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**Filename:** HURRICANE-LAURA-QUESTIONS-AND-ANSWERS-FOR-HIGH-SCHOOL-STUDENTS-AND-POSTSECOND...

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**HURRICANE LAURA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**
**FOR**
**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS**

*Updated as of 09/30/2020 at 3:26 p.m.*

**On September 18, 2020, Governor John Bel Edwards signed Proclamation 124 JBE 2020. This Proclamation suspends certain provisions of law related to TOPS for students who were living in a parish or attending an institution in a parish in which an emergency declaration was issued due to Hurricane Laura.**

**As of September 15, the list includes the following parishes:**

- **Acadia**
- **Allen**
- **Beauregard**
- **Caddo**
- **Calcasieu**
- **Cameron**
- **Grant**
- **Jackson**
- **Jefferson Davis**
- **Lasalle**
- **Lincoln**
- **Morehouse**
- **Natchitoches**
- **Ouachita**
- **Rapides**
- **Sabine**
- **St. Landry**
- **Union**
- **Vermilion**
- **Vernon**
- **Winn**

## High School Graduates of 2020

## The deadline for achievement of a qualifying score on the ACT or SAT when the ACT or SAT testing site has closed due to the effects of Hurricane Laura or due to actions taken to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

**1. I was scheduled to take the ACT on September 12, but my test site was closed because it was damaged in Hurricane Laura. I am unable to schedule a test by September 30. Does this mean I won't qualify for TOPS?**

The Governor's Proclamation has suspended the September 30 deadline, so you do not have to achieve a qualifying score by that date. However, graduates of 2020 are encouraged to register for an ACT test that occurs on or before December 31, 2020.

**2. I was scheduled to take the ACT in September, but the test site was closed because of COVID-19, and I am unable to schedule another test this month. Will I have an opportunity to qualify for TOPS on a later test**?

The Governor's Proclamation has suspended the September 30 deadline, so you do not have to achieve a qualifying score by that date. However, graduates of 2020 are encouraged to register for an ACT test that occurs on or before December 31, 2020.

NOTE: The above deadline applies to 2020 high school graduates ONLY. Graduates of 2021 have until April 30, 2021, to achieve a qualifying score on the ACT.

**3. I already have a qualifying ACT score. If I take the ACT again before December 31, will I be evaluated for a higher award level than what I've already been awarded?**

Yes. Once LOSFA receives a new ACT score, your award eligibility will be re-evaluated, and if you are eligible for a higher award level, your award will be upgraded.

## Current High School Students

- **The requirement that students must live in Louisiana and complete their last four (4) semesters at a Louisiana high school or that their parents must reside in Louisiana for the 24 months preceding high school graduation.**
- **The requirement that a student score a minimum of 23 on the ACT to receive the Opportunity Award if they graduate from an out of state high school.**
- **The requirement that a student begin a home study program no later than the end of their 10$^{th}$ grade year.**

**1. I am a high school senior, and we went to Texas to evacuate from Cameron Parish, and now I'm going to school in Texas. Does this mean I will not be able qualify for TOPS?**

The Governor's proclamation has suspended the requirement that you live in Louisiana and complete your last 4 semesters of high school in Louisiana. The proclamation also suspends the requirement that you complete the TOPS core curriculum. It also suspends the requirement that you must have a higher ACT score if you have to stay in Texas for your entire senior year and graduate from a Texas high school.

**2. I was a senior in high school in a parish that was severely impacted by Hurricane Laura. My parents have decided to home school me now. Will I still be able to qualify for TOPS?**

Yes. The Governor's proclamation has suspended the requirement that you begin a home study program no later than the end of your tenth-grade year.

## College Students

- **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 requirement that one semester of TOPS eligibility be reduced for each semester attended full time at an out of state institution.**

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

If your FAFSA indicates that you lived in a parish for which a disaster was declared by FEMA, or if you were attending an institution in an affected parish, you will receive an automatic exception to this requirement.

**2. Do I need to file a request for exception if I withdraw this semester or if I don't earn 24 hours?**

If your FAFSA indicates that you lived in a parish for which a disaster was declared by FEMA, or if you were attending an institution in an affected parish, you will receive an automatic exception to these requirements.

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

It depends on whether the 14th school day has passed, and if so, whether your school issues a TOPS refund. Your school will determine whether it will issue a TOPS refund or any other type of refund. If

you withdraw on or before the 14th class day, your TOPS Award will not be paid and you will not lose a semester of TOPS.

**4. 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.

**5. 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.

**6. 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.

**7. 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.

**8. I am at the end of my two-year TOPS award suspension and I will not be remaining enrolled this fall because my home was destroyed in Hurricane Laura. Does this mean I have lost my TOPS Award permanently?**

The governor's proclamation suspends the requirement that you bring your grades up by the deadline. If the fall semester of 2020 is your last semester to bring your grades up, you will have one more semester to do so. Note that you will have to achieve the required GPA by the end of the spring semester of 2021 in order to have your award reinstated.

**9. 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, unless your home of record or institution is in one of the parishes listed above. Your school will bill LOSFA for your TOPS Award as it usually does.

**10. I am a TOPS Opportunity recipient whose GPA was below 2.3 at the end of the spring semester of 2020. Will my TOPS Award be paid for this fall semester of 2020?**

During the 2020 Regular Legislative Session, a law was passed to assist students with maintaining their TOPS Awards during the COVID-19 epidemic. The law suspended the requirement that a student have a 2.30 grade point average at the end of the 2019-2020 academic year. Your TOPS award will be paid for the fall semester of 2020 if you enroll full time. If you enroll part-time, your TOPS award may be paid, but you must specifically request such a payment by speaking with the financial aid office at your school. Note that use of TOPS for part-time enrollment will reduce your total remaining TOPS eligibility by one semester.

**11. My GPA was below a 2.30 at the end of the spring semester of 2020, and I am not enrolling this fall semester because of Hurricane Laura. Will my TOPS Award be paid for the spring semester of 2021 if I enroll?**

Yes. A law was passed during the 2020 Regular Legislative Session that suspended the GPA requirement for the 2019-2020 academic year. You do not have to bring your GPA up to that required by the TOPS statutes until the end of the 2020-2021 academic year.

**12. I am at the end of my two-year TOPS award suspension and my home was destroyed during Hurricane Laura, so I am not enrolling in/withdrawing from school this fall. What happens to my award?**

The governor's proclamation waives the deadline to bring your grades up to that required by the TOPS statutes. You will have an additional semester to bring your grades up.

**13. I am a TOPS Honors award recipient whose GPA was below a 3.00 at the end of Spring 2020 semester. I know that the GPA requirement does not apply for last year because of COVID-19, but I thought I had to bring up my grades by Fall 2020. My home is in a hurricane affected parish, and I am needed to help with clean up and repairs. Am I going to lose my Honors award if I don't bring my grades up?**

The GPA requirement was waived for the 2020 academic year because of COVID, so you do not have to bring your grades back up to a 3.00 until the end of the 2021 academic year.

**THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE UPDATED AS MORE INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE.**