

Accel Program

REGULATIONS

2008 - 2009 Award Year



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Georgia Student Finance Commission
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2008 – 2009 ACCEL PROGRAM REGULATIONS

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Accel Program is to provide Georgia public and private high school students with the opportunity to earn college degree-level credit hours, as they simultaneously meet their high school graduation requirements. Some students are able to successfully complete most of the academically meaningful coursework available from their high school before earning a diploma. This program offers these students the option to begin working toward a college degree, while still pursuing a high school diploma, as a Dual Credit Enrollment student.

The Accel Program is funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education and administered by the Georgia Student Finance Commission. It is designed to provide participating high school students with financial assistance toward the cost of postsecondary coursework. In order to be eligible for Accel funds, a high school student must be enrolled in college degree-level courses. A high school student cannot receive assistance from the Accel Program for postsecondary level courses that are part of a technical certificate or diploma programs of study. However, a high school student may receive assistance from the Georgia HOPE Grant Program, rather than Accel, for courses that are part of a technical certificate or diploma program of study.

Additional information is provided in *Chapter III. Appendix – Student Participation Guidelines and Considerations*, which may be helpful to students considering participation in the Accel Program.

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I. ACCEL PROGRAM DEFINITIONS

“Academic Year” means a period of time, usually eight or nine months, during which a Full-Time student would normally be expected to complete the equivalent of two semesters or three quarters of instruction.

“Associate Degree” means a two-year college level Degree conferred on students by a postsecondary institution upon completion of a unified program of study in an academic discipline or major at the Undergraduate level. Associate Degrees typically require a student to earn at least 60 semester or 90 quarter hours of college credit, or the equivalent of two years of study.

“Attempted-Hours” means the college Degree quarter or semester hours that are used to determine when the Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average must be checked for HOPE Scholarship eligibility, and to determine when a student has reached his or her maximum hours of eligibility for the HOPE Scholarship Program. If a student meets the academic requirements to be a HOPE Scholar and is therefore eligible to enter the HOPE Scholarship Program at the First-Tier, then any college Degree level credit hours attempted by such student prior to high school graduation, or equivalent, are not considered to be Attempted-Hours for purposes of the HOPE Scholarship Program. If a student does not meet the academic requirements to be a HOPE Scholar, and is therefore ineligible for the HOPE Scholarship Program at the First-Tier, then any college Degree credit hours attempted by such student prior to high school graduation, or equivalent, which are accepted by the student’s Eligible Postsecondary Institution as college Degree credit, must be considered as Attempted-Hours for purposes of the HOPE Scholarship Program.

“Award Year” means three consecutive quarters or two consecutive semesters that begins with the Fall Term and ends with the Spring Term.

“Award-Year Reconciliation” means a final student-by-student reconciliation conducted by Eligible Postsecondary Institutions with the Commission, following the completion of an Award Year for the Accel Program.

“Baccalaureate Degree” means a four-year college level Degree conferred on students by a postsecondary institution upon completion of a unified program of study in an academic discipline or major at the Undergraduate level. Baccalaureate (Bachelor’s) Degrees typically require a student to earn at least 120 semester or 180 quarter hours of college credit, or the equivalent of four years of study.

“Book Allowance” means Accel funds made available to students to purchase books and/or supplies for their course of study.

“Board of Regents” means the governing body of the University System of Georgia.

“Carnegie Unit” means one unit of credit for a minimum of 150 clock hours of instruction.

“Certificate” means a credential indicating satisfactory completion of training in a technical program of study offered by a postsecondary educational institution; which is not an Associate or Baccalaureate Degree.

“Combined Paid-Hours” means the total number of postsecondary credit hours for which a student received payment (Paid-Hours) from any combination of the HOPE Scholarship, plus HOPE Grant, plus Accel Program.

“Commission” means the Georgia Student Finance Commission, the agency responsible for administering certain postsecondary educational student financial aid programs offered by the State of Georgia, and other programs for which funds may be appropriated or assigned to it by the State Legislature, or from other sources, from time to time.

