

TOPS TECH AWARD

NOTE: Most of the requirements for the TOPS Tech Award are the same as, or similar to, the TOPS Award. The differences are noted in the answers to the following questions. If you do not find the answer you need from these questions, please review the other Q&A documents to determine whether you can find the answer you seek there.

Core Curriculum

Q-1. What are the core curricula choices?

A. There is one TOPS Tech curriculum, also known as the Career Diploma curriculum or the JumpStart curriculum. This curriculum requires completion of 21 core courses, including 9 courses in Jump Start course sequences, workplace experiences, and credentials.

You may also complete the TOPS core curriculum for the TOPS Opportunity Award (19.0 units) to qualify for TOPS Tech.

ACT/SAT

Q-1. What score do I need to achieve on the ACT to be eligible for TOPS Tech?

A. You will need to earn at least a 17 on the ACT (920 on the SAT) to be eligible for a TOPS Tech Award. You can also qualify for the TOPS Tech Award by earning a Silver Level Score on the ACT WorkKeys assessments.

Q-2. What is the deadline for taking the ACT WorkKeys assessment?

A. You must achieve a qualifying WorkKeys score on or before the end of April in the academic year you graduate from high school. If you have not previously achieved a qualifying score for the TOPS Tech Award, you may qualify after April in the academic year you graduate from high school, but prior to July 1, by using May and/or June test scores. (In certain very limited circumstances, you may qualify for a TOPS Tech award based on a WorkKeys assessment score achieved on a test taken before September 30. (See the Q&A entitled ACT and SAT Questions for more information.) If your qualifying WorkKeys score is earned after the April deadline, but before September 30 your award will be reduced by one semester.

Q-3. Where can I obtain information on WorkKeys Assessment dates and locations?

A. A WorkKeys Assessment is not scheduled like ACT testing. Assessment dates depend on the entity administering the assessment.

You should first check with your high school counselor or school district office. When a school district administers an assessment, it typically administers the assessment in a group/class setting, but dates and times vary by district.

For individual testing, you can contact one of the Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC) Business Career Solution Centers. These Centers administer the assessment frequently and at some centers, multiple times during the week. A list of the Centers can be downloaded from LWC's website at: www.laworks.net/Downloads/WFD/B&CSC_Contacts.pdf.

You can also contact your local Louisiana Technical College (LTC) campus. The LTC Adult Education program administers WorkKeys assessments. Generally, a student must be enrolled in a LTC program to take the assessment at the LTC campus.

You are responsible for sending these scores to LOSFA. You should send a copy of the official ACT Score Report (write your date of birth on the report) to LOSFA by mail or by fax to (225) 612-6508 or by email to custserv@la.gov. Send an email to LOSFA at custserv@la.gov if you have questions. Be sure that the name that you use on the WorkKeys assessments and the FAFSA exactly matches your name on file with your high school or the Louisiana Department of Education. For example, if your school records indicate your name is John Q. Smith, your ACT and your FAFSA should use the name John Q. Smith, not John Smith, not John Quincy Smith, and not Quincy Smith. If your name differs in the slightest way in any of these documents, the determination of your eligibility for TOPS may be delayed because matching your records will require manual intervention by LOSFA staff.

Eligible Postsecondary Institutions

Q-1. Where can I use a TOPS Tech Award?

- A. The TOPS Tech Award may be used for up to two years of skill or occupational training at any campus of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, accredited two-or-four-year public colleges or universities, or private colleges or universities (members of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, LAICU) to pursue a vocational or technical education certificate, diploma or non-academic degree program. Students who are eligible for the TOPS Tech Award may also use their awards at any school with a valid and current certificate of registration issued by the Louisiana State Board of Cosmetology and that is accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the United States Department of Education, and any proprietary school, with a valid and current license issued by the Board of Regents and accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the United States Department of Education.

TOPS Tech awardees who graduated high school in 2017 or later may also use their awards to enroll in an eligible college or university on a full time basis in an associate's degree or other shorter-term training or education program that is aligned to state workforce priorities as determined by the Board of Regents and the Workforce Investment Council. (For eligible programs of study, go to <http://www.osfa.la.gov/MainSitePDFs/T2017-3.pdf>)

If the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Commission determine that a program is no longer aligned with those priorities, an otherwise eligible student who had previously received an award and enrolled in that program may continue to use the award.

Q-2. Which schools offer technical programs?

A. The eligible colleges and universities that currently offer technical programs are:

- All campuses of the Louisiana Technical Colleges
- Baton Rouge Community College
- Bossier Parish Community College
- Central Louisiana Technical Community College
- Delgado Community College
- Louisiana Delta Community College
- Louisiana State University at Eunice
- Northshore Technical Community College
- Nunez Community College
- River Parishes Community College
- South Louisiana Community College
- Southern University at Shreveport
- Fletcher Technical Community College
- SOWELA Technical Community College
- Cosmetology and Proprietary schools

Q-3. What is a technical program?

A. A technical program is a program of courses designed to teach a skill or occupation or provide technical training resulting in a vocational or technical education certificate, diploma, or a technical undergraduate degree. The purpose of TOPS Tech is to provide an incentive for qualified Louisiana residents to prepare for and pursue technical positions in Louisiana and to encourage students to enter into programs of study that meet state workforce needs.

