

2021 & 2022 Graduating Cohorts Appeals Guide:

Additional Verification Process for Federal Graduation Rate Reporting

March 3, 2023

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Section I: Overview

Based on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and federal guidance, the department must calculate the four-year graduation rate by only including students who complete **all required coursework** and graduate with a regular diploma or an alternate academic diploma (AAD) diploma within four years and a summer as a high school graduate in his or her original cohort. In response to this requirement, the department will calculate and report two graduation rates for accountability purposes. First, the **federal graduation rate** will be calculated following the federal guidelines. Second, the **Tennessee graduation rate** will be calculated following the State Board of Education (SBE) [High School Policy 2.103](#).

Per federal guidelines, when calculating the federal graduation rate, only students that complete all required math courses will be included in the numerator of the federal graduation rate calculation. To earn a regular diploma, students must complete four math courses, including Algebra I (or Integrated Math I), Geometry (or Integrated Math II), Algebra II (or Integrated Math III), and one additional math course. It is essential to note that the federal requirement on graduation rate calculation only affects federal reporting; it does not supersede the SBE High School Policy 2.103 governing the awarding of regular diplomas to students with disabilities. This adjustment shall not change what students experience in the classroom. When calculating the Tennessee graduation rate, students with disabilities who complete four years of ELA and math in extended courses (A/B courses) will continue to receive a regular diploma and be included in the numerator of the Tennessee graduation rate calculation.

The graduates defined by the federal graduation rate will be used to calculate the graduation rate for schools and districts and be used to evaluate the Graduation Rate indicator. The federal graduation rate will also be used to identify Priority and Additional Target Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools (i.e., any school with a graduation rate less than 67% will earn Priority status; any school with a graduation rate less than 67% for a given student group will earn ATSI designation during the identification year). The graduates defined by the Tennessee graduation rate will be used to calculate the *Ready Graduate* rate and the ACT/SAT participation rate.

Section II: Purpose of the Additional Data Verification Process

The department has finalized and released the Tennessee graduation rate for the 2021¹ and 2022 graduating cohorts. This data will be used to inform the evaluation of the *Ready Graduate* rate and ACT/SAT participation rate calculation for the 2022-23 accountability. However, among the Tennessee graduates, a subgroup of students will be removed from the numerator of the federal graduation rate calculation if they do not meet federal graduation guideline as specified in [Section I](#). Students who received a regular diploma without any record of receiving a math credit in Algebra II or Integrated Math III course shall be removed from the federal graduation rate calculation (i.e., exclusion criterion).

The department has utilized the course enrollment data from EIS and identified lists of 2021² and 2022 Tennessee graduates who met the exclusion criterion. As a next step, schools and districts shall review both lists and submit appeals, as needed, to finalize the exclusion lists for the federal graduation rate calculation. ***The purpose of this document is to describe the appeals process and timeline and provide guidance on the required documentation for submitting appeals for the 2021 and 2022 graduating***

¹ The 2021 graduating cohort data are used to calculate the AMO targets.

² For the evaluation of the Graduation Rate indicator for the 2022-23 accountability, the department must update the 2021 graduating cohort data and recalculate the AMO targets.

cohorts ONLY. Additional guidance for the 2023 graduating cohort will be provided in the 2022-23 Cohort Phase II-III Appeals Guide, which will be released in summer 2023.

Section III: Appealable Issues and Required Documentation

Districts may only submit appeals for students who enrolled in Algebra II or Integrated Math III and received a math credit for the course. **Students who enrolled but did not complete the course are not eligible for appeals.** Districts must provide an official student transcript or SIS report for each appeal case. The transcript/report must show the following information:

- District name
- School name
- Student ID
- Student name
- Algebra II or Integrated Math III credit received

The department will only accept official transcripts/reports from the current district or the out-of-state sending district as the required supporting document. Any appeals without an official transcript or SIS report will not be reviewed.

For students who did not get an Algebra II or Integrated Math III credit because of a college-level course graduation substitution policy, districts shall provide the district policy showing alignment with the SBE Approved High School Courses Policy 3.205³ as a supporting documentation in addition to the transcript or SIS report.

Section IV: Appeals Submission Timeline

The appeals window opens on **March 6, 2023**, and closes on **April 7, 2023**. The table below shows the dates and times for each milestone as well as the delivery medium. All appeals should be submitted using the [2021 & 2022 Graduating Cohorts Appeals form](#). See [Section V](#) for more guidance on appeal submissions.

