

# **300. HOPE Grant Program**

## **REGULATIONS**

**2007-2008 Award Year**



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**Georgia Student Finance Commission  
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Tucker, Georgia 30084**

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### **302. Program Overview.**

The HOPE Grant Program was created beginning with the 1993-1994 Award Year (Fiscal Year 1994). The program is fully funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education and administered by the Georgia Student Finance Commission. Eligible students seeking a technical Certificate or Diploma from a Department of Technical and Adult Education institution, University System of Georgia institution may receive HOPE Grant funds covering the full cost of Tuition, certain approved Mandatory Fees, and a Book Allowance of up to \$100 per quarter or \$150 per semester. Unlike the HOPE Scholarship Program, students are not required to graduate from high school with a specific grade average or maintain a specific grade average at the postsecondary level in order to be eligible for the HOPE Grant Program. The purpose of the HOPE Grant Program is to encourage Georgians to obtain technical training in order to increase the knowledge and skills of Georgia's workforce.

The Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-3-519.11 authorizes the Georgia Student Finance Commission to promulgate rules and regulations relating to the HOPE Grant Program that are not inconsistent with the provisions of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-3-519 et. seq., in its entirety.

### **303. 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.

**“Accel Program”** means a program funded by the Georgia Lottery and administered by the Georgia Student Finance Commission to assist students who are simultaneously attending an Eligible High School in Georgia and taking college Degree level courses from an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in Georgia as a Dual Credit student.

**“Accrediting Agency”** means an association or agency recognized and approved by the Commission to function as an evaluator of the quality of the educational institutions and programs as described in these regulations.

**“Advanced Placement” or “AP”** means a nationwide program and testing service provided by the College Board that offers high school students the opportunity to receive credit from the college they will attend for standardized course work taken while in high school in certain subject areas.

**“Alternative Study”** means course work included in college Degree credit-earning programs of study that require travel outside of the State of Georgia, but within the United States.

**“Appeal”** means a formal written request from a student to the Commission for a review to determine if a HOPE rule, policy, or regulation was applied correctly in the student’s specific case.

**“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.

**“Attempted-Hours”** means the number of college Degree level quarter or semester hours, after high school graduation or equivalent, for which a postsecondary student was Enrolled. The number of Attempted-Hours is used to determine when the Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average should be checked for the renewal of the HOPE Scholarship program and to determine when a student has reached his or her maximum hours of eligibility for the HOPE Scholarship program. The number of college Degree level credit hours attempted by a student while participating in the Accel Scholarship program, or attempted by any student prior to high school graduation, are not considered to be Attempted-Hours for purposes of the HOPE Scholarship program. For a student who did not earn a high school diploma or equivalent, and is otherwise eligible to

enter the HOPE Scholarship at the Second-Tier or higher, Degree level credit hours are counted as Attempted-Hours at the point the student stopped pursuing a high school diploma. Credit hours are considered Attempted-Hours regardless of whether or not the course was completed, the hours were earned, or a letter grade was recorded on the student's official academic transcript. Such hours are considered Attempted-Hours regardless of whether or not the student receives payment for those hours from the HOPE Program. For purposes of HOPE Scholarship eligibility, credit hours attempted as part of a technical Certificate or Diploma program of study are only counted as Attempted-Hours if a postsecondary institution ever accepted those hours as credit hours toward a college Degree. Courses that appear on a student's transcript with no credit hours will be assigned 3 semester or 5 quarter credit hours for the purpose of determining a student's Attempted-Hours unless the Eligible Postsecondary Institution's official college catalog lists the course as a zero-credit course. Credit hours earned by examination are not counted as Attempted-Hours. Students transferring from Certificate or Diploma programs into Associate of Applied Science (AAS) or Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) Degree programs receive a "block" of credit hours for course work taken in the Certificate or Diploma program, rather than on a course-by-course basis. In order to determine the number of Attempted-Hours for purposes of HOPE Scholarship eligibility, the value of the "block" of credit hours is dependent upon the number of hours the student is required to complete in order to receive an AAS or BAS degree. The Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average is based on the cumulative grade point average for the full "block" of credit hours. Credit hours earned as a result of military training or experience are not counted as Attempted-Hours, unless such hours were granted or accepted as Degree credit by any postsecondary institution that is separate and independent of the military.

**"Audit Student"** means a student who Enrolls in a course for personal development and who does not earn college Degree level credit or a grade for the course.

**"Award Year"** means four consecutive quarters or three consecutive semesters, beginning with the summer term and ending 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 HOPE Scholarship 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.

**“Board”** means Board of Commissioners of the Georgia Student Finance Commission.

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

**“Book Allowance”** means HOPE funds made available to students attending Eligible Postsecondary Institutions to purchase books and/or supplies for their course of study.

**“Carnegie Unit”** means one unit of credit for a minimum of 150 clock hours of instruction at the secondary (high school) level.

**“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.

**“Checkpoint”** means the end of a school term at which a student’s Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average must be calculated to determine the student’s eligibility for the HOPE Scholarship. Such Checkpoints include Attempted-Hours Checkpoints, End-of-Spring Checkpoints, and Three-Term Checkpoints.

**“Commission”** means the Georgia Student Finance Commission.

**“Combined Paid-Hours”** the total number of postsecondary credit hours for which a student received any combinations of payments from the HOPE Scholarship, plus HOPE Grant, plus Accel Program.

**“Continuing Education”** means postsecondary level courses designed for personal development or an extension of the traditional on-campus learning process and does not lead to a postsecondary Certificate, Diploma, or Degree.

**“Cost Of Attendance”** means the expenses, both direct and indirect, incurred by a student and the student’s family to finance the cost of receiving a postsecondary education. These expenses include tuition, fees, room, meals, books, supplies, transportation, and personal expenses.

**“Degree”** means a two-year Associate Degree or four-year Baccalaureate Degree conferred on students by a postsecondary institution upon completion of a unified program of study in 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 institution, which is not an Associate or Baccalaureate Degree.

**“Disbursed”** means the Eligible Postsecondary Institution has credited the student’s account, issued or made available to the student a check, or directly deposited the funds in the student’s personal account

**“Distance Learning”** means an educational process that is characterized by the separation, in time or place, between instructor and student. It may include courses offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission, such as open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite transmission, audio/computer conferencing, video cassettes/discs, or correspondence.

**“Department of Technical and Adult Education or DTAE”** means the system comprised of thirty-four technical colleges located in the State of Georgia that receive public funding and are overseen by the State Board of Technical and Adult Education and the Commissioner of the Department of Technical and Adult Education.

**“Dual Credit Enrollment”** means a situation whereby an agreement has been established between an Eligible High School and an Eligible Postsecondary Institution wherein a student Enrolls in postsecondary courses and earns postsecondary level credit hours and simultaneously earns Carnegie Units of credit that count toward both high school graduation requirements.

**“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”** means any private or public secondary educational institution in the State of Georgia that is authorized to grant high school diplomas and 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, the Georgia Private School Accreditation Council, the Accrediting Commission for Independent Study, or the Southern Association of Independent Schools. If the institution is not located in the State of Georgia, then it must be accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or one of the following regional agencies: New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (successor to the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges), Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the Alabama Independent School Association, or the Southern Association of Independent Schools. Any high school not meeting the definition of an “Eligible

High School” is considered to be an ineligible high school for purposes of the HOPE 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 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”. Persons with an F1 or F2 student visa, a J1 or J2 exchange visitor visa, or a G series visa do not meet the definition of an Eligible Non-citizen.

