

For guidance and FAQs on grading, please see the **Guidance on Grading** document located under [Assessment](#).

For guidance on individual graduation committees, please see the **Guidance on Individual Graduation Committees** document located under [Assessment](#).

For guidance on EOC completion for graduating seniors, please see the **Assessment Guidance** document located under [Assessment](#).

## Guidance for 2020 Seniors FAQs: Section Topics

*Click on the section topics below to go directly to that section of the FAQ*

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### Award of Diploma

#### 1. What are the requirements for certifying a student is eligible to graduate? **Posted April 21, 2020**

To receive a high school diploma, a student must complete the following:

- Course requirements of the Foundation High School Program specified in §74.12 of this title (relating to Foundation High School Program)
- Assessment requirements for graduation as specified in Chapter 101 of this title (relating to Assessment); and
- Demonstrated proficiency, as determined by the district in which the student is enrolled, in delivering clear verbal messages; choosing effective nonverbal behaviors; listening for desired results; applying valid critical-thinking and problem-solving processes; and identifying, analyzing, developing, and evaluating communication skills needed for professional and social success in interpersonal situations, group interactions, and personal and professional presentations

Once a student has met all the above requirements, the student is eligible for a high school diploma. Please note that a student may satisfy assessment graduation requirements through an individual graduation committee review. **Guidance on Individual Graduation Committees** can be located on TEA's Coronavirus webpage under [Assessment](#).

**2. Is there a deadline by which a district should certify a student's eligibility for graduation? Posted April 21, 2020**

There is not a specific deadline by which a district should certify eligibility for graduation. It is possible for a student to satisfy all graduation requirements before the end of a school year. Once a student has satisfied all of the graduation requirements, a district may issue the student a diploma.

**3. Can a district award a diploma to a student before the end of the school year if the student has an enlistment contract and requests to graduate early in order to enter the military early? Posted April 21, 2020**

As soon as a student has met all graduation requirements including course credit and assessment requirements, the student is eligible to receive a diploma. Districts may wish to prioritize getting students who have enlistment contracts and wish to enter the military early to completion.

**4. When ordering diplomas for the 2020 graduating class, can we use a "month year" or just "year" format due to COVID-19? Posted April 30, 2020**

A student's academic achievement record (AAR) or transcript should indicate the date the student completed all graduation requirements using the standard PEIMS numerical date format of MM/YYYY. A district has the authority to determine the date format to use on high school diplomas.

## Graduation Requirements

**1. What do we do if a graduating senior was scheduled to meet the requirement that students receive hands-on CPR instruction this spring? Posted April 21, 2020**

School districts and open-enrollment charter schools are required to provide instruction to students in grades 7 through 12 in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). If seniors have not completed this requirement, a school district should request a waiver of the requirement from the Commissioner. Steps for submitting a waiver request to the Commissioner can be found on **the Instructions for Submitting a CPR Waiver** document located on the TEA Coronavirus webpage under [Waivers & Funding](#).

**2. What do we do if a graduating senior was scheduled to meet the requirement that students receive instruction in proper interaction with law enforcement this spring? Posted March 30, 2020**

This requirement applies to students who entered grade 9 in the 2018-2019 school year or later. Consequently, the requirement would only apply to a student who was in grade 9 last year and is graduating early. A student may access and watch the flashing lights video at <https://www.texasgateway.org/resource/flashing-lights-senate-bill-30> in order to meet this requirement.

**3. What do we do if a graduating senior was scheduled to meet the requirement that students demonstrate proficiency in speech skills this spring? [Posted March 30, 2020](#)**

A student must demonstrate proficiency, as determined by the district, in the following:

- Delivering clear verbal messages
- Choosing effective nonverbal behaviors
- Listening for desired results
- Applying valid critical-thinking and problem-solving processes
- Identifying, analyzing, developing, and evaluating communication skills needed for professional and social success in interpersonal situations, group interactions, and personal and professional presentations

A district has the authority to determine when and how a student demonstrates proficiency in these skills. It may be possible to confirm that some or all skills were addressed in the past. If not, a district would need to identify a way for the student to demonstrate proficiency in the skills in order to meet the graduation requirement.

**4. Are districts still required to collect parent signatures to opt out of endorsements? [Posted April 21, 2020](#)**

Yes. Parents must still provide written permission allowing the student to graduate under the Foundation High School Program without earning an endorsement. A parent may provide written permission using one of the following methods:

- Download the electronic form ([ENGLISH](#)) ([SPANISH](#)), complete the form and add an electronic signature, and return the form to the district via email.
- Write the statement below, sign the statement, take a picture of the statement, and return the photo to the district by email.
- Write the statement below, sign the statement, and return the statement to the district by mail.

