- Submission Window: July 8-August 4, 2024
- Initial Appeals Response: August 9, 2024
- Remediation Window: August 12-14, 2024
- Final Appeals Response: August 16, 2024

Phase II tasks shall be completed by 9 p.m. CT on August 4, 2024, including (1) report summer graduates in EIS; (2) import the complete student transcript data (extract 80) in EIS for the 2024 graduating cohort (**optional**); (3) submit 60-day appeals; (4) verify the TISA graduate roster (**new**); and (5) submit a postsecondary credit substitution worksheet and district substitution policy (**new**). All issues regarding these three tasks should be addressed by the end of the Phase II remediation window, as the data updated during Phase II will be finalized by the end of the Phase II process.

Phase III Key Dates

- Submission Window: August 26-September 6, 2024
- Initial Appeals Response: September 20, 2024
- Remediation Window: September 23-27, 2024
- Final Appeals Response: October 4, 2024

Phase III tasks shall be completed by 9 p.m. CT on September 6, 2024, including (1) submit appeals for summer graduates (only for appealable situations); (2) submit appeals for receiving students because of a 60-day appeal approval; (3) submit cohort appeals for federal graduation rate reporting. All issues regarding the appeals shall be addressed by the end of the Phase III remediation window as the data updated in Phase III will be finalized by the end of the Phase III process. In this phase, districts can also review their preliminary graduation rate in the Cohort application; However, this data will not reflect possible changes resulting from Phase III appeals.

Please refer to Section 4.1 of the [2023-24 Cohort Phase II-III Appeals Guide](#) for more information regarding the required tasks for Phase II-III appeals.

2. What action should be taken by a district for a student in the 2024 Graduation Cohort who spent less than 60 days in the same high school in his or her most recent school year?

Students who did not attend the same high school for at least 60 days of the most recent school year in which the student was enrolled in Tennessee public schools are able to be assigned to the school in which the student was enrolled for the greatest proportion of days across grades 9-12. Appeals to re-assign students using the 60-day rule should be submitted using the [2023-24 Graduation Cohort Phase II Appeals Form](#) during **Phase II only** as an appeal. Please refer to Section 6.1 of the [2023-24 Cohort Phase II-III Appeals Guide](#) for more information regarding submitting Phase II appeals.

3. What action should be taken by a district that receives a student because of another district's 60-day appeal?

Districts can submit an appeal for students they received because of another district's 60-day appeal. The appeal must be supported by appropriate documentation (e.g., enrollment record, withdrawal documentation). This type of appeal can only be submitted during **Phase III** using the [2023-24 Graduation Cohort Phase III Appeals Form](#). Please refer to Section 6.2 of the [2023-24 Cohort Phase II-III Appeals Guide](#) for more information regarding submitting Phase III appeals.

4. Why is the Tennessee Department of Education (department) updating the graduation rate for federal reporting purposes?

The department is required to update its federal graduation rate reporting method starting with the 2022-23 accountability cycle to comply with federal requirements. Federal guidelines require the department to calculate the four-year graduation rate by only including students who complete **all required coursework in all subject areas** and graduate with a regular diploma (also known as a traditional diploma) or an Alternate Academic Diploma (AAD) within four years and a summer as a high school graduate in his or her original cohort.

Currently, the [Tennessee State Board of Education \(SBE\) Graduation Requirements Rule 0520-01-03-.06](#) and [High School Policy 2.103](#) provide an alternative pathway toward a regular diploma for students with a qualifying disability who have deficits in mathematics and science as documented in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). This alternative pathway conflicts with federal guidelines. Students who use the alternative pathway to earn a regular diploma are therefore counted in the Tennessee graduation rate but not in the federal graduation rate. For more information on the difference between the federal graduation rate and the Tennessee Graduation Rate, please see Section 2 of the [2023-24 Graduation Cohort Protocol](#).

5. How will the federal graduation rate be used in school accountability?

The federal graduation rate will be used to evaluate school performance on the Graduation Rate indicator, which has 5% weight in high school accountability. It will also be used to identify Priority/Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools. Any school with a graduation rate of less than 67% will earn Priority status; Any school with a graduation rate of less than 67% for a given student group will earn ATSI designation during an identification year.

6. How will the Tennessee graduation rate be used in school accountability?

The Tennessee graduation rate will be used to evaluate school performance on the *Ready Graduate* indicator, which has 20% weight in high school accountability. Additionally, students who receive a regular diploma per SBE's graduation rule and policy will be used in the denominator of the ACT/SAT participation rate calculation.

7. How will the federal graduation rate and the Tennessee graduation rate be used in district accountability?

Both the federal graduation rate and the Tennessee graduation rate will be used to evaluate district performance on the Graduation Rate indicator, which has 16.7% weight in district accountability. Specifically, districts will be measured across three pathways:

- absolute performance, which will represent the percent of graduates per federal definition (i.e., federal graduation rate);
- graduation rate AMO targets, calculated based on the federal graduation rate); and

- value-added measure, which calculates the difference in the district's percent of *Ready Graduates* to the prior year as compared to statewide performance. Tennessee's graduation rate procedure is used to produce the *Ready Graduate Rate*.

