



# 2020-21 *Ready Graduate* Appeals Guidance (2019-20 Graduates)

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## Section 1: Overview

The *Ready Graduate* appeals process allows districts to resolve any data issues in line with federal and state guidelines. These data include the following:

- ACT records
- SAT records
- Advanced Placement (AP) records
- International Baccalaureate (IB) records
- College Level Examination Program (CLEP) records
- Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) records
- Local Dual Credit (LDC) records
- Statewide Dual Credit (SDC) records
- Dual Enrollment (DE) records
- Industry Credential (IC) records
- ASVAB AFQT records

This document explains what, how, and when districts may appeal. Please contact [TNEd.Graduates@tn.gov](mailto:TNEd.Graduates@tn.gov) with questions not addressed in this document.

## Section 2: Appeals Context and Parameters

### 2.1 Appeals Context

In Tennessee, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) indicator of school quality and student success is ascertained through multiple indicators, one of which is the **Ready Graduate indicator**. The *Ready Graduate* indicator measures the percentage of students who earn a diploma from a Tennessee high school and who have met criteria of success which increases their probability of seamlessly enrolling in postsecondary education and/or securing high-quality employment.

The intent of this indicator is to recognize and reward schools and districts whose high school graduates demonstrate readiness for meaningful postsecondary education, a training program, and/or workforce entry. As outlined in Tennessee's state ESSA plan, the *Ready Graduate* indicator is calculated for all schools with at least 30 students in a graduation cohort by dividing the number of on-time graduates who meet at least one of the criteria for demonstrating postsecondary and workforce readiness by the total number of students in that cohort.

The *Ready Graduate* data included in the *Ready Graduate* indicator **only** reflect the students in the prior graduation cohort who earned an on-time regular diploma. Students count in a cohort based on the year they entered grade 9. Please consult the [Graduation Cohort Protocol](#) and other resources on the Cohort application for more information. These data are lagged by one year for calculation purposes; therefore, 2020-21 *Ready Graduate* reporting includes only 2020 graduates. See the [Ready Graduate FAQ](#) and [Ready Graduate User Guide](#) for additional information on the *Ready Graduate* indicator.

To make the appeal process easier for districts, the Cohort application was updated to highlight students for appeals. Students highlighted in green meet *Ready Graduate* criteria. Students that are "greyed out" and missing an "attach" link have been removed from the original cohort and will not count for or against the school or district's *Ready Graduate* calculation.

#### 2.1.1 Ready Graduate Indicator Adjustments for the Class of 2019-20

Due to COVID-19, school building closures occurred in spring 2020. Additionally, many of the *Ready Graduate* data requirements depend on third party administration of certain exams that may have been cancelled.

This disruption to the school year resulted in a State Board of Education [decision](#) waiving the state's requirement that students take the ACT or SAT to earn a Tennessee high school diploma. For seniors who intended to take the ACT or SAT in spring 2020 and were unable to due to school closures, the department will include them in the 2020 cohort and will accept appeals to exclude them from ACT participation rate calculations. ACT/SAT will remain an element in *Ready Graduate* calculations to benefit students who were able to test and meet the ACT threshold for *Ready Graduate* classification.

If a third party did not administer an exam due to COVID-19, documentation demonstrating cancellation of Early Postsecondary Opportunity (EPSO)-aligned exams from March-June 2020 will suffice for *Ready Graduate* appeals. Examples may include **cancellation notification letters, announcements of waived testing requirements**, etc. Depending on location, these exams might include Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT), Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), or local dual credit.

Students in the 2019-20 cohort will automatically receive EPSO credit for the following course-aligned annual exams that were cancelled: Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Statewide Dual Credit (SDC). Credit for these exams will be based on course enrollment and completion. Districts will not be required

to provide any documentation to receive credit for these exams, as the information is already found within the Student Information System (SIS).

## 2.2 Appealable and Non-Appealable Situations

Districts may submit *Ready Graduate* appeals **only** for graduates:

1. who have missing data and have corresponding evidence, **OR**
2. whose exam scores increased to meet *Ready Graduate* qualifying criteria and have corresponding evidence.

Other appeals may not be accepted. Appealable and non-appealable issues are outlined below:

### Appealable issues:

- Missing *Ready Graduate* data
  - The district has score reports and/or data files that contain valid scores, completion/enrollment records, and/or certificates for students with missing data on the *Ready Graduate* page of the Cohort application.
    - ASVAB AFQT data must come from the districts. This data will only be reflected if submitted during the *Ready Graduate* appeals window.
- Corrected *Ready Graduate* data
  - The district has documentation and/or data files that contain valid scores, completion records, and/or certificates for students whose submitted data and evidence would qualify them for *Ready Graduate* status<sup>1</sup>.
- SAT data
  - The district has score reports and/or data files that contain valid SAT scores for students with missing score information in the student-level file on the Accountability application.