**“Eligible Postsecondary Institution”** means: (1) a unit of the University System of Georgia (USG); (2) a branch of the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE); (3) a private independent non-profit postsecondary institution located in Georgia that is eligible to participate in the Georgia Tuition Equalization Grant program, which is not a unit of the University System of Georgia (USG), which is not a branch of the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE), which is not a graduate level school or college of theology or divinity, and which is accredited or holds candidate status for accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; (4) a private proprietary (for-profit) postsecondary institution located in Georgia that is eligible to participate in the Georgia Tuition Equalization Grant program, which is a Baccalaureate Degree granting postsecondary institution, which is accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education, which is not a Bible school or college (or, at the graduate level, a school or college of theology or divinity), which 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, whose students are eligible to participate in the Federal Pell Grant program, which has been reviewed and approved for operation and for receipt of Georgia Tuition Equalization Grant funds by the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission, and which has been in existence for at least ten years. Once any Eligible Postsecondary Institution has been approved by the United States Department of Education for participation in the Federal Title IV Programs and then such approval is suspended or revoked by the United States Department of Education; such institution is ineligible to participate in the HOPE programs until approval for participation in Federal Title IV Programs has been restored by the United State Department of Education.

**“End-of-Spring Checkpoint”** means a Checkpoint, taking place at the end of the Spring semester or quarter, at which HOPE Scholarship recipients must have at least a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average on a 4.0 scale in order to continue receiving payment for following school term(s). This Checkpoint applies to First-Tier HOPE Scholarship recipients who were Enrolled for 12 or

more hours for at least one of their first three school terms and for all Second-Tier and above students, regardless of the number of hours of Enrollment per school term. A recipient may lose, but not gain or regain, eligibility at this Checkpoint.

**“Enroll/Enrolled/Enrollment”** means a student has completed the registration requirements, as defined by the postsecondary institution, except for payment of Tuition and fees.

**“Extended Fourth-Tier”** means, for purposes of the HOPE Scholarship, the fifth academic level or classification of a postsecondary student who is seeking a Degree. The Extended Fourth-Tier may or may not exactly correlate with the institution’s classification of the student as a college senior. An Extended Fourth-Tier student has accumulated at least 127 semester or 190 quarter Attempted-Hours, but no more than 150 semester or 225 quarter Attempted-Hours.

**“Exception”** means a formal written request from a student to the Commission for a review of the student’s extenuating circumstances and to request approval for HOPE payment, despite not having fulfilled the regulatory eligibility requirements of the HOPE payment, based upon the merits of such extenuating circumstances.

**“FAFSA”** means Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

**“Federal Title IV Programs”** means the student financial aid programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education that are authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

**“First Professional Degree Program”** means a non-undergraduate degree program that: (1) Accepts students after the completion of the postsecondary sophomore or junior year; (2) Results in the award of a non-undergraduate degree; and (3) Has been specifically approved by the Commission for inclusion as a First Professional Degree Program. For the 2007-2008 Award Year, Doctor of Pharmacy Degree Programs, Masters of Health Science with a major in Occupational Therapy Programs, and Doctor of Physical Therapy Program offered by Eligible Postsecondary Institutions are approved by the Commission and therefore considered First Professional Degree Programs. Regardless of approval by the Commission as a First Professional Degree Program, no student is eligible to receive HOPE Scholarship payment once he or she has earned a Baccalaureate Degree of any type.

**“First-Tier”** means, for purposes of the HOPE Scholarship, the first academic level or classification of a postsecondary student who is seeking a Degree. The First-Tier may or may not exactly correlate with the institution’s classification of the student as a college Freshman. A First-Tier student has accumulated less than 30 semester or 45 quarter Attempted-Hours.

**“Fiscal Year”** means the 12-month period of time commencing each year on July 1<sup>st</sup> and extending through June 30<sup>th</sup> of the succeeding calendar year that represents the State Government of Georgia’s annual budgetary cycle.

**“Fourth-Tier”** means, for purposes of the HOPE Scholarship, the fourth academic level or classification of a postsecondary student who is seeking a Degree. The Fourth-Tier may or may not exactly correlate with the institution’s classification of the student as a college senior. A Fourth-Tier student has accumulated at least 90 semester or 135 quarter Attempted-Hours, but no more than 127 semester or 190 quarter Attempted-Hours.

**“Freshman”** means a first-year student who is fully admitted and Enrolled in a Matriculated status to seek college Degree or technical Certificate or Diploma at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution. Typically, a student is classified as a Freshman until he or she has earned at least 30 semester or 45 quarter hours of postsecondary level credit.

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

**“GCollege411”** means the State of Georgia’s website that provides information on careers, Georgia’s postsecondary institutions, student financial aid, and accesses electronic college and financial aid applications.

**“GED”** means General Education Development diploma awarded by the Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE).

**“Georgia Resident/Georgia Residency”** means an individual or the status of such individual who is a United States Citizen or Eligible Non-citizen and is domiciled in the State of Georgia and meets the in-state tuition requirements of the governing body of the public (USG or DTAE) Eligible Postsecondary Institution he or she attends, as specified and limited by these regulations, or meets the requirements of the Georgia Residency policy of the Commission for students attending private (independent) Eligible Postsecondary Institutions, as specified and limited by these regulations.

**“GSFAPPS”** means the Commission’s web-based electronic application process by which students can apply for the scholarship, grant, and service-cancelable loan programs administered by the Commission.

**“GTEG”** means the Georgia Tuition Equalization Grant, a State of Georgia student financial aid program administered by the Commission to provide non-repayable grant assistance to residents of Georgia who are Full-Time Undergraduate students attending private independent (nonprofit and

proprietary) Eligible Postsecondary Institutions located in Georgia or college level juniors or seniors attending four-year public colleges or universities located outside the State of Georgia, but within 50 miles of Georgia's borders. The GTEG program is authorized by the Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-3-410 and is funded by state appropriations.

**“Graduate Level”** means the postsecondary academic level at which a student is Enrolled in a program of study beyond the Baccalaureate Degree level or in a non-undergraduate degree program.

**“Half-Time”** means a Matriculated 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.

**“High School Curriculum Track”** means the course of study, i.e., college preparatory, from which a student plans to graduate or has graduated from a secondary institution (high school).

**“High School Graduating Class”** means a group of students receiving their high school diploma within a specific school year. Students are considered members of a specific High School Graduating Class based on when they graduated from high school rather than when they began high school. Students who graduate within a school year are considered to be members of the same High School Graduating Class. A school year, at the high school level, begins with the Fall term and ends with the Summer term. Students who graduate from high school early during the 2006-2007 school year and prior to May 1, 2007, and begin their postsecondary work prior to May 1, 2007, are considered members of the High School Graduating Class of 2006 and must meet the HOPE Scholar academic requirements for members of the High School Graduating Class of 2006. Students receiving their high school diplomas on or after May 1, 2007, or who first Enrolled as Freshmen at Eligible Postsecondary Institutions on or after May 1, 2007, are treated as members of the High School Graduating Class of 2007, for purposes of HOPE Scholarship eligibility.

**“Home Institution”** means an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in which the student is normally Enrolled and is in a Matriculated status working toward a Degree, Diploma, or Certificate.