“Course” means instruction for which credit is awarded.

“Course Directory” means a document produced and updated annually by the Georgia Department of Education of eligible high school courses that can be substituted with college degree-level coursework and applied toward high school graduation requirements for Dual Credit Enrollment students.

“Credit” means Carnegie Units earned and applied toward high school graduation and credit hours earned toward the completion of a postsecondary program of study.

“Degree” means a two-year Associate Degree or four-year Baccalaureate Degree conferred on students by a postsecondary educational institution upon completion of a unified program of study in an academic discipline or major at the Undergraduate level.

“Diploma” means a credential indicating satisfactory completion of training in a technical program of study offered by a postsecondary educational institution, which is not an Associate or Baccalaureate Degree.

“Dual Credit Enrollment” means a situation whereby an agreement has been established between an Eligible High School and an Eligible Postsecondary Institution wherein a high school student Enrolls in postsecondary courses and earns postsecondary level credit hours and simultaneously earns Carnegie Units of credit that count toward his or her high school graduation requirements. A Dual Credit Enrollment student differs from a Joint Enrollment student in that the postsecondary credit hours earned by a Joint Enrollment student does is not applied toward the student’s high school graduation. A Dual Credit Enrollment student differs from an Early Admissions student in that Early Admissions students enroll as full-time postsecondary students and pursue a postsecondary degree in lieu of a high school diploma.

“Early Admissions” means a situation whereby a student who has not yet graduated from high school is fully admitted, Enrolled, and classified as a Full-Time Undergraduate student in a Matriculated status at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution and is pursuing an Associate Degree or Baccalaureate Degree in lieu of a high school diploma.

“Eligible High School Courses” means core curriculum courses of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Science, and Foreign Language that can be used to satisfy core curriculum graduation requirements. However, Dual Credit Enrollment students participating in the Advanced Academy of Georgia, located at the State University of West Georgia, and the Georgia Academy of Mathematics, Engineering, and Science (GAMES), located at Middle Georgia College, are not restricted, for purposes of Accel Program, to the core curriculum eligible high school courses identified in the Course Directory. The authorized officials of those two academies are responsible for approving coursework that is appropriate inclusion in the Accel Program.

“Eligible Non-Citizen” means a person who, in accordance with the Federal Title IV definition, is a United States permanent resident with a Permanent Resident Card (I-551 or I-151); or a conditional permanent resident (I-551C); or the holder of an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from the Department of Homeland Security showing any one of the following designations: “Refugee”, “Asylum Granted”, “Parolee” (I-94 confirms paroled for a minimum of one year and status has not expired); or “Cuban-Haitian Entrant”. Victims of human trafficking, in accordance with the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, may also be considered Eligible Non-Citizens. Persons with an F1 or F2 student visa, a J1 or J2 exchange visitor visa, or a G series visa are not Eligible Non-Citizens.

“Eligible High School” means a public high school in Georgia that is operated by a local unit of administration or a school administered or chartered by the State Board of Education and is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or the Georgia Accrediting Commission, or a private high school in Georgia that is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Georgia Accrediting Commission, the Georgia Association of Christian Schools, the Association of Christian Schools International, or the Georgia Private School Accreditation Council.

“Eligible Postsecondary Institution” means a unit of the University System of Georgia, a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia, or any private, non-profit college or university located in Georgia, and which is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The definition also includes any proprietary institution of higher education located in the State of Georgia which: is a Baccalaureate Degree granting institution; is accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education; is not a Bible college; admits as regular students only persons who have a high school diploma, a General Education Development (GED) diploma, or a degree from an accredited postsecondary institution; has been reviewed and approved for operation by the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission; has been in existence for at least ten years; and whose students are eligible to participate in the Federal Pell Grant program. All eligible institutions must also be approved by the U.S. Department of Education to participate in federal Title IV programs and be actively participating in at least the Federal Pell Grant program. Additionally, private colleges and universities must also be eligible to participate in the Tuition Equalization Grant Program.