### Non-appealable issues:

- Data without required evidence
  - The request to update student data must reflect the documentation described in the subsequent table. Requests that do not meet these criteria will be denied.
- Cohort change
  - A student who graduated early (i.e., the year before their expected cohort graduation year) does not appear in the file.
    - Graduates count with their graduation cohort rather than their graduating class, per federal law.
  - Adding or removing a student into or from the cohort
    - These types of changes were required prior to the June 11, 2020 Phase I deadline for the graduation cohort process.
- Student demographic changes
  - All demographic data must be corrected through your education information system (EIS) as part of the graduation cohort process. Please consult the [Graduation Cohort Protocol](#) on the Cohort application for more information.

The department requires specific documentation/evidence for each EPSO to be considered during the *Ready Graduate* appeals window. Acceptable evidence for each *Ready Graduate* element is outlined in the table below:

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<sup>1</sup> Higher values for Ready Graduate data may be accepted for all EPSOs.

<b>Ready Graduate Element</b>	<b>Evidence of Completion</b>	<b>Adjustments for Class of 2019-20</b>
<a href="#">ACT</a>	Earn a composite score of 21 or higher	
<a href="#">Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)</a>	Earn a composite score of 1060 or higher	
<a href="#">Advanced Placement (AP)</a>	Complete course and attempt exam	Automatic credit for course completion
<a href="#">Cambridge International Examinations (CIE)</a>	Complete course and attempt exam <sup>2</sup>	Submit third party documentation
<a href="#">College Level Examination Program (CLEP)</a>	Earn a passing score of 50 or higher on exam	
<a href="#">International Baccalaureate (IB)</a>	Complete course and attempt exam <sup>3</sup>	Automatic credit for course completion
<a href="#">Dual Enrollment (DE)</a>	Complete course	
<a href="#">Local Dual Credit (LDC)</a>	Complete course and attempt exam	
<a href="#">Statewide Dual Credit (SDC)</a>	Complete course and attempt exam <sup>4</sup>	Automatic credit for course completion
<a href="#">Industry Credential (IC)</a>	Earn passing score on exam and/or complete licensure requirements.	
<a href="#">Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)</a>	Earn a score of 31 or higher <sup>5</sup>	Submit third party documentation

Please note that the ESPOs listing more than one required documentation/evidence require **all** the evidence listed to be considered for review. EPSOs that are **only** documented on student transcripts are not sufficient. Additionally, the department **will not** consider the following types of documentation:

- Transcripts that list ACT or SAT scores<sup>6</sup>
- Student Information System screenshots of students' recorded scores
- Letters from schools or families stating scores

Districts will have the opportunity to upload a spreadsheet and PDF documentation of all 2020 graduates and their *Ready Graduate* data as part of their appeal. Please see [section 3.2](#) for more information about the appeals submission process.

<sup>2</sup> This requirement may be dependent on third party administration of the exam. If the responsible third party (i.e., postsecondary institution) does not administer a normally required EPSO exam, documentation from the responsible third party will be required for appeals.

<sup>3</sup> Dependent on postsecondary institution testing protocols.

<sup>4</sup> Dependent on postsecondary institution testing protocols.

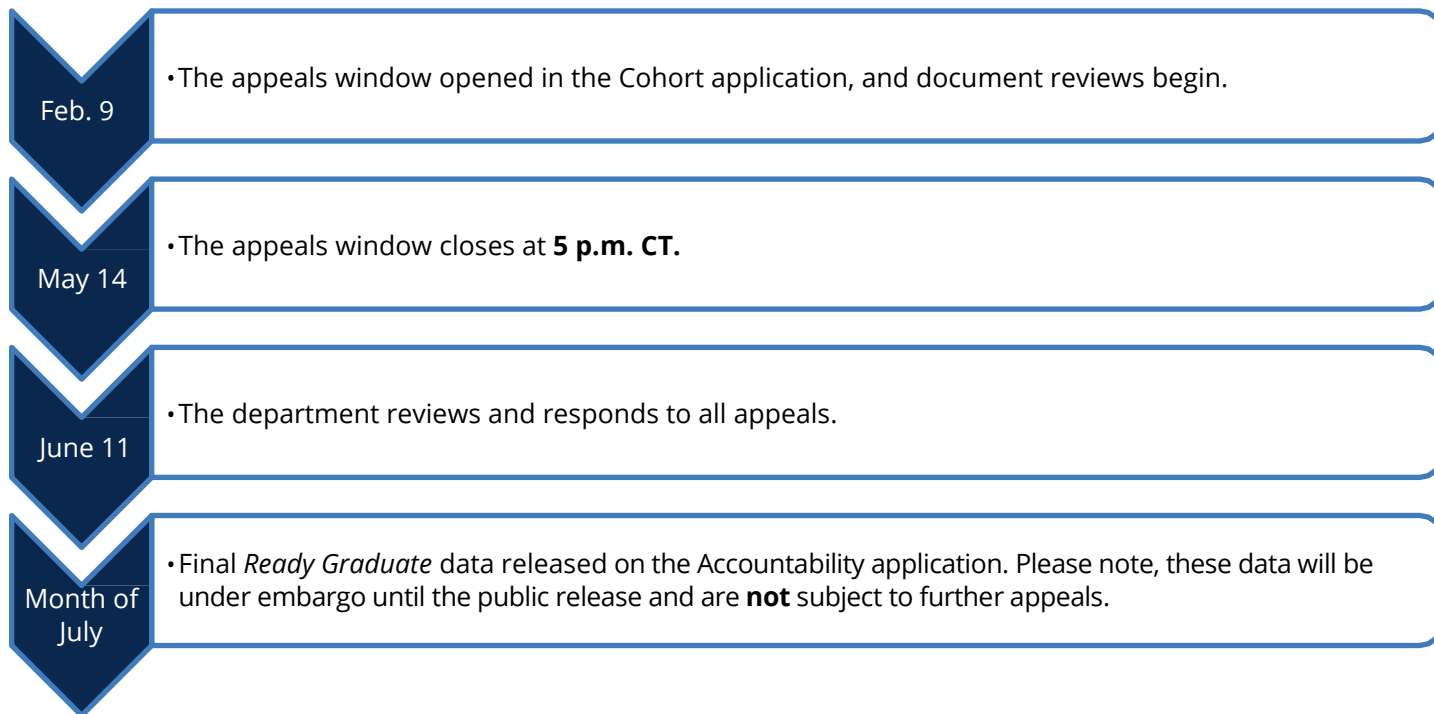
<sup>5</sup> The "passing" score for military aptitude may change in the future. Annual determination of military readiness will be the minimum ASVAB AFQT score required to qualify for admission into at least one branch of the military as of June 1 following a student's graduation. Scores will be determined on June 1 annually for the following year's accountability.

