

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

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

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TOPICS:	TOPS Legislative changes

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The Executive Committee of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission approved an Emergency Rule and Notice of Intent at its meeting held on July 19, 2007 that implements Acts 372 and 412 of the 2007 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature and incorporates certain TOPS Core Curriculum changes recommended by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and the Board of Regents (BOR). Specifically, the proposed changes provide alternative residency requirements for certain dependents of retired military personnel (Act 372); extends the alternative initial eligibility requirements for students displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to certain 2007 out-of-state high school graduates (Act 372); modifies the ACT requirements for home study program students beginning with 2008 completers (Act 412); lowers the GPA requirements for the TOPS Performance and Honors Award beginning with 2008 high school graduates (Act 412); and replaces Speech Debate with Speech III and Speech IV and deletes General Science as an equivalent to Physical Science.

The attached rules incorporate the changes into the Scholarship and Grant Programs rules. A brief summary of the changes follows.

Act 372 - Hurricane Exception

Certain alternative eligibility requirements that were adopted in 2006 for students displaced by Hurricane Katrina or Rita have been extended for another year but only for students **who graduate from an out of**

state high school and receive a Louisiana Distance Diploma issued by the Department of Education for the 2006-2007 high school academic year.

For these students, the TOPS initial eligibility criteria has been modified to include the following exceptions:

An ACT/SAT score that is the same as that for a student graduating from a Louisiana high School.

A cumulative grade point average requirement of at least 2.50 on a 4.00 scale on all courses attempted for the TOPS Tech and Opportunity Award and at least 3.50 for the Performance and Honors Awards.

No core curriculum requirement.

Residency is based on the student living in Louisiana and attending an eligible Louisiana high school for all of the 10th grade or a parent or a court ordered custodian actually living in one of the designated Louisiana parishes for at least one full year prior to the storms.

Act 372 - Alternative Residency and ACT Requirement for Dependents of Retired Military Personnel

Act 372 of the 2007 Regular Session added a new but limited alternative residency requirement for certain dependents of retired military personnel who graduated from an out-of-state high school during the 2006-2007 academic year. The change also slightly modified the ACT requirements for this case.

Act 412 - Home Study ACT Requirements

Currently, the initial eligibility ACT requirement for home study students is two points higher than that required for Louisiana high school graduates. This provision was due to sunset in 2009, but Act 412 of the 2007 Regular Session deleted the sunset provision. In addition, Act 412 changed the home study ACT requirements for the TOPS Performance and Honors Awards to one point higher than that required for Louisiana high school graduates beginning with 2008 home study completers.

Students who complete a BESE approved home study program during the 2007-2008 academic year must have the following minimum ACT score to qualify for the indicated TOPS Award:

Award Level	ACT Score
TECH	19
Opportunity	equal to or greater than the state's reported prior year average plus 2 points, rounded, but never less than 22
Performance	24
Honors	28

Act 412 - TOPS Performance and Honors Award GPA Requirements

Under current law and rules, the minimum high school grade point average (GPA) on the courses used to complete the TOPS Core Curriculum to qualify for the TOPS Performance and Honors Award is a GPA of at least 3.50 on a 4.00 maximum scale. Beginning with students graduating from high school during the 2007-2008 academic year, the minimum required GPA to be eligible for these awards will be 3.00.

Core Curriculum Changes

The TOPS statute authorizes the Commission through rulemaking to determine a high school course to be the equivalent to a course included in the TOPS core curriculum after receiving recommendations from BESE and BOR. The TOPS Core Curriculum includes one unit of science, including *Physical Science* and one unit of Fine Arts Survey.

Shortly after TOPS was established, the Commission promulgated rules establishing *General Science* as an equivalent to and substitute for *Physical Science* and *Speech Debate* (2 units) as an equivalent to and substitute for *Fine Arts Survey*.

Recently, the Commission received a recommendation from BESE to remove both *General Science* and *Speech Debate* (2 units) as equivalents beginning with students graduating from high school during the 2008-2009 academic year. In addition, BESE recommended adding *Speech III* and *Speech IV* (both units) as an equivalent to and substitute for *Fine Arts Survey* beginning with students graduating from high school during the 2006-2007 academic year. The BOR concurred with BESE's recommendations and the Commission has amended its rules accordingly.

