

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

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

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TOPICS:	Addition of intersession hours and extension of supporting documentation deadline

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The Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission approved an Emergency Rule and initiation of rulemaking to make the rule permanent at its meeting on January 29, 2008 that changes several provisions of the Scholarship and Grant Rules for the Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS). The changes:

- Allow students to use hours earned during intersessions that end during the TOPS college academic year toward the minimum 24 hours required for continuation of the award.
- Extend the deadline to provide supporting documentation to LOSFA for students who enroll for the first time as full time students at accredited out-of-state colleges and desire to return to Louisiana and to apply for a TOPS award.

College Academic Year Definition - Intersessions

Recipients of the TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Awards are required to earn the required 24 credit hours during the TOPS college academic year. Prior to this rule change, the TOPS rules defined the TOPS college academic year as beginning with the fall term of the award year, included the winter term, if applicable, and concluded with the completion of the spring term of the award year. The definition specifically excluded summer sessions and all intersessions.

Hours earned through correspondence courses are currently included in the 24 hour calculation, if reported by the college as being earned during the TOPS college academic year regardless of when the correspondence course started. This rulemaking will treat hours earned during intersessions ending during the TOPS college academic year the same as correspondence course hours.

This rulemaking changes the TOPS rules to include intersessions ending during the TOPS college

academic year as part of the TOPS college academic year. The hours earned during these intersessions will now be included in the hours earned during the academic year and will be counted toward the minimum 24 hours required for continuation of the award.

The following guidance is provided:

1. This change is effective for the 2007- 2008 TOPS college academic year.
2. "Intersession" is a generic term. Any shortened term or session held between terms or semesters that end during the TOPS college academic year are included in the term.
3. Intersessions that end before or after the TOPS college academic year after are not included, even if they begin during the TOPS college academic year.
4. Students are not required to enroll in any intersession.
5. TOPS awards, including stipends, will not be paid for students enrolling in any intersession.
6. Grades and hours earned at any time during the year will continue be used to calculate the student's GPA for TOPS steady academic progress and to meet the minimum cumulative GPA requirements.
7. If a student's TOPS Award is suspended before an intersession and he increases his cumulative GPA to at least the minimum required, the student's award will be reinstated for the next term or semester.

Students Returning from Out-of-State Colleges - Supporting Documentation Final Deadline

The deadline for receipt of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the On-Line Application and the "*Application to Return from an Out-of-State College*" (the new agency application for returning students) for students returning from out-of-state colleges is July 1 immediately following the TOPS college academic year the student returns to an eligible Louisiana college or university. Prior to this rule change, the deadline for receipt of all required supporting documentation was that same deadline.

This rulemaking does not change the deadline for receipt of the FAFSA or On-Line Application and *Application to Return from an Out-of-State College*. The deadline remains July 1 immediately following the TOPS college academic year the student returns to an eligible Louisiana college or university.

This rulemaking does extend the deadline for receipt of supporting documentation (official transcripts, military forms, affidavits, citizenship documentation, etc.):

- Until April 15, 2007 for students who first enrolled as a full time student in an out-of-state college or university and returned to an eligible Louisiana college or university during the 2005-2006 TOPS college academic year.
- Until April 15, 2008 for students who first enrolled as a full time student in an out-of-state college or university and returned to an eligible Louisiana college or university during the 2006-2007 TOPS college academic year.
- Until January 15 after the July 1 deadline for students who first enrolled as a full time student in an out-of-state college or university and return to an eligible Louisiana college or university during the 2007-2008 TOPS college academic year or later. Example: A student graduates from high school in May 2006 and enrolls full time at an accredited out-of-state high school for the fall semester of 2006 and the spring semester of 2007. The student then returns to Louisiana and enrolls as a full time student in an eligible Louisiana college for the fall semester of 2007. The deadline for receipt of this student's FAFSA or Online Application and the student's *Application to Return from an Out-of-State College* is July 1, 2008. The deadline for receipt of this student's supporting documentation is January 15, 2009.

