

**LOUISIANA STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

***Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)  
Bulletin***

TOPS BULLETIN NUMBER:	T2019-1
DATE ISSUED:	September 18, 2019
EFFECTIVE DATE:	Immediately
DISTRIBUTION:	High School Counselors, High School Principals, Parish Superintendents, College and University Financial Aid Offices and Registrars, LAICU Financial Aid Offices and Registrars, and Louisiana Community and Technical College System Personnel
TOPICS:	Exception Request Form

Effective immediately, the attached form is to be used by students when requesting an exception to the initial, full time, or continuous enrollment requirement and/or the 24 hour requirement for TOPS. **Please destroy all old forms which you may have printed for your students' use.**

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance has added new exceptional circumstances to the form. Please ask students to carefully read and review the exception which may meet their individual qualifications for the exception.

The Exception Request Form can be found online at <https://www.osfa.la.gov/MainSitePDFs/exceptionrequestform.pdf>.

Questions? Please e-mail [custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@la.gov).

# REQUEST FOR EXCEPTION FORM

TO THE INITIAL, FULL-TIME or CONTINUOUS, ENROLLMENT and/or 24 HOUR REQUIREMENT

Please follow the instructions on pages 2, 3 and 4

IT WILL TAKE A MINIMUM OF 4 TO 6 WEEKS TO PROCESS THIS REQUEST - IF IT IS COMPLETE

## A. MY STUDENT INFORMATION: (Print or Type)

Full Name:			DOB:	LOSFA ID :
Permanent Address (Street or P.O. Box) (Check If New <input type="checkbox"/> ):			Current or Last College/University Attended:	
City:	State:	Zip:	Current or Last Semester/Quarter/Term Attended:	
E-mail Address:			College or University You Will Attend, if Reinstated:	
Cell Phone: ( ) - (Check If New <input type="checkbox"/> )			Semester/Quarter/Term You Plan on Returning to College:	
Alternate Phone: ( ) - (Check If New <input type="checkbox"/> )				

## B. MY PROGRAM: (Check all that apply)

TOPS Award (Opportunity, Performance, Honors, and Tech)    Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship    GO Youth Challenge Grant

## C. MY QUALIFYING EXCEPTION TYPE: [Check the applicable type(s).]

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 - Parental (Pregnancy/Maternity/Paternity) Leave	<input type="checkbox"/> 8 - Death of Immediate Family Member
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 - Physical Rehabilitation Program	<input type="checkbox"/> 9A - Military Service - Student
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 - Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program	<input type="checkbox"/> 9B - Military Service - Spouse
<input type="checkbox"/> 4A - Temporary Disability – Self	<input type="checkbox"/> 10 - Transfer to a Selective Enrollment Program
<input type="checkbox"/> 4B - Care of Immediate Family Member with Temporary Disability	<input type="checkbox"/> 11 – Unavailability of Courses
<input type="checkbox"/> 5 - Permanent Disability	<input type="checkbox"/> 12 – Natural Disaster
<input type="checkbox"/> 6 - Exceptional Educational Opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/> 13 – Exceptional Circumstances
<input type="checkbox"/> 7 - Religious Commitment	

## D. I NEED AN EXCEPTION FOR THE FOLLOWING Semester(s)/Quarter(s)/Term(s):

\_\_\_\_\_

## E. MY SIGNATURE (Student's):

\_\_\_\_\_

## F. DATE:

\_\_\_\_\_

**OFFICIAL USE ONLY. (DO NOT MAKE ENTRIES BELOW.)**

<p>Date Request Received: _____</p> <p>H. S. Graduation Date: _____</p> <p>Last Semester/Quarter/Term Paid: _____</p> <p>Academic Year Hours Earned: _____</p> <p>Requested semester/Quarter/Term(s): _____</p> <p>Cum GPA: _____ Total Hours Earned: _____</p> <p>Term Count: _____</p> <p>Suspended: <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES After: _____</p> <p><u>Additional Action</u> Needed at Time of Update:</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Comments:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Disapproved</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Approved For:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Reinstatement Approved For:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SIGNATURE (Approval Authority) _____ DATE _____</p>
---	---

**For assistance with this form, send an email to [TOPS.exceptions@la.gov](mailto:TOPS.exceptions@la.gov).**

## INSTRUCTIONS for *Request for Exception Form*

### IT WILL TAKE A MINIMUM OF 4 TO 6 WEEKS TO PROCESS THIS REQUEST - IF IT IS COMPLETE WHEN IT IS RECEIVED

Requirements to maintain TOPS eligibility: (1) enroll for the first time as a full time student no later than the semester immediately following the one year anniversary of high school graduation; (2) enroll as a full time student each semester; (3) remain continuously enrolled during each semester; and (4) **earn** at least 24 hours during each academic year.