**“Home Study”** means a situation whereby a school-age child is involved in a Home Study program governed by the requirements of §20-2-690 (c) O.C.G.A. Such a student spends the majority of the conventional school day in or near his or her home in lieu of attendance at a conventional institution of education. Parents or guardians are usually the prime educators of these students. In Georgia, such parents or guardian must annually submit to the superintendent of the local public school district a Declaration of Intent to Utilize a Home Study

program by September 1 or within 30 days after the program was established. A monthly attendance report must also be submitted to the superintendent at the end of each month. Failure to comply with the terms of the Code Section governing Home Study programs will mean that a student will not be granted Home Study student status for purposes of HOPE Scholarship eligibility.

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

**“HOPE Scholar”** means: (1.) a student who graduated from an Eligible High School located within the State of Georgia as a member of the 1993 High School Graduating Class, or any High School Graduating Class thereafter, meeting the academic requirements for the HOPE Scholarship, or, (2.) a student who graduated from an Eligible High School located outside of the State of Georgia as a member of the 1993 High School Graduating Class, or any High School Graduating Class thereafter, meeting the academic requirements for the HOPE Scholarship and Georgia Residency requirements at the time of high school graduation.

**“Host Institution”** means a postsecondary institution a student is temporarily attending as a Transient student.

**“Immediate Family”** means the parent, spouse, child or sibling of a student.

**“Incarcerated”** means to be confined by competent public authority or under due legal process. A student is considered Incarcerated if he or she is serving a criminal sentence in a federal, state, or local penitentiary, prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, half-way house, or similar correctional institution (whether operated by the government or a contractor) or is sentenced to home detention.

**“International Baccalaureate” “IB”** means an international program and testing service provided by the International Baccalaureate Organization that offers high school students the opportunity to receive credit from the college they will attend for standardized course work taken while in high school in certain subject areas.

**“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.

**“Learning Support”** means remedial course work provided by a postsecondary institution to a student whose entrance or placement evaluation has identified deficiencies in the student’s academic preparation or readiness for specific core curriculum college Degree level course work.

**“Mandatory Fees”** means HOPE-approved fees charged by an Eligible Postsecondary Institution to every student Enrolled at that institution, regardless of their program of study. Examples of Mandatory Fees are: activity, athletic, health and transportation. Technology fees are eligible for HOPE payment at USG institutions, but not at DTAE institutions. The Mandatory Fees are capped at the same amount allowed for the 2003-2004 Award Year at each institution. If fees are increased or new fees are added by the institution, the difference will not be covered by HOPE funds. If a specific fee is reduced or eliminated, the amount of the Mandatory Fee cap will be reduced by an equal amount. For any eligible University System of Georgia institution or Department of Technical and Adult Education institution established after January 1, 2004, the amount of the Mandatory Fees paid by HOPE Scholarship or HOPE Grant funds shall be equal to such amount or amounts initially approved for the new institution for its first year of operation, by action of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia or the Department of Technical and Adult Education.

**“Mathematically Impossible”** means a situation which assumes the student will make all “A’s” during the next school term, earning at least 12 hours, but those grades do not provide enough Quality Points to allow the student to have a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average.

**“Matriculated”** means a student is fully admitted and Enrolled in an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in a unified academic program of study leading to Degree, Diploma, or Certificate. Retroactively gaining Matriculated status will not establish retroactive eligibility for HOPE.

**“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 quarter or semester hours used to determine: (1) when a student has reached the maximum number of hours for which a student can receive HOPE Grant payment, and (2) when a student has reached the maximum number of hours for which a student can receive payment from any combination of the HOPE Scholarship, HOPE Grant, and Accel Program. The Paid-Hours limit for HOPE Grant eligibility is determined by totaling only the hours for which a student received HOPE Grant payment. The hours for which a student received HOPE Grant payment prior to the Summer term of 2003 are not counted as Paid-Hours. The hours for which a student received HOPE Grant

payment for the Summer term of 2003, Fall term of 2003, Winter term of 2004, Spring term of 2004, and Summer term of 2004 are counted as Paid-Hours, except if the student was also attending high school during these terms. Beginning with Fall term of 2004, all credit hours for which a student received HOPE Grant payment are counted as Paid-Hours, regardless of whether the student was simultaneously attending high school. The Paid-Hours limit for the combination of the HOPE Scholarship, HOPE Grant, and Accel Program (Combined Paid-Hours) is determined by totaling all hours for which a student received payment from any combination of the Accel Program, HOPE Grant (as described above), and/or HOPE Scholarship programs. All hours for which a student received HOPE Scholarship payment for the Fall term of 1993, and all terms thereafter, are counted as Paid-Hours for purposes of the Combined Paid-Hours limit. All hours for which a student received Accel Program payment, beginning with Fall term of 2004, are included in the Combined Paid-Hours limit.

**“Parent”** means the natural mother or father, adoptive parent, or United States court-appointed legal guardian of a student.

**“Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average”** means the calculation of those grades earned at the postsecondary 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. A traditional 4.0 scale is defined as 4.00 = A+, A, A-, 90.00 or above, 3.00 = B+, B, B-, 80.00 – 89.99, 2.00 = C+, C, C-, 70.00 – 79.99, 1.00 = D+, D, D-, 60.00-69.99 and 0 = F, 59.99 or below. 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.

**“Program Review”** means an assessment by the Commission of an Eligible Postsecondary Institution by evaluating the Eligible Postsecondary Institution’s compliance with the regulations governing state programs.

**“Quality Points”** means the value assigned to course work by multiplying the number of credit hours a course is worth by the grade points earned for the course on a traditional 4.0 scale, to the hundredth decimal, without rounding. A traditional 4.0 scale is defined as 4.00 = A+, A, A-, 90.00 or above, 3.00 = B+, B, B-, 80.00 – 89.99, 2.00 = C+, C, C-, 70.00 – 79.99, 1.00 = D+, D, D-, 60.00-69.99 and 0 = F, 59.99 or below. For example, a student completing a course worth 3 credit hours, who received a grade of "B" or 3.0, has earned 9.0 Quality Points (3 credit hours x 3.0 points = 9.0 Quality Points).

**“Second-Tier”** means, for purposes of the HOPE Scholarship, the second academic level or classification of a postsecondary student who is seeking a

Degree. The Second-Tier may or may not exactly correlate with the institution's classification of the student as a college sophomore. A Second-Tier student has accumulated at least 30 semester or 45 quarter Attempted-Hours, but no more than 60 semester or 90 quarter Attempted-Hours.

**“Serious Illness or Injury”** means a health problem that is medically documented as being severe enough to interfere with the student's ability to perform academically. *(Revised 08/03/2007.)*

**“Study Abroad”** means postsecondary course work that requires travel outside the United States and for which a student earns college Degree credit that is accepted toward a program of study leading to a college Degree. Study Abroad programs are also referred to by some institutions as International-Intercultural Studies.

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

**“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 and amount invoiced and the number of students and amount disbursed, according to the SURFER system, are accurate on the date of such acknowledgement.

**“Three-Term Checkpoint”** means a Checkpoint, taking place at the end of a student's first three semesters or quarters, if Enrolled for less than 12 hours during each of those three terms, at which a First-Tier student must have at least a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average on a 4.0 scale in order to continue receiving payment for the following school term(s). Thereafter, the End-of-Spring Checkpoint must be applied to these students, rather than the Three-Term Checkpoint, regardless of the number of hours in which the student is Enrolled per school term.