ENGLISH: "I have received written notice regarding the benefits to my child of graduating from high school with one or more endorsements and I grant permission for my child to graduate under the Foundation High School Program without earning an endorsement."

SPANISH: "He recibido una notificación por escrito con respecto a los beneficios para mi hijo(a) de graduarse de la escuela secundaria con un plan o más de especialidades y otorgo permiso para que mi hijo(a) se gradúe bajo el Programa Básico/Fundamental sin una especialidad."

**5. What do we do if a graduating senior has started, but not completed requirements to earn a performance acknowledgment? [Posted April 21, 2020](#)**

Students are permitted, but not required to earn performance acknowledgments.

Dual credit

A student may earn a performance acknowledgment by earning an associate degree while in high school or by earning 12 hours of college academic courses, including dual credit, with a grade of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale.

If a determination cannot be made regarding successful completion of the requirements for a performance acknowledgment at the time of graduation, a school district may award the performance acknowledgment for college coursework after graduation once information from the college or university is available and should note the accomplishment on the student's academic achievement record (transcript) when the determination is made.

### Bilingualism and Biliteracy

A student may earn a performance acknowledgment by demonstrating proficiency in two or more languages if they meet the following criteria.

- Students must complete all English language arts requirements and maintain a minimum grade point average (GPA) of the equivalent of 80 on a scale of 100 and satisfy **one** of the following:
  - Complete a minimum of three credits in the same language in a language other than English with a minimum GPA of the equivalent of 80 on a scale of 100.
  - Demonstrate proficiency in the TEKS for Level IV or higher in a language other than English with a minimum GPA of the equivalent of 80 on a scale of 100.
  - Complete at least three credits in foundation subject area courses in a language other than English with a minimum GPA of 80 on a scale of 100.
  - Demonstrate proficiency in one or more language other than English by scoring a 3 or higher on an AP exam or a 4 or higher on an IB exam for a language other than English or performance on a national assessment of language proficiency in a language other than English of at least Intermediate High or its equivalent.
- An English Learner must participate in and meet the exit criteria for a bilingual or ESL program **and** score at the Advanced High level on TELPAS.

If all four domains of the 2019-2020 TELPAS cannot be completed, the LEA may wish to administer the LAS Links Assessment to English Learners with the potential for reclassification. See English Learner Guidance on TEA's [COVID-19 Support and Guidance](#) webpage for more details.

If a determination cannot be made regarding successful completion of the requirements for a performance acknowledgment at the time of graduation, a school district may award the performance acknowledgment after graduation once the information becomes available. Districts must note the accomplishment on the student's academic achievement record (transcript) when the determination is made.

### AP and IB

A student may earn a performance acknowledgment by earning

- a score of 3 or above on a College Board advanced placement examination; or
- a score of 4 or above on an International Baccalaureate examination for a higher-level course.

The College Board May 2020 AP examinations will be modified and administered online. The College Board has provided free remote learning resources to help students prepare for an AP exam with live and on-demand AP courses and review sessions. A student who took an AP examination and scored 3 or above in a prior school year has met the requirement and should be awarded the performance acknowledgment.

May 2020 IB examinations will not be administered. A student who took an IB examination and scored 4 or above in a prior school year has met the requirement and should be awarded the performance acknowledgment.

If a student is not able to successfully complete an examination prior to graduation, a school district may award the performance acknowledgment at the time a student earns a qualifying score and should note the accomplishment on the student's academic achievement record (transcript) when the determination is made.

The most up-to-date information on AP and IB testing may be found on [TEA's COVID-19 Support and Guidance webpage](#).

### SAT and ACT

A student may earn a performance acknowledgment by

- achieving the ACT® readiness benchmark score on at least three of the five subject tests on the ACT Aspire™ examination;
- earning a total score of at least 1310 on the SAT®; or
- earning a composite score on the ACT® examination of 28 (excluding the writing subscore).

The College Board cancelled the May and June 2020 SAT administrations and plans to provide weekend SAT administrations every month through the end of the calendar year, beginning in August. This includes a new administration in September and the previously scheduled tests on August 29, October 3, November 7, and December 5. In the event that schools do not reopen in the fall, the College Board will offer an at-home, remote delivery of the SAT. The College Board will continue to assess its status and determine which administrations will be held.