**Section A.** Insert all information requested. Your email address and your phone numbers should be the best numbers at which you can be reached in case additional information is required for your request for exception. Your LOSFA ID number can be found on any correspondence that you have received from LOSFA regarding your TOPS award. If you have not yet signed up for an account on the Student Hub, you should do so at <https://www.osfa.la.gov/studenthub.html>. This will allow you to view your TOPS status, including your exception status, at any time.

**Section B.** Check the box that corresponds to the program for which you need an exception.

**Section C.** Check the box that corresponds to the type of exception you are requesting. Refer to the chart below to determine the type of exception your circumstances support.

**Section D.** Insert the semester/quarter/term that you did not enroll or resigned or you were not able to earn the hours you needed to meet the 24 hour requirement.

**Section E.** Sign the form.

**Section F.** Date the form.

**You MUST provide (1) the completed and signed Request for an Exception form, (2) your personal letter explaining the circumstances that lead to your need for an exception, and (3) the required supporting documents listed for your circumstances in the chart below. Email the completed form, your personal letter, and required supporting documentation to [TOPS.exceptions@la.gov](mailto:TOPS.exceptions@la.gov). If you do not have all required supporting documentation, you should submit the Request for Exception form without the documentation and include a statement in your personal letter that you are in the process of obtaining the necessary documentation. Do NOT send us your social security number. You can also submit your request via FAX to (225) 208-1618 or by mail to LOSFA, Legal – Exceptions Section, 602 North 5th Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802. LOSFA must receive the completed Request for Exception form no later than the deadline that is printed at the bottom of the cancellation notice that was emailed to you. If you have not received a cancellation letter, submit your Request for Exception form as soon as possible after the event or circumstance that supports your request. If your request is received after the deadline on the notice of cancellation, it will not be considered. Keep a copy of what you send to support your request for exception for your records.**

### CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANTING EXCEPTION TO THE INITIAL, FULL-TIME, AND CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS AND TO THE 24 HOUR REQUIREMENT

CODE & TYPE	CIRCUMSTANCES	REQUIRED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS	MAXIMUM
1 Parental Leave	You are/were pregnant or caring for a newborn or newly-adopted child less than one year of age.	(1) a written statement from a doctor of medicine who is legally authorized to practice certifying the date of diagnosis of pregnancy and the anticipated delivery date, or the actual birth date, OR (2) a copy of the hospital's certificate of live birth, OR (3) a copy of the official birth certificate or equivalent official document, OR (4) written documentation from the person or agency completing the adoption that confirms the adoption and date of adoption. (5) if you are not the custodial parent of the child, documentation of the adoption/custodianship as well as documentation evidencing that you are assisting in the care of the child, which may include, but is not limited to, a letter from the custodial parent confirming that you provide care, evidence of child support payments made, and/or evidence of bills paid by you for the benefit of the child.	Up to the equivalent of one full academic year per child.
2 Physical Rehabilitation Program	You are/were receiving physical rehabilitation in a program.	(1) a statement of reason for the rehabilitation, the necessity of withdrawing, dropping hours, etc., the semester(s) involved and any other information or documents that may be relevant to your request; and (2) a written statement from a qualified medical professional confirming the rehabilitation and the beginning and ending dates of the rehabilitation.	Up to 4 consecutive semesters (6 consecutive quarters) per occurrence.

