




THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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To: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Schools
Principals of Public, Religious, and Independent Schools
Leaders of Charter Schools

From: Betty A. Rosa, Commissioner 

Subject: Exemptions from Diploma Requirements and Cancellation of the August 2021 Administration of the New York State (NYS) High School Regents Examination Program in Response to the Ongoing Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you that the New York State Education Department (NYSED) is cancelling all but four of the Regents Examinations scheduled to be administered in June 2021 and all of the Regents Examinations scheduled to be administered in August 2021. This memorandum also provides information on the adjustments with respect to the assessment requirements that students must ordinarily meet in order to earn diplomas, credentials, and endorsements so that the current pandemic will not adversely impact students.

June 2021 Administration of the NYS High School Regents Examination Program

Currently, NYSED plans to administer the following Regents Examinations in June 2021: Algebra I, Earth Science (written test only), English Language Arts, and Living Environment. NYSED is required to administer these four exams to comply with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). A schedule of administration dates for these four Regents Examinations is forthcoming. These examinations shall be administered only in instances where schools and districts can ensure the health and safety of students and teachers. Students receiving remote instruction should not be made to come to school for the sole purpose of taking a Regents Examination.

Cancellation of the August 2021 Administration of the NYS High School Regents Examination Program

NYSED is cancelling the August 2021 administration of Regents Examinations as this administration period is not required to comply with ESSA.

Exemptions from Diploma Requirements

Eligible students may be exempted from the associated diploma requirement for any Regents Examination, Department Approved Alternative Examination, Pathway Examination, and/or Career and Technical Education (CTE) Assessment that was originally scheduled to be administered in June or August 2021. Students who meet one of the following eligibility requirements are exempt from the associated examination-related diploma requirement:

- currently enrolled in a course of study culminating in a Regents, Department Approved Alternative, or a Pathway Examination and earn credit in such course of study by June 2021 or August 2021;
- currently in grade 7 or grade 8, enrolled in a course of study leading to a Regents, Department Approved Alternative, or a Pathway Examination, and meet the learning outcomes for such course of study by June 2021 or August 2021;
- successfully complete a make-up program by August 2021 in a course of study culminating in a Regents, Department Approved Alternative, or a Pathway Examination; or
- previously achieved course credit in a course of study leading to a Regents, Department Approved Alternative, or a Pathway Examination, has not yet passed the associated assessment, but intended to take the exam in June or August 2021 to achieve a passing score.

Students who take one of the four Regents Examinations being administered in June 2021 and fail, may still qualify for an exemption to the diploma requirement associated with the examination, as long as they meet one of the eligibility requirements above.

Use of Safety Net Options

All current [safety net options](#) remain in effect for all students and must be considered in the determination of which diploma type can be awarded. To determine whether general education students, English Language Learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities are eligible to earn either a Regents or local diploma, districts and schools should consider an exempted examination to be equivalent to a score of 65. However, students with disabilities eligible for the compensatory safety net option may not use exemptions on tests to compensate for lower test scores.

Any student, including a student with a disability, who does not earn a Regents or local diploma continues to be eligible for a free public education until the end of the school year in which the student turns age 21, or until the receipt of a Regents or local high school diploma, whichever shall occur first.

Locally Developed Checkpoint A and Checkpoint B Languages Other than English (World Language) Assessments

Students enrolled in Languages Other than English (World Language) courses who successfully complete such courses normally scheduled to culminate in a Checkpoint A or Checkpoint B examination in June or August 2021 are exempt from such examinations for the purposes of meeting Regents with Advanced Designation diploma requirements (Checkpoint B) or in order to earn high school credit for courses completed in grades earlier than 9 (Checkpoint A).

Mastery, Honors, and Technical Endorsements

Mastery

Students seeking a Mastery in Mathematics or Science endorsement to their diploma may qualify for such endorsement if such student meets the requirements for a Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation as well as one of the following criteria:

- passes 3 math and/or 3 science Regents Examinations with a score of 85 or better,
- passes 2 math and/or 2 science Regents Examinations with a score of 85 or higher and has been granted an exemption on a third math and/or science Regents Examination; or
- passes 1 math and/or 1 science Regents Examination with a score of 85 or higher and has earned a final course average of 85 or higher in 2 additional math and/or science courses culminating in a Regents Examination for which they are granted exemptions.

Honors

Students seeking the Honors endorsement on their diploma must meet one of the following criteria:

- earn a computed average of 90 or greater on **all** Regents examinations applicable to the diploma; or
- earn a computed average of 90 or greater on a minimum of three Regents Examinations applicable to the diploma and exemptions granted for the other examinations applicable to the diploma; or
- for students with fewer than three Regents Examination scores, earn a computed average of 90 or greater for scores on Regents Examinations taken and final course grades in courses ordinarily culminating in a Regents Examination for which exemptions have been granted, applicable to the diploma.

Career and Technical Education Technical Endorsement

Students enrolled in NYSED approved CTE programs culminating in a CTE pathway who earn the applicable program credit by the end of the 2020-21 school year and intended to take the CTE +1 pathway assessment are exempt from the assessment for graduation purposes. Such students will earn the CTE technical endorsement on their diploma. Students enrolled in programs that culminate in an assessment leading to an industry credential are exempt from passing the assessment for the purposes of meeting diploma requirements. However, districts should make every attempt to provide students with the opportunity to take such assessments for the purposes of earning an industry certification.

New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB)

Students who are working to earn the NYSSB and receive an exemption from the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (ELA) in June or August 2021 shall be exempt from such assessment for the purposes of meeting NYSSB requirements so long as they have demonstrated proficiency in the ELA learning standards assessed through the provided coursework and earned credit for such course by the end of the 2020-21 school year. In this case, the exempted Regents examination may be applied as a point towards NYSSB's "Criteria for Demonstrating Proficiency in English" requirement.

Additional information about diploma requirements may be referenced in the NYSED's *Frequently Asked Questions Related to the June 2021 and August 2021 Exemptions from Diploma Requirements*. Any questions about the exemptions from examination requirements or the effect of such exemptions on student qualification for a diploma should be directed to emscgradreq@nysed.gov.

The Department is grateful to the dedicated educators, school staff, community members, and parents who are working so diligently to ensure that students are safe and well. Please continue to monitor NYSED's [COVID-19 Information site](#) for additional guidance as it becomes available.