Q-4. Can I use the TOPS Tech Award or the Opportunity, Performance, or Honors Award to enroll in a technical program at a nonpublic college or university?

A. Yes, if the college or university is a member of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU). You may also use the TOPS Tech award at certain cosmetology and proprietary schools. (See Question 1 above.)

Q-8. Can I use a TOPS Opportunity, Performance or Honors Award to pursue a technical program?

A. Yes. You may also use your TOPS Opportunity, Performance or Honors Award at an eligible cosmetology or a proprietary school.

Award Amount

Q-9. How much does the TOPS Tech Award pay toward enrollment in a technical program or in an academic program that is aligned to state workforce priorities?

- A. Payment of TOPS Awards is contingent upon appropriations by the Louisiana Legislature. See the chart on LOSFA's website at http://www.osfa.la.gov/MainSitePDFs/TOPS_Payment_Amounts.pdf which indicates the TOPS Award amounts for the 2019-2020 academic year.

NOTE: TOPS Tech awardees who enroll in an approved academic program of study that results in an associate's degree at a four year university that also has a baccalaureate degree in that program will receive the weighted average of award amounts paid to students enrolled in TOPS Tech eligible programs at two year colleges and universities. For example, Northwestern State University (NSU) provides an associate's degree in Nursing as well as a baccalaureate degree. A TOPS Tech awardee enrolled in the associate's degree program at NSU will receive the weighted average award amount. Louisiana Tech University offers an associate degree in Nursing, but it does not offer a baccalaureate degree in Nursing. A TOPS Tech Awardee enrolled in this program at Louisiana Tech will receive the TOPS Award Amount that all TOPS eligible students receive at that school. You should carefully review the TOPS Payment Amount Charts referenced above before selecting your school.

Q-10. How much do the TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Awards pay toward enrollment in a technical program?

- A. Payment of TOPS Awards is contingent upon appropriations by the Louisiana Legislature. See the chart on LOSFA's website at http://www.osfa.la.gov/MainSitePDFs/TOPS_Payment_Amounts.pdf which indicates the TOPS Award amounts for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Q-11. Will TOPS pay my award for a summer session in a technical program?

- A. Yes, provided that funding is available for this purpose. Payment of a TOPS Award is contingent upon appropriations by the Louisiana Legislature. If funding is available, LOSFA will update its website and its social media pages, and the financial aid office at your school will be notified.

If funds are available, TOPS will pay for enrollment in a summer session in technical programs EXCEPT for the summer session immediately after high school graduation. For example, if you graduate in May 2022, you may enroll in a technical program for the 2022 summer session, but your TOPS Tech Award will not be paid; however, if you enroll as a full time student in a technical program for the fall semester of 2022 and/or spring semester of 2023, your award will be paid for enrolling in a technical program for the 2023 summer session if funding is available for that purpose.

Q-12. Will a TOPS Tech Award pay for two technical diplomas?

- A. Yes. You may use two full years of eligibility for technical programs.

Q-13. Will a TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Award pay for two technical diplomas (four years)?

- A. Yes. You may use all 8 semesters of eligibility for technical programs.

Q-14. Will a TOPS Opportunity, Performance or Honors Award pay for a technical diploma (two years) and then two years of a four-year academic program?

- A. Yes. If you have the TOPS Opportunity, Performance or Honors Award and enroll in an academic program in the semester or term, excluding summer sessions, that starts no later than the fall semester following the one year anniversary of the semester you completed the technical diploma, you may be eligible for continued TOPS payments if you have met continuing eligibility requirements and have not exhausted your TOPS eligibility.

Renewal – Grades

Q-1. What cumulative GPA do I have to maintain with the TOPS Tech Award?

- A. You must maintain a 2.00 cumulative GPA at the end of each semester or term, and you are required to have a cumulative 2.50 GPA at the end of each academic year if you are enrolled in a technical program. This GPA is applicable to recipients of TOPS Tech and Opportunity Awards. If you are a Performance or Honors recipient and you are enrolled in a technical program, you must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 at the end of each academic year to maintain your award as a Performance or Honors Award. If you do not earn at least a 3.0, your award will be converted to Opportunity for the remainder of your eligibility and you will no longer be eligible to receive the stipend portion of your award.

If you are **enrolled at a proprietary or cosmetology school**, you must meet the federal grant aid steady academic progress requirement at the school you are attending instead of the grades stated in the preceding paragraph.

Q-2. If I have an Opportunity, Performance or Honors Award and have attended both an academic program and a technical program, how is my GPA for TOPS continuing eligibility calculated?

- A. All of your college grades will be averaged together, regardless of whether your program of study is academic or technical.

Renewal – Hours

Q-1. How many hours do I have to earn each academic year to keep my TOPS Award?

You must earn 24 hours each academic year in order to maintain your TOPS Award.

Q-2. If I enrolled in a technical program and have not earned at least 24 hours after the spring semester, will TOPS pay for the summer session?

- A. Yes, provided that funding is available for this purpose.

TOPS Tech and Military Service

Q-4. Can I receive a TOPS Tech award if I join the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard?

A. Yes. See the Q&A entitled Military for more information.