As shown in the table, all appeals along with the acceptable documentation, as specified in [Section III](#) must be submitted by **5 p.m. CT on April 7, 2023**. Appeals decisions will be made based on the documentation submitted by the deadline. The department will not accept any additional documentation once the appeals window closes. Districts will receive an initial appeals response on May 5, 2023. Districts will then have the opportunity to correct any issues that resulted in an initial denial during the review and remediation window (**April 24-28, 2023**). Districts will receive final letters regarding the appeal decision from the department on **May 9, 2023**. The exclusion lists will then be finalized and released on the Accountability application on **May 9, 2023**. The updated 2021 and 2022 graduating cohort data for federal graduation rate calculation will then be used for the evaluation of the Graduation Rate indicator for schools and districts for the 2022-23 accountability cycle.

³ [SBE rule 0520-01-03-.03\(7\)](#) states, "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." SBE's Approved High School Courses Policy 3.205 lists approved course substitutions.

Date	Time	Milestone	Delivery Medium
Monday, March 6, 2023	8 a.m. CT	Release of 2021 and 2022 exclusion lists to districts for review and submit appeal as appropriate Appeals submission window opens	Accountability Application
Friday, April 7, 2023	5 p.m. CT	Appeals submission window closes	Appeals and acceptable documentation should be submitted using the 2021 & 2022 Graduating Cohorts Appeals Form
Friday, April 21, 2023	5 p.m. CT	Initial appeal response letter sent to districts	Appeal responses will be sent from TNEducation@tn.gov
April 24-28, 2023	5 p.m. CT	Review and remediation window	Appeals and acceptable documentation should be submitted using the 2021 & 2022 Graduating Cohorts Appeals Form
Tuesday, May 9, 2023	5 p.m. CT	Final appeal response letter sent to districts	Appeal responses will be sent from TNEducation@tn.gov
Tuesday, May 9, 2023	5 p.m. CT	Data finalized and released on Accountability application <i>*Data is under embargo until TDOE's accountability data release</i>	Accountability Application

Section V: Appeals Submission Process

4.1. Required Documentation

The department will only consider appeals that include all the following components:

- An appeal letter on district letterhead explaining the appealable issues; the letter must be signed by the director of schools
- An official transcript showing all of the required information, including:
 - District name
 - School name
 - Student ID
 - Student name
 - Algebra II or Integrated Math III credit received
- Submit the [2021 & 2022 Cohort Appeals Submission Worksheet](#)
- Submit appeal using the [2021 & 2022 Graduating Cohorts Appeals Form](#)

4.2. 2021 & 2022 Cohort Appeals Submission Worksheet

The [2021 & 2022 Cohort Appeals Submission Worksheet](#) must be complete and correct. Please follow the submission instructions below closely to expedite appeals processing.

- **Step 1:** Download the [2021 & 2022 Cohort Appeals Submission Worksheet](#)
- **Step 2:** Fill out the “Contact_Info” Tab.
 - Enter a valid date in cell B2 (format: MM/DD/YYYY).

- Enter your district number in cell B3.
 - This should automatically populate your district name, director's name, and director's email address.
 - Contact the department at TNEG.Graduates@tn.gov if any of the information automated is incorrect.
 - Enter the name of the person who serves as the point of contact for Cohort data in cell B7.
 - Enter the email address of the Cohort data point of contact in cell B8.
 - Enter the numbers only of the phone number for the Cohort data point of contact in cell B9.
 - Enter the appropriate phone extension in cell D9, if applicable.
- **Step 3:** Fill out the "District_Appeals" tab.
 - Enter the first student's state ID number into cell A2.
 - If you have correctly completed the "Contact_Info" tab, your district number and district name will automatically fill in.
 - Enter the school number for the first student in cell D2.
 - You can find the school number in the Cohort application and downloadable files.
 - Enter the student's last name in cell E2 and student's first name in cell F2.
 - Enter the reason for appeal in G2.
 - Enter the graduating cohort (2023) in H2.
 - Enter the school year when the student received the credit for Algebra II or Integrated Math III in I2.
 - If appealing a college-level course substitution, please enter the title of the course as it appears on the student's supporting documentation (transcript or SIS report).
 - Repeat the steps for each appealable student
 - **Step 4:** Save the [2021 & 2022 Cohort Appeals Submission Worksheet](#) excel file.
 - a. Save the file using the following naming convention:
"###_Appeals_Submission_Worksheet" where "###" is your district number.
 - b. Submit only one Appeals Submission Worksheet per district.
 - c. If you are unable to locate your district and school number, please consult any of the files on the Accountability application or search the [School Directory page](#).