**“Third-Tier”** means, for purposes of the HOPE Scholarship, the third academic level or classification of a postsecondary student who is seeking a Degree. The Third-Tier may or may not exactly correlate with the institution's classification of the student as a college junior. A Third-Tier student has accumulated at least 60 semester or 90 quarter Attempted-Hours, but no more than 90 semester or 135 quarter Attempted-Hours.

**“Transient”** means a student is attending a Host Institution and is granted temporary admission for the purpose of completing course work and earning postsecondary credit to transfer back to his or her Home Institution toward a Degree, Diploma, or Certificate.

**“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, Baccalaureate Degree, Diploma, or Certificate.

**“University System of Georgia or USG”** means the system comprised of thirty-five colleges and universities located in the State of Georgia that receive public funding and are overseen by the Board of Regents and the Chancellor of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

**“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.

## **304. General Eligibility Requirements.**

### **304.1. Citizenship.**

A student must be a United States Citizen or an Eligible Non-citizen, according to Federal Title IV requirements, for 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the first day of classes of the school term for which the HOPE Grant is sought. Full-time employees of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), their spouses, and their dependent children are not exempt from this requirement.

### **304.2. Georgia Residency.**

- a. A student attending a Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE) institution meets the Georgia Residency requirements for purposes of HOPE Grant eligibility if he or she meets the requirements to be classified as a Georgia Resident according to DTAE's in-state tuition policy. If the DTAE institution, according to DTAE policy, grants a Military Personnel out-of-state tuition waiver, then such student meets the Georgia Residency requirements of the HOPE Grant. No out-of-state tuition waiver, other than for Military Personnel and their dependents, qualify for HOPE Grant eligibility.
- b. A student attending a University System of Georgia (USG) institution meets the Georgia Residency requirements for purposes of HOPE Grant eligibility if he or she meets the requirements to be classified as a Georgia Resident according to USG's in-state tuition policy. If the USG institution, according to USG policy, grants a Military Personnel out-of-state tuition waiver, then such student meets the Georgia Residency requirements of the HOPE Grant. No out-of-state tuition waiver, other than for Military Personnel and their dependents, qualify for HOPE Grant eligibility.
- c. A student who was correctly determined to meet the Georgia Residency requirements for purposes of HOPE Grant eligibility and began receiving HOPE Grant payment, will continue to meet the Georgia Residency requirements for purposes of HOPE Grant eligibility, unless such student has a break in Enrollment of two or more consecutive semesters or quarters and establishes residency in another state. Students with a break in Enrollment of two or more consecutive semesters or quarters, who establish residency in another state must re-establish Georgia Residency for 12 consecutive months before regaining HOPE Grant eligibility.
- d. Full-time employees of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), who are recognized by the United States Department of State as based in Georgia, their spouses, and their dependent children are considered to meet the Georgia Residency requirements for participation in the HOPE Grant Program, regardless of the length of time they have resided in the State of Georgia.

### **304.3. Enrollment Status.**

- a. A student must be Enrolled as an Undergraduate student in a Matriculated status leading to a technical Certificate or Diploma from a DTAE or USG Eligible Postsecondary Institution. The Certificate or Diploma program of study must be approved by the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Technical and Adult Education or be a comparable program of study approved by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Such Certificate or Diploma must be granted and issued to the student from his or her Eligible Postsecondary Institution.
- b. A student is eligible for the HOPE Grant regardless of the number of credit hours for which he or she is Enrolled during a school term. Half-Time or Full-Time Enrollment is not a requirement.
- c. A student is eligible to receive HOPE Grant payment for the full number of hours Enrolled for the school term in which he or she reaches the HOPE Grant Paid-Hours limit or the Combined HOPE Paid-Hours limit.
- d. A student is eligible for HOPE Grant payment for Certificate or Diploma level course, only if such course is included in his or her Certificate or Diploma program of study. The only exception is for Degree level courses that have a direct and specific correlation to required courses included in the student's Certificate or Diploma program of study. A student cannot receive HOPE Grant payment for Degree level courses used to fulfill general elective requirements for a Certificate or Diploma program of study.

### **304.4. Satisfactory Academic Progress.**

A student must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress in a program of study in accordance with the standards and practices used for Federal Title IV Programs by the Eligible Postsecondary Institution at which such student is Enrolled.

### **304.5. Selective Service Registration.**

A student must be in compliance with the United States Selective Service System requirements, if such requirements are applicable, prior to the HOPE Grant application deadline in order to be eligible for HOPE Grant payment for such school term.

### **304.6. Defaulted Loan or Refund Due.**

A student must not be in default on a Federal Title IV or State of Georgia educational loan, nor owe a refund on a Federal Title IV or State of Georgia student financial aid program, nor in any other way be in violation of Federal Title

IV or State of Georgia student financial aid program regulations. If such student has repaid the defaulted loan or refund due in full, or resolved the default status, then he or she may be eligible to receive HOPE Grant funds beginning with the school term in which repayment was made in full, but not retroactively for previous school terms. A student's default status can be resolved by one of three ways: 1) complete a rehabilitation plan that includes having the loan repurchased, 2) having the loan repurchased by the original lender and the default status reversed, or 3) by consolidating the loan out of a default status.

#### **304.7. Georgia Drug-Free Act.**

A student convicted for committing certain felony offenses involving marijuana, controlled substances, or dangerous drugs, is ineligible for HOPE Grant payment from the date of conviction to the completion of the following school term, in accordance with the Georgia Drug-Free Postsecondary Education Act of 1990.

#### **304.8. Incarceration.**

A student seeking a technical Certificate or Diploma from an Eligible Postsecondary Institution is ineligible for HOPE Grant payment while Incarcerated. Upon release from Incarceration, such students may begin receiving HOPE Grant payments, if he or she meets all eligibility requirements.

### **305. Program Specific Eligibility Requirements.**

#### **305.1. HOPE Grant Paid-Hours Limit.**

- a. A student may receive HOPE Grant payment for all course work required by an Eligible Postsecondary Institution for a program of study leading to a technical Certificate or Diploma, including Learning Support course work. However, recipients are limited by the number of credit hours for which they can receive HOPE Grant payment, referred to in these regulations as the HOPE Grant Paid-Hours limit.
- b. The HOPE Grant Paid-Hours limit is 95 quarter or 63 semester hours of HOPE Grant payment for technical Certificate or Diploma credit hours that meet the definition of Paid-Hours, except for students Enrolled in specific technical Certificate or Diploma programs of study designed to require more than 95 quarter or 63 semester hours of course work. Such students are eligible for HOPE Grant payment for the number of hours required by the program of study, up to a maximum of 130 quarter or 86 semester HOPE Grant Paid -Hours.
- c. Technical Certificate or Diploma credit hours attempted prior to Summer term of 2003 are not counted as HOPE Grant Paid-Hours, regardless of HOPE Grant payment.
- d. Technical Certificate or Diploma credit hours attempted beginning with the Summer term of 2003, for which the student received HOPE Grant payment, must be counted as HOPE Grant Paid-Hours, unless the student was a high school Joint Enrollment or Dual Credit Enrollment student during such term.
- e. Technical Certificate or Diploma credit hours for which a student received HOPE Grant payment for Summer term 2003, Fall term 2003, Winter term 2004, Spring term 2004, or Summer term 2004 are not counted as HOPE Grant Paid-Hours, if the student was also Enrolled in high school as a Joint Enrollment or Dual Credit Enrollment student for such term.
- f. Technical Certificate or Diploma credit hours for which a Joint Enrollment or Dual Credit Enrollment high school student received HOPE Grant payment for Fall term of 2004, and all terms following Fall term of 2004, must be counted as HOPE Grant Paid-Hours.