The final score for the district Graduation Rate indicator is the value-added score averaged with **the better score** between their absolute performance and AMO targets.

8. Which graduation rate will be publicly released?

Both graduation rates will be publicly released on the [Data Downloads webpage](#) and will be reported on the annual Tennessee State Report Card.

9. Which graduation rate will be used for teacher evaluations?

Per federal regulations, the department now calculates and reports two graduation rates, the federal graduation rate, and the Tennessee graduation rate (see [Q4](#) for more information on how each graduation rate is calculated). For educator evaluation, the department will continue to use the Tennessee graduation rate as an achievement measure option. The Tennessee graduation rate includes both students receiving regular and alternate academic diplomas, per the [SBE Graduation Requirements Rule 0520-01-03-.06](#) and [High School Policy 2.103](#). For more information regarding teacher evaluation, please contact Team.Questions@tn.gov.

10. How will the department verify the federal graduation rate?

Using enrollment and student transcript data from EIS, the department will identify an **exclusion list** comprised of students who should be removed from the numerator of the federal graduation rate calculation per federal guidelines. The exclusion list will include any students who received a regular diploma but did not receive a credit in Algebra II/Integrated Math III and/or Chemistry or Physics or an approved post-secondary substitution from the district's substitution list (see [Section 5.1.5](#) of the [2023-24 Cohort Phase II-III Appeals Guide](#)). At the start of Phase III, districts will be able to download the exclusion list from the Accountability application. Districts shall review the exclusion list and submit appeals, as needed, to finalize the list for the federal graduation rate calculation.

11. What are the appealable issues for verifying the federal graduation rate?

Students who received a regular diploma without any record of receiving a math credit in Algebra II or Integrated Math III course or receiving a science credit in Chemistry or Physics and did not complete an approved post-secondary substitution from the district's substitution list will be included in the exclusion list. Districts shall submit appeals **ONLY** for students who earned an Algebra II/Integrated Math III credit and Chemistry/Physics **OR** who completed a college-level course as a substitution for Algebra II/Integrated Math III or Chemistry/Physics. Districts must submit a transcript or a Student Information System (SIS) report for each appealed record as supporting documentation. When submitting a postsecondary substitution appeal, the course code and course title should clearly be listed as a substitutable postsecondary credit in the district's substitution policy submitted during Phase II of the Graduation Cohort Appeals Guide (see [Question 13](#) for more information regarding substitution policy). For more information on appealable issues and appropriate supporting documentation for verifying the federal graduation rate, please refer to Section 5.1.5 of the [2023-24 Cohort Phase II-III Appeals Guide](#).

12. What will the department review on the student's transcript/SIS report?

The department will look for confirmation that the student earned 1.0 credits for Algebra II/Integrated Math III and earned 1.0 credits for Chemistry/Physics (or an approved post-secondary substitution from the district's substitution list). If the transcript/SIS report does not show that the students earned full credit for the course, the appeal will be denied.

13. What is a district substitution policy?

[SBE Academic Program Requirements Rule 0520-01-03-.03\(7\)](#) states, “Local education agencies (LEAs) shall award high school credit to students who successfully complete college-level courses aligned to a graduation requirement course, including general education and elective focus courses,” while [SBE Graduation Substitutions Policy 3.103\(l\)](#) stipulates that the “decision to permit a postsecondary course... to count as a substitution for a graduation requirement course is to be determined at the local level based on a review of whether the postsecondary course covers the state standards for the graduation requirement course.” A district’s substitution policy communicates what postsecondary credit courses it accepts in place of various graduation requirements.

An appropriate district substitution policy should, at a minimum, include a comprehensive list of all college-level courses eligible for substitution that provides a clear guideline for schools regarding which college-level courses can be used for course substitutions in all subject areas that meet SBE graduation requirements. The district’s substitution policy’s substitutable course list should include (1) subject area, (2) type of college-level course (e.g., International Baccalaureate program, Cambridge program, advanced placement, dual enrollment, local dual credit, state dual credit, etc.), (3) course name, and (4) course code. The course name and course code should be the same as the information presented in the EIS or SIS transcript.

14. How is the exclusion list identified? Does the exclusion list only include students in special education?

As stated in [Question 10](#), the exclusion list is based on course enrollment and transcript data from EIS and includes students receiving a regular diploma without any records of receiving an Algebra II/Integrated Math III credit and a Chemistry or Physics credit or any acceptable substitutions listed on the substitution list provided during Phase II. This list is not limited to students in special education.

15. Where can districts download the exclusion lists?

Districts may download the exclusion lists from the Accountability application. Districts will find the exclusion list under the subsection titled “Additional Verification Files” on the File Download tab.

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