



Advocates for Children of New York
Protecting every child's right to learn

Summary of Changes to Graduation Requirements due to COVID-19

In general, students in New York need to earn 22 credits (44 credits in NYC) and pass 4+1 exams to graduate from high school. For details, see AFC's guides on [New York graduation requirements](#) & [graduation options for students with disabilities](#). However, due to COVID-19, June & August 2020 Regents exams are canceled.

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) released this [guidance](#) and this [FAQ](#) about how canceled Regents exams will affect graduation requirements. A summary is below.

Course Credit

- High School students should participate in the remote learning opportunities being offered by their school.
- So long as the student meets the standards assessed in their coursework for the semester, they should be granted diploma credit for the course. For details, see [this guidance from NYSED](#).

Regents Exams and Other 4+1 Requirements

Students in grades 7-12 are permanently exempt from passing the Regents exams that they were intending to take in June or August 2020 if they pass the associated class in:

- June 2020; or
- August 2020, after attending summer instruction; or
- They passed the class in a prior semester and were planning to take or re-take the Regents exam in June 2020

Students will be considered "intending to take a June or August 2020 Regents exam" if ANY of the following are true:

- In the Spring 2020 semester, they are enrolled in a class leading to the Regents exam;
- They informed the school they wished to retake the Regents exam in June or August 2020;
- They were receiving academic intervention, supplemental instruction, or tutoring to prepare for the Regents exam;
- They took the Regents exam in June 2019, August 2019, or January 2020 in an attempt to pass or improve their score.

Career Development and Occupational Skills (CDOS) Credentials:

- Students who were preparing for a CDOS in Spring 2020 can be awarded the credential if they have otherwise demonstrated the knowledge and skills outlined in the commencement-level CDOS learning standards.
 - OPTION 1 PATHWAY: Students on this pathway will be exempt from the credits/hours they were planning to fulfill in the Spring 2020 semester.
 - OPTION 2 PATHWAY: Students on this pathway who are planning to graduate in the 2019-2020 school year will be exempt from the CDOS assessment and will be awarded the credential so long as they have otherwise met CDOS learning standards.
 - SUPERINTENDENT DETERMINATION PATHWAY: Students with disabilities can still earn a local diploma through this pathway by working towards a CDOS using the above guidelines.
- NOTE: For students *not* in their last year of high school, CDOS exemptions apply only to credits to be acquired and assessments to be taken in the Spring 2020 semester, *not* to future credits.

How will June & August 2020 Regents exams show on my transcript?

- Students who are eligible for an exemption will see a score of “E” listed next to the name of the exam on their transcript.
- Honors/Advanced Regents Diploma determinations will be made without consideration of the exempted Regents exams scores.
- Safety Net options are still available to students with disabilities and English Language Learners. However, students with disabilities using the Compensatory Safety Net cannot use an exempted Regents exam to compensate for a lower Regents exam score (45-54).

If I do not want a Regents Exam exemption or CDOS waiver, what can I do?

Parents can decline any COVID-19 exam exemption or CDOS waiver. Parents may wish to decline an exemption or waiver if they want their child to remain in high school during the 2020-21 school year. Parent requests must be in writing. To decline a waiver or exemption:

- Send a letter, email or text to your school. Be sure to include:
 - Student’s name and date of birth
 - Name of school
 - Parent name and contact information (email, phone number, address).
 - List the exams or CDOS requirements you do NOT want your child exempted from.
- OR fill out the form on page 3 of this [NYSED guidance](#).
- For students who attend a NYC Department of Education (DOE) school, check out this DOE guidance about declining waivers and exemptions: <https://bit.ly/2Ahoxgf>

Parents may decline some exemptions or waivers and accept other exemptions or waivers. But, once you decline an exemption or waiver, you cannot request that it be applied at a later date. Students, regardless of age, may not decline an exemption or waiver for themselves.

Notice Requirements for Students Eligible to Graduate in June or August 2020 Using an Exemption/Waiver

At least 10 calendar days before graduation, schools must tell parents if their child is scheduled to graduate in June or August 2020 using an exemption or waiver.

- This notice must be in the parent's language and must explain that once a student receives a diploma, they no longer have the right to return to high school.
- Schools must send a letter and follow up by phone or text, if possible.
- Generally, if the Parent does not respond, schools can issue a diploma to students who have met all credit requirements and are eligible to graduate using one of these exemptions or waivers.
- However, for students with IEPs whose IEP says the student was planning to return in 2020-21, the school cannot issue a diploma until the parent is successfully contacted.

High School Equivalency & TASC

The TASC exam is canceled due to COVID-19. But, students can still earn a High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma during this time if they are enrolled in an approved High School Equivalency Program.

In general, students who leave high school without a diploma can combine passing Regents exam scores with passing sub-tests of the TASC exam to earn an HSE diploma. For details, see this NYSED document. ***While TASC test centers are closed, students can earn an HSE diploma without passing TASC sub-tests if they:***

- Enroll in an approved High School Equivalency Program (like P2G):
- Already passed at least 3 Regents exams and/or TASC sub-tests; and
- For the remaining 2 sub-tests, earn a passing grade in their corresponding HSE classes.

Students in approved High School Equivalency programs (like P2G) are eligible for the COVID-19 Regents exam exemptions, which can be used towards an HSE diploma, if they:

- Previously passed a high school course that has a Regents exam, and
- Are currently (during the 2019-20 school year) passing the corresponding subject class in their HSE program.

During the COVID-19 emergency period, NYSED has waived the requirement that students pass at least one TASC sub-test. This means that students in approved HSE programs can use any combination of prior Regents exam scores, COVID-19 Regents exam exemptions, and passing TASC sub-tests to earn an HSE diploma. ***Beyond this emergency period***, if a student's transcript shows that they were exempt from one or more Regents exams due to COVID-19, they will also be exempt from that sub-test of the TASC.

This fact sheet does not constitute legal advice. This fact sheet attempts to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of AFC. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.