LOUISIANA OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Accessibility Notice

Archived Document — Alternative Format Available Upon Request

Filename: COVID-19-QUESTIONS-AND-ANSWERS.pdf

About This Document

This document is part of an archived public record library. We are committed to making all information accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. Some archived documents may not fully conform to current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1 Level AA) or applicable ADA Title II requirements.

We are actively reviewing and remediating our document library. If you encounter any barriers accessing this content, please contact us using the information below and we will provide the information in an alternative accessible format as promptly as possible.

Request an Accessible Format

Contact:	Louisiana Board of Regents Communications
Email:	communications@laregents.edu
Phone:	(225) 342-4253
Mailing Address:	P.O. Box 3677, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3677
Online Request:	https://www.laregents.edu/web-accessibility-statement/
TTY / TDD:	Please use your preferred relay service

This accessibility notice was added automatically. The original archived document begins on the following page.

COVID-19 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
FOR
HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS AND POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS
Updated as of 08/27/2021 at 12:00 p.m.

Fall 2020 Semester Update:

1. **Am I required to enroll full time for the Fall 2020 Semester in order to maintain my TOPS award**?

Yes, full time enrollment is required to maintain TOPS eligibility. Your TOPS award may be used for in-person, on-line, or hybrid attendance at an eligible Louisiana institution, as long as you are enrolled full time. The TOPS award amount by institution may be found here.

2. **May I use my TOPS award to attend on-line classes?**

Yes, your TOPS award may be used for full time, on-line attendance at an eligible Louisiana institution.

3. **Is my TOPS award affected if I choose on-line or hybrid attendance, instead of in-person attendance?**

No, your TOPS award will not change if you choose on-line or hybrid attendance at an eligible Louisiana institution. The TOPS award amount paid is the same regardless of the attendance option chosen: in-person, on-line or hybrid. The TOPS award amount by institution may be found here. Please note you are still required to enroll full time if you choose on-line or hybrid attendance at an eligible Louisiana institution.

4. **I am a first time freshman. Am I required to enroll for the Fall 2020 semester in order to accept my TOPS award?**

No, first time freshman have a year from high school graduation to accept their TOPS award. Therefore, a 2020 high school graduate has until Fall 2021 to accept their TOPS award. However, if you choose to enroll this fall, your TOPS Award may be used for in-person, on-line, or hybrid attendance.

High School Seniors TOPS related Q&A:

On April 2, 2020, Governor Edwards suspended the following TOPS initial eligibility requirements for the 2019-2020 Academic Year:

- **The requirement that a student achieve a qualifying score on the ACT no later than April of their year of high school graduation;**
- **The requirement that a student begin a home study program no later than the end of their 10th grade year;**
- **The requirement that students who were in the JumpStart graduation track complete all nine units in Jump Start course sequences, workplace experiences, and credentials IF that requirement was waived by the student's high school for high school graduation purposes.**

The following Q&As have been updated to reflect these changes.

1. **Will my daughter, who is a Senior in high school still qualify to get more TOPS if her score can increase on the June test? That was why we signed up for the April test.**

As you know, ACT has postponed the April National test to June, and the TOPS law provides that graduating seniors must achieve a qualifying score no later than the April National ACT Test date. The Board of Regents will be asking the Legislature to take legislative action to make an exception to this provision in light of developments relating to COVID-19, including allowing a student to qualify with a June test date without receiving a one-semester reduction in their eligibility period. We will update schools, students, and parents as soon as there is any change to this requirement. **On April 2, 2020, Governor Edwards suspended the requirement that a student achieve a qualifying score on or before the national ACT test date in April. Students will have until September 30, 2020, to achieve a qualifying ACT score or to qualify for higher TOPS Award.**

2. **My school is giving me the option to receive a Pass/Fail grade for one or more of the courses required to complete the TOPS Core Curriculum. How will that affect my TOPS Core GPA?**

For TOPS purposes, courses graded on pass/fail basis are not assigned a quality point value and are not included in the calculation of the TOPS Core GPA. A TOPS core course that is completed as a "pass" is not included in the grade point calculation in any way. Failed courses cannot be used to complete the core curriculum, and as a result, will not impact a student's TOPS Core GPA.

