

Act 18 of the 2016 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature sets a floor for the TOPS Award Amount beginning with the fall semester of 2016 and provides that the qualifying ACT score shall be truncated to a whole number rather than rounded to the next whole number. **This change is effective beginning with the fall semester of 2016.**

Act 388 of the 2016 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature increases the grade point average (GPA) requirement to qualify for a TOPS Performance Award from 3.0 to 3.25 and increases the GPA requirement to qualify for a TOPS Honors Award from 3.0 to 3.50. **This change is effective for high school graduates of 2021 and later.**

Act 503 of the 2016 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature changes the methodology for eliminating students' TOPS Awards in the event of a budget shortfall. Under this law, when there is a budget shortfall, each student's TOPS award -- including Performance and Honors Award stipends -- is subject to a reduction. TOPS Awards will be distributed to all students according to a pro-rata distribution of the available funds.

- Neither the TOPS Tech Early Start Award nor the National Guard stipends are subject to reduction under this law.

Act 503 also allows a student to "opt out" of receiving his TOPS Award during a budget shortfall. Students will be required to log in to their Louisiana Award System account and either accept or reject payment of their TOPS Award during the 2016-2017 academic year. If the student rejects his TOPS Award, he will not be required to enroll full time in school or maintain continuous enrollment during that academic year. NOTE that the time period for students whose awards are suspended for failure to meet steady academic progress WILL NOT be extended, even if the student opts out. In addition, a student who opts out must use all of his TOPS eligibility within 5 years of the budget shortfall, which time may be extended if the student requests an exception for cause in accordance with the administrative rules. **This change is effective beginning with the 2016-2017 award year.**