

**LOUISIANA STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

***Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)  
Bulletin***

TOPS BULLETIN NUMBER:	T2016-4
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EFFECTIVE DATE:	As Indicated
DISTRIBUTION:	High School Counselors, High School Principals, Parish Superintendents, College and University Financial Aid Offices and Registrars, LAICU Financial Aid Offices and Registrars, Louisiana Community and Technical College System Personnel
TOPICS:	"Opt Out" Procedures for Students Receiving a TOPS Award During a Budget Shortfall

Act 503 of the 2016 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature allows a student to "opt out" of receiving his/her TOPS Award during a budget shortfall, as is the case with the 2016-17 Academic Year. Students may choose not to receive payment of their TOPS awards during any or all semesters/terms of the 2016-17 academic year. If they do so, they will not be required to enroll full time or to earn 24 hours for the Academic Year.

The deadline to "opt out" for the Fall Semester or term was **August 22, 2016**.

Students who chose to opt out have until the 14<sup>th</sup> class day at the institution they attend to change their mind.

To reverse a prior decision to opt out, the student must:

- Log in to their Louisiana Award System account.
- Select the "Profile" tab, then "Privacy Preferences" from the drop-down selector.
- When that screen loads, select the row that has "Opt-Out" in the "Type" column.
- Selecting an Opt-Out record will enable the "Cancel My Opt Out" button. Clicking that button will terminate the Opt-Out selection.

A student who opts out has five years from the initial semester or term he opts out to complete all remaining eligible terms of their TOPS Award. This period may be extended only if the student requests and is approved for an exception for cause.

A student attending an out-of-state institution may opt out, but he must opt out within the time frame provided above. Upon returning to an eligible Louisiana college or university, a student who has attended out of state

will still be required to complete and submit the Request to Return from an Out-of-State School application along with any required documentation in order to have his TOPS Award paid.

A student whose TOPS Award is suspended may elect to opt out. If he does so, he will not be required to enroll full time or to complete 24 hours for the Academic Year, but he will still have to increase his GPA to that required by the TOPS statutes within 24 months (12 months if enrolled in a technical program) of the original suspension date. For example, if a student's award was suspended after the spring semester of 2015, he would have until the end of the spring semester of 2017 to bring his grades up to the required cumulative GPA. Even if the student opts out during the 2016-2017 academic year, he still must have the required GPA no later than the end of spring 2017 or his TOPS award will be permanently canceled.

Students who opt out will be designated on the TOPS Master Roster by Process Code 14. They will remain Process Code 14 until grades for the OPT OUT semester/term are received or until 20 days after the end of the semester/term. Students who opt out will be designated on the TOPS Student Roster as Special Circumstance 22; additionally all 3 payment flags (Tuition, Stipend, and National Guard (NG)) will be set to N.

If you have questions concerning the TOPS opt out provisions, please contact John W. Bell at [John.Bell@la.gov](mailto:John.Bell@la.gov) or by phone at 225-219-7674.