ACT will offer a flexible schedule for summer 2020 test dates and test-at-home options for fall/winter 2020. Students scheduled for summer 2020 may make free test date changes from the June to the July national test date. ACT is providing [free digital learning](#) and workforce resources to assist students, teacher, schools, and workers impacted by COVID-19. Additional details are available on the [ACT website](#).

If a student is not able to successfully complete an examination prior to graduation, a school district may award the performance acknowledgment at the time a student earns a qualifying score and should note the accomplishment on the student's academic achievement record (transcript) when the determination is made.

The most up-to-date information on SAT/ACT may be found on [TEA's COVID-19 Support and Guidance webpage](#).

### Business or Industry Certification

Performance acknowledgements for business or industry certifications are awarded at the discretion of the district. If a student has the ability to test online or complete the assessment virtually, districts should award this acknowledgement once the student meets the established criteria. Districts should work with their vendors or certifying entities to determine options and feasibility. Information related to industry-based certifications for public school accountability can be found on [TEA's coronavirus webpage](#).

If a determination cannot be made regarding successful completion of the requirements for a performance acknowledgment at the time of graduation, a school district may award the performance acknowledgment after graduation once information from the college or university is available and should note the accomplishment on the student's academic achievement record (transcript) when the determination is made.

## **6. What should districts do regarding the off-campus physical activity substitution for the physical education graduation requirement? [Posted April 30, 2020](#)**

Districts and open-enrollment charter schools may award a student credit toward the physical education graduation requirement for participation in a TEA-approved private or commercially sponsored physical activity programs conducted on or off-campus if the program provides documentation that the student completed the program remotely during the period of remote instruction. Alternatively, a district or charter school may award credit for physical education if they can determine that, through participation in the private or commercially sponsored physical activity program, the student demonstrated proficiency in all of the [TEKS](#) for one of the high school physical education courses (Foundations of Personal Fitness, Adventure/Outdoor Education, Aerobic Activities, Individual Sports, or Team Sports).

## **Class Rank and GPA**

### **1. How should districts calculate GPAs for graduating seniors for this year? [Posted March 25, 2020](#)**

Calculation of GPA is a local district decision and is not required. If a district chooses to modify the policy for calculation of GPA, care should be taken to ensure equity in the application of the policy for all impacted students.

### **2. How should districts handle class rank for graduating seniors for this year? [Posted March 25, 2020](#)**

Class rank is a local district decision. Please note that while calculation of GPA and class ranking are not required, districts and open-enrollment charter schools must identify junior and senior students in the top 10% of their class for the purposes of eligibility for automatic college admission to a Texas institution of higher education.

Districts may choose to calculate GPA and class rank for the first four six weeks of the school year only. However, any method for calculation of GPA and class rank should be applied to all impacted students equitably.

### **3. Should districts identify the highest-ranking graduate so they may provide a certificate and notice for the college tuition waiver as in previous years? [Posted April 21, 2020](#)**

Class rank is a local decision. Texas Education Code (TEC), §54.301 provides an opportunity for each public, charter, and accredited non-public high school in Texas to identify a student to award a “Highest Ranking Graduate” (HRG) certificate and tuition waiver document. These documents may be presented to the highest-ranking graduate in the senior class. Under no circumstances may a student ranked lower than the “highest” be award this honor. The HRG may present the tuition waiver document to the Texas public college or university upon admission. The HRG tuition waiver document authorizes the president of any state-supported college or university to provide a waiver for tuition in accordance with TEC, §54.301.

Visit [the HRG "frequently asked questions" web page](#) for additional information regarding the program. Each high school may award only one student.

TEA will send the superintendent and principal separate correspondence detailing the process for completing the certificate and tuition waiver document. Additional questions may be sent to [hrg@tea.texas.gov](mailto:hrg@tea.texas.gov).

#### **4. Are there considerations we need to be aware of regarding students who are trying to meet NCAA eligibility requirements? Posted April 30, 2020**

Please review the recently released NCAA Eligibility Center COVID-19 Response FAQs for information regarding the initial-eligibility certification process.