Students who graduate during the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 high school academic years may use either *Speech Debate* (2 units) or *Speech III* and *Speech IV* (both units) as equivalents for the fine arts survey requirement and may continue to use *General Science* as an equivalent for the *Physical Science* course. Beginning with students who graduate during the 2008-2009 academic year, neither *Speech Debate* nor *General Science* may be used to complete the TOPS core curriculum.

For additional information, please contact one of our Public Information Officers by calling **225-922-1012** or toll-free by dialing **1-800-259-LOAN (5626), Extension 1012**.

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

Student Financial Assistance Commission
Office of Student Financial Assistance
Scholarship/Grant Programs
(LAC 28:IV: 301, 703, 803)

The Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC) is exercising the emergency provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act [R.S. 49:953(B)] to amend and re-promulgate the rules of the Scholarship/Grant programs (R.S. 17:3021-3025, R.S. 3041.10-3041.15, and R.S. 17:3042.1.1-3042.8, R.S. 17:3048.1, R.S. 56:797.D(2)).

The emergency rules are necessary to implement changes to the Scholarship/Grant programs to allow the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance and state educational institutions to effectively administer these programs. A delay in promulgating rules would have an adverse impact on the financial welfare of the eligible students and the financial condition of their families. LASFAC has determined that these emergency rules are necessary in order to prevent imminent financial peril to the welfare of the affected students.

This declaration of emergency is effective July 19, 2007, and shall remain in effect for the maximum period allowed under the Administrative Procedure Act. (SG0888E)

Title 28
EDUCATION
Part IV. Student Financial Assistance-
Higher
Education Scholarship and Grant Programs
 Chapter 3. Definitions

§301. Definitions

A. Words and terms not otherwise defined in these rules shall have the meanings ascribed to such words and terms in this Section. Where the masculine is used in these rules, it includes the feminine, and vice versa; where the singular is used, it includes the plural, and vice versa.

* * *

Louisiana Resident—

a. - g.iv. ...

h. For any dependent student graduating from an out-of-state high school during the 2006-2007 academic year (high school) whose parent or court-ordered custodian was a member of the United States armed forces who, in the year 2006, moved from Louisiana under permanent change of station orders and retired from the armed forces, and changed his military personnel records to reflect a change of his state of legal residence from Louisiana to another state, shall meet the requirements of this Item, provided that such parent or court-ordered custodian changes his military personnel records from the other state to reestablish Louisiana as his state of legal residence no later than July 1, 2007, and has filed a Louisiana state income tax return for the two years preceding the date of the dependent's graduation from high school.

* * *

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 17:3021-3025, R.S. 17:3042.1 and R.S. 17:3048.1.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by the Student Financial Assistance Commission, Office of Student Financial Assistance, LR 22:338 (May 1996), repromulgated LR 24:635 (April 1998), LR 24:1900 (October 1998), amended LR 26:1994 (September 2000), repromulgated LR 27:1846 (November 2001),

amended LR 29:554 (April 2003), LR 30:2015 (September 2004), LR 31:36 (January 2005), LR 31:1060 (May 2005).

Chapter 7. Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) Opportunity, Performance, and Honors Awards

§703. Establishing Eligibility

A.1.a. – A.5.a.i.(d) ...

ii. (a). For students graduating in academic year (high school) 2007-2008 and prior, for purposes of satisfying the requirements of §703.A.5.a.i above, or §803.A.6.a, the following courses shall be considered equivalent to the identified core courses and may be substituted to satisfy corresponding core courses.

Core Curriculum Course	Equivalent (Substitute) Course
Physical Science	General Science, Integrated Science
Algebra I	Algebra I, Parts 1 and 2, Integrated Mathematics I
Applied Algebra IA and IB	Applied Mathematics I and II
Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry	Integrated Mathematics I, II and III
Algebra II	Integrated Mathematics II
Geometry	Integrated Mathematics III
Geometry, Trigonometry, Calculus, or Comparable Advanced Mathematics	Pre-Calculus, Algebra III, Probability and Statistics, Discrete Mathematics, Applied Mathematics III*, Advanced Mathematics I, Advanced Mathematics II
Chemistry	Chemistry Com
Fine Arts Survey	Speech Debate (2 units)
Western Civilization	European History
Civics	AP American Government
*Applied Mathematics III was formerly referred to as Applied Geometry	

(b). For students graduating in academic year (high school) 2006-2007 and after, for

purposes of satisfying the requirements of §703.A.5.a.i above, or §803.A.6.a, the following courses shall be considered equivalent to the identified core courses and may be substituted to satisfy corresponding core courses.