If a course is graded on a pass/fail basis, the unit earned will not be included to calculate the TOPS Core GPA. Passed courses will be used to satisfy the TOPS core curriculum requirements, but they will not increase your GPA. Failed courses cannot be counted in the number of units needed to satisfy the TOPS core curriculum requirement.
Example: If one of your TOPS Core courses is graded on a pass basis, your TOPS Cumulative GPA will be computed by dividing your total grade points by 18 units instead of 19 units. If two of your TOPS Core courses are graded on a pass basis, your TOPS Cumulative GPA will be computed by dividing your total grade points by 17 units instead of 19 units, etc.

3. **I am a high school senior and currently have a 2.49 TOPS Core GPA. I chose to receive Pass/Fail grades for my courses and passed all the TOPS core courses. Will I be eligible for TOPS?**

No. A course that is passed will be used in counting the number of units needed to satisfy the TOPS core curriculum requirement; however, no numerical value will be assigned to that "P" grade. As a result, your TOPS Core GPA would remain as a 2.49 The TOPS statute requires that you earn at least a 2.50 grade point average which means you would not be eligible for a TOPS Award.

4. **I chose to receive Pass/Fail grades and failed one of the courses in the TOPS Core Curriculum. Does this affect my TOPS Eligibility?**

Yes. A course that is failed cannot be counted in the number of units needed to satisfy the TOPS core curriculum requirement. If you needed this course in order to meet the core curriculum requirements and

you received an "F", you would not have met the core curriculum and you will not be eligible for a TOPS Award.

5. **I am currently a high school senior, but I was not able to complete/pass some of the TOPS Core curriculum courses due to COVID-19. Can I take those courses over the summer to qualify for TOPS?**

Yes. However, you must make sure you have completed the TOPS Core Curriculum prior to August 31, 2020. These classes must be listed on your official high school transcript at the time of graduation to be considered for the TOPS core curriculum. You will not be allowed to complete TOPS Core Curriculum courses after high school graduation to qualify for a TOPS award.

6. **Why do I have until September 30 to achieve a qualifying ACT score but I only have until August 31 to finish the core curriculum and get a qualifying high school GPA?**

The high school academic year for purposes of TOPS is September 1 through August 31. By August 31, the new high school academic year has begun, and any courses completed after that date will be included in the following academic year.

With respect to the later date to achieve a qualifying ACT score, the TOPS statutes already allow a student to achieve a qualifying score on the ACT through September 30, but only if the student has never achieved a qualifying score, and only if the student was unable to take the ACT due to circumstances beyond his control which are attributable to the administration of the test.

The Governor has suspended the requirement that a student achieve a qualifying score by April of the year of high school graduation and the requirement that a student lose a semester of his award eligibility, so a student can achieve a qualifying score through September 30 without losing a semester of his award eligibility.

7. **When will LOSFA begin determining TOPS eligibility for 2020 graduates?**

LOSFA will begin determining TOPS eligibility for 2020 graduates in June. If a student has completed the core curriculum and has achieved a qualifying ACT score at this time, his eligibility will be determined in June.

8. **What if I already have a qualifying ACT score, but I achieve a higher score by September 30 that makes me a eligible for a higher award level?**

If the student achieves an ACT score that makes him eligible for a higher award by September 30, his award will be upgraded to the higher award.

9. **What if I don't have a qualifying ACT score when LOSFA begins determining eligibility in June?**

You will not be made eligible for TOPS until you receive a qualifying ACT score. Note that you must still meet all other initial eligibility requirements, including completion of the TOPS core curriculum and achievement of the required GPA. If you achieve a qualifying score by September 30, 2020, and

you meet the other initial eligibility requirements, you will be made eligible for TOPS and your TOPS Award will be paid for the fall semester of 2020 as long as you are enrolled full time.