## Award of Credit

#### **1. What options does a district have for awarding credits/graduation? Posted March 25, 2020**

Credit for courses for high school graduation should be awarded based on a student's demonstrated proficiency in the essential knowledge and skills for the course. If a district is closed for the remainder of the year, plans should be made to provide students with remote opportunities to receive instruction and demonstrate proficiency in the remaining content for a course so that students may be awarded credit for courses. If a student is unable to demonstrate proficiency in remaining content, districts have the authority to award proportionate credit if a student has successfully completed half of the course.

Credit by examination (CBE) is an option available to districts to determine demonstrated proficiency, should this option be useful in confirming proficiency in order to award credit. Texas Tech University (TTU) will be offering online proctored CBEs for a fee. For assistance with those seniors who need to earn credit and who do not have access to the internet to take a CBE online, please contact TTU directly at [ttuk12@ttu.edu](mailto:ttuk12@ttu.edu) or 1-800-692-6877. Visit <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/k12/programs/testing/cbe/> for more information. The University of Texas at Austin High School expects to begin offering online proctoring for CBEs for a fee in May. Visit [https://highschool.utexas.edu/credit\\_by\\_exam](https://highschool.utexas.edu/credit_by_exam) for more information.

#### **2. Is there direction on course credit for graduation, meaning would first semester work constitute meeting credit requirement? Posted March 25, 2020**

Districts have the option of awarding proportional credit to students who have successfully completed half of a course. Successful completion of half of a course would not constitute demonstrated proficiency for the entire course. Students may earn credit for the second semester by taking a CBE.

#### **3. Our district was in the process of allowing a graduating senior to make up credit that was not originally awarded due to lack of attendance. What should we do now? Are we allowed to continue that process? Posted March 25, 2020**

Yes. Districts should continue with processes to allow students to make up credit that was not awarded because the student was not in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class was offered in a prior school year or academic period (e.g. last semester). Processes should provide opportunities for students to meet the instructional requirements of the class by demonstrating proficiency in the essential knowledge and skills for the class. Please be aware that the waiver of the 90% attendance requirement of Texas Education

Code, Section 25.092, now in effect only applies to students who lack the required days of attendance for a course taken in the current academic period (e.g. spring semester) of the 2019-2020 school year. The waiver does not affect students who lack credit for days missed for a course taken in a previous academic period (e.g. semester) or school year.

#### **4. Do we need to have a waiver of some kind to waive course credit requirements for graduation and completion for HS students? [Posted April 30, 2020](#)**

High school course credit requirements cannot be waived. Credit for courses for high school graduation should be awarded based on a student's demonstrated proficiency in the essential knowledge and skills for the course. If a district is closed for the remainder of the year, plans should be made to provide students with remote opportunities to receive instruction and demonstrate proficiency in the remaining content for a course so that students may be awarded credit for courses and graduate.

## Graduation Ceremonies

UPDATED  
5/5/2020

#### **1. How do we obtain approval to conduct a completely virtual graduation ceremony? [Posted April 21, 2020](#)**

Graduation ceremonies that will be completely virtual are approved and may proceed in accordance with local plans.

A student may participate in a virtual graduation ceremony upon certification that the student has satisfied all graduation requirements. No action is required on the part of school districts to obtain approval for a virtual ceremony.

Ideas from Texas school districts for virtual ceremonies include the following:

- Real-time or pre-recorded interactive webinar events in which individuals are recognized while students, faculty, and friends join on their computers using audio and webcam to be part of the ceremony
- District- or campus-developed virtual ceremonies that include pre-recorded speeches from commencement speakers, students, and faculty members
- Vendor-produced ceremonies featuring premade content and templates, the ability to customize content, a choice of live or prerecorded speeches and award presentations, and an all-in-one platform to create a graduation ceremony
- To increase live interaction, webinar graduation ceremonies that incorporate social media elements (similar to a Twitter feed) to allow students to post pictures, short videos, and messages during the ceremony
- Live webinars that feature avatars in a gaming environment (sometimes referred to as a “Second Life” commencement ceremony approach) or in a virtual environment resembling a ceremony hall
- Virtual ceremonies that can be accessed via livestream or television broadcast



NEW  
5/5/2020

## 2. Are we able to compile a video of students filmed individually or in small groups to create a virtual graduation ceremony?

A hybrid ceremony (compilation video of students filmed individually or in small groups) that complies with relevant executive orders and guidelines is approved and may proceed **effective May 15** in accordance with local plans. See [Executive Order GA-21](#) for specifics requirements. Please note, though, that determining whether specific arrangements made in a hybrid ceremony are permissible under Governor Abbott's current COVID-19 disaster orders, as well as any local orders not in conflict with Governor Abbott's orders, a school system is advised to first consult with its legal counsel regarding such planned activities. Assuming its legal counsel considers the planned activities for a hybrid ceremony permissible, the school system could then seek written approval from applicable local jurisdictions tasked with enforcement of COVID-19-related gubernatorial or local orders to engage in the planned hybrid graduation ceremony.