“Eligible Student” means any student enrolled in an Eligible High School who has not received a high school diploma, and meets all other requirements as specified in these regulations.

“Full-Time” means Enrollment for the equivalent of at least 12 quarter or 12 semester hours per school term of postsecondary credit of a Matriculated student at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

“GED” means General Education Development diploma.

“Half-Time” means a student attending an Eligible Postsecondary Institution that is enrolled for the equivalent of at least 6 quarter or 6 semester credit hours, but not more than 11 quarter or 11 semester credit hours during a school term.

“HOPE” means Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally, a State of Georgia student financial aid program administered the Commission to provide non-repayable scholarship and grant assistance to residents of Georgia attending Eligible Postsecondary Institutions in Georgia. The components that comprise HOPE are the HOPE Scholarship Program, HOPE Grant Program, and HOPE GED Grant Program. HOPE is authorized by the Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-3-519, is funded by Georgia Lottery appropriations, and administered by the Commission in accordance with the *HOPE Scholarship Program Regulations*, *HOPE Grant Program Regulations*, and *HOPE GED Grant Program Regulations*.

“HOPE GED Grant Program” or “HOPE GED Grant” means a State of Georgia student financial aid program that provides non-repayable grant assistance to Georgia Residents who received GED diplomas, and are attending Eligible Postsecondary Institutions. The HOPE GED Grant Program is authorized by the Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-3-519, funded by Georgia Lottery appropriations, and administered by the Commission in accordance with the *HOPE GED Grant Program Regulations*.

“HOPE Grant Program” or “HOPE Grant” means a State of Georgia student financial aid program that provides non-repayable grant assistance to Georgia Residents seeking technical Certificates or Diplomas from TCSG and USG Eligible Postsecondary Institutions. The HOPE Grant Program is authorized by the Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-3-519, funded by Georgia Lottery appropriations, and administered by the Commission in accordance with the *HOPE Grant Program Regulations*.

“HOPE Scholarship Program” or “HOPE Scholarship” means a State of Georgia student financial aid program that provides non-repayable merit-based scholarship assistance to Georgia Residents seeking Degrees from Eligible Postsecondary Institutions. The HOPE Scholarship Program is authorized by the Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-3-519, funded by Georgia Lottery appropriations, and administered by the Commission in accordance with the *HOPE Scholarship Program Regulations*.

“Joint Enrollment” means a situation whereby a secondary (high school) student is enrolled in postsecondary level course work with an Eligible Postsecondary Institution while continuing to pursue his or her high school diploma, but the student’s high school has not agreed to accept the postsecondary course work as credit toward the student’s high school graduation requirements.

“Mandatory Fees” means HOPE-approved fees charged by the institution to every student enrolled at that institution, regardless of their program of study. The specific fees and dollar amounts for HOPE-approved fees are identical for the Accel Program, the HOPE Scholarship Program, and the HOPE Grant Program. (Refer to the *HOPE Scholarship Program Regulations* or *HOPE Grant Program Regulations*.)

“Military Personnel” means an active member of the Armed Forces of the United States, including members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. Commissioned officers of the Public Health Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on active duty are also considered to be military personnel.

“Paid-Hours” means the postsecondary quarter or semester credit hours used to determine when a student has reached the maximum number of hours for which a student can receive payment from any combination of HOPE Scholarship, HOPE Grant, and Accel Program.

“Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average” means the calculation of grades earned at the college Degree level, after high school graduation, to determine eligibility for the HOPE Scholarship at the End-of-Spring Checkpoint, Three-Term Checkpoint, and all Attempted-Hours Checkpoints. The Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average is calculated, by the Eligible Postsecondary Institution, on a traditional 4.00 scale, to the hundredth decimal, without rounding. All Degree hours (Attempted-Hours) and corresponding grades attempted after high school graduation, and only Degree hours and corresponding grades attempted after high school graduation, must be included in the calculation.