10. **Due to COVID-19, I must take courses during summer school. How does that impact my TOPS eligibility?**

You are allowed to complete TOPS Core Curriculum courses during the summer as long as you have not yet graduated from high school; however, the determination of your eligibility for a TOPS award could be delayed depending on the date your high school submits final high school transcript data in the Student Transcript System (STS). Please note: The academic year for TOPS eligibility ends on August 31. If your graduation date falls on September 1 or beyond you may still enroll for the fall 2020 semester; however, your TOPS eligibility will not be determined until June 2021 as you will be considered a 2021 high school graduate.

11. **Can TOPS Core Curriculum classes be waived if we were not able to complete them due to COVID-19?**

No, a TOPS core course cannot be waived, except under limited circumstances for students with one or more learning, visual, hearing or physical disabilities and/or exceptionalities. You are still required to complete the TOPS core curriculum requirements. **On April 2, 2020, Governor Edwards suspended the requirement that students who were in the JumpStart graduation track complete all nine units in Jump Start course sequences, workplace experiences, and credentials IF that requirement was waived by the student's high school for high school graduation purposes.**

12. **My ACT score puts me in the range to qualify for either TOPS Performance or TOPS Honors. I currently have a 2.95 TOPS Core GPA and passed all the TOPS Core Curriculum courses through a Pass/Fail grading system for my 12th grade year. Can I qualify for the higher level of TOPS with just my ACT score considering the situation with COVID-19?**

No. Students must still meet TOPS eligibility requirements for each level of TOPS which include earning a qualifying ACT score **AND** completing the TOPS Core Curriculum with the required GPA. Your TOPS Core GPA will not be rounded up.

13. **I have more than 19 units to meet the TOPS core curriculum requirement but received a Pass grade for one of the courses I was hoping to earn a higher grade in and use as a substitute for another course. How will my TOPS Core GPA be impacted?**

If you have earned more than the required number of units of courses that are included in the TOPS core curriculum, your TOPS Core GPA will be calculated using the courses with the highest grades that satisfy the required core curriculum category. Since the letter grade has a numeric value, programming will choose the full numeric letter grade over the P grade.

14. **If I did not have a TOPS Core GPA of 3.00 when I graduated high school due to COVID-19 but I make a 3.00 cumulative GPA in college, can I move up to a higher award level?**

No. You are awarded TOPS based on your academic performance in high school. You must meet the TOPS requirements at the time of graduation from high school and once awarded, must meet certain academic standards in college to continue your award. Note that the requirement that you must have a qualifying ACT score as of high school graduation has been waived. You have until September 30, 2020, to achieve a qualifying score on the ACT.

15. **If I did not have a TOPS Core GPA of 2.50 when I graduated high school due to COVID-19, can I get a higher GPA in college and receive TOPS then?**

No. You are awarded TOPS based on your academic performance in high school. You must meet the TOPS requirements at the time of graduation from high school.

16. **Is there an exception for the TOPS Core GPA due to COVID-19?**

No. The statute requires a minimum TOPS Core GPA of 2.50. This requirement still applies even if you choose to receive Pass/Fail grades from your high school.

17. **If a student earns a letter grade for the first semester then choses to take a Pass/Fail grade for the second semester, how will their grade be reported to LOSFA and how will this impact their TOPS Eligibility?**

A course with an earned grade of "P" can only be entered as Y1 – Year Long Course. A student cannot receive a grade of "P" for one part of a course and a letter grade for the other part of the course. You will be missing ½ unit of the required 19 core units. You will need to speak with the counselor at your high school regarding their policy for reporting grades to LOSFA.

