LOUISIANA OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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## TOPS Award Amounts, Payments, and Use

**Q-1. How much does the TOPS Opportunity Award pay to pursue an academic undergraduate degree?**

A. Payment of TOPS awards is contingent upon appropriations by the Louisiana Legislature. See the chart on LOSFA's website at https://mylosfa.la.gov/wp-content/uploads/Current-Year-TOPS-Funding.pdf for TOPS payment amounts at specific colleges and universities for the 2023-2024 academic year. The TOPS Award Amounts in the future will be the same as those provided in this chart unless the Legislature specifically appropriates additional funding for TOPS. In that event, this chart will be updated.

**Q-2. What is the value of a TOPS award?**

A. It depends on the college attended and the award made to you. See the chart on LOSFA's website at https://mylosfa.la.gov/wp-content/uploads/Current-Year-TOPS-Funding.pdf for the amount paid at different colleges and universities during the 2023-2024 academic year. The amount listed on the chart represents full-time enrollment (12 or more hours). A student's award payment may be less than that listed on this chart if the student is enrolled in less than 12 hours but is considered to be full-time for their program of study **AND** your school bills for your award and includes the code that indicates that you are enrolled full time for your program of study.

**Q-3. Can I use TOPS for summer school?**

A. Payment of a TOPS award is contingent upon appropriations by the Louisiana Legislature. If funding is available, LOSFA will update its website and social media pages, and the financial aid office at your school will be notified.

The TOPS Opportunity, Performance, and Honors Awards will not pay for summer school **except** when funding for summer awards is available and when:

- the summer session is required in your degree program for graduation and you enrolled for at least the minimum number of hours required for the degree program, or
- you can complete your program's graduation requirements in the summer session, or
- the course(s) taken during the summer session is required for graduation in the program in which you are enrolled and is only offered during the summer session, or
- the summer session is conducted for a technical program in which you are enrolled, or
- you have earned at least 60 hours.

**NOTE: An award made for summer school expends one semester, quarter, or term of eligibility.**

Check with the financial aid office at your school.

If you are pursuing a technical certificate or diploma or degree, read the TOPS Tech Section.

**Q-4. How many semesters can I receive a TOPS award?**

A. You may receive a TOPS award for up to eight semesters or twelve quarters unless:

- Your award is reduced by one or two semesters because your application was submitted after the deadline; or

- You qualified for TOPS based on an ACT score achieved after the ACT national test date in April but before August 1 immediately after graduation; or
- You enrolled in an out-of-state college or university; or
- Your award is reduced by one or two semesters because your Application to Return from an Out-of-State College was submitted after the deadline.

If you have a permanent disability or enter on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, you may be allowed to attend part time, but your total TOPS award may not exceed the equivalent of eight semesters or twelve quarters. If TOPS has already paid for a semester or term during which you are called to active duty, the semester or term will not be charged as a semester of TOPS used by you. A Request for Exception form with instructions describing the documentation required can be found on the LOSFA website (https://mylosfa.la.gov/wp-content/uploads/Exception-Request-Form.pdf), obtained directly from LOSFA, or by emailing custserv@la.gov.

**Q-5. Can I use TOPS to pursue a second undergraduate degree?**

A. No. If you successfully complete an academic undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level and have remaining TOPS eligibility, you **CANNOT** use the remaining eligibility to pursue a second academic undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level. Once you have received a baccalaureate degree, you may only use the remainder of your award to attend graduate or professional school.

You MAY use the TOPS Opportunity, Performance, or Honors Award for technical programs, cosmetology school, or proprietary school, and you may use your award to complete more than one such program, provided you have not exceeded your total eligibility of eight semesters or twelve quarters. If you have already received a baccalaureate degree, you may only use the remainder of your award to attend graduate or professional school.

**Q-6. Can I use TOPS for graduate or professional school?**

A. Yes. If you completed an undergraduate degree without exhausting all eight semesters or twelve quarters of eligibility, you may receive the period of eligibility remaining if you enroll in an eligible graduate or professional school no later than the fall semester following the one-year anniversary of completion of your undergraduate degree and have met the requirements for continuation of your award.

**Q-7. How does my college get the money for my TOPS award?**

A. TOPS awards are paid directly to the postsecondary institution the student is attending. Institutions submit payment requests to LOSFA for students who are enrolled full time on the 15th class day (semester schools) or the 10th class day (quarter schools), or who enroll full time after the 14th class day (semester schools) or the 9th class day (quarter schools). Funds are sent directly to the institutions either electronically or with a paper check as soon as funds are available for distribution.

**Q-8. When is my TOPS award disbursed to my school?**

A. Your school will submit a payment request to LOSFA for your TOPS award after the 14th class day (semester schools) or the 9th class day (term or quarter schools). LOSFA will pay your award to your school after it receives and processes the invoice.

**Q-9. How does the university get the TOPS money to me?**

A. This varies from institution to institution. You should contact the bursar or the financial aid officer at your school. Normally, your school applies the award to charges you owe the school, and the balance, if any, will be remitted to you.

**Q-10. Can I use TOPS in conjunction with other types of scholarships?**

A. Yes. You can be awarded scholarships, other financial aid, and TOPS up to the cost of attendance for your college or university. Cost of attendance is determined by each college and university based on federal guidelines and can include tuition and fees, on-campus room and board (or a housing and food allowance for off-campus students), and allowances for books, supplies, transportation, childcare, costs related to a disability, and miscellaneous expenses. Your college or university will deduct any amounts you owe for tuition, fees, and other charges, and it will remit the remainder to you.

If the total of your scholarships, state and federal aid, and TOPS award exceeds the cost of attendance, your school will reduce any loans (if applicable) first, and it will continue reducing your financial assistance until your awards do not exceed the cost of attendance. If the TOPS award is totally eliminated, then the semester, quarter, or term will not be counted toward the maximum semesters or terms allowed.

**Q-11. Can I use the TOPS Opportunity, Performance, or Honors Award to enroll in an occupational, skill, or technical program?**

A. Yes. See the Section entitled TOPS Tech Award for additional information.

**Q-12. I just received my fee bill. Why is my TOPS Opportunity Award not paying for all of my tuition?**

**A. Payment of TOPS Awards is contingent upon appropriations by the Louisiana Legislature. See the chart on LOSFA's website https://mylosfa.la.gov/wp-content/uploads/Current-Year-TOPS-Funding.pdf for the amounts paid** at specific colleges and universities for the 2023-2024 academic year. The TOPS Award Amounts in the future will be the same as those provided in this chart unless the Legislature specifically appropriates additional funding for TOPS.