“SURFER” means the Commission’s web-based system used by Eligible Postsecondary Institutions to electronically transmit and receive student data, award information, and conduct other administrative activities related to the Commission’s scholarship and grant programs.

“Technical College System of Georgia” or **“TCSG”** means the State of Georgia’s unified system of public technical colleges, formerly known as the Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE), which is governed by the Commissioners of the Technical College System of Georgia.

“Term-Reconciliation” means an official acknowledgement by an authorized official of an Eligible Postsecondary Institution, at the end of each school term, that the number of students submitted for payment and amount invoiced by the institution and the number of students awarded and amount issued by the Commission, according to the SURFER system, are accurate on the date of such acknowledgement.

“Tuition” means the charges to a student for instruction without regard to other fees such as technology, activity, athletic, health, etc.

“Undergraduate” means a student who is in attendance at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution and who is in the process of obtaining an Associate Degree or Baccalaureate Degree.

“University System of Georgia” or **“USG”** means the State of Georgia’s unified system of public colleges and universities, which is governed by the Board of Regents.

“Withdrawal Date” means the date the student withdraws, as determined by the institution. The institution must determine the withdrawal date in accordance with the procedures set forth for determining withdrawal date under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

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II. ACCEL REGULATIONS

A. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible to receive Accel funds, a student must meet the following eligibility requirements.

HIGH SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

1. A student must have completed all of the academic requirements of the 10th grade (high school sophomore) and be classified as an 11th grader (high school junior) or 12th grader (high school senior) by the student's high school. However, a student who is classified as a 9th grader (high school freshman) or a 10th grader (high school sophomore) is exempted from this requirement, if he or she meets all of the following criteria.
 - Demonstrates academic excellence by having earned a cumulative high school grade point average of at least a 3.50 on a 4.00 scale;
 - Is approved by his or her high school and an Eligible Postsecondary Institution for participation in Dual Credit Enrollment;
 - The high school certifies that the student has exhausted all coursework available from the high school that is within the specific core curriculum academic discipline (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Sciences, and Foreign Languages) for which the student will be participating in Dual Credit Enrollment.
2. A student must not have already received a high school diploma or General Education Development (GED) diploma.
3. A student must be enrolled in a public or private Eligible High School in Georgia to participate in the Accel Program.
4. A student must have been approved to be a Dual Credit Enrollment student through the advisement process at his or her Eligible High School and Eligible Postsecondary Institution, so that the postsecondary credit hours earned are applied to the student's high school graduation requirements.
5. A student must abide by the rules of both the Eligible High School and the Eligible Postsecondary Institution the student is attending, and can be denied participation in the Accel Program for such violations by either the Eligible High School or the Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

ENROLLMENT

1. A student must be attending an Eligible Postsecondary Institution that is a unit of the University System of Georgia, a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia, or a private Eligible Postsecondary Institution in Georgia.

2. A student must be admitted and classified as a Dual Credit Enrollment student, enrolled in college Degree level course work.
3. There is no required minimum number of hours of enrollment and Full-Time enrollment is not a requirement.

PAYMENT AT PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

1. The Accel award covers Tuition and HOPE-approved Mandatory Fees for students attending USG and TCSG Eligible Postsecondary Institutions.
2. A student who meets all of the eligibility requirements for Accel funds at USG and TCSG Eligible Public Institutions is also eligible for a Book Allowance. The institution will allow a Book Allowance payment of \$100 per quarter/\$150 per semester if the student is at least Half-Time (six or more hours). A student who is enrolled for less than Half-Time will receive \$50 per quarter/\$75 per semester. Funds for the Book Allowance shall be made available by the institution to the student for the purchase of books and/or supplies.