18. **I'm currently in the 11th grade and was taking dual enrollment courses through TOPS Tech Early START. If I choose to receive Pass/Fail grading due to COVID-19, how will this impact my eligibility for TOPS Tech Early START next year?**

You are required to maintain a 2.00 GPA on a 4.00 scale on all high school courses attempted in order to remain eligible for TOPS Tech Early Start. Pass/Fail grades are not assigned a quality point value and they will not be included in the calculation of your high school GPA. If you receive an "F", it will lower your GPA such that you may not meet the 2.00 requirement to continue to be eligible for TOPS Tech Early Start. If you receive a "P", the grade will not lower your GPA, but it will not increase it either.

19. **I am junior in high school. As a result of COVID-19, I am now a home-study student. Will I be eligible for TOPS?**

On April 2, 2020, Governor Edwards suspended the requirement that students must have begun a home study program no later than the end of their tenth grade year has been suspended. Therefore, students that began home study at any time during their junior or senior year will be eligible for TOPS if all of the other initial eligbility requirements are met. Note that you must have an approved home study application on file with the Louisiana Department of Education to qualify for TOPS. Visit the Louisiana

Department of Education Home Study Page at https://www.louisianabelieves.com/schools/home-study for additional information.

Postsecondary Students (TOPS Recipients and Non-TOPS Recipients):

The Board of Regents recognizes that these are extraordinary circumstances affecting all of us. Here is some advice about how to handle P/F credit. Note that some institutions are responding to the COVID19 situation by amending or suspending some of their academic rules and regulations. It is strongly advised that you connect with the Registrar's Office or Advisor/Counselor at your institution if you have questions regarding how P/F grading impacts your record.

20. **When do students need to inform their professors that they wish to receive P/F credit on a course?**

In most circumstances, students must usually inform their professors of their intention to receive P/F credit by the last day to add classes. However, in light of circumstances involving COVID-19, it's possible some institutions may revisit their policies concerning this. Please contact your campus Registrar's Office for specific details at your institution.

21. **How do P/F grades impact my GPA?**

A P(PASS) grade counts as a completed grade and has no impact on your GPA. If you are on probation and need to raise your GPA, a P grade will not move your GPA up or down. A grade of F (FAIL) impacts your GPA as a failing grade.

22. **Is there a limit to the number of P/F grades that a student can receive?**

Contact the Office of the Registrar at your institution or refer to the General Catalog of your institution.

23. **Do P/F grades transfer from one institution to another?**

P/F grades may or may not be transferrable. It is recommended that you check with the institution that you plan to transfer to in order to know for certain. The Registrar's Office of the institution you plan to transfer to will be able to answer that question.

Post-Secondary Students - TOPS Recipients only:

On April 2, 2020, Governor Edwards suspended the following TOPS continuation requirements for the 2019-2020 Academic Year:

- **The annual hours requirements**
- **the steady academic progress requirements**
- **the minimum grade point average requirements**

- **the deadlines requiring that a student whose award is suspended for failure to meet the grade point average requirements must bring his grade point average up to that required in the applicable statute within a specified time period**

The suspension of these requirements applies to students who were:

- **enrolled full time as of the census date in a college in Louisiana and were enrolled on March 13, 2020;**
- **enrolled full time at an out of state college or university as of the census date and remained enrolled through March 13, 2020;**
- **enrolled full time as of the census date and who were studying abroad and were required to return to Louisiana due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country in which the students were studying;**
- **scheduled to be enrolled full time at a school operating on a basis other than semesters during the spring of 2020:**

The following Q&As have been updated to reflect these changes.

24. **Is there anything I need to do to guarantee my TOPS award is not cancelled?**

If you were unable to maintain continuous enrollment due to steps taken to mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus and you were studying abroad or were scheduled to study abroad, your school will report this information to LOSFA when submitting your grades or when reporting that you resigned from all courses. An exception will automatically be granted.

