

Governor's Scholarship Program

REGULATIONS

2008 - 2009 Award Year



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Georgia Student Finance Commission
2082 East Exchange Place
Tucker, Georgia 30084

2008 - 2009 AWARD YEAR
GOVERNOR’S SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM REGULATIONS
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GOVERNOR'S SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Governor's Scholarship Program is to recognize and reward academic achievement and to encourage Georgia's best and brightest students to attend Eligible Postsecondary Institutions in Georgia.

The Governor's Scholarship Program was established in 1985 (Fiscal Year 1986) for students who graduated from Eligible High Schools in Georgia as Georgia Scholars. The program was expanded in 1991 (Fiscal Year 1992) to include students who graduated as the Valedictorian, Salutatorian, or STAR Student of their Eligible High School. In 2005 (Fiscal Year 2006), the program was restructured so that one Valedictorian and one STAR Student from each Eligible High School were eligible for a Governor's Scholarship award at Eligible Postsecondary Institutions in Georgia. Beginning with the 2008-2009 Award Year (Fiscal Year 2009), the limit of one STAR Student per high school was removed.

The Governor's Scholarship Program award amount received by eligible students and the total amount of State funds appropriated for the program, are established each year by the Georgia General Assembly during the preceding legislative session, and are subject to change during the Award Year.

The Georgia Student Finance Commission, referred to in these regulations as the "Commission", administers the Governor's Scholarship Program.

I. 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.

“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.

“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 Degree credit.

“Award Year” means four consecutive quarters or three consecutive semesters beginning with the summer term and ending with the spring term.

“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 Degree credit.

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

“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.

“Cost of Attendance” means the estimated expenses, both direct and indirect, which may be 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 educational institution upon completion of an organized program of study at the Undergraduate level.

“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, , or the Southern Association of Independent Schools.

“Eligible Non-Citizen” means a person who, in accordance with the Federal Title IV Program 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”. 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 Postsecondary Institution” means a unit of the University System of Georgia, a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia, or a private, non-profit college or university located in Georgia, and which is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The definition of a private independent college or university also includes any proprietary (for-profit) 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 and for receipt of Tuition Equalization Grant funds 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 or have applied for approval from the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the Federal Title IV Program. Once an eligible institution has been approved by the U.S. Department of Education for participation in the Federal Pell Grant Program and then such approval is suspended or revoked by the U.S. Department of Education, the institution is ineligible to participate in the Governor’s Scholarship Program. Additionally, private colleges and universities, including proprietary institutions must also be eligible to participate in the Tuition Equalization Grant Program.

“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 payment, despite not having fulfilled the regulatory eligibility requirements of the program.

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

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

“Freshman” means a first-year student who is fully admitted and Enrolled in a Matriculated status to seek a college Degree 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, per school term, of Degree credit of a Matriculated student at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

“Georgia Resident” or “Georgia Residency” means an individual who meets the criteria of the *Georgia Residency Requirements for State Programs Regulations*, as specified and limited by these regulations.

“Georgia Scholar” means a graduating senior from an Eligible High School in Georgia who was recognized by the Georgia Department of Education as having exhibited excellence in all phases of school life and in community activities, according to standards prescribed by the Georgia Department of Education. Beginning with the high school graduating class of 2005 (Fiscal Year 2006), being named a Georgia Scholar does not qualify a student for Governor’s Scholarship eligibility.

“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.

“GSFAPPS” means the Georgia Student Financial Aid Application System, 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.

“Home Institution” means an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in which the student is normally enrolled and is in a Matriculated status working toward a Degree.

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

“Matriculated” means a student is fully admitted and enrolled in an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in a unified academic program of study leading to a Degree.

“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.

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

“Part-Time” means enrollment for the equivalent of less than 12 quarter or 12 semester hours, per school term, of Degree credit of a Matriculated student at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

“Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average” means the calculation of those grades earned at the postsecondary level to establish eligibility for Governor’s Scholarship renewal. The Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average is calculated on a traditional 4.00 scale, to the hundredth decimal, without rounding. A traditional 4.00 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.