#### **305.2. Combined Paid-Hours Limit.**

In addition to the HOPE Grant Paid-Hours limit, a student is ineligible to receive HOPE Grant payment once he or she reaches the Combined Paid-Hours limit of 190 quarter or 127 semester hours from any combination of HOPE Scholarship Paid-Hours, plus HOPE Grant Paid-Hours, plus Accel Program Paid-Hours.

### **305.3. Attainment of a Certificate, Diploma, or Degree.**

A student meeting all HOPE Grant eligibility requirements who has earned a technical Certificate, technical Diploma, Associate Degree, Baccalaureate Degree, or Graduate Level Degree is eligible for HOPE Grant payment, provided that such student has not reached the HOPE Grant Paid-Hours limit or the Combined Paid-Hours limit. Recipients of the HOPE Grant are not limited by the number of technical Certificate or Diploma programs of study for which they can receive HOPE Grant payment, but are limited by the Paid-Hours limits.

### **306. Eligible Course Work.**

#### **306.1. Joint and Dual Enrollment Course Work.**

A student seeking a high school diploma who is simultaneously seeking a postsecondary technical Certificate or Diploma as a Joint Enrollment or Dual Credit Enrollment student at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution is eligible for HOPE Grant payment for such postsecondary technical Certificate or Diploma course work, if he or she meets all other HOPE Grant eligibility requirements. The credit hours for which such student receives HOPE Grant funds must count toward the HOPE Grant Paid-Hours limit and the HOPE Combined Paid-Hours limit.

#### **306.2. Learning Support Course Work.**

A student seeking a technical Certificate or Diploma, who is required by his or her Eligible Postsecondary Institution to participate in Learning Support (remedial) course work, is eligible for HOPE Grant payment for such course work, if he or she meets all other HOPE Grant eligibility requirements. Such Learning Support credit hours must count toward the HOPE Grant Paid-Hours limit and the HOPE Combined Paid-Hours limit.

#### **306.3. Exemption by Examination Course Work.**

A student is ineligible to receive HOPE Grant payment for course work that was exempted or given credit by examination, testing, training, or experience.

#### **306.4. Distance Learning Course Work.**

- a. A student participating in Distance Learning course work is eligible to receive HOPE Grant payment if all other eligibility requirements are met. The institution offering the Distance Learning course work must be a DTAE or USG Eligible Postsecondary Institution.
- b. A student taking course work through more than one Eligible Postsecondary Institution during the same term is eligible to receive HOPE Grant payment from each institution. The payment process for Distance Learning students is the same as for Transient students. (Refer to 306.5. of these regulations.) Distance Learning students are eligible to receive HOPE Grant payment from each Eligible Postsecondary Institution to cover the Tuition charged by the institution, Mandatory Fees for Distance Learning students, and the Book Allowance.
- c. The only HOPE Mandatory Fee for Distance Learning students attending DTAE institutions is the Registration Fee. The only Mandatory Fee for Distance Learning students attending USG institutions is the Technology Fee.

### **306.5. Transient Course Work.**

- a. A Transient student is eligible to receive HOPE Grant payment if all other eligibility requirements are met. Both the Home Institution and the Host Institution must be DTAE or USG Eligible Postsecondary Institutions.
- b. The Host Institution awards HOPE Grant funds to the Transient student based on certification of eligibility from the Home Institution. The Home Institution is responsible for verifying the eligibility of their Transient students. The HOPE Grant award must be the amount the student would normally receive at the Host Institution if she or she were a regular student. The Host Institution must report HOPE Grant payment for Transient students to the Commission in the same manner it reports HOPE Grant payments for their regular students. Upon the student's return to the Home Institution, the Host Institution must provide information necessary for the Home Institution to determine continued HOPE Grant eligibility.

### **306.6. Study Abroad Course Work.**

A student seeking a technical Certificate or Diploma is ineligible to receive HOPE Grant payment for Study Abroad course work.

### **306.7. Alternative Study Course Work.**

A student seeking a technical Certificate or Diploma is ineligible to receive HOPE Grant payment for Alternative Study course work.

### **306.8. Continuing Education Course Work.**

A student is ineligible to receive HOPE Grant payment for course work classified by his or her Eligible Postsecondary Institution as Continuing Education course work.

### **306.9. Total Withdrawal from Course Work.**

A student is not eligible for HOPE Grant payment for course work from which he or she totally withdrew if, as a result, such course work does not appear on the student's academic transcript as a "Withdrawal" or any other similar identification.

## **307. Student Application Requirements.**

### **307.1. Application Forms.**

- a. A student must complete a GSFAPPS electronic application, or the HOPE Scholarship and Grant Application printable from the GAcollge411 web site, or a current year Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in order to be considered for HOPE Grant payment. Paper applications must be forwarded to the Commission for input into the electronic GSFAPPS system. It is only necessary for a student to complete one of these three applications and no other form or application can serve as a substitute. In addition to one of these three applications, an Eligible Postsecondary Institution may require students to complete the institution's application for student financial aid or other forms to provide supplemental information for the purpose of determining HOPE Grant eligibility.
- b. The GSFAPPS and HOPE Scholarship and Grant applications are intended to be "lifetime" applications so long as there is activity on them. As such, a student's GSFAPPS and/or HOPE Scholarship and Grant application will remain active so long as the student has awards invoiced on the application within 18 months of the submission date and at least once every 18 months thereafter. If a student completed and submitted a GSFAPPS or HOPE Scholarship and Grant Application, and no invoice or award has been applied to such application for 18 consecutive months, then that application will expire and the student must reapply. In addition, if an invoice or award has been applied to a student's application and then no additional invoice or award is recorded for 18 consecutive months, the student's application will expire and he or she must reapply.
  1. If a student previously submitted an e-HOPE application, it can serve as a valid current Award Year application for HOPE, as long as it has not expired after 18 months of inactivity.
  2. If the Eligible Postsecondary Institution has a paper application on file that was completed before the 2006-2007 Award Year, and it was not submitted to the Commission for data-entry, the institution may award on that application so long as an invoice or award was previously applied to the student's account by the same institution and so long as such application has not expired after 18 months of inactivity
- c. A student who applies for HOPE by completing and submitting a FAFSA must complete and submit a new FAFSA for each Award Year.

### **307.2. Application Deadline Date.**

A student must file the application online or with the Eligible Postsecondary 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.

### **307.3. Application Renewal.**

It is not mandatory, except as provided for in 307. 1. b. and c. of these regulations, for a student to complete a new application for the HOPE Grant for each Award Year, however, Eligible Postsecondary Institutions may require their students to complete a new application each Award Year for renewal of the HOPE Grant.

### **308. Award Requirements.**

#### **308.1. Tuition and Fees Awards.**

- a. The HOPE Grant covers Tuition and Mandatory Fees. The HOPE Grant award amount for Tuition must not be greater than the in-state Tuition rate of the Eligible Postsecondary Institution. Award amounts may include cents and must not be rounded. HOPE Grant funds awarded for Tuition and Mandatory Fees can only be applied to Tuition and Mandatory Fees, not other expenses such as room and board.
- b. If a student is receiving student financial aid from a source other than the HOPE Grant and such aid is required by the donor to be applied to the student's Tuition and Mandatory Fee charges, then the student's HOPE Grant award for Tuition and Mandatory Fees must be reduced by the amount of such aid.
- c. A student's HOPE Grant award amount for Tuition and Mandatory Fees is not reduced if the student is receiving financial aid from sources that is applied to educational expenses other than Tuition and Mandatory Fees, even if the student's total aid exceeds his or her Cost of Attendance budget.