PAYMENT AT PRIVATE POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

The Accel maximum award is \$3,000 per Academic Year, (\$1,000 per quarter or \$1,500 per semester), for students enrolled at least 12 hours (Full-Time) at the postsecondary level. The award amount is prorated for students enrolled at the postsecondary level for 1 through 11 hours, as follows:

Semester System:
\$125 per hour

Quarter System:
\$84 per hour

RESIDENCY

1. A student who is attending a USG institution and is classified as a Georgia Resident for purposes of in-state Tuition, according to Board of Regents policy, for at least 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the first day of classes of the school term for which Accel Program payment is sought, is considered a Georgia Resident for purposes of the Accel Program. A student granted an out-of-state Tuition waiver as a dependent of Military Personnel stationed in Georgia, according to the Board of Regents policy, is treated as a Georgia Resident for purposes the Accel Program.
2. A student who is attending a TCSG and is classified as a Georgia Resident for purposes of in-state Tuition, according to Technical College System of Georgia policy, for at least 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the first day of classes of the school term for which Accel Program payment is sought, is considered a Georgia Resident for purposes of the Accel Program. A student granted an out-of-state Tuition waiver as a dependent of Military Personnel stationed in Georgia, according to TCSG policy, is treated as a Georgia Resident for purposes the Accel Program.

3. A student who is attending a private Eligible Postsecondary Institution and is classified as a Georgia Resident, according to the *Georgia Residency Requirements For State Programs Regulations*, for at least 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the first day of classes of the school term for which Accel Program payment is sought, is considered a Georgia Resident for purposes of the Accel Program. As an exemption, a student enrolled in an Eligible High School in Georgia, who is the dependent child of Military Personnel stationed in Georgia, is treated as a Georgia Resident for purposes of the Accel Program.

CITIZENSHIP

A student must be a United States citizen or an Eligible Non-Citizen for the 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the first day of classes of the school term for which Accel Program payment is sought.

SELECTIVE SERVICE REGISTRATION

The student must meet federal Selective Service registration requirements.

REFUND DUE

The student must not owe a refund on a State of Georgia student financial aid program.

GEORGIA DRUG-FREE ACT

A student may be ineligible if, in accordance with the Drug-Free Postsecondary Education Act of 1990, he or she has been convicted of committing certain felony offenses involving marijuana, controlled substances, or dangerous drugs. A student is ineligible to receive Accel funds from the date of conviction to the completion of the next school term.

ACCEL LENGTH OF ELIGIBILITY

A student who begins receiving Accel Program payment as a 9th grade student (high school freshman) is eligible for Accel Program payment for **four** Award Years. A student who begins receiving Accel Program payment as a 10th grade student (high school sophomore) is eligible for Accel Program payment for **three** Award Years. A student who begins receiving Accel Program payment as an 11th grade student (high school junior) is eligible for Accel Program payment for **two** Award Years. A student who begins receiving Accel Program payment as a 12th grade student (high school senior) is eligible for Accel Program payment for **one** Award Year. (Refer to *Section C*.)

CREDIT HOURS AND GRADE AVERAGE DETERMINATION

1. The postsecondary credit hours taken as a Dual Credit Enrollment student, for which Accel payment was made, are not counted as Attempted-Hours and the corresponding grades are not included in the Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average for purposes of the HOPE Scholarship Program. However, if a student does not meet the academic requirements to be a HOPE Scholar, and is therefore ineligible for the HOPE Scholarship Program at the First-Tier, then any college Degree credit hours attempted by such student prior to high school graduation, or equivalent, which is accepted by the student's Eligible Postsecondary Institution as college Degree credit, must be considered as Attempted-Hours for purposes of the HOPE Scholarship Program
2. No student shall receive more Paid-Hours than a cumulative total of 190 quarter hours or 127 semester hours of Accel, HOPE Grant, and HOPE Scholarship payment, except for students enrolled prior to the Fall quarter or semester beginning after July 1, 2005 in specific undergraduate degree programs that are designed to be more than 190 quarter hours or 127 semester hours in length. Such students are eligible for a total of 225 quarter hours or 150 semester hours, or the number of hours required by the program of study, whichever is less.
3. Hours for which a student received Accel payment, beginning with the Fall school term of 2004, will be included in the Paid-Hours limit.