<sup>6</sup> Transcripts that include the official ACT or SAT score report stickers are considered acceptable forms of evidence.

## Section 3: Appeals Submission Timeline and Process

### 3.1 Timeline

2020 *Ready Graduate* appeals must be submitted **by Friday, May 14, 2021 at 5 p.m. CT** for 2020 graduates to be considered for 2020-21 reporting. More information regarding timelines, updates, and data will be included in the *Commissioner's Update for Directors*. The timeline below outlines important dates in the *Ready Graduate* appeals process.



### 3.2 Submission Format

Districts will have two options for submitting *Ready Graduate* appeals documentation: an individual upload for a single student's appeal **or** a combined upload for appeals for multiple students. All appeals must be submitted on the *Ready Graduate* page through the Cohort application. The submissions must include files containing student evidence and **must be named with the student's state ID**<sup>7</sup> (student key). All appeals must be submitted before **5 p.m. CT on Friday, May 14**.

#### 3.2.1 Individual Student Submissions

Districts choosing to update an individual student's *Ready Graduate* status may follow the steps outlined below:

1. Identify students who are not currently meeting *Ready Graduate* criteria. This action can be completed by selecting the "Non-Ready Graduate" filter at the top of the page **OR** by downloading and filtering the .csv file from the application.
2. In the "Upload Document" column, districts may complete the following actions: Attach or Delete.
  - a. Documentation to be attached must be in a single PDF file (multiple documents may be included in a single file, but please identify which EPSO each page represents).
  - b. The file must be saved as the student's state ID (Student Key).
  - c. Select "Upload."

<sup>7</sup> Files saved with any name other than the correct student ID will not upload automatically.

3. The “Status/Comments” column will indicate whether the department has reviewed and approved or denied the appeal.

### 3.2.2 Combined Upload Submissions

Districts choosing to submit multiple students’ *Ready Graduate* data and documentation may access the “Combined Upload” page. This page houses both the combined upload functionality for Cohort and *Ready Graduate*. As described in [section 2.2](#), submissions must include files containing student evidence. To upload documentation using the “Combined Documentation Upload” feature, complete the following steps:

1. Save each student PDF with the file name as the student’s state ID.
2. Save all student documentation to be uploaded into a zip/compressed file containing the **district number, name, and the upload number** (e.g., ###\_Apple\_Co\_Schools\_1, where ### is the three-digit district number and 1 is the first combined upload performed by the district).
3. Select “Choose File”.
4. Select the zip/compressed file.
5. Select “Upload.”
6. The “Status/Comments” column will indicate whether the department has reviewed and approved the appeal.

Please note, student PDFs named with incorrect student IDs will return an error and will not attach to the student record on the *Ready Graduate* page. Additionally, after completing either a data or document combined upload, please review the *Ready Graduate* page to ensure the upload was successfully completed as intended.

### 3.3 Reviewing Appeals and *Ready Graduate* Status

The department will review all submissions and respond to appeals by **June 11, 2021**. Once approved or denied, the status of the student will be updated accordingly. Appeals decisions are final. New documentation uploaded after students have been approved or denied will automatically reset their approval status. As a student’s *Ready Graduate* status updates, the column identifier as “*Ready Graduate*” will update from N to Y.

To provide feedback on any of the information in this document, or to ask clarifying questions, please email [TNEd.Graduates@tn.gov](mailto:TNEd.Graduates@tn.gov).