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

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY
Student Financial Assistance Commission
Office of Student Financial Assistance
Scholarship/Grant Programs
(LAC 28:IV.301, 507, 703 and 705)

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 January 29, 2008, and shall remain in effect for the maximum period allowed under the Administrative Procedure Act. (SG0893E)

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. *Academic Year (College)*—the two- and four-year college and university *academic year* begins with the fall term of the award year, includes the winter term, if applicable, and concludes with the completion of the spring term of the award year. Intersessions ending during the academic year are included in the academic year. The two- and four-year college and university academic year does not include summer sessions ~~nor~~ or intersessions that do not end during the academic year.

Application to Return from an Out-of-State College— A form that must be submitted by students who first enroll full time in an accredited out-of-state college or university and who then return to an eligible Louisiana college or university and want to apply for TOPS eligibility.

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 24:632

(April 1998), amended LR 24:1898 (October 1998), LR 24:2237 (December 1998), LR 25:256 (February 1999), LR 25:654 (April 1999), LR 25:1458 and 1460 (August 1999), LR 25:1794 (October 1999), LR 26:65 (January 2000), LR 26:688 (April 2000), LR 26:1262 (June 2000), LR 26:1601 (August 2000), LR 26:1993, 1999 (September 2000), LR 26:2268 (October 2000), LR 26:2752 (December 2000), LR 27:36 (January 2001), LR 27:284 (March 2001), LR 27:1219 (August 2001), repromulgated LR 27:1842 (November 2001), amended LR 27:1875 (November 2001), LR 28:45 (January 2002), LR 28:446 (March 2002), LR 28:772 (April 2002), LR 28:2330, 2331 (November 2002), LR 29:555 (April 2003), LR 29:879 (June 2003), LR 30:1159 (June 2004), LR 30:2015 (September 2004), LR 31:36 (January 2005), LR 31:3112 (December 2005), LR 33:86 (January 2007), LR 33:439 (March 2007), LR 33:1339 (July 2007), LR 33:2612 (December 2007), LR 34:.

Chapter 5. Applications, Federal Grant Aid and ACT Test

§507. Final Deadline for Submitting Documentation of Eligibility

A. – B.2. ...

C. Returning Students

C.1 – 2. ...

3. a. Returning students, who enroll in an eligible college or university in ~~the academic year (college) fall semester of 2005-2006 or academic year (college) 2006-2007~~ or later, must submit documentation that establishes TOPS eligibility no later than the

April 15th immediately following the July 1 immediately following the academic year (college) the student enrolls as a full-time student in an eligible college or university. For example, a student who seeks to enroll in an eligible college or university in the fall semester of 2006 must submit documentation that establishes TOPS eligibility no later than July 1, 2007.

b. Returning students, who enroll in an eligible college or university in the fall semester of 2007 or later, must submit an application to return from an out-of-state college no later than July 1 immediately following the academic year (college) the student enrolls as a full-time student in an eligible college or university and must submit any supporting documentation required by the application no later than January 15 following the July 1 deadline.

c. Examples:

i. A returning student who enrolled in an eligible college or university in the fall semester of 2005 must submit the application to return from an out-of-state college no later than July 1, 2006, and any required supporting documentation such as college transcripts no later than April 15, 2007.

ii. A returning student who enrolled in an eligible college or university in the spring semester of 2007 must submit the application to return from an out-of-state college no later than July 1, 2007, and any required supporting documentation such as college transcripts no later than April 15, 2008.

iii. A returning student who enrolled in an eligible college or university in the fall semester of 2007 must submit the application to return from an out-of-state college no later than July 1, 2008, and any required supporting documentation such as college transcripts no later than January 15, 2009.

iv. A returning student who enrolled in an eligible college or university in the spring semester of 2008 must submit the application to return from an out-of-state college no later than July 1, 2008, and any required supporting documentation such as college transcripts no later than January 15, 2009.

v. A returning student who enrolls in an eligible college or university in the fall semester of 2009 must submit the application to return from an out-of-state college no later than July 1, 2010, and any required supporting documentation such as college transcripts no later than January 15, 2011.