Ideas from Texas school districts for hybrid ceremonies include the following:

- Students brought into school, another indoor venue, or an outdoor venue individually or in small groups, with or without family members, to be filmed and to have photos taken in caps and gowns walking across the stage to receive their diplomas
- Inclusion of pre-recorded speeches from commencement speakers, students, and faculty members uploaded into a clickable graduation program
- Individual student videos uploaded and linked to each student's name in a clickable graduation program
- Availability of a compiled video of the ceremony to be viewed in its entirety online or on a district station on a designated day and time or in portions at an individual's leisure

NEW  
5/5/2020

## 3. Are we able to conduct a graduation ceremony during which graduates and their families participate from their vehicles?

A vehicle ceremony that complies with relevant executive orders and guidelines is approved and may proceed **effective May 15** in accordance with local plans. See [Executive Order GA-21](#) for specifics requirements. Please note, though, that determining whether specific arrangements made in a hybrid ceremony are permissible under Governor Abbott's current COVID-19 disaster orders, as well as any local orders not in conflict with Governor Abbott's orders, a school system is advised to first consult with its legal counsel regarding such planned activities. Assuming its legal counsel considers the planned activities for a vehicle ceremony permissible, the school system could then seek written approval from applicable local jurisdictions tasked with enforcement of COVID-19-related gubernatorial or local orders to engage in the planned vehicle graduation ceremony.

Ideas from Texas school districts for vehicle ceremonies include the following:

- Participants arrive at a designated venue (one vehicle with the graduate and family members from the same household) and remain in their vehicles. When called
  - the family drives to a stage, the graduate exits the vehicle, and walks across the stage to receive a diploma from an administrator or dignitary wearing gloves (or picks the diploma up from a table or
  - the family drives to a designated location where an administrator or dignitary wearing gloves hands the graduate the diploma through an open window
- Participants arrive at a designated venue (one vehicle with the graduate and family members from the same household) and remain in their vehicles to view previously recorded speeches shown on a

screen with audio provided through loud speakers or broadcast on a local radio station followed by each graduate's name being called

REVISED  
5/5/2020

#### 4. Are we able to conduct in-person, outdoor ceremonies?

An outdoor ceremony may take place in any county **on or after June 1**.

Be advised, the executive order guidance is subject to change as underlying public health conditions change.

Additionally, between **May 15 and May 31, 2020**, an outdoor ceremony will be permitted in a rural county that has an attestation as described in the "*Texans Helping Texans: The Governor's Report to Open Texas*" (April 27, 2020) that remains in effect 7 days prior to the ceremony.

See [Executive Order GA-21](#) for specifics requirements.

Ideas from Texas school districts for outdoor ceremonies that comply with executive orders and guidelines include the following:

- Identification of the largest outdoor venue in the area to allow for maximum spacing among participants
- Seating of graduates of sufficient distance from one another on the football field with limited guests in the bleachers or not guests at all
- Availability of a livestream or televised broadcast of ceremony to limit participant attendance and for those unable to attend.
- Providing non-medical grade face masks printed with the school name or logo to graduates
- Assigning seating and having graduates escort their families to the assigned location
- Spacing ceremonies apart by several hours to allow time for cleaning and sanitizing
- Predesignating/assigning parking so that arrivals and departures are carefully coordinated
- Staggering of release of students and guests to limit congregating after the ceremony

UPDATED  
5/5/2020

#### 5. Are we able to conduct in-person, indoor ceremonies?

No. In-person indoor ceremonies are not yet permitted under current executive orders related to public health.

#### 6. How can a school district or charter school (school system) determine if any of its planned activities that do not constitute support for remote instruction or food assistance program services are permissible under Governor Abbott's current COVID-19 disaster orders, as well as any local orders not in conflict with Governor Abbott's orders? [Posted April 23, 2020](#)

A school system is advised to first consult with its legal counsel regarding such planned activities. Assuming its legal counsel considers the planned activities permissible, the school system could then seek written approval from applicable local jurisdictions tasked with enforcement of COVID-19-related gubernatorial or local orders to engage in the planned activities.