“Salutatorian” means a graduating senior from an Eligible High School in Georgia who was recognized as the second highest student academically of the graduating class. Beginning with the high school graduating class of 2005 (Fiscal Year 2006), being named as the Salutatorian does not qualify a student for Governor’s Scholarship eligibility.

“STAR Student” means a graduating senior from an Eligible High School in Georgia who was recognized by such Eligible High School as the student with the highest SAT score of the graduating class. An Eligible High School may have more than one STAR Student.

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

“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.

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

“Tuition Equalization Grant” or “TEG” means a State of Georgia student financial aid program administered by the Commission to provide non-repayable grant assistance to Georgia Residents 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 TEG program is authorized by the Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-3-410 and is funded by state appropriations.

“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 a 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.

“Valedictorian” means a graduating senior from an Eligible High School in Georgia who was recognized by such Eligible High School as the top student academically of the graduating class. Each Eligible High School may only submit the name of one Valedictorian from each graduating class to the Commission for purposes of the Governor’s Scholarship Program.

“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.

II. INITIAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible to receive a Governor's Scholarship as an entering Freshman attending an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in Georgia, a student meet all the following requirements:

1. A student must be named the Valedictorian or a STAR Student by his or her Eligible High School in Georgia. Each Eligible High School is limited to submitting information regarding one Valedictorian from each high school graduating class to the Commission for purposes of the Governor's Scholarship Program. An Eligible High School may submit the name of one or more STAR Students to the Commission, if the students are tied for the honor of STAR Student.
2. A student must be a Georgia Resident, according to the *Georgia Residency Requirements For State Programs Regulations*,, for a minimum of 12 consecutive months, immediately preceding the first day of classes of the school term for which the Governor's Scholarship is sought. A student who graduates from an Eligible High School in Georgia, whose Parent is classified as non-resident Military Personnel stationed in Georgia at the time of such high school graduation, is treated as a Georgia Resident, for purposes of the Governor's Scholarship Program. Once any Governor's Scholarship recipient correctly meets the Georgia Residency requirements and begins receiving the Governor's Scholarship, he or she will continue to be treated as a Georgia Resident, even if his or her Parent moves from the State of Georgia.
3. A student must be a United States citizen or an Eligible Non-Citizen according to Federal Title IV Program requirements for the 12-month consecutive immediately prior to the school term for which the Governor's Scholarship is sought.
4. A student must comply with the United States Selective Service System requirements for registration, if such requirements are applicable, prior to the application deadline, in order to receive payment for that school term.
5. A student must be enrolled Full-Time at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in Georgia in a Matriculated status seeking an Undergraduate Degree within nine calendar months following graduation from an Eligible High School in Georgia. Any Part-Time or Full-Time enrollment in an Eligible Postsecondary Institution or an ineligible postsecondary institution prior to that time shall not act as a disqualifier for receipt of a Governor's Scholarship award.
6. A student must complete the application process for the Governor's Scholarship Program, as established and instructed by the Commission.

7. A student must not be receiving non-repayable federal, state, college, university or privately funded scholarship and grant aid, inclusive of aid to be received under the Governor's Scholarship Program, which total more than the Cost of Attendance of the Eligible Postsecondary Institution. An individual student's award may not exceed Tuition at the Eligible Postsecondary Institution in which he or she is enrolled.
8. A student must be in compliance with the Georgia Drug-Free Postsecondary Education Act of 1990.
9. A student must not have been charged with or convicted of the commission of a felony, unless such felony charge has been dismissed or the student has been acquitted of the charge.

III. MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY

In addition to the Initial Eligibility Requirements of these regulations, in order to maintain eligibility and to be eligible to apply for successive renewals of a Governor's Scholarship, a recipient must also meet the following requirements:

1. A student must complete the renewal application process for the Governor's Scholarship Program, as established and instructed by the Commission for subsequent periods of study at such times as designated by the Commission. Such student must also contact his or her Eligible Postsecondary Institution to have an official academic transcript forwarded to the Commission that includes the credit hours and grades for his or her most recently completed course work.
2. A student must be enrolled Full-Time (12 hours), per school term, at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in order to receive Governor's Scholarship payment for that school term.
3. A student must have at least a 3.00 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average on a 4.00 scale, after completion of three quarters or two semesters for which the preceding Governor's Scholarship award was made. Failure to have a 3.00 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average on a 4.00 scale at each such point of determination will result in the student becoming ineligible to receive any further aid under the Governor's Scholarship Program. Once a student loses academic eligibility for a Governor's Scholarship, such eligibility cannot be regained.
4. A student must have earned a cumulative 30 semester or 45 quarter hours of Degree credit after two semesters or three quarters of receiving Governor's Scholarship funds. Degree credit hours earned prior to such school terms may be included in the cumulative hours total. A one-time exemption is available to a Freshman recipient who has a 3.00 Postsecondary Cumulative

Grade Point Average, but did not earned a cumulative 30 semester or 45 quarter hours of Degree credit, after receiving two semesters or three quarters of Governor's Scholarship assistance. Under this exemption, a Freshman recipient may attend his or her next school term, at his or her own expense, to earn the cumulative 30 semester or 45 quarter hours. In order to renew his or her Governor's Scholarship, such Freshman recipient must have a 3.00 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average after completion of such school term. Once a student loses eligibility for the Governor's Scholarship, due to a lack of earned credit hours or Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average requirements, such eligibility cannot be regained.

5. A student must have earned a cumulative 60 semester or 90 quarter hours of Degree credit with a 3.00 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average after four semesters or six quarters of receiving the Governor's Scholarship. There is no standard provision in these regulations for an Exception to this requirement. Once a student loses eligibility for the Governor's Scholarship, due to a lack of earned credit hours or Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average requirements, such eligibility cannot be regained.
6. A student must have earned a cumulative 90 semester or 135 quarter hours of Degree credit with a 3.00 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average after six semesters or nine quarters of receiving the Governor's Scholarship. There is no standard provision in these regulations for an Exception to this requirement. Once a student loses eligibility for the Governor's Scholarship, due to a lack of earned credit hours or Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average requirements, such eligibility cannot be regained.
7. A student must not, at any time, be dismissed from an Eligible Postsecondary Institution for a disciplinary reason. Once a student loses eligibility for the Governor's Scholarship, due to disciplinary reasons, such eligibility cannot be regained.
8. 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 Regulations 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 Scholarship 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 an acceptable rehabilitation plan, 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.

9. Subject to the availability of funds, a qualifying student is eligible to receive a Governor's Scholarship payment for not more than 12 quarters or 8 semesters of Full-Time study, including summer school terms, within a five-year period of time dating from the first day of classes of the school term for which the student first received a Governor's Scholarship award. A student may receive Governor's Scholarship payment for 4 quarters or 3 semesters of an Award Year, but is limited to a total of 12 quarters or 8 semesters of payment from the Governor's Scholarship Program. A student must be eligible and receive Governor's Scholarship payment for at least one school term during the Award Year in order to continue his or her eligibility for the following Award Year.
10. A Governor's Scholarship award may not be made nor used for study beyond the Baccalaureate Degree level, except for students in programs of study designed to include enrollment in Graduate Level course work, while the students continue to pursue a Baccalaureate Degree. The Board of Regents or the private Eligible Postsecondary Institution must approve such programs of study. A student participating in such a program of study may be enrolled in both Undergraduate and Graduate Level coursework during the same term and be simultaneously seeking a Graduate Level Degree and a Baccalaureate Degree. If the student is no longer seeking a Baccalaureate Degree, and only seeking a Graduate Level Degree, he or she is ineligible for Governor's Scholarship payment.
11. A student who was determined to be ineligible to receive aid under the Governor's Scholarship Program, due to the amount of non-repayable aid he or she is received for an Award Year, may reapply for the subsequent Award Year, provided all other eligibility requirements of these regulations are met.