25. **Do I need to file a request for exception if I withdraw this semester or if I don't earn 24 hours because of COVID-19?**

You are expected to make every effort to complete the 2019-2020 academic year. This includes remaining enrolled full time and earning 24 hours during the academic year. However, if you are unable to do so because of circumstances beyond your control and which are related to COVID-19, you will be granted an exception to these requirements IF your school reports these circumstances when reporting your grades for this semester. As a result, you must discuss your withdrawal from some or all of your courses with your school so that it can verify that you did so because of circumstances related to COVID-19.

26. **What if all my classes were converted to on-line and/or modified classes and I can't attend them because I don't have access to the internet from home?**

If you were unable to maintain continuous enrollment due to the Coronavirus, your school will report this information to LOSFA when submitting your grades or when reporting that you resigned from all courses. An exception will automatically be granted.

27. **Do I lose a semester of TOPS because I had to withdraw?**

It depends on whether your school issues a TOPS refund. Your school will determine whether it will issue a TOPS refund or any other type of refund.

28. **What happens if my school issues a full TOPS refund?**

If your school issues a full refund, you will receive credit for a full semester of TOPS funding as if you had never utilized the affected semester.

29. **What happens if my school only issues a partial refund?**

If your school provides a partial refund, you will receive credit for the portion of the TOPS award amount that is refunded. Credit for this portion will be available after you've exhausted your 8th semester or equivalent terms on TOPS.

30. **How do I find out if my school issued a TOPS refund?**

You will receive an email from LOSFA at the most recent email address in LOSFA's records. To verify that we have the correct email address for you, register for a Student Hub account at https://mylosfa.la.gov/applications/student-hub/. You will also be able to check your Student Hub account to see if your school provided a partial or full refund of your TOPS Award.

31. **My school will not issue a refund. What does this mean for me?**

If your school does not issue a refund, your TOPS eligibility will be reduced by one semester or term as it would have if you had remained enrolled throughout the semester.

32. **How will a Pass or Fail Grading system affect my GPA?**

There is no numeric value assigned to Pass grades, but Fail Grades receive 0 quality points. Therefore, if you receive all Pass grades, your GPA will remain the same as your Fall 2019 semester GPA. If you receive one or more Fail grades, your GPA will be lowered, as Fail grades receive 0 quality points.

33. **I am a TOPS Opportunity recipient whose GPA was below 2.3 at the end of Fall 2019. How will Pass or Fail affect me?**

You must have earned at least 24 hours and a 2.30 cumulative grade point average at the end of every academic year to continue receiving the award. However, this requirement has been suspended for the 2019-2020 academic year. This means that you do not have to have a 2.30 cumulative grade point

average at the end of the 2020 academic year only. You will have to earn the appropriate cumulative GPA next academic year.

34. **I am at the end of my two-year TOPS award suspension and I earn all Pass grades. What happens to my award?**

Since there is no numeric value assigned to Pass grades, the Pass grades will not boost your GPA. At the end of this semester, your GPA will remain your Fall 2019 GPA. However, the requirement that you bring your grades up to a 2.50 by the end of the academic year has been suspended. Note that you will have to achieve the required GPA by the end of the fall semester of 2020 in order to have your award reinstated.

35. **I am a TOPS Honors award recipient whose GPA was below a 3.00 at the end of Fall 2019 semester. What happens since my school now has a Pass or Fail grading system for the Spring 2020 semester?**

The Honors Award requires you to earn 24 hours during the academic year along with a 3.0 cumulative grade point average. Since there is no numeric value assigned to Pass grades, you will be unable to improve your GPA with the Pass grades. Even if you receive all Pass grades this semester, your GPA at the end of this Academic Year will remain your GPA received at the end of the Fall semester. The requirement that you earn a 3.00 at the end of the Academic Year has been suspended for 2019-2020, so you will still have the Honors Award for the fall semester of 2020. However, you will have to have at least a 3.00 at the end of next year to keep your Honors Award.