4.3 Submission Format

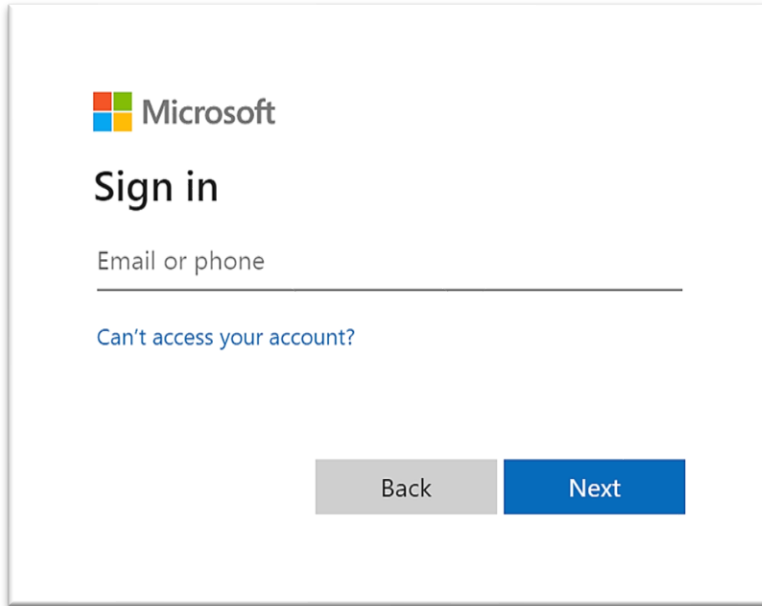
Districts must submit all appeals through the [2021 & 2022 Graduating Cohorts Appeals Form](#) by **5 p.m. CT on Friday, April 7, 2023**. The person submitting the appeals form must have an Orion/SSO account in order to submit the form. Districts must submit the following information:

- District Number
- District Name
- Name and Email of person submitting form
- Director of Schools Name
- Director of Schools Email
- An Appeals Letter signed by the Director of Schools

- must be submitted as a PDF file with the naming convention “###_AppealsLetter” where ### is the district number
- [2021 & 2022 Cohort Appeals Submission Worksheet](#)
 - must be submitted as an Excel file with the naming convention “###_Appeals_Submission_Worksheet” where ### is the district number
- Supporting Documentation
 - must be submitted as a pdf file with the naming convention “###_StudentDocumentation” where ### is the district number
 - **Important Note:** documentation must be provided for each student being appealed. Failure to include supporting documentation will result in a denial.

Districts must submit all appeals as well as the required documentation before **5 p.m. CT on Friday, April 7, 2023**. Any appeals and documentation submitted past the timeline will be denied. If you need assistance submitting the [2021 & 2022 Graduating Cohorts Appeals Form](#), please consult the Microsoft Form Login and Trouble Shooting Guide (see Appendix) or email TNEducation@tn.gov.

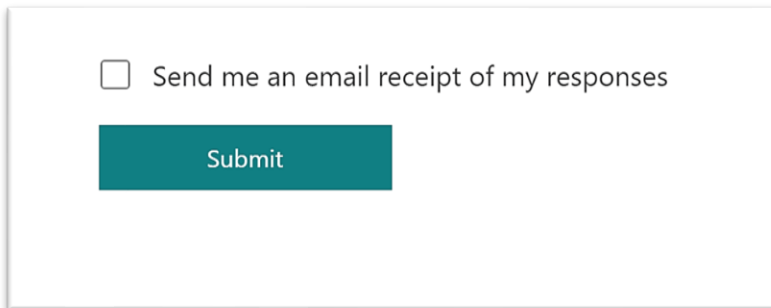
Appendix: Microsoft Form Login and Troubleshooting Guide



The screenshot shows the Microsoft sign-in interface. At the top left is the Microsoft logo. Below it, the text "Sign in" is displayed in a large, bold font. Underneath, there is a text input field labeled "Email or phone" with a horizontal line below it. Below the input field is a blue link that says "Can't access your account?". At the bottom of the form, there are two buttons: a grey "Back" button and a blue "Next" button.