IV. INITIAL APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. Upon receipt of the Valedictorian and STAR Student information from the Eligible High Schools, the Commission will furnish such Valedictorians and STAR Students with information regarding the Governor's Scholarship Program and instructions regarding the application process.
2. A student must file the application 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.
3. In addition to obtaining information from the applicants, the Commission may obtain information from the Eligible Postsecondary Institutions, such as, but not limited to, enrollment status information, Cost of Attendance information,

and information regarding other non-repayable scholarship and grant aid applicants may receive.

V. SUCCESSIVE ANNUAL RENEWAL APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. The Commission will provide renewal application information and application instructions to each Governor's Scholarship recipient prior to the ending date of the school period covered by the current Governor's Scholarship's award.
2. The recipient should complete the renewal application process within 30 days, or by such other later date as may be prescribed by the Commission in order to receive priority consideration for renewal of the Governor's Scholarship. Regardless, a student must file the application before the last day of the term (semester or quarter) or the student's withdrawal date, whichever occurs first, in order to be paid for that academic term. The last day of the term is the last day of classes or exams, whichever occurs later.
3. The initial application procedures of *Section III* also apply to the renewal application requirements, and the Commission may incorporate into the renewal application process additional information that must be certified to the Commission by the Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

VI. DETERMINATION AND NOTIFICATION OF AWARDS

1. The maximum Governor's Scholarship award amount is set by the Georgia General Assembly each year, and is subject to change during the Award Year.
2. An individual student's award may not exceed Tuition at the Eligible Postsecondary Institution in which he or she is enrolled.
3. If the total amount of non-repayable scholarship and grant aid known to be available to a student exceeds the recipient's Cost of Attendance budget, the recipient's Governor's Scholarship award must be reduced by the amount of aid in excess of the recipient's Cost of Attendance. If the recipient chooses to decline receipt of the excess amount in one or more of the other non-repayable aid programs from which he or she is eligible for assistance, then he or she may receive the full amount of his or her Governor's Scholarship award.
4. The Governor's Scholarship Program is a non-need based program, meaning that the financial ability of the recipient, or recipient's parents or family, to defray costs to be incurred while enrolled in an Eligible

Postsecondary Institution is not a factor to be considered in the awarding of Governor's Scholarships.

5. Applicants are notified by the Commission, or by their Eligible Postsecondary Institution, of the award or denial of their Governor's Scholarships at the earliest practicable date each Award Year.
6. A recipient transferring from one Eligible Postsecondary Institution to another Eligible Postsecondary Institution, during a period of study for which a Governor's Scholarship has been awarded, must reapply for his or her Governorship Scholarship award for the remainder of the period, due to a possible variation in tuition costs and/or total non-repayable aid awarded at the second Eligible Postsecondary Institution.
7. A student is eligible for Governor's Scholarship payment as a Transient, Alternative Study, or Study Abroad student, as follows:
 - a. Such student's Home Institution, which must be an Eligible Postsecondary Institution, must approve the course work for credit toward the student's program of study.
 - b. The Governor's Scholarship award amount must be the amount the student would normally receive at the Home Institution.
 - c. The Governor's Scholarship payment must take place through the Home Institution, which must be an Eligible Postsecondary Institution, and the student must be considered to be in a Matriculated status by his or her Home Institution.

VII. DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

1. The Commission disburses funds in one of three ways, determined by the Eligible Postsecondary Institution:
 - a. Individual checks made payable to each recipient, for each school term covered by the recipient's Governor's Scholarship award.
 - b. Single check made payable to the Eligible Postsecondary Institution for all students receiving the Governor's Scholarship at the institution.
 - c. Electronic transfer of funds to the Eligible Postsecondary Institution for all students receiving the Governor's Scholarship at the institution.
2. The Eligible Postsecondary Institution must deliver the funds to the students or credit the students' accounts toward their Cost of Attendance.

VIII. RECORDS RETENTION

1. An Eligible Postsecondary Institution shall maintain accurate records, books, documents and other evidence concerning the Governor's Scholarship 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 Governor's Scholarship 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 review. It is the institution's responsibility to resolve any inconsistencies or conflicting information within a student's records, prior to awarding or disbursing Governor's Scholarship 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.