HOURS LIMITATION

1. Credit hours paid for duplicate courses will count toward the Paid-Hours limit for the HOPE Scholarship Program.
2. Courses that are audited, accepted by examination, or earned through Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate are not paid for by Accel and are not counted as Attempted-Hours or Paid-Hours.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

For the purpose of Dual Credit Enrollment students who are seeking Accel assistance prior to high school graduation, the Georgia Department of Education is responsible for the following:

1. Annually update and provide to the Commission the Course Directory, by February 1st, prior to the beginning of each future Accel Program Award Year. Otherwise, the high school Course Directory information will roll forward for the upcoming Award Year.
2. Serve as a resource for advisement to high school and college officials regarding appropriate course work for Dual Credit Enrollment students.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HIGH SCHOOL OR LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM

For the purpose of Dual Credit Enrollment students who are seeking Accel assistance prior to high school graduation, the student's high school or local school system is responsible for the following:

1. Obtain written consent of the parent(s) or guardian(s), if the student is a minor, for the student to participate as a Dual Credit Enrollment student.
2. Obtain written verification by the high school principal of the student's eligibility to participate as a Dual Credit Enrollment student.
3. Accept toward state, local, or school graduation requirements the postsecondary credit of an eligible Dual Credit Enrollment student who successfully completes an approved course at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution.
4. Record on the student's high school transcript each approved course name, grade, and amount of credit hours earned for each course taken as a Dual Credit Enrollment student.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPATING POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

For the purpose of Dual Credit Enrollment students who are seeking Accel assistance prior to high school graduation, participating Eligible Postsecondary Institutions are responsible for the following:

1. Annually update and provide to the Commission the list of eligible courses by March 1st prior to the beginning of each future Accel Program Award Year. Otherwise, the college Course Directory information will roll forward to the upcoming Award Year.
2. Transfer postsecondary credit hours earned in the Accel Program from one Eligible Postsecondary Institution to another Eligible Postsecondary Institution on the same basis as such credit hours are customarily transferred
3. Notify the high school of each student's enrollment and grade(s) earned in the course(s).
4. Verify Georgia Residency, citizenship, Selective Service registration, and Drug-Free Act eligibility requirements.
5. Invoice Accel Program payment from the Commission by the same method as used for the HOPE Scholarship Program. (Refer to *Section C.*)

B. APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. A high school student must complete an Accel Program Application and submit it to his or her Eligible High School.
2. An authorized high school official will list on the form each high school course the student will be substituting with a college Degree level course from the Eligible Postsecondary Institution the student will be attending as a Dual Credit Enrollment student. The authorized official will also certify that:
 - a. The student meets the academic requirements of *Section II.A.1.* of these regulations;
 - b. The student has not yet received a high school diploma or GED;
 - c. The student is enrolled in good standing at the high school;
 - d. The student has been approved to be a Dual Credit Enrollment student through the advisement process at both the Eligible High School and the Eligible Postsecondary Institution, so that the postsecondary credit hours earned are applied to the student's high school graduation requirements.
3. The completed Accel Application must be forwarded by the Eligible High School to the Eligible Postsecondary Institution the student will attend. An authorized postsecondary official will list each postsecondary course the student will take in place of a high school course and certify that:
 - a. The postsecondary course work listed on the application is eligible course work that matches the appropriate high school course work, in accordance with the Course Directory. However, Dual Credit Enrollment students participating in the Advanced Academy of Georgia, located at the State University of West Georgia, and the Georgia Academy of Mathematics, Engineering, and Science (GAMES), located at Middle Georgia College, are not restricted, for purposes of Accel Program, to the core curriculum eligible high school courses identified in the Course Directory. The authorized officials of those two academies are responsible for approving course work that is appropriate for inclusion in the Accel Program.
 - b. The student is accepted as a Dual Credit Enrollment student at the institution.
 - c. The student meets federal Selective Service registration requirements.
 - d. The student is in compliance with the Drug-Free Postsecondary Act of 1990.
 - e. The student meets Georgia Residency and citizenship requirements.

