

OUT OF STATE AND OUT OF COUNTRY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Q-1. I graduated from a high school outside of Louisiana. Can I qualify for a TOPS Award?

- A. Yes. If one of your parents or your court ordered custodian meets Louisiana residency requirements and you meet the alternate eligibility requirements, you may qualify. See the TOPS Q&A entitled “Residency” for the TOPS residency requirements.

Q-2. What is the purpose of the alternate eligibility requirements?

- A. These requirements permit students who qualify as Louisiana residents and who graduated from eligible out-of-state high schools to apply for a TOPS Award. Since course names and grading scales for these students may not be consistent with Louisiana’s standards, a higher ACT or SAT test score was selected as the criteria for qualification.

Q-3. I graduated from an out-of-state high school. What are the alternate requirements for eligibility?

- A. The “alternate requirements” for graduates of out-of-state high schools are that you:
1. Must graduate from:
 - an out-of-state high school that has been approved by the appropriate state educational agency in the state in which the school is located that is the equivalent of Louisiana’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education; or
 - Must graduate from an out-of-state high school that is accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education* and can demonstrate that it meets the standards adopted by BESE for approval of nonpublic schools in Louisiana; or
 - Must graduate from a high school that has been approved by the U.S. Department of Defense; and
 2. Must have a composite score on the ACT of at least 20 for TOPS Tech, 23 for Opportunity, 26 for Performance, and 30 for Honors (or an equivalent value on the SAT); and
 3. Must enroll in a Louisiana public postsecondary institution as a first-time freshman not later than the semester, excluding summer semesters or sessions, immediately following the first anniversary of the date that you graduated from high school or, if you are returning from an eligible out-of-state college, be enrolled in an eligible college or university not later than the next semester or term, excluding summer sessions or intersessions, immediately following the last semester that you were enrolled in the out-of-state college or university (your period of eligibility shall be reduced by one semester or term for each semester or term that you were enrolled in an out-of-state college or university); OR
 - If you enter on active duty with the U.S. Armed Forces within one year after graduating from high school, you must enroll in a TOPS eligible college or university as a first-time freshman not later than the semester, excluding summer semesters or intersessions, immediately following the one year anniversary of separation from active duty; and
 4. Must be a U.S. citizen or be designated as a Permanent Resident by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services; and
 5. Must meet Louisiana residency requirements (you will be required to complete an Affidavit of Residency – See (<https://mylosfa.la.gov/students-parents/scholarships-grants/tops/tops-forms/>); and
 6. Must not have any criminal convictions, except for misdemeanor traffic violations; and

7. If you have been in the U.S. Armed Forces and have been separated from such service, have received an honorable or general discharge.

***NOTE:** The organizations currently recognized can be found on the U.S. Department of Education website at [College Accreditation in the United States-- Pg 6](#)

Q-4. I graduated from high school or completed a home study program outside of the United States and its territories. Can I qualify for a TOPS Award?

- A. Yes. You may qualify for a TOPS Award if you meet the standard residency requirements. See the TOPS Q&A entitled “Residency”.

Q-5. What are the alternate requirements for a student who graduates from an out-of-country high school or completes a home study program out-of-country?

- A. The “alternate requirements” are as follows:

If you will graduate or have graduated from out of country high school, you:

1. Must graduate from an out-of-country high school that has been approved by an accrediting organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and meets the standards adopted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for nonpublic high schools in Louisiana; and
2. Must have a composite score on the ACT (SAT) of at least 20 for TOPS Tech and at least 23 for TOPS Opportunity;

OR

If you will complete or have completed a home study program, you:

3. Must be certified to have successfully completed the eleventh and the twelfth grade levels of a home study program (if you were previously enrolled in a Louisiana public or BESE approved private high school) which has been approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education; and
4. Must have a composite score on the ACT (SAT) of at least 19 for TOPS Tech and at least 22 for the TOPS Opportunity Award;

AND You:

5. Must enroll in a Louisiana public postsecondary institution as a first-time freshman not later than the semester, excluding summer semesters or sessions, immediately following the first anniversary of the date that you graduated from high school or completed a home study program;* or
6. If you enter on active duty with the U.S. Armed Forces within one year after graduating from high school, you must enroll in a Louisiana public postsecondary institution as a first-time freshman not later than the semester, quarter, or term, excluding summer semesters or sessions, immediately following the one year anniversary of separation from active duty (See Q&A entitled Military Service); and
7. Must be a U.S. citizen or designated as a Permanent Resident by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (See Q&A entitled Citizenship.); and
8. Must meet Louisiana residency requirements (See Q&A entitled Residency.); and
9. Must not have any criminal convictions, except for misdemeanor traffic violations; and
10. If you have been in the U.S. Armed Forces and have been separated from such service, have received an honorable or general discharge (See Q&A entitled Military Service).

*For students returning to Louisiana after attending an accredited out-of-state postsecondary institution, refer to the Q&A entitled Returning from an Out of State School.

Q-6. What do I have to do to prove Louisiana residency?

A. See the Q&A entitled “Residency.”

TOPS PROVISIONS RELATING TO MILITARY

Residency - Allows a student to meet TOPS Louisiana residency requirement if his/her military parent:

1. Is a Louisiana resident stationed outside Louisiana;
2. Is an out-of-state resident, but the student actually lives in Louisiana for the last two full years of high school and graduates from an eligible Louisiana high school; or
3. Is an out-of-state resident who moves to Louisiana based on permanent change of station orders and changes residency to Louisiana within 180 days after reporting.

Application - Students who graduate from high school and enter on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces within one year of graduation are:

1. Exempted from the requirement for receipt of an application for TOPS no later than July 1 following the one year anniversary of high school graduation.
2. Provided an extended deadline for receipt of an application for TOPS to one year from the date of separation from active duty.

FTFT Enrollment - Students who graduate from high school and enter on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces within one year of graduation are:

3. Exempted from the requirement to enroll for the first time as a full time student no later than the semester immediately following the one year anniversary of graduation.
4. Provided an extended deadline to enroll for the first time as a full time student to the semester immediately following the one year anniversary of their discharge from active duty. (This is retroactive to the beginning of TOPS, so if a 1998 graduate requested that he be allowed to use his TOPS today, he could do so, provided that he filed his FAFSA within one year of separation from active duty and that he enrolls full time in school no later than the semester immediately following the one year anniversary of discharge from active duty.)

Call to Active Duty While Enrolled - Students are granted:

1. On request, and with a copy of his DD-214, an exception to the TOPS requirements to:
 - a. Enroll full time,
 - b. Maintain continuous enrollment, and
 - c. Earn at least 24 hours each year.
2. A full semester of additional TOPS eligibility if called to active duty after a semester begins, even if the TOPS award was paid for the semester.

National Guard – Students who are in the National Guard and eligible for a TOPS Award:

1. Receive all the same benefits as other members of the military.
2. Receive their TOPS award as follows:
 - a. Tuition exemption provided in R.S. 29:36.1 applies in lieu of the TOPS basic award;
 - b. \$300 per semester (\$600 per year) to pay for books and other instructional materials; and
 - c. TOPS stipend of:
 - i. \$800 per year if eligible for the TOPS Performance Award.
 - ii. \$1,600 per year if eligible for the TOPS Honors Award.