**INSTRUCTIONS for Request for Exception Form**

3 Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program	You are/were receiving substance abuse rehabilitation in a program prescribed by a qualified professional and administered by a qualified professional.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) a statement of the reason for the rehabilitation, the necessity of withdrawing, dropping hours, etc., the semester(s) involved and any other information or documents that may be relevant to the your request; and</li> <li>(2) a written statement from a qualified professional or from the director of a substance abuse rehabilitation facility confirming the rehabilitation and the beginning and ending dates of the rehabilitation.</li> </ol>	Up to 2 consecutive semesters or 3 consecutive quarters. Available only once.
4A Temporary Disability – Self	You are/were recovering from an accident, injury, illness, mental illness or surgery.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) a statement of your disability, the necessity of withdrawing, dropping hours, etc., the semester(s) involved, and any other information or documents that may be relevant to the your request</li> <li>(2) a written statement from a qualified professional if a medical disability or from a qualified professional or a clergyman if a mental disability certifying the existence of a temporary disability, the dates of treatment, and opinions as to the impact of the disability on your ability to attend school.</li> </ol>	Up to two full academic years
4B Care of Immediate Family Member (who has a Temporary Disability)	You are/were providing continuous care to your spouse, dependent, parent, stepparent, custodian (guardian) or grandparent due to their accident, illness, injury or required surgery.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) a statement of your family member’s disability, the family connection, the necessity of withdrawing, dropping hours, etc., the semester(s) involved, and any other information or documents that may be relevant to the your request</li> <li>(2) a written statement from a qualified professional of the family member’s temporary disability and the beginning and ending dates of treatment; and</li> <li>(3) a statement from a family member or qualified professional confirming the care you gave; and</li> <li>(4) a written statement from a parent or other documentation confirming the family connection.</li> </ol>	Up to a maximum of 2 consecutive semesters (3 consecutive quarters).
5 Permanent Disability	You are permanently disabled in a manner that prevents you from attending classes on a full-time basis.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) a description of the disability and an explanation why the disability prevents you from attending classes full-time, and</li> <li>(2) a written statement from a qualified professional stating the diagnosis of and prognosis for the disability, stating that the disability is permanent, and opining why the disability restricts the student/recipient from attending classes full-time despite medications, accommodations, therapy and/or treatment.</li> </ol>	Up to the equivalent of 8 full-time semesters of postsecondary education in part time semesters.
6 Exceptional Educational Opportunity	You are/were enrolled in an internship, residency, cooperative work, or work/study program or a similar program that, in the written opinion of your academic dean, will enhance your education.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) a written statement from the college/school official that you are a student at the school/college and that the program is offered or sponsored by the college/school, or</li> <li>(2) a statement from the dean of your college or the dean’s designee or from the Director of the your program of study that the program is related to your major and will enhance your education. The statement must include the dates of leave of absence, the semester(s) or number of days involved, and the beginning and ending dates of the program.</li> </ol>	Up to 4 consecutive semesters (6 consecutive quarters).
7 Religious Commitment	You are a member of a religious group that requires you to perform certain activities or obligations to be a member of that group, which necessitate taking a leave of absence from school.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) a statement explaining the necessity of withdrawing, dropping hours, etc.; the semester(s) or number of days involved; and the length of the religious obligation, and</li> <li>(2) a written statement from your religious group’s governing official documenting the group’s requirement, the necessity of the leave of absence, and dates of the required leave of absence.</li> </ol>	Up to 5 consecutive semesters (8 consecutive quarters).
8 Death of Immediate Family Member	Your spouse, parent, stepparent, custodian (guardian), dependent, sister, brother, stepsibling or grandparent dies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) a copy of the death certificate, or</li> <li>(2) a doctor’s or funeral director’s verifying statement, or</li> <li>(3) a copy of the obituary published in the local newspaper, and</li> <li>(4) if your last name is different from the deceased and you are not listed in the obituary, a written statement from a parent or other documentation explaining the family connection between the student and the deceased.</li> </ol>	1 semester or 2 consecutive quarters per death.
9A Military Service - Self	You are/were in the United States Armed Forces Reserves or National Guard called on active duty status or are/were performing emergency state service or enlisted or reenlisted are/were on active duty as a member of the regular United States Armed Forces.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) a statement of the dates of the required leave of absence, necessity of withdrawing, dropping hours, etc.; the semester(s) or number of days involved; and the length of duty (beginning and ending dates), and</li> <li>(2) a written certification from the military including the dates and location of active duty, or</li> <li>(3) a copy of your military orders or separation forms showing dates of active duty.</li> </ol>	Up to the length of active duty service.