NOTE that the requirement that a student meet the continuation GPA for his award has been suspended by the governor's proclamation for all TOPS Award recipients. If a student had at least a 2.00 at the end of the fall semester of 2019, he will maintain his TOPS Award at the level it was at the beginning of the fall and he will have until the end of the 2020-2021 academic year to achieve the required continuation GPA (2.30 if Opportunity recipient who has earned 47 hours or less; 2.50 if Opportunity recipient who has earned 48 or more hours; 2.50 for a TOPS Tech recipient; 3.00 for a Performance recipient).

36. **I am a junior who has earned 70 hours of college credit. Can I use my TOPS award to go to summer school even if I don't have at least a 2.50 cumulative GPA?**

Yes, you will be able to use your TOPS award to attend summer school as long as you enroll full time. Your remaining TOPS eligibility will be reduced by one semester/term.

37**. I requested and was granted an exception for the fall semester of 2020 to participate in an internship, but I will no longer be participating. What do I need to do to make sure my TOPS is available for fall?**

You must enroll full time in the fall semester of 2020 if you will not be participating in the internship. Your school will bill LOSFA for your TOPS Award as it usually does.

38**. Will the Governor's proclamation allow me to receive my TOPS award for fall 2020, if I lost my TOPS due to GPA after fall 2019?**

Your TOPS award will not be reinstated for fall 2020 unless you bring the GPA up to the required level by the end of the 2019-2020 academic year.

39**. How will the Pass/No Credit (P/NC) grade impact my TOPS?**

The Governor's Proclamation suspends the GPA and annual hours requirements for the 2019-2020 academic year for TOPS. If you are currently receiving the TOPS award, a P/NC grade will not have an impact on your TOPS eligibility. If your TOPS Award is currently suspended, the P/NC option would not help your GPA so that your award could be reinstated.

40**. I am enrolled for the Spring term but I won't have 24 earned hours. Will I lose my TOPS?**

You are expected to make every effort to earn (pass) 24 hours during the academic year. You can attend summer school to meet the 24 earned hour requirement; however, the Governor's Proclamation suspends both the GPA and annual hours requirements for the 2019-2020 academic year for TOPS if you had to withdraw from classes in the spring semester of 2020 because of circumstances related to COVID-19.

41**. I was awarded TOPS when I graduated from high school. Currently, I attend an out-of-state institution but plan to return to Louisiana for the summer. Can I use my TOPS award during the summer?**

Yes, you can use your TOPS award if you meet certain requirements. The requirements can be found in the instructions to the Returning Out of State (ROOS) application, which can be found on our website at www.mylosfa.la.gov. Also required is the Summer School Acknowledgement Form which can also be found on the website. In order to use your TOPS award for a summer session, you must have earned at least 60 hours and have met the continuing eligibility requirements. Using TOPS for one summer semester will count as one full semester of TOPS eligibility received. Note that one semester of TOPS will be deducted from your total eligible semesters for each semester you attended out of state. For example, if you attended an out of state school for the fall semester of 2019 and the spring semester of 2020, two semesters of TOPS will be deducted from your total eligible semseters. If you utilize TOPS during summer, another semester will be deducted.

42. **I was attending school out of state during 2019-2020, but I plan on returning to Louisiana for the 2020-2021 academic year. Am I still eligible for a TOPS Award?**

Yes, you can use your TOPS award if you meet certain requirements. The requirements can be found in the instructions to the Returning Out of State (ROOS) application, which can be found on our website at www.mylosfa.la.gov. Note that one semester of TOPS will be deducted from your total eligible semesters for each semester you attended out of state. For example, if you attended an out of state school for the fall semester of 2019 and the spring semester of 2020, two semesters of TOPS will be deducted from your total eligible semesters.

43. **Can I sit out a semester because of my concerns about the vaccine mandates being rolled out at colleges?**

We do not anticipate any changes to the TOPS exceptions to allow a student to sit out due to vaccine mandates. It is our understanding that colleges and universities may be providing an "opt out" based on philosophical/religious/medical reasons. Students should check with their institution for the documentation required and/or attendance options available to them if they choose not get a vaccine.

THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE UPDATED AS MORE INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE.