



June 2020

## Administration and Use of Keystone Exams during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 School Years

On March 27, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education approved the Commonwealth's request to waive several federal assessment, accountability, and reporting requirements for the 2019-20 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The waiver means that in the 2019-20 school year Pennsylvania is not required to administer state assessments, designate schools for accountability purposes, or report certain accountability indicators to USDOE.<sup>1</sup> The waiver has led to the cancellation of the spring administration of the Keystone Exams and the delay of the summer administration.

**Keystone Administration in the 2020-21 School Year.** The 2020 Summer Keystone Exam window will be delayed until September 28-October 2, 2020 to accommodate district planning for the assessment of students who completed Keystone-related courses at the end of the 2019-20 school year. PDE anticipates that all other Keystone Exams will be administered as usual in the 2020-21 school year. Students impacted by the cancellation of the spring 2020 Keystone Exam administration may choose to make-up one or more Keystone Exams in the delayed summer window, the winter window (December 1, 2020–January 15, 2021), or the spring window (May 17-28, 2021) during the next school year.

**Keystone Exams and Graduation Requirements.** Although the Keystone Exam administration schedule has been altered and some federal accountability requirements waived for 2019-20, Keystone Exams continue to be an important component of graduation requirements, beginning with the class of 2022, under Act 158 of 2018. The Act provides five options for students to meet graduation requirements, two of which rely solely on attaining individual or composite minimum Keystone Exam scores. Even though spring test administration was cancelled due to COVID-19, all students enrolled in a Keystone-related course during the spring of the 2019-20 school year must have full access to Keystone-related graduation pathways.

Students who took Keystone Exams during the 2019-20 school year prior to pandemic-related school building closures may use those results to satisfy graduation requirements. Students who took a Keystone-related course in 2019-20 but have not yet taken the related Keystone Exam must be provided an opportunity to take the exam during the delayed summer 2020 test administration window. Districts can determine whether to schedule the summer 2020 Keystone administration as a cohort assessment or as individual make-up exams. If a district does not schedule a cohort assessment then the district must communicate that decision at a school board meeting and through the district's website.

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<sup>1</sup> For additional information about the ESSA waiver issued by USDOE on March 27, see PSEA's Advisory: [ESSA Waivers during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

**Parental Opt-out.** If a district schedules cohort administration of the Keystone Exam in the delayed summer 2020 assessment window, any student enrolled in a Keystone-related course during the spring of the 2019-20 school year has the right to be opted out of the assessment. Parents wishing to opt their student out of this administration of the assessment are not required to follow the procedures set forth in School Code related to religious opt-outs.

**Impact on Educator Evaluation.** All roster verification and teacher specific PVAAS score calculations for the 2019-20 school year have been cancelled, even for teachers with Keystone scores from the winter 2019-20 test administration. Evaluations for the 2019-20 school year are based entirely upon observations of professional practice. Because teacher-specific state assessment scores are not being calculated for the 2019-20 school year, no state assessment data from 2019-20 will be included in future educator evaluations, including the three-year rolling average used to calculate teacher specific PVAAS scores. PSEA continues to monitor guidance from the Department related to the impact of the unavailability of 2019-20 PVAAS scores on teacher specific PVAAS scores in the coming years.

**Impact on Future Accountability Calculations.** Because 2019-20 Keystone Exam results (from students who took the exam in the winter or delayed summer assessment window) will not be comparable with prior or future years' results, these results will not be factored into future accountability determinations such as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (A-TSI) determinations. The results for students who took the Keystone Exams in summer 2019 or winter 2019-2020 as "re-testers" will be used in federal accountability and state reporting only; scores from first-time test takers will not be used in this manner.

**For More Information.** Additional information about the administration and use of the Keystone Exam during the pandemic is available to PSEA members by contacting the Education Services Division at [professionallearning@psea.org](mailto:professionallearning@psea.org). PSEA members who would like specific information about the administration of Keystone Exams in their district should contact their UniServ Representative.