9B Military Service - Spouse	Your spouse is in the United States Armed Forces Reserves or National Guard and is called on active duty status or is performing emergency state service with the National Guard or enlists or reenlists and enters on active duty as a member of the regular United States Armed Forces	(1) a statement of the dates of the required leave of absence, necessity of withdrawing, dropping hours, etc., the semester(s) or number of days involved, and the length of duty (beginning and ending dates); and (2) a copy of your marriage license; (3) a written certification from the military including the dates and location of active duty of your spouse; or (4) a copy of the military orders or other military documents confirming the military service of your spouse.	Up to two consecutive semesters
10 Transfer - Selective Enrollment Program	You completed the prerequisite program requirements for transfer to a Selective Enrollment Program.	(1) a statement of the semester(s) affected and the selective enrollment program in which you intend to enroll, and (2) a written statement from the dean of the college or the dean's designee certifying that you have or will complete your prerequisite requirements for transfer to the Selective Enrollment Program, and (3) the date you completed or will complete those requirements.	Up to 2 consecutive semesters or 3 consecutive quarters.
11 Unavailability of Courses	You are unable to enroll full time due to the advanced coursework required, the necessity of earning credits in prerequisites before moving on to the next block of courses, and/or the unavailability of course due to limited course offerings. <i>Requirement: you have earned credit for at least 75% of the courses required to complete your degree</i>	(1) an explanation as to why you are unable to enroll full time, college transcripts, a description of your major, the total hours required to graduate, the structure of courses; and (2) a letter from your academic counselor or from the dean or director of your program of study explaining the course structure and certifying that you have earned credit for at least 75% of the courses required to complete your degree and you are unable to enroll full time due to this structure	
12 Natural Disaster	You are unable to enroll in school, to maintain continuous enrollment in school, or to earn the required annual hours due to the fact that you or your family live in a region of the state of Louisiana that is declared a natural disaster by the Governor of the state.	(1) A written statement detailing the natural disaster's impact on you or your immediate family (mother, father, custodian, siblings and/or spouse and children), which prevented your from meeting the continuation requirements, including the length of the impact; and (2) Documentation corroborating your statement (examples: photographs of damage; insurance documents, FEMA documents, fire and/or police reports; statements from public officials; statements from family members or other persons with actual knowledge; receipts and invoices for work done and materials purchases; a copy of a lease and statement from lessor regarding the impact of the flood; etc.).	Up to two consecutive semesters (three consecutive quarters)
13 Exceptional Circumstances  (See Note 1 Below)	You have/had circumstances that are not listed above that are exceptional and are/were beyond your immediate control that caused you not to enroll or fully or partially withdraw from college or prevented you from earning 24 hours.	(1) Submit a statement in a sworn affidavit signed by you in the presence of a notary detailing the circumstances that prevented you from completing the requirements to keep your TOPS award and explaining why you believe that the circumstances are exceptional and beyond your control; and Submit documentation to corroborate your statement of the exceptional circumstances.	Up to 2 consecutive semesters or 3 consecutive quarters.

**Note 1: The following situations ARE NOT exceptional circumstances:**

- (a) Financial conditions related to a student's ability to meet his educational expenses are not an exceptional circumstance since TOPS is a merit-based award; however, a student's family's financial condition may be considered if the student provides documentation that he was required to work to supplement his family's income due to unexpected circumstances.
- (b) You dropped or failed one or more courses or withdrew from school to protect your grade point average or because you had difficulty with a course or you had difficulty arranging tutoring.
- (c) You were not aware of or did not understand the TOPS requirements to continue to receive your TOPS.
- (d) You thought (assumed) that advanced standing or correspondence course work credited outside the academic year would be applied to the TOPS 24 hour requirement.
- (e) You thought that the scholarship or award requirements for other programs, such as NCAA full-time enrollment requirements, were applicable.

- (f) You voluntarily withdrew from school to pursue other interests or activities or to move out-of-state.
- (g) Claims of receipt of advice that is contrary to these rules, information provided by LOSFA, award letters, and the rights and responsibilities document provided to students; however, if a student can provide written documentation indicating that the student was provided advice by his academic counselor or academic dean contrary to the administrative rules, etc., the student's request for exception may be considered.
- (h) You failed to provide or respond to LOSFA's request for documentation to support your Request for Exception.
- (i) You were involuntarily dropped, suspended or required to withdraw from school by your college because of academics, scholastics, nonattendance or noncompliance with institutional regulations.
- (j) You were suspended or expelled from college for misconduct.
- (k) You were not allowed to register because of your failure to satisfy financial obligations.

**For assistance with this form, send an email to [TOPS.exceptions@la.gov](mailto:TOPS.exceptions@la.gov)**