Microsoft Form Login Requirements

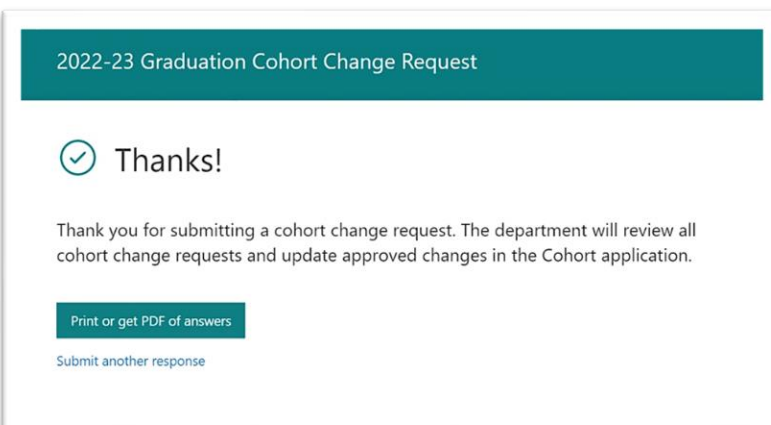
- School and district accountability staff must have an SSO/Orion account to submit a Microsoft Forms for accountability related data appeals, including ACT, Cohort, *Ready Graduate*, accountability data files, accountability and designation, and Report Card data verification process.
- When clicking on the Microsoft Form link, staff will be prompted to sign in. Make sure to sign in with your SSO/Orion account.
- If staff have trouble logging into their SSO/Orion account, they should refer to the [User Guide](#) and contact DT.Support@tn.gov for assistance.



The screenshot shows a form submission option. It features a checkbox followed by the text "Send me an email receipt of my responses". Below this is a teal "Submit" button.

Submitting a Form

- Staff shall answer all questions and upload the required documentation following the instructions provided by the department.
- When ready to submit, check "Send me an email receipt of my responses" to receive a record of the submission.
- After clicking the Submit button, staff also has the option to save a PDF version of the submission by selecting "Print or get PDF of answers."

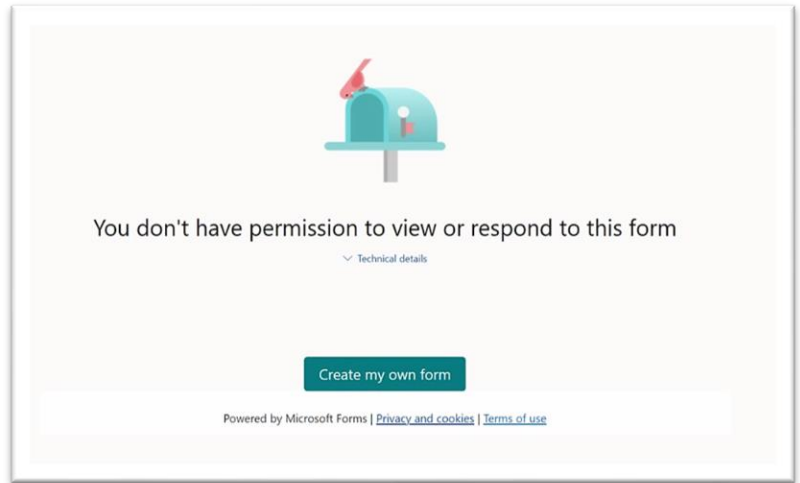


The screenshot shows a confirmation screen for a "2022-23 Graduation Cohort Change Request". At the top, there is a teal header with the text "2022-23 Graduation Cohort Change Request". Below the header, there is a teal checkmark icon followed by the text "Thanks!". Underneath, there is a paragraph of text: "Thank you for submitting a cohort change request. The department will review all cohort change requests and update approved changes in the Cohort application." Below this text is a teal button that says "Print or get PDF of answers". At the bottom, there is a link that says "Submit another response".

Troubleshooting Common IT issues

If the message to the right shows up when attempting to access the Microsoft form, please attempt the following:

- If the SSO/Orion login information has saved in the internet browser previously, and if
 - Using Google Chrome, open a new incognito window and re-sign into the SSO/Orion account.
 - Using Microsoft Edge, open a new InPrivate window and re-sign into the SSO/Orion account.
 - Using Firefox or Safari, open a new private window and re-sign into the SSO/Orion account.
- If attempting to open the Microsoft forms link from within the data appeals resource guides, make sure the form window opens in the same browser in which the resource guide was opened.



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