<u>Core Curriculum Course</u>	<u>Equivalent (Substitute) Course</u>
<u>Physical Science</u>	<u>Integrated Science</u>
<u>Algebra I</u>	<u>Algebra I, Parts 1 and 2, Integrated Mathematics I</u>
<u>Applied Algebra IA and IB</u>	<u>Applied Mathematics I and II</u>
<u>Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry</u>	<u>Integrated Mathematics I, II and III</u>
<u>Algebra II</u>	<u>Integrated Mathematics II</u>
<u>Geometry</u>	<u>Integrated Mathematics III</u>
<u>Geometry, Trigonometry, Calculus, or Comparable Advanced Mathematics</u>	<u>Pre-Calculus, Algebra III, Probability and Statistics, Discrete Mathematics, Applied Mathematics III*, Advanced Mathematics I, Advanced Mathematics II</u>
<u>Chemistry</u>	<u>Chemistry Com</u>
<u>Fine Arts Survey</u>	<u>Speech III and Speech IV (both units)</u>
<u>Western Civilization</u>	<u>European History</u>
<u>Civics</u>	<u>AP American Government</u>
<u>*Applied Mathematics III was formerly referred to as Applied Geometry</u>	

A.5.a.iii. – 6.a.iii. ...

b. if qualifying under §703.A.5.c:

i. is a Louisiana Resident, except as defined in Subparagraph h of the definition of Louisiana Resident in §301:

(a). the state's reported prior year average plus 3 points, rounded, but never less than 23 for the Opportunity Award; or
~~ii.(b).~~ a 26 for the Performance Award; or
~~iii.(c).~~ a 30 for the Honors Award; and
 ii. is a Louisiana Resident as defined in Subparagraph h of the definition of Louisiana Resident in §301:

(a). the state's reported prior year average plus 2 points, rounded, but never less than 22 for the Opportunity Award; or

(b). a 25 for the Performance Award; or

(c). a 29 for the Honors Award; and

c.i. if completed the 12th grade level of an approved home study program during or before the academic year (high school) 2003-2004 ~~or during or after the academic year (high school) 2008-2009~~ and qualifying under §703.A.5.d;

(a). the state's reported prior year average plus

3 points, rounded, but never less than 23 for the Opportunity Award; or

(b). a 26 for the Performance Award; or

(c). a 30 for the Honors Award; and

ii. if completed the 12th grade level of an approved home study program during or after ~~the~~ academic year (high school) 2004-2005 and through ~~the~~ academic year (high school) ~~2007-2008-2006-2007~~ and qualifying under §703.A.5.d;

(a). the state's reported prior year average plus

2 points, rounded, but never less than 22 for the Opportunity Award; or

(b). a 25 for the Performance Award; or

(c). a 29 for the Honors Award; and

iii. if completed the 12th grade level of an approved home study program during or after the academic year (high school) 2007-2008 and after, and qualifying under §703.A.5.d;

(a). the state's reported prior year average plus

2 points, rounded, but never less than 22 for the Opportunity Award; or

(b). a 24 for the Performance Award; or

(c). a 28 for the Honors Award; and

A.6.d.i. – 8. ...

B. Students qualifying:

1. under §703.A.5.a and b ~~during or before~~ academic year (high school) 2006-2007, must have attained a cumulative high school grade point average, based on a 4.00 maximum scale, of at least:

a. a 2.50 for the Opportunity Award; or

b. a 3.50 for the Performance ~~Or~~ or Honors Awards;

2. _____ under §703.A.5.a and b during or after academic year (high school) 2007-2008, must have attained a cumulative high school grade point average, based on a 4.00 maximum scale, of at least:

- a. _____ a 2.50 for the Opportunity Award; or
b. _____ a 3.00 for the Performance or Honors Awards;

2-3. _____ under §703.A.5.f and graduating in academic year (high school) 2000-2001 through 2005-2006, must have attained a TOPS cumulative high school grade point average, based on a 4.00 maximum scale, of at least a 3.00 for the Performance Award.

