

Qualifying for TOPS

Question: How do I apply for TOPS?

Answer: Students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) unless they can demonstrate that they do not qualify for federal grant aid (Pell Grant). We recommend that all students submit the FAFSA. The most direct way to file the FAFSA is via the Internet at www.fafsa.ed.gov. The paper FAFSA may also be used.

Students who can demonstrate that they do not qualify for federal grant aid may submit the TOPS On-Line Application on the LOSFA website (<https://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/TOPSPort.nsf/>). The On-Line Application requires students to certify that they do not qualify for federal grant aid, and to certify their citizenship, residency and criminal conviction status.

Those students who apply for TOPS by submitting the TOPS On-Line Application will be the first to lose their award in the event of a budget shortfall.

For additional information, please consult the TOPS Q&A on the web at https://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/TOPS_Q_and_A.pdf.

Question: What is the deadline for applying for TOPS?

Answer: Students submitting applications for a TOPS award by July 1st following the student's graduation from high school will be eligible for payments beginning with the Fall semester immediately following their high school graduation.

Students submitting applications from July 2nd of the year of graduation through July 1st of the following year will be eligible for TOPS payments beginning with the Fall semester of the next academic year and will be eligible for the full 8 semesters of the award.

Students submitting applications from July 2nd of the year following the year of high school graduation through August 30th of that same year will be eligible for TOPS payments beginning in the Fall of the next academic year, but will be eligible for only 7 semesters of TOPS funding.

Students submitting applications from August 31st through October 29th of the year following the year of high school graduation will be eligible for only 6 semesters of TOPS payments beginning with the Fall semester of the next academic year.

For additional information, please consult the TOPS Q&A on the web at https://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/TOPS_Q_and_A.pdf.

Question: What is the minimum ACT score required for a TOPS award?

Answer: For all Louisiana high school graduates, the minimum ACT scores required are: 17 for the TOPS Tech award, 20 for the TOPS Opportunity award, 23 for the Performance Award or 27 for the TOPS Honors award. The writing portion of the ACT is not considered.

For students who have completed a BESE-approved home-study curriculum, the minimum ACT scores required are: 19 for the TOPS Tech award, 22 for the TOPS Opportunity award, 24 for the TOPS Performance award or 28 for the TOPS Honors award.

For students graduating from an out-of-state high school, and who meet Louisiana residency requirements, the minimum ACT scored scores required are: 20 for the TOPS Tech award, 23 for the TOPS Opportunity award, 26 for the TOPS Performance award and 30 for the TOPS Honors award.

Students graduating from an out-of-country high school must meet the same ACT scores as the out-of-state high school graduates. However, they will not be eligible for the Performance or Honors awards if the Louisiana residency requirement is met based on a parent who is a Louisiana resident living outside the United States who actively engaged in work or another activity on behalf of a Louisiana sponsor or employer after having lived in Louisiana at least 24 months prior to starting work out of the country.

A student who has not taken the ACT may use a qualifying score on the SAT. The SAT composite score will be determined using the scores from the Critical Reading and Math sections only. The writing portion of the SAT will not be considered.

The deadline for taking either the ACT or the SAT is April of the year the student graduates from high school. Qualifying scores from tests taken in May or June of that year may be used to qualify for a TOPS award as well, but only if the student does not have a qualifying score on file or if the student is upgrading from a Tech Award to a higher award. Students using tests taken in May or June will lose one semester of TOPS eligibility.

For additional information, please consult the TOPS Q&A on the web at https://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/TOPS_Q_and_A.pdf.

Question: What is the minimum GPA needed to qualify for a TOPS award?

Answer: The minimum TOPS Core GPA required for the Tech or Opportunity awards is 2.50. The minimum TOPS Core GPA required for the Performance or Honors award is a 3.00.

These values represent the *minimum* requirements for a TOPS award. GPA's of 2.49 or 2.99 *cannot* be rounded up to meet award requirements.

For additional information, please consult the TOPS Q&A on the web at https://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/TOPS_Q_and_A.pdf.

Question: How is my TOPS Core GPA different from my Cumulative GPA and how is my TOPS Core GPA determined?

Answer: Student's TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average is calculated on a 4.00 scale using the grades for the courses that were used to satisfy the 17.5 units of required core curriculum courses (17.0 or 19.0 units for the TOPS Tech Award). Your Cumulative GPA is the grade point average derived from all of your high school courses.

Your TOPS Core GPA is determined using the grades earned only in those courses that were used to satisfy the 17.5 credits of core course required for a TOPS award.

For additional information, please consult the TOPS Q&A on the web at https://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/TOPS_Q_and_A.pdf.

Question: Are there any students who are not required to meet the TOPS Core GPA requirement?

Answer: All students graduating from a Louisiana high school must meet the TOPS GPA requirement and must meet all 17.5 core course requirements.

Hurricane displaced students graduating in 2006-2009 have the option of using either the TOPS Core GPA along with the in-state ACT score requirement, or using only the out-of-state ACT requirements without needing a minimum GPA. TOPS will use whichever method results in the best award for the student.

Out-of-state, Out-of-country and Home-study students do not need to meet GPA requirements, but must meet the higher ACT score requirement.

For additional information, please consult the TOPS Q&A on the web at https://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/TOPS_Q_and_A.pdf.

Question: I am a high school freshman, should I take the TOPS Core curriculum or the CORE 4 curriculum?

Answer: Anyone entering the 9th grade during the 2008-09 school year or afterwards is required to take the CORE 4 curriculum in order to graduate. Graduation is also required to be eligible for TOPS. So these students should take the required CORE 4 courses as a part of the TOPS CORE Curriculum. **Periodically discuss course requirements with your high school guidance counselor to ensure that you're on track to graduate AND to be eligible to receive TOPS.**

For additional information, please consult the TOPS Q&A on the web at https://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/TOPS_Q_and_A.pdf.

Question: If a high school does not offer a core course, can it be waived?

Answer: No, the ability to waive a core curriculum course expired with the graduating class of 2003.

Starting with the 2003-04 high school academic year, students are required to complete all core curriculum requirements. If the school does not offer a course, other arrangements such as correspondence, distance learning, or concurrent enrollment for college credit, must be made to acquire the course before graduation if the student wants to qualify for a TOPS award. These classes must be listed on the student's official high school transcript at the time of graduation to be considered for TOPS. Beginning with 2003 graduates, all Louisiana high school academic data is submitted using the Louisiana Department of Education's (LDE) Student Transcript System.

For additional information, please consult the TOPS Q&A on the web at https://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/TOPS_Q_and_A.pdf.