#### **308.2. Book Allowance Awards.**

- a. The HOPE Grant award amount includes a Book Allowance payment of \$100 per quarter or \$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 or \$75 per semester.
- b. A student's eligibility for the Book Allowance is based on his or her Enrollment status at the end of the first day of classes of the school term. If a student withdraws from courses on or before the first day of classes, his or her eligibility for the HOPE Allowance is calculated by using the hours for which he or she was Enrolled at the end of the first day of classes. If a student adds course work after the first day of classes, bringing his or her total hours to six or more, the student is eligible for a full Book Allowance payment. A student who Enrolls after the first day of classes is eligible for a Book Allowance based on the number of hours for which he or she Enrolled. An institution that disbursed the Book Allowance to a student who later drops or withdraws from courses is held harmless if the award was correct at the time of disbursement.
- c. If a student is Enrolled in two or more programs of study (Degree, Certificate, Diploma, or any combination) within the same term at the same Eligible Postsecondary Institution, he or she should only receive one Book Allowance award based on the total hours of Enrollment for that school term. A student

Enrolled in two or more programs of study within the same school term at more than one Eligible Postsecondary Institution is eligible for a Book Allowance payment at each Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

- d. A student is eligible for the Book Allowance regardless of whether his or her Cost of Attendance or financial need is met or exceeded by other types or sources of student financial aid.
- e. Funds for the Book Allowance must be made available by the Eligible Postsecondary Institution to the student for the purchase of books and supplies. Book Allowance funds cannot be applied by the Eligible Postsecondary Institution to a student's direct charges, such as fees, room, and meals, unless the institution obtains written or electronic authorization from the student to do so.

### **308.3. Awards Per School Term.**

The HOPE Grant is available to students for the standard school terms of Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters or Summer, Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters. An institution may combine mini-terms or modules to form the equivalent of a standard semester or quarter. An institution may offer non-standard school terms, in which courses or modules are taken consecutively to form the equivalent of a standard semester or quarter. Regardless of the structure of an Eligible Postsecondary Institution's school terms, a student may be awarded HOPE Grant funds for a maximum of three semesters or four quarters per Award Year.

### **308.4. Student Notification of Award.**

Eligible Postsecondary Institutions must include and identify HOPE Grant awards on the institutional award letter of each of their HOPE Grant recipients.

### **309. Invoicing Requirements.**

#### **309.1. Submission of Invoices.**

Eligible Postsecondary Institutions may submit HOPE invoices to the Commission as early as 15 days prior to the first day of classes for the school term.

#### **309.2. Payment of Invoices.**

HOPE funds are paid to Eligible Postsecondary Institutions by check or electronic transfer of funds on behalf of eligible students each school term upon submission to the Commission of a HOPE invoice.

#### **309.3. Tuition and Fees Payments.**

Upon receipt of HOPE payments from the Commission, the institution must credit the amount of payment on behalf of an eligible student to the account of the student, toward Tuition and Mandatory Fees charges.

#### **309.4. Book Allowance Payments.**

Funds for the Book Allowance must be made available to the student for the purchase of books and supplies. Book Allowance funds cannot be applied by the Eligible Postsecondary Institution to a student's direct charges, such as fees, room, and meals, unless the institution obtains written or electronic authorization from the student to do so.

## **310. Refund Requirements.**

### **310.1. Calculation of Refund Amounts.**

- a. 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 HOPE fund. If the student was awarded a HOPE Grant, the Eligible Postsecondary Institution must determine the amount of the refund for Tuition and Mandatory Fee charges, post the refund on the student's record in the Commission's system within 45 days of the determination, and return that amount to the Commission at the time of the End-of-Year Reconciliation. The remainder of the HOPE award for Tuition and Mandatory Fees is retained by the institution to cover the institution's cost for the portion of the school term that the student was Enrolled. The Book Allowance awarded to the student is not included in the HOPE refund calculation.
- b. If a refund is due and the student received HOPE Grant funds only (no federal aid), then such amounts must be refunded to HOPE, rounded to the nearest dollar, by applying the institution's refund policy to the student's original HOPE Scholarship award for Tuition and Mandatory Fees. The Book Allowance is not part of the refund calculation.
- c. If the student received Federal Title IV funds in addition to HOPE Grant funds, the institution must follow the Federal Title IV Return of Funds policy for any federal aid received. To determine the refund to HOPE, the institution must then follow their institutional refund policy, if different from Federal Title IV Return of Funds policy.

### **310.2. Collection of Refunds.**

A student who owes a refund to the Commission should pay the Eligible Postsecondary Institution and the Eligible Postsecondary Institution should 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 or the Eligible Postsecondary Institution from using all available legal and equitable remedies to collect the refund.

### **310.3. Unavailable Evidence.**

If later evidence not available at the time of awarding indicates that a student should not have received the HOPE Grant payment, then all future HOPE Grant awards must be canceled. The Eligible Postsecondary Institution is held harmless in Commission Program Reviews, if the student's file is appropriately documented with available evidence and it is determined by the Commission that the institution was not at fault. Evidence is considered unavailable at the time of

awarding if it is not available in the student's institutional files (i.e. financial aid, admissions, registrar, etc.). The institution must notify the student and the Commission of a refund due. The student will be ineligible to receive additional state aid from the Commission until the refund is paid in full.

#### **310.4. Emergency Military Duty.**

A student who is a member of the U.S. Armed Services, National Guard, or Armed Forces Reserve receiving funds from the HOPE Grant Program who is called to emergency military duty during a school term that is already in progress should not have their HOPE Grant eligibility negatively impacted. If the Eligible Postsecondary Institution the student attends allows the student to totally withdraw and receive a grade such as "WM" for "military withdrawal" or the institution totally removes all grades for that term and corresponding credit hours from the student's records, the institution should return the full amount of the Tuition and Mandatory Fee charges to the HOPE account. If the Book Allowance has already been disbursed to the student, then the Book Allowance funds do not have to be refunded. This regulation may also be applied to students who are not members of the military but are otherwise unusually and detrimentally affected by the emergency activation of members of the military, as determined by the president of the Eligible Postsecondary Institution that such student is attending.

## **311. Reconciliation Requirements.**

### **311.1. Term-Reconciliation.**

A Term-Reconciliation must be conducted by the Eligible Postsecondary Institution near the end of each term. A Term-Reconciliation consists of an official acknowledgement by an authorized school official that the number of students and amount invoiced and the number of students and amount disbursed, according to the SURFER system, is accurate on that date. HOPE funds for the following school term will not be disbursed until the Term-Reconciliation is complete. Surplus funds are not returned to the Commission as part of the Term-Reconciliation process.

### **311.2. Award-Year Reconciliation.**

In addition to the Term-Reconciliations, the Eligible Postsecondary Institution must conduct the Award-Year Reconciliation. 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 July 15, immediately following the completion of the Award Year.

### **311.3 Return of Funds.**

The institution must return to the Commission any HOPE funds not utilized according to the final reconciliation within 30 days of completing the Award-Year Reconciliation process. This includes Book Allowance funds. The institution must have a procedure in place to ensure that the HOPE funds do not go to an unintended third party (i.e. State, institution).

