LOUISIANA OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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EXCEPTIONS

Q-1. Can I get an exception to the high school grade point average requirement?

A. No. The minimum TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average of 2.50 is established in the TOPS statutes, and there is no provision for waiver.

Q-2. Can I get an exception to the requirement to complete the TOPS core curriculum?

A. An exception is only available to students with disabilities who have a 504 Plan on file with their high school OR to students with exceptionalities who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) on file with their high school. See the Q&A entitled Students with Disabilities or Exceptionalities for more detailed information.

Q-3. Can I get an exception for failing to achieve an eligible ACT/SAT score by the national ACT test date in April of the year I graduate from high school?

A. In very limited circumstances, an exception may be available.

You may qualify for a TOPS Award based on an eligible score received in May, June, and/or July of the year you graduated. You will lose one semester of your total eligibility if you qualify based on a score earned on one of these test dates. For more detailed information, you should review the Q&A entitled ACT and SAT scores.

You may qualify for a TOPS Tech or Opportunity Award based on an eligible score received after June of the year you graduate from high through September 30 of that year BUT only if you were unable to take the ACT/SAT prior to July AND only if the circumstances that caused you to be unable to take the test were attributable to administration of the test. For example, if you could not take the test prior to July because you were sick on the day of the test, you would not be able to use an eligible score obtained after July of the year you graduated. If you could not take the test because inclement weather (i.e., flooding of the test center, tornado, etc.) caused the test to be canceled, you would be able to use an eligible score first received after June of the year you graduated.

Q-4. Can I get an exception for failure to achieve the required cumulative grade point average (GPA) once I enter college?

A. No. The GPA requirement to continue to receive a TOPS award is established in the TOPS statutes, and there are no exceptions. See the Q&A entitled Renewal – Grades Requirements for more information.

Q-5. Can I get an exception to the requirement to enroll full time, to maintain continuous enrollment, or to earn 24 hours during the academic year?

A. Yes, provided that the reason you did not enroll full time was beyond your control. For a list of the types of exceptions available and the documentation required to support each type of request, download the exception request form at https://www.osfa.la.gov/MainSitePDFs/exceptionrequestform.pdf.

Q-6. How will I know if my TOPS Award has been canceled?

A. LOSFA will email you a notice that your award has been canceled. The email will be sent to the most recent email address that we have on file for you. You can update all of your contact information in the Student Hub. If you have not yet signed up for a Student Hub account, you can do so at www.osfa.la.gov/StudentHub.

Q-7. Is there a deadline for me to request an exception?

A. Yes. You must request an exception within 6 months of the date your TOPS Award is canceled, and you can also submit the form before your award is canceled. Your deadline will be on the notice that advises you of the cancelation.

Q-8. I have been offered a CO-OP/Internship for the upcoming academic year. What happens to my TOPS award if I accept it?

A. A CO-OP/Internship may be considered an exceptional educational opportunity, if your academic dean certifies in writing that the CO-OP/Internship is considered an exceptional educational opportunity. An exception for an exceptional educational opportunity may be granted for up to two consecutive semesters or the required program length.

Q-9. I only earned 21 hours in the academic year, and I cannot go to school this summer because of my job. Can I get an exception for working?

A. It depends. If your job is related to, or will enhance, your education, you may qualify for an exception based on exceptional educational opportunity (EEO). You will need a letter from the dean of your college that indicates he/she believes that the employment enhanced your education.

Q-10. What if I qualify for a TOPS Award, but cannot attend college on a full-time basis because of a permanent disability?

A. You may be eligible for an exception to the full-time enrollment requirement. You must submit a Request for Exception form to LOSFA requesting permanent disability status. In addition to the completed form, you must submit a written statement from a qualified professional that states:

1. the diagnosis of disability and prognosis,
2. that the disability is permanent,
3. an opinion as to why the disability restricts you from attending classes full-time, and
4. an opinion as to whether you could attend full time with medications and/or accommodations.

Note that having a permanent disability is not enough to warrant this type of exception since many permanent disabilities do not prevent you from enrolling full-time and progressing in college because the disability can be treated with therapy or medications, and/or overcome with appropriate accommodations. To warrant an exception based on permanent disability, you must be unable to attend school full time, even with medication and appropriate accommodations.

If permanent disability status is approved, your TOPS Award and stipend, if applicable, will be paid up to the equivalent of eight full-time semesters or twelve terms of postsecondary education for part time attendance.

Q-11. I have ADD or ADHD, or a physical disability such as blindness or deafness. Will I automatically be designated as having a permanent disability?

A. No. The fact that you have a disability that cannot be cured is not enough. Since most students with these disabilities can function normally with medication and/or with accommodations, a qualified professional must have determined that you cannot enroll on a full-time basis, even with medication and accommodations, due to the disability. You may, however, qualify for an exception based on temporary disability if the diagnosis is new or if you were unable to obtain and/or take any prescribed medication.

Q.12. I have to withdraw from some (or all) of my classes because my mom is having surgery. I will not be taking care of her after surgery, but I do have to take care of my younger siblings while she is recovering. What exception type is this?

A. This is exception type 4B, care of a family member with a temporary disability. In addition to the exception request form, you must provide a letter, on letterhead, from your mother's physician which states that she will be unable to care for herself or for your younger siblings during her recovery period and will need assistance.

Q-13. My spouse is being deployed for military training and then overseas for two years. He has already requested and been granted an exception for TOPS. Can I also get an exception if I stay with him during his training period?

A. You can request an exception based on the fact that you are the spouse of a person serving in the armed forces (Exception type 9B.) In addition to the completed exception request form, you will need to provide a copy of your marriage license and a copy of your spouse's military orders. For more information about TOPS and members of the military, see the Q&A entitled Military.

Q-14. I am getting married next July. Can I take this spring off to plan the wedding and get my TOPS back for the fall semester?

A. No, you cannot. Your TOPS Award will be canceled, and you will be ineligible for an exception since the circumstances giving rise to your withdrawing from school was not beyond your control.

Q-15. I want to take some time off school to figure out what I want to major in. Can I get an exception for that?

A. No. However, if you have received counseling from a qualified professional or your spiritual advisor, you may qualify for an exception based on temporary disability. You will have to provide a letter from that professional or advisor confirming that they advised you to take time away from school.