4. An authorized postsecondary institution official must determine the number of college Degree level credit hours for which the student is enrolled, calculate the correct Accel award amount, as directed by these regulations, and invoice the Commission, according to the process provided in these regulations.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

An application deadline date may be set by the Eligible High School and Eligible Postsecondary Institution participating in the Accel Program. At a minimum, a student must file the application online or in the institution's financial aid office on or before the last day of the school term (semester or quarter) or the student's Withdrawal Date, whichever occurs first, in order to be paid for that school term. The last day of the school term is the last day of classes or exams for the institution, whichever occurs later. Supplemental documentation required by the institution or the Commission to support or verify a student's application information may be submitted after the deadline without jeopardizing the student's eligibility.

C. INVOICING PROCESS

Accel is available for Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters or Fall, and Spring semesters. A student is limited to Accel payment for two semesters or three quarters per Award Year.

1. Accel funds shall be paid to the Eligible Postsecondary Institution in one check or electronic transfer of funds on behalf of eligible students each school term upon submission to the Commission of an Accel Invoice.
2. Accel Invoices are transmitted from the Eligible Postsecondary Institution to the Commission through the use of the SURFER Internet system. Institutions can use either SURFER to data-enter the student information and transmit it individually to the Commission or extract the student information from their computer system's database and use SURFER to transmit it to the Commission as a file. Regardless of which of these two methods an institution uses, the data transmitted in a given day will be processed by the Commission that night and an award/denial report (when applicable) will be available the next day for the institution to download.
3. Upon receipt of Accel payments from the Commission, the institution shall credit the amount of payment on behalf of an eligible student to the account of the student for direct charges
4. At USG and TCSG institutions, funds for the Book Allowance must be used to purchase books and/or supplies for the student's course of study and cannot be applied to other charges such as fees, room, or board.
5. In the event an Accel check is lost by the institution or through the mail, the procedures described below should be followed.

- a. The appropriate institution official must contact the Commission and request a replacement check.
- b. After following normal verification procedures that the lost check has not been cashed, the Commission will place a "Stop Payment" order on the original check. A replacement check will then be issued to the school for delivery to the student.
- c. If the original check should subsequently be found, it should be voided and returned to the Commission.
- d. If the institution has already reconciled for the fiscal year from which the check had been disbursed, then the institution cannot request replacement of these funds.

D. RECONCILIATION

A Term-Reconciliation must be conducted by the institution near the end of each term.

1. A Term-Reconciliation consists of an official acknowledgement by an authorized school official that the number of students submitted and amount invoiced by the institution and the number of students awarded and amount issued by the Commission, according to the SURFER system, is accurate as of that date.
2. Accel funds for the following school term will not be issued by the Commission until the institution's Term-Reconciliation is complete.
3. Surplus funds are not returned to the Commission as part of the Term-Reconciliation process.

After the completion of the Award Year, each institution will print a reconciliation report through SURFER that provides payment records for the Award Year.

1. The institution must conduct a complete student-by-student Award-Year Reconciliation with the Commission and submit a Reconciliation Certification Form to the Commission by August 1, of the current Award Year.
2. The Commission will provide the institution with a letter to confirm that reconciliation is complete and final for the Award Year.
3. The institution must return to the Commission by August 1 any Accel funds not utilized according to the final reconciliation. The institution must have a procedure in place to ensure that the Accel funds do not go to an unintended third party (i.e. State, institution).