## **312. Records Retention Requirements.**

### **312.1. Length of Retention.**

An Eligible Postsecondary Institution shall maintain accurate records, books, documents and other evidence concerning the HOPE Grant 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.

### **312.2. Documentation.**

Documentation contained within an individual student file or record, which supports the original determination of a student's eligibility made by the institution, should be transferred to the student's file or record for the most current Award Year. Such documentation may include, but is not limited to, copies of Alien Registration Receipt Cards, Georgia State Income Tax Returns, applications and academic transcripts from previous institutions. As an alternative to the original hard copies, 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.

### **312.3. Extended Retention.**

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.

### **313. Appeals and Exceptions.**

*(Revisions to Section 113. were approved by the Board on 08/03/2007 and are incorporated herein.)*

If a student wishes to Appeal a determination of eligibility made by an Eligible Postsecondary Institution or the Commission or to request an Exception to these regulations, then he or she must follow the HOPE Appeal and Exception Process.

#### **313.1. Filing an Appeal or Exception.**

In order for an Appeal or Exception to be considered, the student must write a request for an Appeal or an Exception to the Commission office within 45 days of receiving notice of denial. If additional information is requested from the student, it must be provided within the time frame specified by the Commission. The Commission decides a case based only on documentation provided, rather than a personal presentation.

#### **313.2. Appeals.**

The HOPE regulations are applied to each student considered for HOPE funds by appropriate officials of Eligible Postsecondary Institutions and by the administrative staff of the Commission. If a student believes a HOPE rule or regulation was incorrectly applied in his/her case, the student has the right to file an Appeal with the Commission. The Commission will review the case and determine whether the rule or regulation was applied correctly and notify the student and institution of the determination.

#### **313.3. Exceptions.**

In exceptional cases, the Board of Commissioners of the Commission has authorized the Commission staff to grant a HOPE award to a student who fails to meet the regulatory requirements for receiving HOPE funds. The Board of Commissioners and authorized Commission staff have sole discretion to grant an Exception based on the circumstances presented by a student who is requesting an Exception. Provided below are the guidelines for granting Exceptions as authorized by the Board of Commissioners. No student obtains a right to have his or her request for an Exception considered by the Commission. No student obtains a right to a HOPE award under any of these circumstances. Rather, the Commission staff reviews the circumstances to determine if, in its sole judgment, a student may receive HOPE payment despite not having fulfilled the regulatory requirements for receiving the award. No student obtains a right to Appeal the denial of an Exception. Each individual HOPE recipient is limited to one (1) Exception, as granted by the Commission, and such Exception shall only apply to one (1) school term.

#### **313.4. Authorized Staff Approval.**

In the event that any of the circumstances outlined below are met, the Board of Commissioners authorizes the Commission staff to allow the student to continue to receive funding from the HOPE Program. A summary of the determinations made by the staff, as outlined below as Guidelines A1-A11, shall be presented to the Public Policy and Law Committee of the Board of Commissioners for review and to the full Board for ratification. By empowering the Commission staff to allow funding immediately, the student is better served in these circumstances. It is understood that the requests for an Exception that meets the criteria outlined as Guidelines A1-A11 shall automatically receive approval from the Board of Commissioners in a formal vote for ratification. The Commission should notify students of the Commission staff decisions within 21 days of the date of receipt of the letter.

Exceptions granted by applying Guidelines A1 - A11 or by applying the Special Criteria provision of these regulations may provide for the forgiveness of postsecondary Attempted-Hours, but in no case or circumstance shall a student's postsecondary grade(s), as determined by the student's postsecondary institution, be forgiven or altered by the Board of Commissioners or by Commission staff, as part of the HOPE Appeals and Exception process. Nor, under any circumstances, shall an Exception be made regarding student-data submitted to the Commission by a student's high school for purposes of determining the student's eligibility for a HOPE Scholarship.

A1 Early Admission Exceptions may be granted so that a student becomes eligible to receive a HOPE Scholarship without having earned a high school diploma, when all required documentation, as outlined in these regulations, is received and:

- the student has completed the 11<sup>th</sup> grade; and
- the student has a high school grade point average through the 11<sup>th</sup> grade of at least a 3.2 on a 4.0 scale in the college preparatory core curriculum courses; and
- the student has a combined Verbal and Math SAT score of at least 1300 or an ACT score of at least 29.

With regard to an Early Admission Exception request, any request for an Exception from a student who has not yet completed the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, or who does not have a high school grade point average of at least a 3.2 on the 4.0 scale in the core curriculum courses of the college preparatory track, or who does not score at least 1300 on the SAT or 29 on the ACT must be evaluated by the staff using the "Early Admission Evaluation Factors" of these regulations.

A2 Requests for an Exception may be granted for a HOPE Scholar who has

reached a HOPE Scholarship Checkpoint and lost HOPE eligibility without yet earning a Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average or a student who has reached an Attempted-Hours Checkpoint for entry into the HOPE Scholarship Program without yet earning a Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average, if the student has at least a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average after attempting 12 hours of course work for which he or she received letter grades (A=4.0, B=3.0, C=2.0, D=1.0, F=0.0).

Such an Exception provides for HOPE Scholarship retroactive payment from the point at which the student lost HOPE eligibility or from the point at which the student reached an Attempted-Hours Checkpoint for entry into the program. Additionally, hours from which the student withdrew may be forgiven if extenuating circumstances (Serious Injury, Serious Illness or Death of an Immediate Family Member) are present so that by forgiving the hours from which the student withdrew, the student's total length of eligibility for HOPE is extended.

A3 Requests for an Exception may be granted for a HOPE Scholarship recipient who has exceeded the hours limitation for the HOPE Scholarship, so that by forgiving the hours from which the student withdrew, the student's total length of eligibility for HOPE is extended, if:

- the student completely withdrew from all courses during a term due to a Serious Illness, Serious Injury, or death in the Immediate Family; and
- the student has maintained a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average or higher at all HOPE Checkpoints.

A4 Requests for an Exception may be granted for a HOPE Scholarship recipient who lost HOPE Scholarship eligibility at a HOPE Checkpoint due to a total withdrawal from a term, if:

- the student completely withdrew from all courses during a term due to a Serious Illness, Serious Injury, or death in the Immediate Family; and
- the student has a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average at the new Attempted-Hours Checkpoint (withdrawal hours not included).

By forgiving the hours from which the student withdrew, the student's Attempted-Hours Checkpoint is delayed by a term or terms and the student's total length of eligibility for HOPE is extended. In this circumstance, it is necessary to wait for another term or terms of grades to be posted to determine if the student achieves a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average at the new Attempted-Hours Checkpoint (once hours are forgiven). If the student achieves a 3.0 Postsecondary

Cumulative Grade Point Average after that term, the student is eligible to retain HOPE and to be reimbursed from the point at which the student lost HOPE eligibility.