4. a. Beginning with the 2007-2008

academic year (college), all documentation and certifications necessary to establish a returning student's initial eligibility including, but not limited to, high school and/or college transcripts and certifications, copies of student aid reports, ACT and/or SAT scores, residency affidavits, proof of citizenship or permanent residency status and other documents that may be utilized in determining eligibility, must be received by LASFAC no later than January 15 immediately following the deadline for receipt of the student's FAFSA or on-line application.

b. Examples:

i. If a returning student enrolls full time in an eligible Louisiana college or university for the fall semester of 2007, his deadline to file the FAFSA or on-line application is July 1, 2008. If his initial FAFSA or on-line application is received no later than July 1, 2008, and if all the necessary supporting documentation relevant to establishing eligibility is in LASFAC's possession by January 15, 2009, the student will receive his TOPS award (reduced by the number of semesters/terms he enrolled out-of-state) retroactively beginning the fall semester of 2007.

ii. If a returning student enrolls full time in an eligible Louisiana college or university for the spring semester of 2008, his deadline to file the FAFSA or on-line application is July 1, 2008. If his initial FAFSA or on-line application is received no later than July 1, 2008, and if all the necessary supporting documentation relevant to establishing eligibility is in LASFAC's possession by January 15, 2009, the student will receive his TOPS award (reduced by the number of semesters/terms he enrolled out-of-state) retroactively beginning the spring semester of 2008.

iii. If a returning student enrolls full time in an eligible Louisiana college or university for the spring semester of 2008, his deadline to file the FAFSA or on-line application is July 1, 2008. If his initial FAFSA or on-line application is received after July 1, 2008, but no more than 120 days later, and if all the necessary supporting documentation relevant to establishing eligibility is in LASFAC's possession by January 15, 2009, the student will receive his TOPS award (reduced by the number of semesters/terms he enrolled out-of-state and further reduced by one additional semester if one to sixty days late or by two additional semesters if 61 to 120 days late) retroactively beginning the spring semester of 2008.

D.1. – 3. ...

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in

accordance with R.S. 17:3021-3036, 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), amended LR 24:1901 (October 1998), repromulgated LR 27:1847 (November 2001), amended LR 28:447 (March 2002), LR 30:1161 (June 2004), LR 30:1471 (July 2004), LR 30:2019 (September 2004), LR 32:2238 (December 2006), LR 33:2357 (November 2007), LR 34:.

§703. Establishing Eligibility

A. – H.1.b. ...

c. he enrolled in an eligible college or university no later ~~then~~ than the next semester or term, excluding summer sessions and intersessions, immediately following the last semester he was enrolled in the out-of state college or university.

H.2. – J.4.b.ii. ...

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), LR 33:435 (March 2007), LR 33:2357 (November 2007), LR 33:2612 (December 2007), LR 34:.

§705. Maintaining Eligibility

A. 1. –5. ...

6. minimum academic progress:
a. in an academic undergraduate program at an eligible college or university, by the end of each academic year (college), earn a total of at

least 24 college credit hours as determined by totaling the earned hours reported by the institution for each semester or quarter in the academic year (college), including any hours earned during an intersession ending during the academic year. These hours shall include remedial course work required by the institution, but shall not include hours earned during qualified summer sessions, summer sessions ~~nor~~ or intersessions that do not end during the academic year or ~~nor~~ by advanced placement course credits. Unless granted an exception for cause by LASFAC, failure to earn the required number of hours will result in permanent cancellation of the recipient's eligibility; or A.6.b. – E.3. ...

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 17:3021-3036, 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 24:637 (April 1998), amended LR 24:1904 (October 1998), LR 25:257 (February 1999), LR 25:656 (April 1999), LR 25:1091 (June 1999), LR 26:67 (January 2000), LR 26:688 (April 2000), LR 26:1996 (September 2000), LR 26:2001 (September 2000), repromulgated LR 27:1853 (November 2001), amended LR 28:447 (March 2002), LR 28:772 (April 2002), LR 28:2332 (November 2002), LR 29:2373 (November 2003), LR 30:781 (April 2004), LR 30:1163 (June 2004), LR 30:2019 (September 2004), LR 31:3115 (December 2005), LR 33:437 (March 2007), LR 34:.

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