E. REFUND POLICY

If the student officially withdraws, drops out, drops hours, is expelled, or otherwise fails to complete a period of enrollment, and is entitled to a refund, a portion of such refund may need to be returned to the Accel fund. If the student was awarded Accel funds, the Eligible Postsecondary Institution must determine the amount of the refund, and return that amount to the Accel fund. The remainder of the Accel award is retained by the institution to cover the costs for the portion of the school term that the student was enrolled. The Book Allowance awarded to a student at a USG or TCSG institution is not included in the refund calculation. If a refund is due and the student received Accel funds, then such amounts must be refunded to Accel, by applying the institution's refund policy to the student's original Accel award.

PAYMENT OF REFUND

When a student owes a refund, he or she shall pay the institution and the institution will pay the Commission, or at its sole discretion, the Commission may require the student to pay the refund to the Commission. Nothing herein shall be deemed to prohibit the Commission from using all available legal and equitable remedies to collect the refund.

F. RECORDS RETENTION

1. An Eligible Postsecondary Institution shall maintain accurate records, books, documents and other evidence concerning the Accel Program, including, but not limited to individual student files for the later of three years after the Award Year in which the aid was awarded; or for such other period as required by an applicable statute, rule, or regulation; or such other time as requested in writing by the Commission.
2. Documentation contained within an individual student file or record, which supports the original determination of a student's eligibility, must be retained by the institution and available for review by the Commission on the institution's campus, located within the State of Georgia, for at least three calendar years after the most recent Award Year for which the student received HOPE funds. Institutions are permitted to maintain these documents in an imaged media format. The imaged media format must be capable of reproducing an accurate, legible, and complete copy of the original document.
3. Such documentation may include, but is not limited to, copies of Permanent Resident Alien Cards, Georgia State Income Tax Returns, student financial aid applications and academic transcripts from previous institutions. Documentation regarding a student's eligibility is not limited to files, records, and other information received and maintained by the institution's student financial aid office. Documentation supporting a student's eligibility that is received and maintained by the institution's admissions office, registrars office, business office, and other administrative operations of the institution must be available to the Commission for the purpose of Program Reviews. It is the institution's responsibility to resolve any inconsistencies or conflicting

information within a student's records, prior to awarding or disbursing Accel funds to the student.

4. An institution may be required to retain student records involved in a program review, audit, or investigation for more than the three-year retention period described above. If the three-year retention period expires before the issue in question is resolved, the institution must continue to retain all associated records until resolution is reached.

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III. APPENDIX – STUDENT PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Careful consideration should be taken before a decision is made to participate in the Accel Program. The high school student, his or her parents, the high school counselor and principal, and officials of the postsecondary institution should be confident that it is in the best interest of the student to participate in Accel. It is **critical** that students understand that the credit hours for which they receive payment from the Accel Program will be included in the maximum total number of credit hours of payment they can receive from the HOPE Scholarship Program, after they graduate from high school. The following factors should be assessed before a student enters into the Accel Program.

- It is important for the student and his or her parents to have a serious and open discussion of the student's postsecondary educational and career goals.
- A high school student's social and emotional maturity can often be the major determinate of success as a Dual Credit Enrollment student.
- The quality and quantity of the academic coursework the student has completed, as early as the 8th grade, should be evaluated to determine exactly what additional coursework is required to meet high school graduation requirements and what coursework the high school can offer the student for the remainder of his or her high school studies.
- Although the Accel Program does **not** mandate specific academic requirements for participation, it is important for the student to understand that college credit hours earned at a private college or university as a Dual Credit Enrollment student, are not transferable to a University System of Georgia institution unless the student has achieved at least a **970 SAT** score and earned a **3.00** cumulative grade point average. These requirements may be used as a guideline when deciding upon participation in the Accel Program.
- As the student and his or her parents make this major decision, full advantage should be taken of the knowledge and experience of officials at the student's high school and at the postsecondary institution the student plans to attend.