- A5 Requests for an Exception may be granted for a HOPE Scholarship recipient who has been treated pharmacologically for a psychiatric disorder, so that by forgiving the hours from which the student withdrew, the student's total length of eligibility for HOPE is extended, if:
- the student completely withdrew from all courses during the term in question and received pharmacological treatment during that term; and
  - the student remains academically eligible to receive the HOPE Scholarship.
- A6 (Intentionally left blank.)
- A7 Requests for an Exception may be granted for a HOPE Scholarship recipient who withdrew from all courses during a term because the student was required to provide temporary care for an Immediate Family member, so that by forgiving the hours from which the student withdrew, the student's total length of eligibility for HOPE is extended, if:
- the student can show that no one else was able to provide the care; and
  - the student remains academically eligible to receive the HOPE Scholarship.
- A8 Early Admission Exception may be granted, so that a student becomes eligible to receive HOPE Scholarship funds without having earned a high school diploma, if all required documentation, as outlined in these regulations, is received and the student was admitted by the Eligible Postsecondary Institution as an Early Admission student, and since such admission, the student has attempted at least 30 semester/45 quarter hours of college degree credit and has reached an Attempted-Hours Checkpoint with a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average.
- A9 Requests for an Exception may be granted for a HOPE Scholarship recipient who lost HOPE at an Attempted-Hours Checkpoint or exceeded the hours limitation during a term with a partial withdrawal if:
- the student experienced a Serious Illness, Serious Injury, or Death in the Immediate Family, but did not completely withdraw from all courses because the student's instructor(s) allowed the student to take an "incomplete" in the course(s) or the Eligible Postsecondary Institution made it compulsory for the student to withdraw from the course(s) ; and

- the student has a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average at the new Attempted-Hours Checkpoint (once hours are forgiven and all “incomplete” grades are reported).

By forgiving the hours from which the student withdrew, the student’s Attempted-Hours Checkpoint is delayed by a term or terms and the student’s total length of eligibility for HOPE is extended. In this circumstance, it is necessary to wait for another term or terms of grades to be posted to determine if the student achieves a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average at the new Attempted-Hours Checkpoint (withdrawal hours not included). If the student achieves a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average after that term, the student is eligible to retain HOPE and to be reimbursed from the point at which the student lost HOPE eligibility.

A10 Requests for an Exception may be granted for a HOPE Scholarship recipient who lost HOPE at an End-of-Spring or Three-Term Checkpoint with a Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average greater than 0.00 but less than 3.0 due to a total withdrawal from a term, if

- the student completely withdrew from all courses during a term due to a Serious Illness, Serious Injury, or death in the Immediate Family; and
- the student has a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average at the next Attempted-Hours Checkpoint (withdrawal hours not included).

By forgiving the hours from which the student withdrew the student’s total length of eligibility for HOPE is extended. In this circumstance, it is necessary to wait for another term or terms of grades to be posted to determine if the student achieves a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average at the next Attempted-Hours Checkpoint (withdrawal hours not included).

A11 Requests for an Exception may be granted for HOPE Scholarship recipients who lost HOPE at an End-of-Spring or Three-Term Checkpoint with a Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average greater than 0.00 but less than 3.0 or exceeded the hours limitation during a term with a partial withdrawal, if:

- the student experienced a Serious Illness, Serious Injury, or Death in the Immediate Family, but did not completely withdraw from all courses because one or more of the student’s professors allowed the student to take an “incomplete” in the course(s); or the Eligible Postsecondary Institution made it compulsory for the student to withdraw from the course(s):and

- the student has a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average at the next Attempted-Hours Checkpoint (withdrawal hours not included and all “incomplete” grades are reported).

By forgiving the hours from which the student withdrew the student's total length of eligibility for HOPE is extended. In this circumstance, it is necessary to wait for another term or terms of grades to be posted to determine if the student achieves a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average at the next Attempted-Hours Checkpoint (withdrawal hours not included).

### **313.5. Authorized Staff Denials.**

Commission staff is authorized to deny a request for an Exception as outlined below in Guidelines D1-D9. The Commission should notify the student of the decision within 21 days of the date of receipt of the letter.

- D1 Regardless of the extenuating circumstances, a request for an Exception shall be denied if it is Mathematically Impossible for the student to have a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average at the new 30- 60- or 90- semester-hour (45- 90- or 135-quarter-hour) HOPE Checkpoint, even after withdrawal hours are forgiven.
- D2 Regardless of the extenuating circumstances, a request for an Exception may be denied if the student does not provide a request for an Exception in writing within 45 calendar days of receiving notice of ineligibility for the HOPE Scholarship (usually provided to the student by the financial aid office of the Eligible Postsecondary Institution).
- D3 Requests for an Exception shall be denied when the basis of the request is the diagnosis of or presence of a learning disability.
- D4 Requests for an Exception shall be denied when the basis of the request is the Serious Injury, Serious Illness, or Death of a family member if the family member is not an Immediate Family member.
- D5 Requests for an Exception shall be denied when the basis of the request is an automobile accident, which damaged the student's car but did not injure the student severely enough to cause the student to withdraw from classes.
- D6 (Intentionally left blank.)
- D7 Requests for an Exception shall be denied if a student who has been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder was not treated pharmacologically for the psychiatric disorder.

- D8 Requests for an Exception shall be denied when a student who withdrew from all courses during a term to provide temporary care for an Immediate Family member if other family members could have provided the care or if the student is no longer academically eligible to receive the HOPE Scholarship.
- D9 Requests for an exception shall be denied if the student did not completely withdraw from the term in question, except as provided for by Approval Guidelines A9 and A11.

### **313.6. Special Criteria.**

The Board of Commissioners recognizes that, from time to time, there will be a request for an Exception that does not fit into any category of the Guidelines outlined above, or merits treatment that exceeds the Appeals and Exceptions provisions. In such circumstances, the staff is authorized to make a determination using their own judgment to grant a Special Criteria Exception. The staff shall inform the Public Policy and Law Committee of the Board of Commissioners of their actions, in summary form, at the next Committee meeting. The Committee may provide the staff with guidance regarding treatment of similar circumstances in the future or reverse the staff's denial of a request for an Exception, thereby awarding the student.

The Special Criteria provision is not intended to provide the Board of Commissioners or Commission staff with carte blanche or unconditional authority to grant exceptions without regard to precedence or the restrictions of these regulations.

### **313.7. Early Admissions Evaluation Factors.**

- a. The student's letter should fully explain the circumstances of the request for an Exception and should reflect the maturity of a college Freshman. The list of honors should demonstrate the student's status as an exceptional young person.
- b. The letter from the principal or headmaster must convince the Commission staff that the student is academically and emotionally prepared to be successful in college and that the student will or would have graduated from high school as a HOPE Scholar.
- c. All transcripts beginning with the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and including all schools attended must be received. All schools attended must be approved as accredited schools eligible to identify HOPE Scholars. The transcripts should convince the Commission staff that the student has successfully completed sufficient academic or core course work to demonstrate that he or she is easily capable

of completing the high school requirements with a “B” or higher average in the core curriculum subjects.

- d. Postsecondary academic transcripts must be official copies. The course work taken and the grade earned should convince the Commission staff that the student is capable of successfully doing college level work. Letters of recommendation from postsecondary officials should not only promote the student’s academic ability but also reflect the student’s social maturity level.
- e. The letter from the Admissions Office should clearly state that the college is fully accepting the student as an Early Admission student, though the student has not yet completed the high school graduation requirements or does not plan to ever complete the high school graduation requirements.

### **314. Program Reviews.**

The Commission shall conduct Program Reviews of Eligible Postsecondary Institutions participating in the HOPE program in order to assess institutional administration of the program and compliance with the program's regulations. The Commission selects a sampling of the institution's HOPE recipients, for the Award Year under review, and the institution's files and records for the sample are examined to assure compliance. If a recipient is determined to have been ineligible for payment, the institution or the recipient may be required to repay to the Commission the HOPE funds awarded to the recipient.

The Commission's State Program Review Policy and Procedure document provide detailed information regarding the Program Review process.