C. – J.3.b.ii. ...

4. _____ To establish eligibility for a TOPS Opportunity, Performance or Honors Award, a displaced student who has been certified by the principal or headmaster to have graduated during the 2006-2007 school year from an out-of-state high school that meets the criteria of an eligible out-of-state high school as provided in §1701.A.4 and 5 and receives a Louisiana Distance Diploma from the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education must meet all of the requirements of §703.A –I.8 above, except as follows:

a. _____ A displaced student shall not be required to have for the respective awards a higher minimum composite score on the ACT or on the Scholastic Aptitude Test than required for a student who graduates from an eligible Louisiana high school provided such student has, for an opportunity award, a cumulative high school grade point average on all courses on the high school transcript of at least 2.50 calculated on a 4.00 scale or, for a performance or honors award, a cumulative high school grade point average on all courses on the high school transcript of at least 3.50 calculated on a 4.00 scale.

b. _____ A displaced student shall be deemed to meet the Louisiana residency requirement if:

- i. _____ such dependent or independent student actually resided in Louisiana during his entire 10th grade year of high school and was enrolled for such time in an eligible Louisiana high school; or
ii. _____ such dependent student has a parent or

court-ordered custodian who actually resided in a parish listed in §703.J.2.a above for at least the 12 months prior to August 26, 2005, or in a parish listed in §703.J.2.b above for at least the 12 months prior to September 20, 2005.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 17:3021-3025, R.S. 17:3042.1 and R.S. 17:3048.1.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by the Student Financial Assistance Commission, Office of Student Financial Assistance, LR 22:338 (May 1996), repromulgated LR 24:636 (April 1998), amended LR 24:1902 (October 1998), LR 24:2237 (December 1998), LR 25:257 (February 1999), LR 25:655 (April 1999), LR 25:1794 (October 1999), LR 26:64, 67 (January 2000), LR 26:689 (April 2000), LR 26:1262 (June 2000), LR 26:1602 (August 2000), LR 26:1996, 1999, 2001 (September 2000), LR 26:2268 (October 2000), LR 26:2753 (December 2000), LR 27:36 (January 2001), LR 27:702 (May 2001), LR 27:1219, 1219 (August 2001), repromulgated LR 27:1850 (November 2001), amended LR 28:772 (April 2002), LR 28:2330, 2332 (November 2002), LR 29:125 (February 2003), LR 29:2372 (November 2003), LR 30:1162 (June 2004), LR 30:1471 (July 2004), LR 30:2019 (September 2004), LR 31:37 (January 2005), LR 31:2213 (September 2005), LR 31:3112 (December 2005), LR 32:2239 (December 2006).

Chapter 8. TOPS-Tech Award
 §803. Establishing Eligibility

A.1.a. – 7.a.

b. _____ i. _____ if qualifying under §803.A.5.b or c; and is a Louisiana Resident, except as defined in Subparagraph h of the definition of Louisiana Resident in §301, an ACT composite of at least 20; and or

ii. _____ if qualifying under §803.A.5.b is a Louisiana Resident as defined in Subparagraph h of the definition of Louisiana Resident in §301, an ACT composite of at least 19; and
 A.7.c. - B.3.b.ii. ...

4. _____ To establish eligibility for a TOPS Tech Award, a displaced student who has been certified by the principal or headmaster to have graduated during the 2006-2007 school year from an out-of-state high school that meets the

criteria of an eligible out-of-state high school as provided in §1701.A.4 and 5 and receives a Louisiana Distance Diploma from the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education must meet all of the requirements of §703.A –I.8 above, except as follows:

a. A displaced student shall not be required to have for the respective awards a higher minimum composite score on the ACT or on the Scholastic Aptitude Test than required for a student who graduates from an eligible Louisiana high school provided such student has a cumulative high school grade point average on all courses on the high school transcript of at least 2.50 calculated on a 4.00 scale.

b. A displaced student shall be deemed to meet the Louisiana residency requirement if:

i. such dependent or independent student actually resided in Louisiana during his entire 10th grade year of high school and was enrolled for such time in an eligible Louisiana high school; or

ii. such dependent student has a parent or court-ordered custodian who actually resided in a parish listed in §703.J.2.a above for at least the 12 months prior to August 26, 2005, or in a

parish listed in §703.J.2.b above for at least the 12 months prior to September 20, 2005.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 17:3021-3025, R.S. 17:3042.1 and R.S. 17:3048.1.

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George Badge Eldredge
General Counsel